

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER OPPORTUNITIES:

UNDERCURRENTS - ON OUR DOORSTEP

Fee: £1,250 / opportunity (at rate of £250/day), plus up to £250 for travel & reasonable disbursements and up to £330 for materials.

Deadline for Applications: 09 June 2021, midnight (GMT)

Project Duration: July - September 2021

Context

The UNDERCURRENTS - ON OUR DOORSTEP Partnership are looking to engage three Wales-based Creative Practitioners (these may be artists, makers, designers, or other creative practitioners and may be an individual, a partnership or a collectives) to work with us and local residents to draw out cultural connections across the Aber Valley (Abertridwr and Senghenydd) to reveal the benefits for communities of the area's cultural and environmental assets.

A former coal mining community, the Aber Valley has a fresh story to tell.

We want to identify and make visible contemporary narratives of place and explore how art and cultural activity may enable communities to connect with their locale in news ways that enhance everyday life.

These opportunities form part of UNDERCURRENTS - ON OUR DOORSTEP - a partnership project between Undercurrents - Arts in the Aber Valley community group,

Caerphilly County Borough Council and Addo, which is funded by Arts Council of Wales' Connect & Flourish grant fund for the development of collaborative proposals between organisations, individuals and creative professionals.

This activity forms part of the first phase of what is hoped will be a longer-term programme of works, which it is hoped will be developed in partnership with and informed by the work of the appointed Creative Practitioners. We intend to apply for further funding for future phases of the project.

The Opportunities

We have three paid opportunities to work with us to develop short art interventions that will explore three key areas: i) Outdoor Spaces; ii) Women & Work; iii) Language. It is expected that the process and outcomes of these interventions will:

- Raise awareness of and interest in the project across as broad a diversity of groups and individuals in the Aber Valley;
- Elicit ideas, reveal local assets, needs and aspirations;
- Take a critical approach to working in the public realm that is responsive to the specific context of the project, locale and participating communities and moves beyond simple representation and ameliorative activities. We want to challenge and be challenged and be innovative in our approach;
- Produce a high quality, aesthetic presentation/documentation that captures and communicates findings to feed into the development of and sourcing of funding for a future longer-term programme of arts interventions that respond to the needs, ideas and assets revealed through this initial phase of work.

It is hoped that the commissioned Creative Practitioners will work with the Undercurrents project partners to develop proposals for a larger programme of work that will have sustainable / longer-term impacts on the Aber Valley area and its residents and into which the commissioned Creative Practitioners are written as key partners. In doing so, we hope that these initial short-term commissions will lead to ongoing working relationships between Undercurrents, artists and local individuals, groups and communities of interest. The three key areas that form the focus of these opportunities have evolved out of Undercurrent's previous work and existing connections. It is intended that these opportunities enhance and complement work already or currently being undertaken by groups and individuals in the area.

OPPORTUNITY ONE – Outdoor Spaces

An opportunity to work with us to map and make visible the area's cultural and environmental assets, in particular outdoor spaces, towards identifying opportunities for arts and cultural-led interventions that may highlight, enhance or make use of them for the benefit of local communities. The hope is that this will engage and introduce the project to the many active groups in the area (e.g. Aber Valley Environmental Group, Women's Institute Aber Valley, YMCA, Senghenydd Youth Drop-in Centre (SYDIC), Aber Valley Community Council, Aber Valley Heritage Committee) and complement their current and previous work, as well as connect with hard to reach communities and individuals. The Aber Valley has a rich history of welcoming people from other areas, countries and cultures, which are not necessarily represented in the public realm. There are also communities and individuals, such as the homeless community, who are often excluded from social, arts and cultural activities. We would like to engage a broad diversity of voices and ideas as possible, as it is hoped that

this initial phase of activity will help to steer future phases of our programme. We're interested in formal and informal cultural activities from arts societies to casual gatherings around common interests (such as aspects of youth culture, gaming 'clubs', etc.) Given the vast green spaces in the valley and in light of how the recent lockdown restrictions have changed people's relationship with their locale, we are particularly interested in how outdoor spaces (e.g. paths, cycle routes, disused car parks, playgrounds and green spaces that form natural amphitheatres) are or may be used by residents (e.g. WI walking group has recently started). As part of this opportunity, we are partnering with the Integrated Wellbeing Network (IWN) to explore how arts and cultural activity may encourage residents' use of outdoor spaces as a means to enhance health and wellbeing.

OPPORTUNITY 2 - Women in Work

An opportunity for a Creative Practitioner to work with us to explore contemporary issues around women and work in the Aber Valley, drawing on the history of the Rural Industries Bureau and the Abertridwr Quilters to explore, reveal and develop a project in response to contemporary concerns for women in work in the Aber Valley.

The Abertridwr Quilters was one of six quilting groups established by the Rural Industries Bureau to revive the art of quilting as part of a scheme started in 1928 to encourage small craft industries in economically deprived areas. These were established in response to evidence collected by the Bureau during the 1920s concluded that the few remaining village quilters in the industrial south Wales were producing work of poor quality but were capable of improvement given better materials and financial incentives. The Bureau paid for the provision of materials and sourced commercial outlets for their

work, one being Miss Muriel Rose's The Little Gallery, off Sloane Street, in London, which supplied quilted bedcovers for Claridge's. The scheme ended with the outbreak of WW2 in 1939. Although geared towards a luxury market outside their locality, the scheme succeeded in raising the standard of Welsh quilting, producing a new generation of highly skilled quilters. The 'Abertridwr Star' - a diamond containing a large eight petalled floral motif, is still a recognised and well used pattern in quilting circles today. The work and history of the Abertridwr Quilters is documented in the collections and archives of St Fagan's Museum, who are supportive of this project. In addition, local playwright Evan Eynon Evans (1904 – 1989) makes reference to a sewing guild in his play 'Jailbird Johnnie: A play in one act for women', an is an interesting reference on how such setups were run and the lives of the women who worked within them.

The National Museum of Wales' website (referenced above) has further information about the Abertridwr Quilters and the Rural Industries Bureau:

<https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/566a76bc-f706-3899-ab65-d2f68c4f47b8/Quilt/footer/>

The following blog post has further info on Miss Muriel Rose's The Little Gallery in reference to Women Designing:

<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/womendesigning/2015/11/12/muriel-rose-and-the-little-gallery/>

OPPORTUNITY 3 - LANGUAGE

There is a significant Welsh-speaking community in the Aber Valley but limited opportunities to engage with arts and culture in and through the Welsh language. We want a Welsh-speaking Creative Practitioner to work with us and Menter Iaith (Caerphilly) to explore and develop a longer-term innovative art

intervention / programme of work that will address this need and be sustainable by engaging, mentoring and acknowledging the needs and creative input of local Welsh-speaking artists and creative practitioners.

Project Governance and Collaboration with Communities & Key Stakeholders

The appointed Creative Practitioners will be contracted by and to Undercurrents. The main point of contact for Creative Practitioners will be Sarah Pace for Addo and Gary Metcalfe for Undercurrents.

A core Steering Group made up of representatives from each of the three main project partners (Undercurrents, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Addo) has been set up to oversee the management of the project. This is an equal partnership in line with Arts Council of Wales' requirements for the Connect & Flourish grant fund. However, for the purposes of the day-to-day management of the project, Sarah Pace of Addo has been designated as project manager and Gary Metcalfe, Chair of Undercurrents is overseeing the financial and contractual arrangements for the project.

It is intended that a wider network/group of key stakeholders interested in participating in the project will be formed through this first phase, as a means to connect with and engage the many active groups and individuals in the area and complement their existing work/offer. An example is the IWN, which is keen to support community wellbeing opportunities that emanate from all strands of the work here.

It is expected that the appointed Creative Practitioners will actively seek to engage with local individuals and groups relevant to the advertised opportunities through dialogue,

debate and participatory activities. The core project partners will support this activity, the form of which will be determined by the Creative Practitioner through research and in consultation with the Steering Group and other key stakeholders as appropriate.

Expectations of the Creative Practitioner

These opportunities are open to Wales-based Creative Practitioners. We welcome applications from individuals, partnerships, groups, or collectives. Applicants must demonstrate:

- Creative originality, artistic quality and professionalism in their work;
- The ability and desire to work openly and collaboratively as part of their creative practice, in particular with communities and other partners;
- A self-motivated, energetic and proactive work ethic;
- A willingness to immerse themselves in the life and culture of the area;
- A critical awareness of the roles that Creative Practitioners and cultural activity may/may not play in the public realm and towards public benefit;
- An awareness of and willingness to abide by the laws for working with children and vulnerable adults, should they undertake such work as part of the project;
- Proven ability to deliver high quality creative outcomes in the public realm on time and within budget;
- Hold and provide evidence of appropriate levels of public and products liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance;
- For Opportunity 3, the appointed Creative Practitioner must be able to speak, write and understand Welsh.

Project Schedule

18 May 2021	Opportunities Advertised
09 June 2021, midnight	Deadline for Applications
18 June 2021	Invitations to interview sent out
23 & 24 June 2021	Interviews via Zoom - applicants must be available on these dates
w/c 28 June 2021	Appoint Creative Practitioners
01 July - 30 Sept 2021	Activity delivered
Sept - Oct 2021	Evaluation & developing further funding applications, etc.

Fees and Budget

We are offering a fee of £1,250/opportunity for 5 days' work at a rate of £250/day.

There are additional budgets of up to £250 for travel and reasonable disbursements and up to £330 for materials. Spending against these must be agreed in advance whilst Covid restrictions apply with the Steering Group.

All fees and costs are inclusive of VAT.

How to Apply

The recruitment process is being managed by curatorial agency Addo (www.addocreative.com) on behalf of and in collaboration with the Steering Group.

To apply, please submit the following information to commissions@addocreative.com by **midnight (GMT) on 09 June 2021**, clearly stating which of the three opportunities you are interested in applying for:

- Up to 10 digital images and if desired, a 10-minute (max) show-reel. These should be clearly labelled and accompanied by a brief description of the project they relate to and the relevance to your application;
- An up-to-date CV;
- A brief letter of application that states which of the three opportunities you are applying for and broadly outlines why you are interested in this opportunity and how it is relevant to your practice;
- Details of any access needs that you may have so that we may meet these at interview and through the project. We especially welcome applications from artists from ethnic minority backgrounds, artists with protected characteristics, disabled and D/deaf artists, artists on low incomes, and people on the margins of society. We ask potential applicants to let us know of any access requirements that they may have in order to apply for this opportunity;
- Two referees that can testify to your suitability to undertake the commissions.

Creative practitioners will be selected on the quality and relevance of their past work to the opportunities. Please note that we do not require proposals for activity at this stage because it is expected that the appointed Creative Practitioner will develop these in consultation with the project partners and other key stakeholders as appropriate.

When sending large files (over 4MB), please provide hyperlinks to online files or send via Dropbox / WeTransfer.

Tour of the Aber Valley

Although not a prerequisite to apply or being appointed, we recommend that applicants visit the Aber Valley to get a feel

for the place. We are therefore offering a tour of the area guided by the project partners on **04 June 2021**. Places may be booked on the tour via Eventbrite by following this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/154836569347>

If you are unable to make the guided tour, the following link provides useful information for arranging your own visit: <https://www.visitcaerphilly.com/aber-valley-heritage-museum/>

Selection Process

The project partners will shortlist up to 4 candidates per opportunity for interview from the applications received. Interviews will take place via Zoom on **23 & 24 June 2021**. Applicants must be available for an interview on these dates.

At interview, interviewees will be expected to speak in more detail about their past work and working processes and the approach they envisage taking towards the commission. They will be asked to present examples of their past work and will be assessed following the interview based on their past work and initial response (**not** proposals) to the opportunities. Each interview will be 45mins in length, made up of a short presentation by the interviewee followed by questions and discussion with the interview panel members.

The interview schedule and information about panel members will be distributed prior to the interview. The project partners are committed to equal opportunities and all applicants will be judged according to the criteria set out above, purely on merit and without prejudice.

If you have any queries, please contact commissions@addocreative.com

Further information

More about Undercurrents here:

https://www.facebook.com/AberValleyArt/?ref=page_internal

More about Caerphilly Arts Development Team here:

<https://www.facebook.com/caerphillyarts>

More about Addo here: www.addocreative.com

The Undercurrents - On Our Doorstep project is funded by the Arts Council of Wales' Connect & Flourish funding for the development of collaborative proposals between organisations, individuals and creative professionals, with funding from Caerphilly County Borough Council and Integrated Well-being Networks, Gwent.

