Open Call for applications
Stowe Creative Residency: “Title TBD, still waters run deep”

The National Trust is inviting residency applications from UK-based creative practitioners interested in researching and responding to water and its surrounding landscape at Stowe.

Summary:
Residency period: January to December 2020
Fee: at least £18k allocated funding – with ambition to scale up the project with ACE funding
Closing date for applications: 18th August 2019
Interviews: 30th August 2019

About the National Trust
National Trust was founded in 1895 to promote and look after places of historic beauty permanently for the benefit of the nation across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Trust’s core purpose is to look after special places forever, for everyone. We protect over 700 miles of coastline and in total look after 617,500 acres of countryside, moorland, beaches and coastline. Amongst the historic properties in the Trust’s care are 166 fine houses, 19 castles, 47 industrial monuments and mills, 40 churches and chapels and 35 pubs and inns. The Trust has over 5 million members and 70,000 volunteers. More than 14 million people visit a National Trust ‘pay for entry’ property, while an estimated 50 million visit our open-air properties per year.

2020 is the 125th anniversary of the National Trust. For 125 years each generation has come together to look after the nation’s places, for everyone. We believe this is something to celebrate. An organisation as relevant today as in 1895. Our founders recognised the importance of places for people. As Octavia Hill put it: “The need of quiet, the need of air, and I believe the sight of sky and of things growing, seem human needs, common to all”. Busy lives, urbanisation and increasingly digital living mean it can be difficult to have some of those human needs met, and our mission is as important now as it was when the National Trust was founded.
About Stowe
Stowe is a 250 acre landscape garden outside the town of Buckingham. Commissioned by Lord Cobham, it is now known as the birthplace of the English Landscape Garden movement. The most prestigious designers, gardeners and architects of the eighteenth century, including William Kent, Charles Bridgeman, and Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown all worked at Stowe. The New Inn, now our visitor centre, was built by Lord Cobham in 1717 to welcome visitors to Stowe, a very early tourist attraction.

Stowe’s spirit of place
“Gardening on the grandest scale”
Stowe is truly a garden of international significance where the art form of landscape gardening was pioneered and developed. Originally created in the eighteenth century as a consequence of wealth and privilege, full of meaning and shaped by political rivalries and influence, its intriguing history is interwoven with stories of its creation, extravagance, revival and restoration. Considered to be the epitome of good taste, Stowe inspired the foremost innovative, intellectual and creative minds of the time, indeed the ‘gardening glitterati’. As one of the earliest tourist attractions Stowe became a cultural point of reference commanding much attention and visitors today continue to walk in the footsteps of the many early tourists who stayed at New Inn to marvel at the wonder of this monumental landscape.

Lord Cobham and Earl Temple’s gardens were designed to make a statement. With Bridgeman’s early layout, Kent’s Rococo scenery and majestic architectural features and with the Grecian Valley amongst Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown’s most influential pieces of work; Stowe today provides a fascinating combination that can be found in no other single place.

There are many different layers of Stowe to unwrap from being overwhelmed by its awe inspiring splendour and scale to delving into the intriguing journey of its history, its meaning and the people who have influenced and shaped this grandest of gardens.

Stowe’s Vision: “Stowe will become a cultural destination where everyone feels welcome. The vast garden will offer a strong connection with the outdoors and the universal themes in its design will spark imagination, ignite creativity and provoke thought, promoting health and wellbeing and a sense of belonging for current and new audiences.”

Residency Brief
The National Trust is seeking applications for a creative residency during 2020. The focus of the residency is on wellbeing and water in the landscape garden. Any appropriate art form will therefore be considered.

This project will be socially engaged, and the creative practitioner will co-create with community partners. We would like the work to reach out into the communities around us, particular into nearby urban centres (Banbury and Milton Keynes). We would expect the creative practitioner to help us explore ways of doing this. The project will enhance the wellbeing of people with various levels of mental health need.
NB Artists will not be expected to act as mental health professionals or have any relevant skills or experience as we will be working with our mental health partner organisations and drawing on their expertise.

Potential partner organisations joined us for a concept development day, where they shared their immediate responses to developing a creative wellbeing commission. For further information about the thoughts from that day please see our document of workshop notes attached.

**Residency budget**
The fee will cover the artist's bursary and production budget, including but not limited to any travel and accommodation, equipment, software, materials and technical support required by the resident. We have £18,000 allocated funding but we are planning to submit an Arts Council England funding application to scale up this project for increased impact.

**The aims of the project, delivered in collaboration with NT staff and volunteers, are to:**
1. Explore the sensory power and potential health and wellbeing benefits of water at Stowe
2. Enable people to come away from Stowe, regardless of who they are, with a restored feeling of wellbeing
3. Evoke an emotional response, provoke thought and reflect the connection to water that people experience not only at Stowe but in their own communities
4. Promote understanding of the design and historic and contemporary functions of the water system
5. Reflect on the potential of creative interventions in the landscape, and inform future programming and planning
6. To inspire other National Trust places.

**The expectations of the artist are:**
- To take an active role in planning the creative process
- Co-create the artwork with community groups in order to:
  - achieve a connection to Stowe and wellbeing benefits for the participants
  - ensure the final visitor experience is relevant to new audiences
- Deliver public engagement activities during the residency (e.g. talks, seminars, open studios, workshops, performances)
- Have regular development discussion with the property team
- Develop and deliver a new body of work to be enjoyed by visitors to Stowe
- Develop and deliver creative ways to take the work beyond Stowe boundaries
- To understand and respect the historic significances and conservation needs of Stowe.

**Selection criteria**
Candidates must demonstrate:
- Creative originality and professionalism in their work
- A demonstrable track record of exhibitions, commissions and other public forms of presentation of their work
- A desire to work with the community groups as part of their creative practice, and an understanding of socially engaged practice
- A understanding and appreciation of the sensory power and potential health and wellbeing benefits of water
- A willingness to work in such a way that respects the historic significances and conservation needs of Stowe

Application process

- Applicants are required to submit a proposal along with a CV including relevant examples of their work by 18th August 2019.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview on 30th August 2019. Shortlisting will be conducted in line with our selection criteria.
- Free entry to the gardens at Stowe can be arranged upon request for applicants who are not National Trust members and would like to visit the site before submitting their proposal or attending interview.
- We will pay expenses of up to £100 all-inclusive for candidates invited to interview.

We expect artwork to be in place for visitors from May 2020.

What the proposal should include:

- A suggested title with the strapline “still waters run deep”
- A 250 word overview of your idea
- A topline draft working schedule which outlines how you intend to structure your time
- A budget breakdown
- Safeguarding and ethical considerations that underpin your work
- How your project will scale dependent on funding that may become available

All documents should be in PDF format and emailed to getinvolved.stowe@nationaltrust.org.uk by 18th August 2019.
APPENDIX: Concept Development Day – Water Art 2020
10th May 2019 – Stowe, Western Garden and New Inn

Attendees:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Stowe Visitor Experience Manager (Facilitator)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Stowe Transformation Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Stowe Senior Visitor Experience Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Stowe Volunteering &amp; Participation Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisa</td>
<td>Stowe Assistant Curator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>Stowe Senior Marketing &amp; Communications Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>National Trust National Grants Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Buckinghamshire Mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Oxfordshire Mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Oxfordshire Mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athina</td>
<td>Buckingham Canal Society</td>
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<td>Jo</td>
<td>Banbury Museum</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
<td>The Mill Arts Centre</td>
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Agenda:

1. Arrival & Welcome
2. Introductory presentation – Louisa
3. Walk in Western Garden
4. Sensory mapping – noting their favourite moments/experiences
5. Group discussion #1:
   a. What is the most important story or message about Stowe that we want to communicate through this artwork?
   b. What would we want someone to write on Tripadvisor after visiting this installation?
   c. Which art form would work best for this programme and why? (Sculpture, music/sound installation, photography, other..?)
   d. How would this appeal to your audiences?
6. Group discussion #2:
   a. How would the ideas from another group appeal to your audiences?
   b. How can we take any of these ideas out of Stowe as a form of outreach? Where? Who to?
7. Questions and next steps - Anne
   a. Their own interest in being involved
   b. Consultation on the artist brief itself
   c. Co-selection of artist
   d. Groups working with artist going forward

Flip chart notes:

Key Stories/Messages/Themes

- Peace, Tranquillity, Mindfulness, Stillness, Escapism
- How the water links together and unites
• How the bodies of water here can relate to places near you
• The history of the design and purpose of the gardens
• Nature
• Water as an adventure
• Lifecycles
• Heart of the landscape; man controlling nature; connection
• Changing perspectives; different emotional responses
• Contrast between open expanses and feeling vulnerable and the small to being protected by sheltered trees
• Curiosity & mystery – different paths of discovery and intrigue
• Sense of possibilities – stories of the owners and the behind the construction
• Man and nature in harmony together
• Work involved to keep it as beautiful as it is – groundsmen/gardeners
• Designed and carefully managed
• Different spaces and sounds – and new discoveries and surprises
• Shifts in focus, scale and contrast

People leave feeling:
• Inspired
• Rejuvenated – ‘spa experience’
• Whatever mood or space you are in you’ll leave with a smile and improved wellbeing
• Health benefits
• Surprise to find this at a NT place
• The value and support offered by Stowe
• It was immersive
• Brings people together
• It was understandable and not complex
• Distracted, sense of calm/relaxation, sense of connection, reflection

Examples of possible art forms:
• Commissioned music inspired by the grounds (sampling the sounds) – can also be taken offsite or be accessible
• Different uses of the water from active to tranquil days/times
• Musicians placed around gardens – speakers concealed in trees etc.
• Model boats
• Light - at night, and light with sculpture - reflection of day light from water and glass and mirrors etc.
• Projections in temples
• Inflatables
• Water powered musical instrument
• Aeolian harp
• Immersive music/sound installation, projections
• Combination of artwork/sculptures and installations
• Getting as close as you can to the water – interaction with it
• Framing of nature by manmade structures
• Very modern plastic – incongruous intervention
• Triggering lights/music
• Therapeutic activities in response to artwork – fishing, photography, drawing, poetry
• Temples of contemplation – places/spaces to think
• Programme layer on top of artwork – mediation, yoga, music performances etc.
• Quotes/phrases that prompt you to stop and pause for thought

Audience’s needs:
• Considerations for safeguarding – particularly on water
• Practical activities
• Together with other people
• Simplicity for mental health
• High noise or night-time not great for severe mental health
• Being in the moment
• Family time
• 5 ways to wellbeing
• Sensory benefits
• Benefits of nature and outdoors
• Reflection physical and mental
• Regaining a sense of self
• Humour always helps
• Something that they can share on social media – something new
• Talking piece – prompt conversations
• Creating memories

Outreach ideas:
• Something to take away for use as a mental health tool
• A way of thinking that can be prompted
• A piece of music
• Virtual reality
• Photography – possibly competition for calendar to take message home, or photos to be displayed in locations offsite