

Barrington Court Contemporary Arts project

Summary

The National Trust is offering a unique opportunity for artists to respond to one of its most important country houses at a pivotal time in its history. To deliver this we would like to appoint an experienced arts organisation or individual to work closely with the Trust and co-ordinate, commission and curate this exciting project.

Barrington Court in Somerset now stands empty for the first time in almost 100 years with its future use up for discussion. From autumn 2010 it will be the venue for a major contemporary arts project running for 12 months. We are looking for a partner to work with the Trust on an application to the Arts Council and to manage this exciting project. The budget for the project is around £60,000. We hope the majority of this will come from the Arts Council who have indicated that they are keen to receive an application for funding of around £50,000 in Jan 2010. The remainder is due to come from other partners and funding sources. The project will be launched in autumn 2010.

This paper sets out a brief for arts organisations or individuals to become partners with the Trust in developing this project, applying for funds and managing the project.

Introduction

Barrington Court near Ilminster in Somerset (TA19 0NQ) was the first major country House to be acquired by the National Trust in 1907. Built in the mid 17th century, by the early 20th century it was in a state of severe dilapidation. In this state the project was almost too ambitious for the fledgling organisation, but this great house was saved by Col A A Lyle who took on the lease in the 1920's and carried out a major refurbishment of the house, also creating a model estate including the famous flower gardens.

For the last 20 years, following the departure of the Lyle family, the Court House has been a showroom for reproduction furniture, but the company left Barrington in January this year. The Court House now stands empty with only the memories of the past furnishing its rooms. This year visitors have enjoyed seeing the Court House in this empty state and learning about its history through an audio project "Echoes of History" that was installed in May. They have also contributed their ideas on what its future might be.

While the Trust considers its future we plan to keep the house open to visitors and stage temporary projects. We have decided that any new use for the property would not start until 2012 at the earliest and we want to continue to explore ideas for the future of this great House through the medium of contemporary art. The House will be inspiration for artists to respond to its history and continue the dialogue with visitors on its future through the medium of art. The House has three floors, with 5 principal rooms on the

ground floor including a great Hall and large kitchen. The first floor includes what were bedrooms and sitting rooms and the 3rd floor is an “I” shaped long gallery. All of these rooms with the exception of one room on the ground floor that is used as a sitting room for visitors will be available for the project.

The project will be launched in July 2010 and will run until September 2011. It will be an opportunity for artists to respond to the building, its past and more importantly what will be its future.

We want to work with a partner with a track record of success in this field and the creative talent to make the best of this opportunity.

The National Trust has recently begun a three-year programme to embed contemporary art into the organisation in partnership with Arts Council England. This project will be part of this programme and the learning will be shared throughout the Trust.

Project Aims

To create a contemporary arts programme that engages the visitor in the history and physical experience of exploring one of the great houses in Somerset, contributing to an enjoyable visit and the ongoing debate on the future of the Court House.

Project Objectives

The project will:

- Attract new audiences to the property and increase existing visitor numbers (currently 67,000)
- Associate nationally known names in contemporary art with the National Trust and Barrington Court
- Introduce new audiences to contemporary art
- Introduce the idea of contemporary art in heritage to “traditional” NT visitors
- Provide opportunities for established and emerging artists
- Involve local organisations including schools in the project
- Contribute ideas for the future of the Court House
- Share learning of contemporary arts in a heritage environment across the National Trust
- Leave a legacy of welcoming contemporary art at Barrington Court

Project delivery

The project will work with nationally recognised artists and local emerging artists who will respond to the Court House; its history, present state and possible future.

Work should include projects that truly engage visitors in the process over the twelve month period, such as the use of generative media or participatory projects. The project will also reach out to local organisations including schools. The local primary school will be involved and also at least one secondary and one FE College. The project partner will be responsible for this outreach with support from the Trust's education officer for South Somerset.

The project will start as soon as funding is in place in early 2010 and will have a launch in autumn 2010. From this date there will be a "presence" of the project in the Court House that will build through the next year finishing in September 2011. We intend that a programme of interpretation and educational activities will support the commissions and all forms of media will be used to promote and share the project including the National Trust website.

Resources available for the project will include the empty rooms within the Court House, and the records held by the Trust of the information about the history of the building, its significance, and the stories of the people who lived there. Some staff time will be made available through negotiation to achieve the project, but all curatorial, artistic, fabrication and education costs should be met from within project budgets. It is anticipated that artwork created by the project will remain the property of the artist and it is not anticipated that commissioned work will remain permanently at the property, although these positions will be reviewed in the light of proposals made.

Management

A steering group has been created with key personnel from Barrington Court and NT, as well as ACE SW and a senior arts professional. The selected organisation will meet regularly with this group who will approve and advise on the programme.

Who are we looking for?

The table below gives details of the people we are looking for as our partner in this project. This may be an organisation or an individual. The main criterion is the ability to deliver the project.

ITEM	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
KNOWLEDGE	<p>Excellent knowledge of local and national arts networks</p> <p>Knowledge of arts funding and marketing</p> <p>Knowledge of contemporary arts media, practices and strategies</p>	<p>Knowledge of Somerset artists</p> <p>Understanding of conservation constraints in a heritage environment</p> <p>Knowledge of local and regional organisations that could be involved in the project</p>
SKILLS	<p>Proven excellent project management skills including ability to deliver on time and within budget.</p> <p>Good IT, verbal and written communication skills.</p> <p>Excellent inter-personal skills</p> <p>Enthusiastic with a desire to succeed and achieve results.</p> <p>Confident team player.</p> <p>Ability to use own initiative.</p> <p>Developing and delivering major creative projects</p>	
EXPERIENCE	<p>Successfully applied for arts grants</p> <p>Track record of managing major arts projects</p> <p>Worked with local communities on arts projects</p> <p>Experience of commissioning art</p> <p>Experience of evaluating arts projects</p>	<p>Worked in partnership with a heritage organisation</p> <p>Worked in a heritage environment</p>

PERSONAL QUALITIES	Able to work in a partnership Committed to Equal Opportunities Track record of creative working	
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Application

A site visit prior to application is recommended - please see www.nationaltrust.org.uk for opening times.

Your application should consist of:

- Covering letter (1 side A4 max) explaining your interest in the project
- Outline project proposal (3 sides A4 max), including curatorial vision, methodology, relevance to site, visitor engagement, timeline and budget
- CV (2 sides A4 max) for each principal person engaged in delivering the project
- Brief supplementary information (e.g. 1 or 2 sides A4 summary plus 3-4 images) on up to three relevant projects involving the applicant's work. Images may only be supplied as prints or JPEG format (these will not be returned)
- Applications may be received by post or email to:
richard.higgs@nationaltrust.org.uk
Richard Higgs
Barrington Court
Barrington
nr Ilminster
Somerset TA19 0NQ

Selection

Applications will be assessed by the project steering group that will be made up of representatives of the National Trust, officers from the Arts Council and a senior arts professional.

Project Timetable

Deadline for applications 23rd October 2009

Interview date 3rd November 2009

Deadline submission of full application to Arts Council England 15th Jan 2010

Project launch autumn 2010