

Brief for artist

Stourhead 75 (working title), phase 1 2021

Stourhead, Wiltshire, National Trust and Creativity Works, Somerset

Stourhead, Creativity Works and Well Wessex are looking for a creative practitioner to develop a new outdoor visual arts installation based at Stourhead which will be built and shaped through community participation. The work will commemorate 75 years since Stourhead was gifted to the National Trust and will respond to community ideas about the relationship between wellbeing and nature. The work will be created in a series of digital and live workshops for local audiences who have experienced isolation as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Ideas coming out of the community workshops will inform the content and design of a digital resource which enable wider participation with the Spirit of Stourhead.



National Trust context for the project

2021 marks 75 years since Stourhead was gifted to the National Trust. Since then, the landscape has welcomed visitors of all ages for walks, picnics, and games, for first steps and first dates, for proposals, weddings, ash scatterings and memorials. For 75 years, Stourhead has been a place where people can experience the height of joy or find consolation in their sorrow.

In 2020, we all lived through unforeseen challenges to our wellbeing in the face of the global pandemic, challenges such as isolation, loneliness, uncertainty, frustration, and fear. Nature and the inevitability of the changing seasons have offered a grounding sense of certainty and hope, and we continue to turn to local landscapes for space and support.

Stourhead 75 seeks to capture a snapshot of the relationship between wellbeing and nature at this moment in time. This anniversary project aims to celebrate the things we cherish the

most about the green spaces, like Stourhead, that have been there for us during this extraordinary time.

We will use this project to look outwards, forming new relationships in our community and a better understanding of who our local audience are and what they value most about Stourhead. The project will allow us to re-engage our internal community of staff, volunteers and residents, who have been isolated and disconnected from Stourhead during lockdown. This work and associated activity will enable us to come together to talk, make and celebrate the ideas that we stand for as a team. Events and interpretation in the property's visitor engagement programme will also align with the project themes (nature and wellbeing). Phase 2 of the project, which is dependent upon successful funding applications, will look to enrich the programme with a wider variety of engagement opportunities that will allow Stourhead visitors to contribute directly to the overall work, just like the community participants in phase 1. Widespread participation will see the final installation grow in size and change in nature over time.

About the National Trust and Stourhead

The National Trust is the largest conservation charity in Europe. We're also a charity and a membership organisation for heritage conservation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We protect and care for places so that people and nature can thrive. On behalf of the nation, we care for:

- Over 780 miles of coastline
- More than 250,000 hectares of land
- Over 500 historic houses, castles, parks, and gardens
- Nearly one million works of art

Built in the early 18th century at the start of the English Landscape Movement, Stourhead has since been described as 'a living work of art'. The landscape garden was the vision of Henry Hoare II, known affectionately as Henry 'the Magnificent' for the scale of his ideas and achievements. With hills, water and classical architecture overlaid by an international collection of champion trees and shrubs, Stourhead's landscape conveys a powerful spirit of place. Meandering paths offer vistas through trees to classical temples and surprises at every turn. Henry II was one of a small group of early eighteenth-century 'gentleman gardeners' using their acres to create a personal landscape which expressed their hopes and beliefs about the world and their journey through it. His vision, recreating a classical landscape, depended on water. The centre piece of the garden at Stourhead is the lake, which dictates the path you take and the views you enjoy.

For the past 75 years, National Trust visitors have made profound personal connections to the Stourhead landscape, as people have for centuries. The following extract from Stourhead's spirit of place statement describes its impact:

Spending time within this living work of art inspires body, mind, and spirit, offers light and shade, and leads us on and out along many paths. It is a journey for all that engages the senses, steadies the soul, and restores the spirit.

This new anniversary work seeks to capture the personal connections people have with Stourhead and green spaces like it, to demonstrate the vital importance of such natural spaces during such extraordinary and challenging times.

Contemporary art at Stourhead

The National Trust team at Stourhead seek to continue the tradition of arts patronage set out by the Hoare family. In the last decade, we have worked with a variety of creative practitioners to commission new works inspired by Stourhead as part of the National Trust New Arts project. Examples include:

Nearness 2019, by Sam Smith –

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/nearness-by-artist-sam-smith>

Caprice 2018, by Anouk Mercier -

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/caprice>

'*Why do objects matter?*' will re-open in the house from May (dependent on restrictions) and features the works several paper artists

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/why-objects-matter>

In 2017 The Scaptors used recycled materials to create installations in commemoration of the life of Harry Hoare, who died during the First World War.

<http://scaptors.blogspot.com/p/stourhead-ww1.html>



Caprice by Anouk Mercier (left) and *Nearness* by Sam Smith (right)

About Creativity Works

We are a registered charity based in Radstock in Bath and North East Somerset and have been since 2012, part of Arts Council England's national portfolio of funded organisations.

The strength of our work lies in the fact that it is participant driven. We are responsive, flexible, and creative and encourage participants to actively shape and co-design their own creative learning journey. Participants explore, develop, and grow due to their own imagination, invention and insight, supported and facilitated by our expertise: the quality of

our artists, the experience and skills of our staff, and through seeking and maintaining mutually beneficial, strong partnerships.

We partner with a wide range of cross-sector partners, including health, local authorities, museums and cultural organisations, community development and voluntary partners to deliver the following:

- Creative activities, courses and projects designed for a diverse range of communities and groups, including those living with poor mental health, young people and families and adults with learning disabilities
- We support and develop the work of our artists and creatives and contribute to the national research and debate concerning Socially Engaged Arts
- We deliver social prescribing and creative commissions
- We contribute to the ecology and landscape of the arts, health, and community sectors on a local, regional, and national scale through the dissemination of our work and through partnership development with the health sector
- We use our expertise to lobby and advocate for policy change and evidence the benefits and social impact around an arts intervention in health and wellbeing

Well Wessex

Is a collaboration of four compassionate mental health organisations in Somerset (specifically Wincanton, Chard, Radstock and Wells). Together we share knowledge of how to improve wellbeing for a wide range of people, including our isolated communities, younger people, people living with dementia and carers. As part of this commission we will invite experiences and ideas from a wide range of user and community groups within the Well Wessex partnership to work with the artist to inform the final piece.

How do we see it working?

We're imagining a large work of visual art comprised of hundreds of individual creations handmade by community participants. We will engage participants through a small series of workshops (in phase 1) and more widely through a digital resource that will show them how to make their own personal contributions to the final artwork (in phase 2). The installation will grow over time as participation widens through Stourhead's public engagement programme. It will be sited in the landscape garden in a location approved by the Stourhead garden team.

The selected artist, Creativity Works and Well Wessex partners will visit Stourhead for a 'visioning day' to explore the site and to meet the Stourhead team. In a workshop setting, we'll collaborate to discuss ideas for the look of the overall work and the design for the individual pieces. This initial workshop will involve staff and volunteers from across the property, and discussions should explore their personal experiences during the pandemic,

their thoughts on the links between wellbeing and the Stourhead landscape and creative ideas drawn from Stourhead's spirit of place.

Creativity Works and Well Wessex will manage engagement with the groups selected for the community workshops – we are envisaging a total of 10 workshops with different groups with a maximum of up to 20 participants in each. These groups will include adults and young people who have faced social isolation and may have mental health challenges. The artist will be supported in these groups by a mental health support worker and an assistant. The community workshops will take place online via zoom or at Stourhead if social distancing restrictions allow. The artist will work with Creativity Works and Well Wessex to develop the structure and content for these workshops. Workshops will result in individual creative contributions to the final work and personal stories participants are willing to share more widely.

With the artist's input, the Stourhead team will use the ideas coming out of the community workshops to design a digital resource that will show people how to create their own contributions to the final installation using recycled materials found at home. The digital resource will act as an open invitation to a wider audience to take part in the project. They'll be encouraged to send in their contributions or to visit Stourhead to add their contribution to the site-specific installation.

At the end of phase 1, the artist will oversee the installation of the work at Stourhead with the support of the project volunteers and the Stourhead team. The installation could be ground-based but sited on an incline for dramatic impact at a distance and affordable to install.

The work will launch on August 03 at Stourhead's 75th anniversary party and this date will also see the launch of the digital resource inviting wider participation. The final work will need to be weatherproof, robust and safe for public display with ideally limited maintenance needed.

Please see the appendix titled 'Conditions for installation' for more detailed information about dos and don'ts in the landscape garden.

What can you expect from the partners?

Stourhead team

- Stourhead will recruit a pool of volunteers who will act as champions for the project, providing support with workshop delivery, interpretation, evaluation, and marketing. We would ideally like these volunteers to be trained to offer workshops to the wider Stourhead team
- Stourhead will pay for and appoint a designer to draw up the digital resource that will show participants how to create their own contributions to the final installation

- The Stourhead team will develop a marketing plan using property-specific channels, while also working with our regional and central office colleagues to promote the impact of the project and the invitation for participation as widely as possible
- Advising and supporting the artist on the final install and the sensitivity of the landscape, undertaking risk assessment, and leading on the public's Health and Safety
- Stourhead will cover all costs of any materials needed for the prep and installation of the artwork (not including materials needed to create individual contributions)
- The Stourhead team will undertake any necessary ongoing maintenance needs that are easily fixed without the technical expertise of the artist or specialist equipment
- Lead alongside Creativity Works and Well Wessex the evaluation of the commission and community engagement

Creativity Works and Well Wessex partnership

- Write artist brief and recruit, contract and pay the artist
- Project manage the overall project and liaise with Stourhead
- Act as the artist's first point of contact for any questions/planning and scheduling
- Source the community groups; co-ordinate and support the 10 community workshops, including 1 for Stourhead staff/volunteers alongside the artist
- Provide mental health support workers and assistants in the workshops, support the collation of creative ideas/stories from the community
- Lead alongside Stourhead the evaluation of the commission and community engagement

Timeline 2021

28 April – deadline to receive artist applications

10 May – artists interviews

26 May – Visioning workshop at Stourhead, in liaison with artist the community workshops are scheduled, project volunteers recruited at Stourhead

June – July – Community workshops take place, digital resource is developed, stories and evaluation collected

June – July – Artist draws together content for digital resource with support from project volunteers and shares with Stourhead

Late July – Artist and project volunteers assemble all creative contributions to make the final work

August 03 – The work launches to the public alongside the digital resource inviting wider participation

September – Spring 2022 – Stourhead visitor engagement programme continues to invite participation onsite through events and activities, the work continues to grow

Fee

The artist fee is £6,500 inclusive of VAT and is based on £250 per day for 25 days work leaving £250 for travel/recycled workshop material costs.

This fee will cover the following: time for research and development, leading up to 10 workshops with the community groups and Stourhead staff/volunteers, using that source material to create an overall artistic concept for the final piece, supporting the creation of the digital resource, liaison with Stourhead and Creativity Works/Well Wessex, supporting the installation and writing a maintenance plan, contributing to evaluation of the commission with the partners.

Key Dates

Deadline for artist proposals – 28 April

Interviews for short-listed artists – 10 May

Visioning Day at Stourhead – 26 May

How to apply

If you want an informal chat about the commission, please contact Philippa Forsey on Philippa@creativityworks.org.uk or if you wish to arrange a site visit to Stourhead in advance of applying, please contact the National Trust, Camilla Forest on Camilla.Forest@nationaltrust.org.uk

Please send a proposal to Creativity Works by 5pm on the 28 April 2021.

The proposal should be no longer than 2 sides of A4 and include the following:

- Images/web links to previous work
- What interests you about this proposal and a suggested approach/methodology to completing the commission
- How your previous skills and experience match the requirements of the brief
- Any current commitments which may affect the proposed timescale

Artist requirements

- Knowledge and a commitment to co-producing creative ideas with community participants

- Experience of working with vulnerable adults and young people and adults with mental health challenges
- Ability to take source material from community workshops and develop into a public art installation
- Experience of working in sensitive, protected landscapes and/or working in the public realm and/or developing site specific installations
- Experience of working with a variety of different stakeholders, preferably on a partnership project
- Ability to consolidate the learning and experience from community workshops to share with Stourhead for the digital engagement resource
- Availability to deliver the project requirements at different times of the day and evening and /or weekends

Desirable qualities

We're looking for someone who...

- Has an appreciation for (and is sensitive to) the conservation of a grade 1 listed landscape
- Can draw inspiration from the spirit of a place like Stourhead
- Has the confidence to lead workshops and speak compellingly about the creative vision of the project using an online platform if necessary
- Is sociable and inclusive and knows how to draw a variety of different people into the creative process
- Has compassion and understanding for people who have or are experiencing challenging circumstances
- Has awareness and understanding of the need for boundaries and confidentiality
- Committed and reliable
- Has good communication skills and the ability to listen to feedback
- Documents relevant observations from the process and community sessions to feed into sharing for the digital resource
- Can work to the project timeline and final event 3rd August which will showcase the art installation and launch the digital resource to the wider public
- Can work with Creativity Works policies including: confidentiality, IT acceptable use policy, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection policy, Equalities and Diversity policy.