

HULL 2017 – POLISH COMMUNITY PROJECT PROPOSAL

PROJECT GOALS

The goals of the projects are as follows:

- to engage with the Polish community in Hull creatively, and help make their voices heard through new writing/performance;
- to prepare a high quality event for Contains Strong Language, featuring work and performances by local Polish artists;
- for me to write and perform new work inspired by the process.

PROJECT PHASES AND EVENTS

Launch Event

A highly publicised event of Polish spoken word poetry and music (open to anyone) featuring guest performers from Poland¹, Hull, and the rest of the UK.

Goals:

- Raising awareness of what spoken word poetry is as a genre
- Spreading the word about the project amongst the Polish community in Hull
- Recruiting participants interested in writing/performing at the festival.

Community Engagement: Free Poems

I spend a day/afternoon/evening each in various places where the Polish community of Hull congregates (the community centre, the Polish centre, a barber, one of the restaurants, etc.). I make myself known to the people there as a poet, and offer them a brand new, custom-written poem on whatever topic they choose. I'll have a conversation with them to inform the poem. In the process, I can let them know about our project and see if they are interested in contributing in any way.

Goals:

- Engaging with the community by offering something rather than asking them for something.
- Generating more buzz around the project.
- Recruiting participants interested in writing/performing at the festival².
- Creating work which will feed into my final piece(s) for the festival.

¹ Possible guests include Wojciech Cichoń, Weronika Lewandowska, Grzegorz Bruszewski, Mateusz Andała, and the winner of the upcoming inaugural Polish National Poetry Slam Championship.

² Each visit to Hull for this phase and all subsequent phases would also be an opportunity to meet with already recruited poets and offer one-to-one mentorship, group writing/feedback sessions, etc. etc.

Community Engagement: Mobile Poetry Station

We create a portable pop-up writing/recording space³ which can accommodate me and at least one or two other people, and we travel with it to public gatherings and busy places. The focus here is to encourage people to contribute, so the space also features writing implements, writing prompts/poem starters, dictionaries, equipment for audio/video recording, etc. We use it to advertise our second event and recruit more potential writer/performers if needed.

Goals:

- Establishing a sustained presence in the community.
- Gathering raw material for installation/website/non-performative creative response to project.
- Recruiting participants interested in writing/performing at the festival.
- Creating an opportunity for participants already on board to contribute to the project
- Creating a good opportunity for workshops and one-to-one feedback meetings with participants.

Exhibition/Making Space Launch

An event at the new exhibition/making space, meant to make people aware of its opening, and to provide a chance for new participants to gain performance experience and road-test new work, featuring special guests but limited to spoken word poetry. Advertising the new space as a community resource.

Goals:

- Giving participants a chance to get stage time and feedback.
- Giving other communities in Hull a good opportunity to see what has been happening within the project.

Community Engagement: A (More) Permanent Space

We take over a space (empty shop, workshop, warehouse, classroom) and turn it into a writing/storytelling studio and an exhibition space⁴, where poems and stories can be created and experienced in Polish and English. We also use the space to rehearse the show for the festival and workshop the texts from the contributors. The space is open at regular times, possibly with the help of festival volunteers.

Goals:

- We respond to a real need frequently formulated by the members of the Polish community I spoke to during my time in Hull: a space where they feel they belong where they can create or consume art which feels like it's meant for them.
- We give ourselves enough time to turn the space into an audio/visual exhibition of poems/stories for festival guests to interact with

³ It would be fantastic for this to be a new, bespoke design, ideally created in collaboration with a Hull-based designer/maker.

⁴ We can combine the pop-up space equipment with more furnishings, and work with the same designer to find an interesting way to display written poems, let visitors access audio recordings and translations, and otherwise interact with the space.