Radar

MK Gallery

Branching Out artist commission opportunity: Radar and MK Gallery

Radar and MK Gallery seek to commission an artist to deliver a programme of five creative workshops and lead on the creation of a small temporary display within MK Gallery's Project Space. The workshops are to take place on dates agreed with the artist within May 2023 and the display will be presented as part of a public event on 2 June 2023.

People form strong emotional connections with trees and woodlands which contribute to - and emerge from - a rich body of myths, folklore and other symbolic associations in contemporary and traditional culture. Taking this as a point of departure, the workshops might explore some existing histories and mythologies connected to the treescapes of Milton Keynes (with support from the research team - see below), and/or seek to develop new ones. The programme is also an opportunity to critically explore ideas around value.

This commission stems from a major research project called Branching Out, which aims to account for the symbolic, heritage, spiritual, social, and cultural values of treescapes. Most studies on urban trees fail to account for their wider social and cultural values, relying instead on financialised metrics to account for value. Branching Out researchers will be working with citizens and stakeholders to develop a holistic value framework, using co-production and storytelling research methods to capture meanings and values associated with past, present and future trees. This data will form the basis of new maps which offer a new way to look at Milton Keynes' treescapes, revealing the social and cultural values which residents ascribe to the landscape. Branching Out is based between Loughborough University, The Open University and University of York. The commissioned artist will have the opportunity to engage with researchers as part of the process of developing their approach.

The commissioned artist will be paid a combined fee and materials budget of £5000.

Research and project teams

The research project is led by Professor Mike Wilson, Director of the Storytelling Academy at Loughborough University, with partners from the Open University (name), University of York, Forest Research and Treezilla. Radar and MK Gallery are working with the Milton Keynes Parks Trust, who along with MK Gallery will be sharing the opportunity to participate in the workshops with their networks.

Possible approaches

The commissioned artist should have experience of leading workshops and of supporting the creativity of others, at the same time as producing work which sets a framework for that collective activity. The selected artist might not have a visual arts specialism; the research project is rooted in storytelling and an artist working in text, language and writing in expanded forms could be well suited, as could an artist working in sound or music. The artist will work with Radar and MK Gallery staff to develop a concept for the workshops and display.

Accessibility

We would be happy to work with artist access statements, and to answer any questions you may have at any stage of the process. We have a £500 accessibility budget to support access needs.

Schedule

First meeting with researchers and project team: March 2023
Workshop programme: May 2023
Display launch: 2 June 2023, running to 4 June 2023

How to apply

Please supply images of up to five artworks, either formatted as JPEGS no larger than 1MB each, or if submitting videos please send links to view rather than files. To accompany the examples of your artwork, please send us a brief expression of interest, in either text form (no more than 300 words) or video (no longer than 2:30 minutes), explaining what interests you about the project, and the approach you might take. We would actively encourage this approach being adapted following discussion with the research team. Please send your application, and/or direct any questions, to Radar's Producer, Laura Purseglove, l.purseglove@lboro.ac.uk by Sunday 5 March 2023.

Notes: Radar

Radar is a commissioning and research programme based at Loughborough University which creates opportunities for artists to work in collaboration with academic researchers. Radar produces a programme of commissions and critical debate that invites artists to engage with research and develop new work. Our projects often engage with the contexts of our two campuses; in Loughborough, East Midlands, and East London, or are hosted by institutional partners. The work we produce is performative, participatory, process based and public. Radar projects are cross disciplinary and favour collaborative models which seek to advance the ways in which we think about research.

MK Gallery

MK Gallery is a locally embedded, nationally significant cultural hub located in central Milton Keynes. Its mission is to provide access to high quality and innovative exhibitions and cultural programmes that bring people and communities together to create, participate and debate. By championing excellence, we seek to raise ambition and build confidence.

This project is supported by the MK Community Foundation