

# **Magic Assemblage (working title)**

**Crafts Council Exhibition Proposal: Hull City of Culture 2017**

March 2016

This document outlines a proposal for an exhibition curated and presented by Crafts Council for Hull City of Culture 2017.

*Magic Assemblage* (working title) will explore themes of craft, technology, inventiveness and play through commissions by preeminent British and international makers. From automata to robotics, making to coding, handmade animation to gaming, the show will draw connections between traditional craft practice and the ingenuity that fuels modern engineering and technology.

It will be a show to dazzle and delight audiences of all kinds whilst making a serious case for the value of play in problem solving and creativity, and in being human. We intend to create a spectacular exhibition that not only attracts the attention of art and design experts but also draws in and involves local communities, national and international visitors, and inspires a new generation of makers and inventors.

## **Crafts Council – an introduction**

The Crafts Council is the national lead for craft. Since our foundation in 1971, we have championed making and driven the explosion of public interest in craft. We have welcomed millions of visitors to over 200 exhibitions, established the national Collection of over 1,600 works, helped launch the careers of pre-eminent makers in all disciplines, and promoted craft education to nurture the next generations of makers.

Our exhibitions present the most innovative, exciting work in contemporary craft. Recent shows have focused on the links between craft and performance, film, storytelling and sound. Last year's *Build Your Own*, which opened at FACT, Liverpool, explored themes of community, technology and making through four commissions, including Assemble's *Homework* which went on to be developed in their subsequent Turner-prize winning show.

We have a track record of producing seminal, once-in-a-lifetime exhibitions, from *The Maker's Eye* (1982) to *Power of Making* (2012), which attracted record visitors at the V&A. People talk about these shows years, even decades, later. Our vision for Hull is an iconic exhibition in this tradition, one that excites visitors about the new possibilities for craft and making, one that stays in the memory and transforms lives.

## **City of Culture 2017**

We are inspired by Hull 2017's ambition to create 365 days of transformative, adventurous culture. We want to be a part of it. We build creative partnerships with cities and places around England, and some of our most exciting, memorable work has emerged in this way, including *Build Your Own* (Liverpool and Norwich) and *Lost in Lace* (Birmingham). We've been developing the *Magic Assemblage* exhibition concept for some time, and we think Hull, with its traditions of making and forward-looking embrace of technology, is the perfect place to make it happen.

## **Tell the World**

Ambitious in scope and international in outlook, our show best fits season four, *Tell the World*. It is designed to communicate ingenuity, inventiveness, and quality of making – along with a certain wit and humour. It will surprise and enlighten through spectacular works – drawing connections between traditional making, mechanics, coding, and robotics. Future-focused, and telling the stories of new possibilities it will be a confident expression and part of Hull redefined, where making meets technology.

## **The Exhibition**

This exhibition will tell a story how tech, craft and innovation meet to create opportunity for inspiring, engaging and surprising works.

Works displayed will be both newly commissioned and also include loans from makers, artists, and public and private collections.

The scale of works will vary, as will the media and disciplines, to ensure rhythm and flow for the visitor in the exhibition.

Content will be contemporary and future-looking, presenting examples of work from a range of disciplines, and cross-disciplinary collaborative working, conveying big ideas, with the value of craft knowledge and skills at the heart.

Exhibits will include some that may seem familiar, but also be unexpected offering a wealth of access points into the theme, for local, and visiting audiences, and range in age, background and context for visiting.

A full suite of multi-layered interpretation will be in place including commissioned film/audio content, accessible and informative labelling, online content and pointers to further information.

Exhibition design will be new contracts, working with innovative design studios for both 2D and 3D design elements – and will be fully DDA compliant, and accessible.

## **Indicative makers, artists, works, commissions**

- Laurence Kavanagh
- Conrad Shawcross
- The Brothers Quay - [theguardian.com/film/2015/aug/20/christopher-nolan-quay-brothers-interview-animators](http://theguardian.com/film/2015/aug/20/christopher-nolan-quay-brothers-interview-animators)
- Mikey Please [mikeyplease.co.uk/](http://mikeyplease.co.uk/)
- Jan Svankmajer [jansvankmajer.com](http://jansvankmajer.com)
- Martin Molin - Wintergarten Marble Machine <http://www.wintergatan.net/#/m.m.machine>
- François Delarozière/ La Machine / <http://www.lesmachines-nantes.fr/>
- Mackinnon & Sanders [mackinnonandsaunders.com](http://mackinnonandsaunders.com)
- Andy Gent – (The Arch Studios/ Nexus Productions) [youtube.com/watch?v=j4KyhWirmzM](http://youtube.com/watch?v=j4KyhWirmzM)
- Studio Glithero
- GEEK Meet, Make, Play annual event since 2012, taking year off in 2016 and will relaunch 2017. <http://www.geek-play.com/>

Images of indicative works are provided in the annex to the proposal.

## **Budget**

The cash budget to deliver the core exhibition is £150k.

This covers: new commissions, loan and transport of works, exhibition design and build, insurance, gallery guide, production of accompanying learning materials etc.

We propose that Crafts Council and Hull City of Culture cover this budget through cash contributions on a 50:50 basis, i.e. £75k per partner.

On top of our cash contribution, Crafts Council will make the exhibition happen with in-kind support including:

- full-time exhibition project curator working on the project for 12 months, leading on commissions, artist liaison, contracting exhibition designers and identity design, coordination and logistics etc.;
- national press and marketing campaign, online and print (our comms and marketing team coordinating their activities with the Hull team)
- development of exhibition learning materials by our learning manager
- promoting and featuring the exhibition in *Crafts* magazine
- budget management
- lead oversight of the project: Annabelle Campbell, Head of Exhibitions and Collections, and Annie Warburton, Creative Director

We see also potential for sponsorship, not least because of the strong connections between the content and the interests of technology and robotics firms. Given other pressures on fundraising, our view is that any sponsorship income should supplement the core budget, rather than making exhibition delivery dependent on securing sponsorship. On this basis our development team could work with the Hull team on identifying and pitching to sponsors for support of the exhibition.

## **Venue**

The proposed venue is Hull's Fruit Market Gallery. The gallery space will be arranged over three floors, though some of the ground floor may be taken up with a café. Approximate sizes of each floor are; ground floor – 200sqm, first floor – 160 sqm and second floor- 200 sqm.

## **Dates**

We would like to present the show October-December 2017 during season 4, *Tell the World*.

## **Audiences**

The exhibition will communicate to audiences from experts to newcomers to contemporary craft. It is designed to connect with and involve local audiences and communities, including families, as well as draw in national and international visitors.

The project will be a platform to deliver events and discussions that encourage a greater understanding of craft, technology and play, and so reach new, broader audiences for culture in general, and craft in particular.

There are strong opportunities for cultural and commercial partnerships and cross-sector collaborations, particularly on the themes of engineering, technology and coding – connecting physical and digital making, making and problem-solving. We wish to make links with local agendas on reskilling, new industry and community – and there are rich opportunities for links with learning and education.

## **Onward touring**

We aim to secure additional venue partners in the UK and internationally to take a show that

starts in Hull – with its identity firmly linked to the city and City of Culture – onward to other places in 2018. This fits with *Tell the World* – with Hull being the home for a show that attracts international audiences both to the city itself and through its onward tour.

We have been invited by the creative director of the Korea-UK Season 2017-18 to put forward proposals for this British Council-supported initiative – and there is a strong fit with this project. This follows signing an MOU with our Korean counterpart, supported by both Governments. In addition, Crafts Council holds the European presidency of the World Crafts Council and we have strong connections with galleries and organisations worldwide. Dependent on funding, this could be an opportunity to take a show made in Hull to Korea or elsewhere globally. Potential UK city venue partners include Bristol and Birmingham, working on a model we have successfully employed in previous shows.

### **Connections with wider Crafts Council programme**

As the realisation of new and future-looking practice, the exhibition presented in Hull will be practice will be the culmination and centrepiece of a wider celebration of interdisciplinary invention in craft, which includes:

- Make:Shift: international innovation conference, which addresses four themes: applied robotics, smart materials, bio materials, and connected wearables and demonstrates the value of craft innovation in sustainability, healthcare, and social innovation. Manchester, 2016.
- Make:Shift:Do national festival of making, and digital making, 2016 and 2017.
- Parallel Practices: with Kings
- Crafts Council Collection touring exhibition of mainly '80s & '90s automata from our Collection, and loans from public and private collections. 2016 ->
- Fielding Talk 2018: annual talk by a major maker, this year presented by a automata maker.

### **Additional elements**

We have planned and budgeted for a core exhibition, gallery guide, online and social media campaign, and learning programme. Additional elements that could be developed would require additional funding to deliver. These are:

- Publication and full catalogue with commissioned essays and photographs
- Conference: exploring the exhibition topics and aimed at an international audience of artists, curators, gallery and visual arts professionals – as well as researchers, technologists etc. As well as makers, artists and curators, the conference and/or publication could feature pioneers in ideas on playfulness, creativity and gaming, such as Jane McGonigle, Pat Kane, Ian Livingstone etc.
- Public realm commission, a tangible legacy of the project, maximising the intrinsic sense of public ownership and place.

### **Next Steps**

We look forward to your thoughts and responses to our proposal. Whilst we have worked up the ideas to a certain stage, this is also a starting point for discussion and development. We look forward to shaping the ideas together to create an extraordinary, inspiring international show for Hull.

Please contact:

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