

Returning to the Philosophers' Table

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Open-call for artists of any discipline

Summary

Returning to the Philosophers' Table is an integrated arts project that will recreate the pre-disciplinary environment of the early Literary and Philosophical Society via cross-disciplinary collaborations and art exhibitions. We will further trace the history of the North East via objects gifted to Society charting the multidirectional trajectory each has taken and establish its role in the wider cultural landscape. The events and exhibitions will take place at the Lit and Phil Library and at the Gallery of Wonder: the Great North Museum in June 2013 as part of the festival of the North East.

Opportunities

Ten selected artists will be given rare behind the scenes access to the Lit and Phil, the Great North Museum and its archive stores, the Mining Institute and other venues across Newcastle to see the original objects which were gifted to the society and uncover their narratives. The artists will be invited to art events and workshops that will bring together wide variety of experts – academics, curators, scientists, keepers of museum collections and more – setting the stage for further collaborations and discussions. This first stage will start February 25th.

The artists then will be given the opportunity to apply for one of three bursaries to make artwork responding to the objects and stories behind them. The selected artists will be given further access to the objects, research and venues. The resultant artwork will be exhibited at the Lit and Phil and at the Gallery of Wonder: GNM and featured during discussion events and performances during the Festival of North East June 2013. The exhibitions will have a high profile with interest and engagement coming from a wide audience.

The partners in this project are the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Society of Antiquaries Newcastle, the Mining Institute, the Natural History Society of Northumberland, the North East Photography Network, the University of Newcastle, the Gallery of Wonder and Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. It is funded by the Arts Council England.

Artist criteria

- Artists working across all disciplines are welcome to apply.
- Applicants must have an established practice with a track record of delivering critically engaging work. We are not currently working with undergraduates but there will be opportunities for students during June 2013.
- Applicants should have an interest in working in collaboration.
- A history of creating site-specific work in a living environment would be helpful but is not crucial.

Context

The Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne is where it all began. What started as a conversation club, a place to share ideas, grew to seed many of the institutions in the North East. Leading minds began meeting in 1793 to discuss a wide ranging of topics and express their interest in furthering knowledge and learning in the region. Many members and admirers gifted the society a wide variety of objects; birds shot, plants grown, fossils found, a mummy unearthed and creatures not yet defined to name just a few. Some objects were domestic curiosities and artifacts while others found their way to Newcastle from a strange and mysterious world still uncategorized. Along with these objects came the tools needed to

understand them such as scientific instruments and volumes written of the research already done. These objects first formed the Lit and Phil Curiosa/Newcastle Museum and later went on to seed the Newcastle Antiquarian Society and Natural History Society Northumbria's collection in the Great North Museum, The Mining Institute, The Discovery Museum, Newcastle University, Durham University School of Medicine and many more institutions.

We will be exploring the way the objects represented fields of study and how these cross-disciplinary forms of thinking were allowed to coexist and cross-pollinate. It is this raw hunger for knowledge, exposure to objects and research from different disciplines and this lack of categorization that that created environment that birthed the first light bulb, two universities and numerous museums. By studying this environment, recreating it via an integrated multidisciplinary exhibition and holding relating discussions we will demonstrate how learning and advancement can be achieved through an inclusive dialogue.

More information about the Literary and Philosophical Society can be found at www.litandphil.org.

Aims of the project

- Recreate the pre-disciplinary environment of the early Literary and Philosophical Society via an integrated art intervention in the Lit and Phil library to test the premise that it is artists who are ushering in the post-disciplinary age.
- Create an inclusive dialogue with artists, experts and scientists resulting in mutually beneficial partnerships and further discovery.
- Explore art's relationship with science while demonstrating the truth that art's role is not merely to illustrate scientific theory but to forge new ground and result in new understanding.

Application process

Please submit a statement of interest to admin@philosopherstable.org explaining why this project is of interest to you and relevant to your practice. Please include information about current practice and past experience. Feel free to email with questions or if you wish to discuss the project. Maximum 250 words. Please send up to 3 images (small files) or links to relevant work.

Artists will be chosen by a curatorial board comprised of the curator of the Gallery of Wonder and director of the MFA at Newcastle University Irene Brown, creative producer of the North East Photography Network Amanda Ritson, Chair of the Lit and Phil and theoretical physicist Paul Gailiunas as well as the project's creator and lead artist Dawn Felicia Knox.

More information can be found at www.philosopherstable.org

Deadline February 15th

First event will be on Monday February 25th

