

Bidston Observatory Artistic Research Centre

PROPOSED OUTLINE OF USE FOR BIDSTON OBSERVATORY AS AN ARTISTIC RESEARCH CENTRE, CULTURAL FORUM AND MUSEUM

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We have just taken on Bidston Observatory in order to re-establish the site as one of research. Our intention is to set up a not-for-profit study centre focused on providing artists, writers, academics, performers etc. with a cheap, temporary place to dictate their own methods of work, allowing them to stay and come together to develop projects that are of social value and require time and space in an unpressured environment in order to be realised.

Although the building's practical use to NERC has come to an end, we believe its potential public application isn't over and intend to make the most of its flexible functionality. We hope that in the future spaces that once hosted laboratories and equipment might be re-appropriated towards new purposes (for example as print and editing labs or screening and study rooms) giving the building a new life and it users access to its rich history in a symbiotic fashion. We hope the contextual backdrop will act as both an inspiration to its inhabitants and reminder that the arts are not a singular field and often perform best when used in direct conjunction with other frameworks of thought (scientific, philosophical, environmental).

The overarching model we hope to employ has been three years in development and looks to sit the tools of artistic practice alongside other disciplines. By 'artists' we refer to a range of fields from the performing and musical arts, to visual arts and craft-based practices. We will also be open to a range of academic discourses from politics and social science to philosophy and theory. We have associates working in a diversity of other fields such as therapy and publishing and see the site providing a forum where these different types of knowledge can be shared and extended. Emphasis will be on the site as a space of research and non-commercial creative production, rather than public presentation per se and work there will be self-initiated rather than steered by programming. We hope the site will eventually also be used by university departments and think tanks who wish to focus on specific projects or work with other institutions and organisations without incurring large interdepartmental costs and complication.

Recognising the social significance of the sites heritage we also intend to establish a museum space that makes its history available to the public; we are currently considering how the atrium on the ground floor could be opened up to visitors at set times. We very much hope to involve the various groups associated with Bidston Observatory in the development process enlisting their personal knowledge of the site and its history in order to do the task justice. All three of us come from a fine arts background, and we have extensive knowledge of how to display materials. We also intend to work with a long term friend and past collaborator who heads the creative team and project co-ordination for an international museum design company that specialises the juncture between science and art (HKD).

While we have set intentions for how the building will function and priorities to maintain it as a site for artistic production, we also intend to host public open days, allowing tours of the building on set dates so visitor can see its key features. Though we do not view public events to be our primary focus, as a cultural forum we envision the hosting of open lectures, seminars and workshops will arise as part of the work carried out at the Observatory and that these should attract an external audience to the site.

Viewing ourselves as accountable guardians of the site and its legacy it is also our intention to be based at The Observatory to oversee the projects development and future running. We would obviously like to discuss this proposal with you further and answer any questions you may have regarding the specifics of this project.

Yours Sincerely

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