

SITUATIONS

Summer opportunity to work with Situations on the Cultural Olympiad project – Nowhereisland

Application Details

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1. Background to Situations

Situations is a commissioning and research programme (currently based in the Faculty of Creative Arts, Humanities and Education at the University of the West of England). The programme is dedicated to the commissioning of outstanding artists' projects, often outside conventional gallery or museum contexts, which open up new forms of public engagement with contemporary art. We are also committed to placing our own projects within a wider international context through the development and dissemination of internationally significant research in contemporary art and commissioning.

Situations was initiated in October 2003 by Claire Doherty, Senior Research Fellow in Fine Art at UWE. From the start, the programme's guiding principles have been to combine a commissioning agency model with the rigour of an academic research programme. Situations addresses a broad range of publics through its work, with a particular emphasis on widening participation, working with external organisations to develop new audiences for contemporary art.

An additional aim of the programme is to develop a significant body of knowledge on visual arts commissioning, situation and place-specific art practices published through our online resource of edited transcripts, bibliographic and biographical material and books and through external lectures, teaching and participation in national and international conferences.

In 2009, Claire Doherty, was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Fund grant to expand and develop Situations over the next three years. At the heart of this expansion is the commissioning of a new series of public art works and events. Situations is leading the production of Alex Hartley's *Nowhereisland*, which is the south west region's Artists Taking the Lead London 2012 Cultural Olympiad project. The project will consist of a large-scale island sculpture and nation – *Nowhereisland*, which will journey around the south west coast of England during summer 2012. In the year leading up to the south west journey an engagement programme is working with partners across the region to raise awareness of and discuss issues connected with the project. *Nowhereisland* will be accompanied by a land-based vehicle, *The Embassy*, at all its stops on the south west journey.

2. Background to Nowhereisland

Nowhereisland is an art project which will represent the South West region as part of Artists Taking the Lead, one of the major projects of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. In 2004, artist Alex Hartley discovered an island in the High Arctic

archipelago of Svalbard, whilst on the Cape Farewell expedition. The island revealed itself from within the melting ice of a retreating glacier and Alex was the first human to ever stand on it and with the help of the Norwegian Polar Institute, the island, named Nyskjaeret, is now included on all maps and charts subsequent to its discovery.

Alex returned to Nyskjaeret in September 2011, with an expedition team. There they retrieved material to make the new nation of Nowhereisland, sailed to International Waters and declared the new nation on 20 September.

From 25 July – 9 September 2012 Nowhereisland will tour the coast of south west England, beginning in Weymouth at the opening of the Olympic sailing events, continuing round the coast and ending in Bristol. Along the way, Nowhereisland will stop at Exmouth, Plymouth, Mevagissey, Newquay, Ilfracombe and Bristol and at each port it will be accompanied by The Embassy.

At the heart of the art project is the story of Nowhereisland, its journey from the Arctic to the coast of south west England, its formation as a nation, its material strangeness akin to a piece of moon rock, its capacity to gather new citizens and to inspire tales of those who choose to follow its epic journey.

3. Nowhereisland Engagement Programme

The Nowhereisland engagement programme is already underway. It is led by Michael Prior, Associate Curator (Engagement) at Situations and Kim Tilbrook, Artist Educator, who has been part of the team since June 2011. Kim will lead The Embassy team and has already been working with Alex and Michael to develop The Embassy. She was also part of the September 2011 expedition team and has been supporting two of the Nowhereisland school partners.

The overall Nowhereisland engagement programme aims to encourage:

Taking part: supporting audiences to access information and to become actively involved in the project through attending activities, events, accessing interpretative material, and actively using the website and associated social media;

Discussion: encouraging questioning and researching about the ideas that are part of Nowhereisland, from its High Arctic origins, to nationhood and citizenship;

Forming temporary communities: encouraging active discussion and sharing of experiences about Nowhereisland through social media and participatory events creating a long---lasting legacy for the project;

New collaborations: supporting local residents to actively engage in hosting welcoming and farewell events which are fostered through discussion about the particularities and diversity of contemporary life of each port and harbour.

This is being developed in three ways:

Host partners: organisations and networks in each port who are involved in preparing for Nowhereisland's arrival. This is happening in a range of ways, some focusing on welcome events, some, such as in schools, concerned with studying Nowhereisland issues in depth in the lead up to Nowhereisland's arrival. There are also some organisations such as British Red Cross and South West Coast Path that are working with us across the region. In all there are over 20 partner organisations involved.

The Embassy: The land based mobile museum that accompanies Nowhereisland on the south west journey (more details below).

The website: A growing source of information, debate, discussion, ideas for related activities and a diary of the expedition and project's development. This is the main way for people to sign up as citizens and contribute to the Nowhereisland constitution. There is also an online version of The Embassy, divided into themes with images and information on each. The online Embassy has some similar information to the mobile Embassy, but is organised in a different way for easy online access.

4. The Nowhereisland Embassy

The Embassy is a converted 7.5 tonne truck (originally a horsebox). Alex Hartley is converting the truck into a mobile museum, packed full of objects, images and information related to the stories of Nowhereisland. Six themes have been identified to help gather the information, but the layout of The Embassy will encourage people to move between ideas and issues freely and at their own pace. The draws, boxes, cabinets and display boards that present the objects and information will be fixed to the outsides of the truck, creating a spectacular and intriguing sight. The Embassy is a core part of the Nowhereisland project and can be thought of as an artwork in its own right.

The Embassy will operate as an information point, storehouse and platform for both the resource of information and ideas about the project. As well as the Embassy objects and information, Embassy staff will devise and run activities around The Embassy, all designed to engage people in the stories and issues associated with Nowhereisland.

At each port where it stops, the Embassy will be parked at a key vantage point for viewing Nowhereisland. The Embassy will be staffed. The core team consists of the Artist Educator, Kim Tilbrook (appointed in June 2011) and two Embassy Educators. The Embassy will be open 12---5pm each day and staffed by at least 2 of the team at any time. In some ports the Embassy team will be assisted by local volunteers, along with other members of the Situations production team.

The Embassy team will be responsible for the day to day running of the Embassy in each port, supporting people to engage with it, the island and the issues raised by the project. They will also set---up and clear up each day and move the Embassy between from port to port.

5. Details of the Nowhereisland internships

We are offering the opportunity to join the Situations team through a number of volunteer internships in Cornwall or Bristol prior to and during the period of the Nowhereisland journey from 25th July to 9 September. Accommodation may be available in Bristol and Cornwall for the period of the internship, as well as per diem offered towards the cost of subsistence and expenses. The Cornwall internships will require the intern to have a clean driving licence. Length of the internships are open to discussion, but we would prefer to appoint interns for longer periods over the summer, rather than on a short-term weekly basis. The maximum period of the internship would be 8 weeks.

6. Key tasks

We will work with the volunteer interns to draft a work-plan for the internships, making sure that there are plenty of opportunities to gain experience, skills and to network as part of the project. We are looking for interns to assist in the following key tasks:

In Cornwall

- 1) To support the Embassy staff on its journey, working closely with any other volunteer staff and the Situations team, to ensure a welcoming, active and engaging Embassy from 25th July to 9th September 2012

OR

2) To support the Situations team in the preparation and anticipation of the Embassy arriving in ports and harbours prior to the journey period (June-July 2012) and to contribute to evaluation as required throughout the process.

3) To communicate the ideas and stories of Nowhereisland in an accessible, exciting and informative way to a wide range of people visiting Nowhereisland and The Embassy.

4) To assist in supporting local Nowhereisland partners in delivering and publicising their Nowhereisland events.

In Bristol:

1) To assist in the running of the Situations HQ office during the SW journey, in particular to assist the Programme Co-ordinator in the delivery and management of the logistics of the Nowhereisland journey.

2) To prepare for the Bristol-based event exploring the critical consideration of Nowhereisland as a public art project.

9. Application process

Applicants for these internships should provide the following information by a Monday 5th March at 5.00pm.

1. A Current C.V.

2. A covering letter detailing why the applicant would be interested in joining the Nowhereisland team and what skills and experiences they would bring.

3. Names and contact details of two referees.

Applications can be sent by email or post to:

Katie Daley-Yates, Situations Programme Co-ordinator, UWE, Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UX

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