

LIVING ART PROJECT

Project Brief for Artists: Primary Schools Residency Programme

Wexford County Council (WCC) and Wexford Arts Centre (WAC) in partnership with the Arts Council invite applications from interested artists residing in County Wexford and working in all manner of visual arts disciplines and practices for an innovative collaborative Artist Residency Programme commencing September 2013.

Background

The mission statement of the **Arts Department of Wexford County Council** (WCC) is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of County Wexford by enabling people to engage in high quality arts experiences and by stimulating and supporting standards of excellence among artists in their practice.

Youth Arts is a key context for investment and is prioritised in Wexford County Council's Arts Strategy 2011 – 2015:

'Youth Arts provides opportunities for young people to explore issues of significance and to experience high quality art practices in a safe and appropriate environment. It provides a platform to enhance a young person's development by cultivating individual expression regardless of background.'

Consequently, Wexford County Council has led a pro-active approach to the development of youth arts within Co. Wexford. Programme supports include youth drama, youth film, youth dance and thirteen years of an Art in Education programme called *Art Alongside*.

Following a phase of critical research of its programme, the Arts Department of Wexford County Council is delighted to roll out a new Art in Education programme called the *Living Art Project*. Via the *Living Art Project* an artist devises and implements an enlivened and experiential arts project in collaboration with students and teachers in schools throughout County Wexford. Schools will be asked to contribute 15% to the cost of programme. The additional 85% of the cost of the programme will be funded by the Arts Department of Wexford County Council and the Arts Council.

Wexford County Council, via the Arts Department, has provided funding to **Wexford Arts Centre** (WAC) to deliver this service. WAC has delivered a vibrant arts programme to the Wexford community since 1974. Recognizing the importance of the visual arts within its overall programming, WAC developed a clear identity for its visual arts activity and since 2006, an innovative strategy plan was implemented with emphasis on promoting contemporary art practice and participation. This led to the development of a visual arts policy which has enhanced WAC's profile as a leading visual arts centre on a local and national level, and has enabled the delivery of a multifaceted, high quality exhibition and education programme.

Operating a three-tiered approach to deliver this programme, WAC showcases a diverse range of mediums and, through our auxiliary educational activities, offers audiences the opportunity to become acquainted with the various contexts in which visual artworks are generated. This approach involves providing exhibition opportunities for recent graduates, emerging and established artists, and originating and producing touring exhibitions.

WAC is acutely aware that today more than ever the arts are needed by young people as a forum for expression, communication, exploration, and cultural and historic understanding. Research confirms that arts education strengthens the child's ability to problem solve, enhancing critical reasoning skills with emphasis placed on using imagination and creative thinking to formulate and hone ideas. Learning through the arts can also serve as a crucial motivating tool for children who are not naturally inclined to more academic modes of teaching. Motivation is critical in terms of identifying and attaining both short and long-term goals.

Together with the collaborative nature involved in many art processes, there is potential for the child to develop essential skills in relation to decision-making, leadership and clear communication. Regular participation in the arts also develops self-discipline and the knowledge that to undertake and produce work requires sustained effort and in many cases, multiple revisions.

The *Living Art Project* – Primary School Artist in Residency

In order to further develop existing education programmes, WCC and WAC has consolidated their existing partnership to create the *Living Art Project* which will launch in September 2013 and be an important step in the advancement of the arts in educational contexts.

The *Living Art Project* presents an exciting opportunity for visual artists to develop their personal practice while using this work as a catalyst to fully engage children/adolescents with processes of contemporary visual art practice

In order for an artist to meaningfully engage with the project and school and to allow the time needed for the artist/s and children to develop their practice, under the structure of the *Living Art Project* an Artist Residency Programme will take place in four primary schools in the County beginning September 2013. This residency will prioritize the development of the artist's work within the project and use this development to in turn encourage competent engaging work from the students.

Overview of Application and Selection Process

Artists currently residing in County Wexford are invited to apply for the Artist Residency Programme detailing their work practices and experience in the appropriate area of engagement. *N.B. It is the implicit intention of WCC and WAC to consider artists working in all and every mode of visual artistic practice in order to provide schools with an opportunity to receive tuition in as a wide a variety of art making approaches as possible so as to encourage better understanding of contemporary practice in addition to more established methods of creating art.*

Primary schools will submit expressions of interest in participating in the Artist Residency Programme by providing WAC with an overview of the work undertaken in the area of visual arts education and outlining potential areas of investigation.

Based on the expressions of interest received from each school, artists will be short-listed and selection will be determined by the schools needs. Wexford County Council will pay selected artists a fee for the residency in addition to finances for materials and travel costs.

How the Artist Residency Programme will work

During the primary school Residency Programme, the selected artists will work four hours a week for a total of fifteen weeks over the school year. It is intended that a gallery visit to Wexford Arts Centre and a tour of Wexford County Council's Art Collection will be integrated into this time frame. These visits will include a talk and/or workshop on the artwork in-situ and will serve to instill a sense ownership in these public venues. In order to work with schools in areas of economical or geographical disadvantage, visits may also be facilitated at alternate cultural venues in the County.

Schools will be informed that a teacher/s should be present for all project workshops. It is envisaged that participating schools will nominate at least two class groups to participate in the programme. In collaboration with the school, the artist will decide how to divide his/her workshop time between the classes.

The content of the work with the school will be determined by the artist. However, over the course of the residency, importance will be placed on the learning process with the direction of the programme determined by the response and engagement of all those participating. The eventual outcome or nature of the art work created should manifest as a result of this overall process.

The programme will culminate in an exhibition of artists and students works from all four participating schools at Wexford Arts Centre in April 2014. This is of particular importance as not only do students have the opportunity to benefit from the detailed guidance of such a programme, they also will see their work realised and exhibited in an art gallery context.

Mentorship

In addition to the residency and in order to monitor the effectiveness of the *Living Art Project* on an ongoing basis, and ensure the artist's practice is developing and that the methods and content of engagement are relevant to the students, a mentorship programme whereby an established artist/curator will critique the programme in each school will run alongside each residency. Artists in residence will nominate an independent artist or curator they feel pertinent to their practice as a mentor and WAC will invite this candidate to partake in the programme. The aim of the mentorship is for positive critiquing of the artist's work to occur and for expansion and refinement of the methods of engaging the students throughout each residency. This ensures that the aims of the project are met, the work and processes are of high quality and the dynamic between artist and students is challenging and productive. WAC will co-ordinate four mentoring sessions with each artist.

Application requirements and guidelines for artists

Artists should submit the following information in order to be considered for the residency

1. Full C.V. including qualifications, relevant employment history, experience, details of exhibitions, previous residencies, etc. The C.V. should also include contact details for three referees.
2. A letter of application outlining your artistic practice to date, detailing your competencies and areas of expertise, stating how you feel the residency would enable the growth of your own practice and what you feel you would bring to the residency.
3. A PDF file of images of previous art works, installations, exhibitions, classes, projects which clarify the nature of your practice and support your letter of application. Please caption the images with relevant details: artwork titles, dimensions, medium and year.

Artists Selection Criteria

- Response to Project Brief;
- Artistic excellence in participatory arts and a high standard of work e.g. demonstrated vision for participatory arts projects; a demonstrated understanding of community arts practice;
- An ability to expound their work – an ability to explain how they created their work and why; to develop a narrative about their work and their practice; to articulate the value of the creative process and why the artist creates work;
- Experience or interest in working in the sometimes challenging environment of a classroom setting;
- A willingness to collaborate and an ability to overcome challenges;

Submission deadline, details and additional information

All application information should be sent by email to Catherine Bowe, Visual Arts Manager, Wexford Arts Centre at catherine@wexfordartscentre.ie no later than **5pm Friday 10th May 2013**. Please include *Artist Application, Primary School Residency, Living Art Project* in the subject box of the email. Please note, ONLY email applications will be accepted. Postal applications will not be considered.

Should you require any further information on the *Living Art Project*, the application procedure, specifics of the residency or indeed any other aspects of Wexford Arts Centre's Visual Art Education Programme, please contact Catherine Bowe on 053 9123754 or email catherine@wexfordartscentre.ie or alternatively you can visit www.wexfordartscentre.ie. For further information on Wexford County Council's full arts programme please visit www.wexford.ie/arts or call 053-9196441 / email arts@wexfordcoco.ie.

