

PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONING BRIEF

Internal Commission: Call for Expressions of Interest

1. SUMMARY

The University of Reading is seeking Expressions of Interest for the second in a series of public art commissions for campus. The commissions will use **'the library'** as a conceptual, metaphorical, academic, physical, spatial and poetic starting point.

Following an external commission for the first project, this project will be an internal commission, open only to employees of the University of Reading. This includes anyone with a substantive employment contract at the University of Reading as of the deadline, regardless of grade or role. It includes those on fixed-term contracts. Applicants must demonstrate evidence of their experience leading similar projects in the past, as well as support from their Head of School/Department/Function and/or their line manager.

The internal commission will have a total budget of £25,000. This will include all costs, including materials, fabrication, and the employee's time which will be arranged as a buyout (or buy-in) based on their existing contract of employment with the University. The applicant(s) cannot be paid on a freelance basis for this commission.

The output(s) of the commission are not defined in advance and will be articulated by the applicant. Due to the nature of the funding, there should be a tangible and lasting element to the outputs, situated in the University campuses.

In addition to a tangible piece of work, we expect to see evidence of one or more of these outcomes achieved by the commission:

- Traditional research output
- Forging interdisciplinary connections
- Work towards an identified research bid, or part of an existing research project or grant
- Enhance existing or propose new teaching and learning practices
- Contributing to other University activities or priorities, such as public engagement and widening participation

Although not a requirement, we encourage projects that demonstrate collaborative working within the University.

Public Art at the University of Reading sits within the overarching research and development of the Arts Strategy for the University and underpins the core objectives of the strategy, including **transforming the campus environment**, its culture, distinctive identity and sense of place; **engaging new and existing audiences** (staff, students, alumni and members of the public), to encourage participation, and inspire connections between communities; maximising opportunities to **connect with the University's strategic priorities for research and impact, teaching and learning, student experience and widening participation; contributing to reputation** through commissioning art which is bold, distinctive, innovative, challenges perceptions, and invites active discussion.

We are interested in, and welcome, all kinds of public art, and in stretching the definition of what public art might entail. **Commissions must include a lasting and tangible aspect to the work**, enabling University communities to engage thoughtfully and curiously.

'The library' theme has been chosen partly to coincide with the completion of a major renovation of our main Library building and because the library conceptually can serve as:

a metaphor for our collective identity as a place of learning;

a communal space;

a concept with historic and contemporary relevance, responding to change;

integral to democracy and social inclusion;

as a space for imagination, enjoyment, reflection and collective and individual engagement with knowledge and learning.

We will place a strong emphasis on commissioning artwork, and an artistic process, which engages with a broad range of University communities, fosters curiosity and broadens horizons.

We seek short expressions of interest demonstrating original and individual responses to the artist's brief.

Deadline for Expressions of Interest:	10 February 2020
Shortlisted applicants informed:	17 February 2020
Shortlisted projects developed:	17 February-27 March 2020
Final award decision by:	27 March 2020
Project completion and final artwork handed over:	One calendar year from the commissioning date

2. THE COMMISSION

Title

University of Reading – Internal Public Art Commission

Introduction

The University of Reading has a sustained history and reputation in the visual arts, which continues to flourish. It is set across campuses of historical significance and aesthetic value.

The University has an ambition to develop and improve facilities for students, staff and local residents and an intention to be an activist institution and a regional leader in the field of visual arts.

Over recent years, the University has produced new strategies for the development of the campus environment. This includes the Quads Landscape Strategy, Campus Routes Strategy, and a Design Guide for the campus.

The University has also launched an Arts Strategy, which is led by the Arts Strategy Group chaired by John Gibbs, Head of School of Arts and Communication Design. The Arts Strategy is being developed by the University's Arts Development Officer and the public art commissions sit within this overall strategy.

The University is committed to proactively seeking and facilitating opportunities for commissioning public art on campus, and on other spaces linked to the University.

Public art enriches the day-to-day experience of environment. It reflects a new perspective about the places and spaces in which we live, work and travel. It can physically and mentally change our pathways. It can decorate and embellish our surroundings. It can provoke or invite physical, mental and emotional reaction, and invite interaction with friends and strangers.

Art at the University of Reading fosters debate and promotes new connections, by generating conversations between people living on, working at or visiting the campus. High quality and relevant public art will improve the University's public profile, forming a visible statement of intention to invest in creativity and quality of life of the University communities. It will improve and positively impact on the lives of students, staff and the public who access University grounds. It will enhance perceptions of the University and form a geographical and reputational focal point for the institution. It will draw out, highlight or make reference to University history, current research, and future visioning.

At the University of Reading, art is an essential tool in place-making and identity, conveying messages to visitors, students and staff about our values and our past, present and future as a university community.

It has the potential to:

- Enhance our award-winning campus with installations that create a welcoming, public-friendly environment
- Assist with orientation and punctuate cultural and landscape features
- Represent our identity and connect the University with the history and culture of the region
- Encourage emotional, intellectual and financial investment in the University
- Strengthen public engagement and enrich student experience
- Engage audiences with art that raises questions around contemporary global challenges.

It also forges valuable connections between research, impact, teaching and learning, student experience, public engagement, widening participation and museums and collections.

The Public Art Project sits within the overarching research and development of the Arts Strategy for the University and underpins the core objectives of the strategy, including:

- **Transforming the campus environment**, its culture, distinctive identity and sense of place.
- **Engaging new and existing audiences** (staff, students, alumni and members of the public), to encourage participation, and inspire connections between communities.
- Maximising opportunities to **connect with strategic priorities for research and impact, teaching and learning, student experience and widening participation**.
- **Contributing to reputation** through commissioning art which is bold, distinctive, innovative, challenges perceptions, and invites active discussion.
- **Creating a legacy** of public art through permanent displays and temporary/durational pieces.
- **Informing debates** and contributing towards knowledge, understanding and interpretation of public art on a local, regional and national level.

Scope of work

This commission is part of a new commitment to the commissioning of public art on a long-term basis, which will in future be supported by a 'Public Art Endowment' in the form of a levy on major capital works led by the University.

The commissions will be connected by a central theme, which is 'the library'. The University of Reading's Library is currently undergoing a major, £40m refurbishment as part of the wider commitment to capital development of the campus. The Library is situated in the physical and conceptual heart of the University, and all members of the University have a connection to it.

Commissions will realise diverse approaches to the University identity in relation to the theme of 'the library'. We do not envisage that every commission will be physically connected to or visible from the University Library, although the work must take place on University campuses. Ideas related to 'the library' theme might include:

Library as a metaphor for learning, exchange, holding, sharing, curation of, and access to knowledge;

the democracy, organisation, interpretation and archiving of information; historical, current and future uses of libraries;

its meaning, function and place within our University and our communities.

This is not an exhaustive list; we welcome the broadest approaches and interpretations to our theme.

We are interested in and welcome all kinds of public art, and in stretching the definition of what public art might entail.

We will place a strong emphasis on commissioning artwork which engages with a broad range of University communities, fosters curiosity and broadens horizons, within the context of contributing to the forming of the identity of the University both within the institution and beyond it. Public art commissioned by the University will have relevance to aspects of University life, activity, history, site or future vision.

We are interested in all forms and media including temporary, digital or virtual, time-based, or event-based work. However, each commission must include a lasting and tangible aspect to the work, enabling University communities to engage thoughtfully and curiously with questions about our own identity, using the library as a conceptual, metaphorical, academic, physical, spatial and poetic starting point.

Documentation and Archiving:

On handover of the finished commissioned work to the University, it will be incorporated into the University's Art Collection and will be subject to the Art Collection Development Policy. This means that it will be subject to the highest standards of professional collections management and care. The University will also document and archive the commissioning process, within the framework of Collections Policy.

Budget

This commission's total budget available is **£25,000**. This includes paying for the applicants' time in the form of buyout (or buy-in) of time from or in addition to normal contractual duties; materials, fabrication and installation costs, supplier fees, and VAT where applicable.

Timescale

Expressions of Interest should be submitted by 9am on 10 February. The selection committee will make a decision to shortlist up to three projects by 17 February and will work with the shortlisted applicants to develop the proposal and conduct a feasibility process in collaboration with colleagues from HR, Legal and Procurement as well as the applicants' Heads of School/Function. More information on this process will be provided to shortlisted applicants and will depend on the circumstances of the applicant.

We expect to make a final decision by 27 March.

We expect the project to be completed within one calendar year of the project start date. The exact timeline will depend on the project and the individual(s) involved, due to varying demands of any existing contractual obligations over the academic year.

Management and governance

The contract will be managed by the University's Arts Development Officer who is supported by a public art steering group made up of senior staff members of the University, a RUSU representative, and an external member.

As contract manager, the Arts Development Officer will

- Be a link point and facilitate contact between commissioned artists and relevant University contacts
- Provide advice on engagement activities aimed at University communities
- Communicate about and advocate for the commissioned artwork to relevant University staff
- Monitor the progress of the commissioned project

Commissioned artists will be responsible for all aspects of project management for the design development, engagement activities and fabrication and installation of work, including seeking permissions from the University Estates Department and other relevant authorities, securing planning permission where needed, and budget management. This must be allowed for within the overall commission budget.

In order for the commissioned artist to reach a satisfactory final design, they will be required to liaise regularly with the steering group, feasibility group and the project manager.

Agreed milestones and points of review of progress of the design development and project implementation will be put in place to support the project development. This will include an agreed financial management approach relevant to the project.

Final designs for any permanent work will need to be approved by the Public Art Steering Group prior to delivery.

3. ARTIST'S BRIEF

Applicants should propose ideas which provide interesting ways of approaching, conceiving and manifesting the broad concept of the library within university life. While we invite the broadest possible interpretations of the theme, we are looking for thoughtful and relevant approaches which show potential for a lasting inspiration to the communities of the university. Expressions of interest should provide a clear explanation of the place the proposal takes in the narrative of the artist's own artistic practice.

We are interested in all forms of artistic research and working methodologies, and welcome all forms of output including temporary, singular, dispersed or serial artworks. We are particularly open to a wide range of media including digital or virtual, time-based, or event-based work. However, each commission must include a lasting and tangible aspect to the work.

As part of a new commitment to art on campus, it is important that communities of the University (staff, students and visitors) are given the opportunity to meaningfully encounter and engage with the research and design processes. This should also be a consideration for the proposed output of the work.

In summary: commissioned work will

- have relevance to the theme of 'the library'
- have a strong element of engagement with University communities
- have a tangible and lasting element (outputs should last at least one year)
- be a bespoke and unique commission for the University

Outcomes of the commission should also include one or more of the following:

- Traditional research output
- Forging interdisciplinary connections
- Work towards an identified research bid, or part of an existing research project or grant
- Enhance existing or propose new teaching and learning practices
- Contributing to other University activities or priorities, such as public engagement and widening participation

Although not a requirement, we will look favourably on projects which have a collaborative element within the University.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Artist's Submission Requirements

Deadline for receiving Expressions of Interest is 12 noon on Monday 10 February 2020.

Please send your Expression of Interest including the below requirements to Miranda Laurence, Arts Development Officer, m.c.laurence@reading.ac.uk. The Expression of Interest should be in the form of one PDF document.

Statement	No more than two sides of A4 (this includes writing, drawing, and any other type of material you want to include) describing your response to this commission. Please include a one page CV and list of relevant previous projects in addition to the two sides.
Images	6-8 images of your previous work
Budget	A breakdown of costs (these may be estimates), including the costing of your time which will be bought out (or bought in as additional hours) to manage and undertake the project. Other costs may include fabrication, materials, transport, insurance, external suppliers, contractors for installation costs.
References	Details of two referees who can support your application with evidence of experience leading similar projects (including: Name, job title, organisation, email address, phone number)
Letter of Support	Please include a letter of support from your Head of School/Function or line manager, demonstrating that they agree in principle to your participation in this project and to the time commitment you have outlined in your costing breakdown

Commissioning Procedure and Timeline

10 February 2020 Deadline for Applications	Expressions of Interest will be assessed by the Project Manager, an expert steering group member, and an external expert assessor.
17 February 2020 Feasibility of shortlisted projects	Shortlisted applicants will be informed. Together we will conduct additional feasibility work, in collaboration with colleagues from HR, Procurement and Legal, as well as the applicants' Heads of School/Function
27 March 2020	Final award decision

Evaluation Criteria

Quality

Experience

Engagement

Value for Money

Pragmatism & Feasibility

Sustainability

Brief explanation of criteria headings:

Quality

The standard of the work produced in the past, the depth and reflectiveness shown by the proposal, and the uniqueness of the ideas, judged in the context of similar examples nationally and internationally. We will also consider how well artists have responded to the brief and particularly the relevance of their proposed work to the University of Reading context; this includes how successful the project will meet one or more of: traditional research output, teaching and learning practices, interdisciplinarity, wider University activities, collaboration within the University.

Experience

Artists' past experience in conducting similar projects. This includes the quality and standard of prior work as well as the success they have had in producing it to a finished standard, and keeping to budget. We expect artists to have successfully delivered at least two projects of similar or greater scale in the past. Credentials and qualifications as an artist will be taken into account, and the extent to which artists are available for and committed to the project.

Engagement

How artists consider involving all people who may be affected by or interested in the work; the quality and amount of engagement they propose as part of the commission; the amount to which they will integrate 'engagement' work with the artistic development and research process.

Value for Money

How the quality, scope and size of the proposed work (physically and conceptually) is commensurate with the budget, judged in context of similar projects nationally and worldwide.

Pragmatism & Feasibility

How artists show that the proposed work can be delivered within the proposed fee, and how they plan to manage the project thinking through the processes of research, design and fabrication to allow for the highest quality within the given time frame and budget.

We will also look for proposals of work that is feasible to fabricate, safe, and long-lasting with minimal maintenance requirements, and suitable for the location(s) for which it is proposed.

Sustainability

How artists will exploit opportunities to use environmentally sustainable resources, materials and processes to create their proposed work. This would include using locally-sourced materials, and low ecological impact products and processes. We would view favourably attempts to use locally-sourced labour if artists are sub-contracting, for environmentally and economically sustainable practice.

Essential Requirements

Applicants must have a substantive employment contract with the University as of the deadline (10 February 2020) and secure the agreement of their line manager prior to applying.