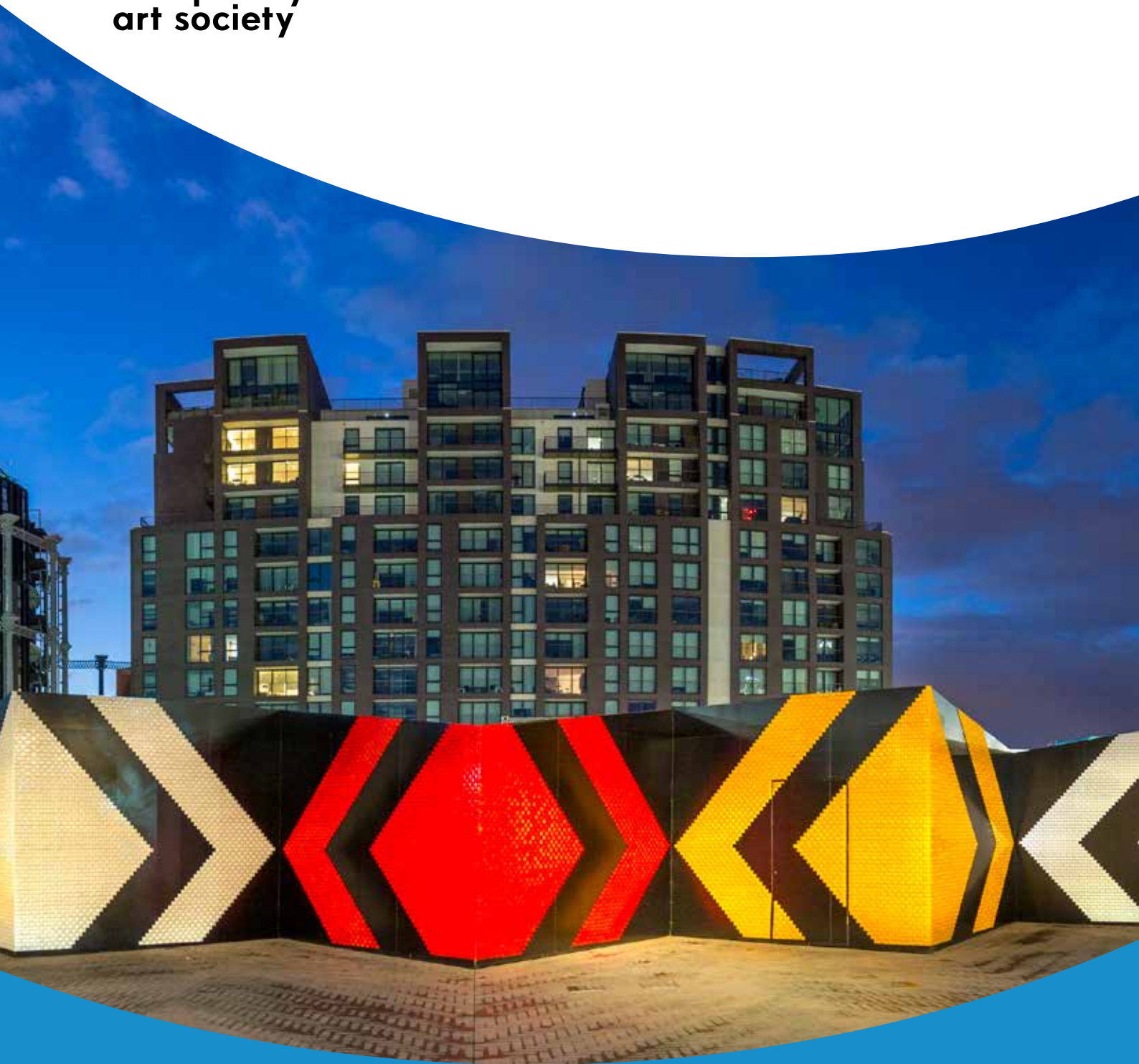
 contemporary
art society

The logo for the Contemporary Art Society consists of a series of vertical bars of varying heights, resembling a barcode or a stylized soundwave. Below this graphic, the words 'contemporary' and 'art society' are stacked in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

A GUIDE TO COMMISSIONING PUBLIC ART



Cover image:
Rana Begum, No.700
Reflectors, 2016

This report was produced by the British Property Federation and researched by the Contemporary Art Society.

About the British Property Federation

The British Property Federation (BPF) represents companies owning, managing and investing in real estate. This includes a broad range of businesses comprising commercial real estate owners, the financial institutions and pension funds, corporate landlords, residential landlords, as well as all those professions that support the industry.

For more information on the BPF please visit www.bpf.org.uk

About the Contemporary Art Society

The Contemporary Art Society (CAS) exists to develop public collections of contemporary art across the UK. Drawing on over 100 years' experience in curating and commissioning, CAS offers a range of Consultancy services, from developing cultural strategies and arts programmes, commissioning landmark artworks for public spaces to building outstanding contemporary art collections for international companies. Advisory fees are reinvested into the charitable mission of CAS.

For more information on CAS projects please visit www.contemporaryartsociety.org

Introduction

Public Art in the 21st Century – A Perspective

Great places benefit from great art. Truly ambitious public art is now a key component of cultural placemaking, supporting animated public realm and creating engaging encounters that encourage people to visit, gather and socialise. Artists can create distinctive narratives of place, uncovering histories and nuances of sites and communities.

Public art can serve to illustrate, to humanise and to create meaning. Art in the public realm now takes multiple forms and serves multiple purposes, both aesthetic and practical. An artwork can provide focus in civic space, be integrated into architecture, enhance lighting, street furniture and landscape design. It can be permanent, monolithic or subtle, singular or distributed in space. It can be programmatic – from performance to temporary interventions, designed to encourage interaction, participation and connections between communities.

It is often the art that contributes most to the unique sense of place, supporting the identity and visibility of new developments, and creating thriving, sustainable communities where people want to live, work and play.

Commissioning Great Art

Many developers understand the rationale for art in the public realm, but struggle with understanding how to get there. Unlike more familiar design, planning and construction processes, commissioning art can seem relatively opaque. Understanding how to get the best out of professional, recognised artists is key – where an element of faith in the creative process is required to achieve exceptional results. Every commissioning opportunity is different, and the act of commissioning requires investment and an element of adaptability to a set of unique circumstances.

This guide aims to provide a framework - how best to work with artists and art expertise to achieve optimum results and minimise risk along the way.

Peter Liversidge, Everything is Connected, 2016.
© the artist, image courtesy U+I Manchester,
Mayfield



EVERYTHING
IS
CONNECTED

Step 1: The Brief

The artist brief is the cornerstone of an art commission – it sets the parameters, aims and context, but is as importantly an invitation to artists.

An open and inspiring commissioning brief allows space for creativity, time for research and development and a shared process for concepts and proposals to develop. The brief will set out clear parameters and realistic and appropriate ambitions, but also allow space for what the artist brings to the table – the creative process. An inspirational brief is essential to attracting great artists and creating great art. Never underestimate how important the brief is – it shapes the project and forms a part of the legal undertaking in commissioning. Key elements of the brief include:



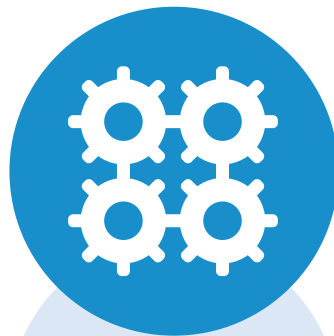
Vision:
the aims and
objectives of the
commission



Context: info about
the commissioner and
the development
project



Site context: history,
physical opportunities
and technical
constraints



Project process,
roles and
accountabilities



Decision making:
sign off, consultation
and planning
requirements



Intended
budget



Project
timeframe



Desired design life
and maintenance
expectations

Southern Headhouse Commissions, Olympic Park

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was the first Olympic Park to integrate artworks into the landscape right from the start. As part of a broader art programme, the Contemporary Art Society worked with the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to commission two wall-based artworks applied to the vertical concrete surrounds of the Southern Headhouses. Both works are permanent fixtures in the park, contributing to a profound narrative of place that responds to the history of this significant site.

Carpenter's Curve is a large-scale artwork that wraps around the façade of a utility building. Clare Woods' tiled walls are characteristic of her psychologically charged approach to landscape painting – each wall drawn from the industrial and creative heritage of the site. Using digital printing and water jet cutting techniques, Woods' original paintings were transferred onto over 88,000 ceramic tiles, making it the most complex tile mural in the world.



Clare Woods, Carpenters Curve, 2012. © the artist, image courtesy ODA

Step 2: Finding the Right Artist

Appointing the right artist makes a significant impact on the success of the project – and this is where a bit of delicate matchmaking can make all the difference.

Understanding the ‘fit’ for the commission is where art expertise can be most valuable – which might be an art advisor, curator or lead artist guiding the process. Defining the specification for the artist is key – is a big name required to add notoriety, or is this an opportunity to unearth an emerging talent; is a radical creative approach desired or a safer known quantity? Each artist brings their own way of working.

Commonly the selection process involves a steering group made up of relevant stakeholders and arts expertise, who assess artists, offer guidance and recommendations on behalf of the client and provide advocacy for the project. Membership will vary depending on the project, but could include representatives of the client/funder, associated third parties such as design teams or local authority, art expertise and community representatives. The role of the panel should be defined at the start - their input could be advisory, or they could hold full accountability for decision-making.

A curated process is the most efficient - an art advisor/curator will identify artists suitable for the commission, introduce them to the brief and determine their interest and availability. Their knowledge will help find artists who are not only critically regarded and endorsed, but also professional, responsive and good communicators. Great artists are in demand - and a well-regarded advisor can facilitate access and encourage their participation.

Artists can be selected in many ways – from open competition to curated longlists, and selection based on the strength of the artist’s previous work and approach, or by requesting a paid proposal stage from a number of artists. What is most important is that the process is transparent, accountable and provides the opportunity to think about and assess a range of artistic approaches.

New Academic Building Commission, London School of Economics

When the London School of Economics (LSE) developed their New Academic Building in 2006, they wanted the site to act as a London landmark, heralding the location of LSE. The Contemporary Art Society worked with LSE to commission a wall-based sculpture for the exterior of the building facing Kingsway. The value of a productive collaborative relationship between the artist, design team and client is explicit in a work that is entirely integrated with the fabric of the building.

Known for his dramatic architectural interventions, Richard Wilson’s sculpture for the exterior of the New Academic Building provides a subtly humorous addition to the architecture. Square the Block mimics the architectural features of the building, revealed on inspection as a fake, a manufactured corner where previously there was just a chamfered edge to the building. The work stops short of the ground at about the first floor. Here the corner appears to be compressed as if by a giant intervening force from below, giving the sculpture a pliable and witty answer to freeing up the walkway.



Richard Wilson, Square the Block, 2009. © the artist, image courtesy LSE, photo by Matthew Blaney

Step 3: Getting to a Proposal

Development of a quality proposal takes time and this must be built into the commissioning programme. Artists should be briefed – given access to the site where possible and liaising with commissioner, design teams, main contractor and other relevant parties. Research resources are invaluable – plans, contextual documentation and historical references all support the development of proposals that are relevant to the place.

For a concept proposal, the artist would be expected to produce detailed visualisations/models, text outlining ideas, research and key concepts, an indicative methodology and programme for production and fabrication, materials samples, an outline budget and consideration for maintenance and design life. It is important to understand that the commission may alter through further detailed design and structural engineering, but the proposal should be clear in intention and deliverability. The material produced through this process can be used to prepare planning applications, if required.

Fig 1: Ooze and Marjetica Potrc, Of Soil and Water: King's Cross Pond Club, 2015



King's Cross Art Programme

In 2004 the King's Cross Public Realm Strategy identified the role art could play in the success of the 67 acre development, led by Argent. It was recognised that activated, animated, welcoming public spaces would be critical to the success of the project and public space should be conceived as a series of well-connected areas, well integrated with the surrounding city. The nine year art programme draws on the rich heritage of the site as well as looking to the future, through the lens of temporary and permanent contemporary art projects.

Working on a three year cycle, curators are appointed to lead the commissioning of temporary and permanent public art for both the buildings and public spaces.

Temporary activations have included the high profile King's Cross Pond (Fig 1), a ten by forty metre outdoor public swimming pool created by Ooze Architects and artist Marjetica Potrc within the development site.

No.700 Reflectors (Fig 2) is a current temporary artwork at King's Cross. It is a massive 50 metres long and features 30,000 reflectors which create a continuous surface of shifting colour and form. The artwork was unveiled in late 2016 at Lewis Cubitt Square, where it takes up the entire length of the square.

The work is by Bangladeshi-British artist Rana Begum. It is the first in a new series of commissions that are part of The King's Cross Project – a three-year programme of art commissions for the buildings and public spaces at King's Cross.

For six months in 2013, a number of giant geometric shapes graced the facades of nine Victorian buildings around Granary Square (Fig 3). The buildings themselves became the artist's canvas.

The giant 'birdcage' in Battle Bridge Place (Fig 4) stands nine meters high, with bars wide enough for the public to enter and use the swing inside. At night the artwork is lit up in an array of neon colours. Although mostly stationary, the artwork can be hoisted into the air to hang freely, to great dramatic effect.

Fig 1: Rana Begum, No.700 Reflectors, 2016



Fig 3: Felice Varini, Across the Buildings, 2013

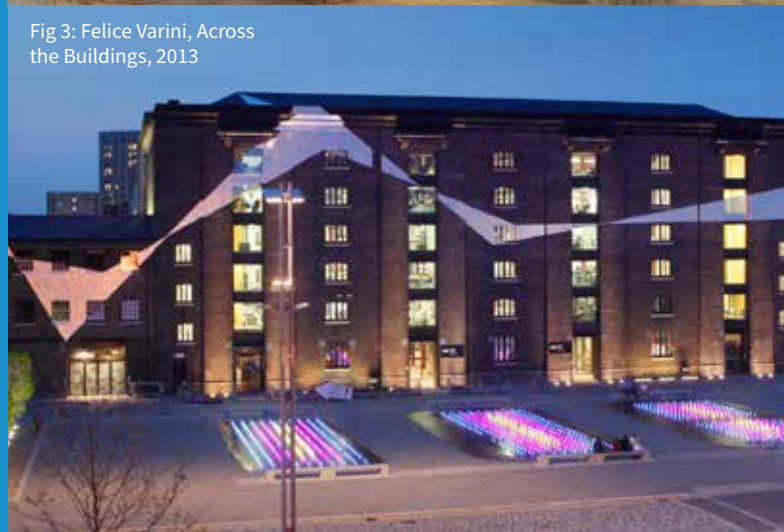


Fig 4: Jacques Rival, IFO (Identified Flying Object), 2011



Step 4: Contracting the Artist

It is recommended that the artist enter into a two-stage contract with the commissioner, the first to allow a period of detailed design to develop the proposal to technical specifications, and the second following approval of detailed design to go onto production and installation.

Artist fee payments should be made upon completion of key milestones defined at the start of the project and outlined in the artist's contract. This approach provides security to the commissioner by linking payment to key delivery and approval stages. Contracts should reciprocally cover artist and client obligations, scope of works, fee and milestones, ownership and maintenance responsibilities, moral rights and copyright, accreditation and dispute resolution. Insurance cover should be considered; appointed artists should carry Public Liability insurance, with the normal level of cover being up to £5 million. It is not normally recommended that artists carry Professional Indemnity or Design Liability insurance as public artwork is normally designed and fabricated by other specialists.

Fig 6: Sara Barker, *Selvedge with dark*, 2017. © the artist, image courtesy Stanhope & Mitsui Fudosan, photo by Marc Wilmot

Angel Court Commissions, City of London

To enhance the public areas of Angel Court, a new office development in the Bank Conservation Area, Stanhope and Mitsui Fudosan commissioned four large-scale public artworks for the Fletcher Priest Architects-designed building. A new hub of contemporary art in the City of London, the artworks have been curated by the Contemporary Art Society to showcase some of the most exciting artists working in the UK today and responding to the historical character of the site.

Last of Light (3 Needles), 2017 (Fig 5) acts as the focal point to the Angel Court piazza and borrows visual motifs from the area's anecdotal history. *Selvedge with dark*, 2017 (Fig 6) consists of woven and painted metal mesh layers running the whole length of Throgmorton Passage.

Inside the foyer Simon Callery has made a related pair of large-scale paintings in his first public realm commission. At almost five metres high, *Wiltshire Modulator Double Void*, 2016 and *Wiltshire Modulator Double Void Cadmium Red Deep*, 2017 (Fig 7, see page 15) are installed on either side of the atrium, echoing the formal symmetry of the architecture.





Fig 5: Sara Barker, Last of Light (3 Needles), 2017. © the artist, image courtesy Stanhope & Mitsui Fudosan, photo by Marc Wilmot

Step 5: Delivering the Artwork

Following approval of the artwork proposal a detailed design phase will determine the structural and fabrication elements of the artwork.

Collaboration is essential to ensure the design is fit for purpose, the site is suitably prepared to receive the artwork and the design is robust and appropriate for public space.

This should include consultation with design teams, structural engineers, materials specialists, planning authorities and specialised fabricators. Commissioner sign off is essential – as the owner of the artwork they have ultimate responsibility for its suitability for the site.

Effective project management will ensure project milestones are met, change managed effectively and key stakeholders are engaged in delivering the artwork. As a specialist process it is advisable that this is led by an art advisor liaising closely with the main contractor, fabricators, installers and commissioner.

As with any construction project, safety and best practice are essential, and the project manager will facilitate required permissions for installation, access, risk assessments and method statements, delivery and site management.

With public art now using a vast range of materials and technologies, ongoing maintenance of public artwork is increasingly object-specific and diverse. Durability, design life and ongoing maintenance must be considered from the beginning of the commissioning process.

Permanent artworks will require a costed maintenance plan, including a timetable and methodology for inspection and considerations linked to the conservation of artworks.



Nina Pope & Karen Guthrie, *Tomorrow, Today*, 2014. © the artists, image courtesy NWCD, photo by Joe Plommer

Public Art Strategy, North West Cambridge Development

In 2012 the University of Cambridge commenced a new 100,000 square meter development, addressing an increasing need for affordable staff and student accommodation and to further foster academic and business collaborations.

At the heart of the development is a focus on building a vibrant community; a commitment to the arts and creativity is an important part of nurturing this community and sense of place.

The Contemporary Art Society with InSite Arts were tasked with developing the public art strategy for the 15 year long development programme. The approach prefaces working with artists in an integrated way and a responsive programme of commissioning, both permanent and temporary, aimed at creating a spirit of place.

Temporary animations respond to a site in transition and engage local wider communities in understanding the future of this place. Permanent commissions reflect the University's international standing and its global reputation.

An internationally networked artist residency programme is at the core of the strategy, ensuring a unique understanding of place is central to the programme. A residency with the Archaeology department resulted in Tomorrow, Today, a participatory sculptural landform, which takes the form of a three dimensional model of Phase 1 of the development and was built entirely by volunteers trained in cob building. The project invites the audience to actively contemplate the future community and townscapes that will comprise the North West Cambridge Development.

In addition to the artist residency programme, permanent artwork commissions include artists working with design teams to contribute to wayfinding, lighting, public amenity, parks and landscapes, earthworks and buildings.



Commissioning Great Art: 10 Top Tips

- 1** **Artists can contribute to design thinking;** involving the artist as early as possible in the design process will ensure artworks are integrated effectively

 - 2** **Consider the audience;** who will interact with the artwork and who does it need to engage – understanding this will guide the artist's thinking

 - 3** **Does it need to be permanent?** Temporary interventions can offer opportunities for the site to remain dynamic and evolve over time

 - 4** **Allow space for creativity** – create open briefs, time to develop ideas and facilitate collaborative design development

 - 5** **Commission for the context** – artwork can tell the story of place and enhance cultural placemaking

 - 6** **Resource the process and establish communication channels** – commissioning in the public realm needs team input from the commissioner, design teams, planners and contractors

 - 7** **Seek to work with artists with critical endorsement** – professional and recognised artists bring repute and experience

 - 8** **Engage local stakeholders and organisations** in the commissioning process; an effective advisory panel can provide advocacy and support community buy-in

 - 9** **Great art takes time** – rushing to meet notional deadlines will compromise the artwork

 - 10** **Consider working with reputable art advisors** – whether curating the artist or managing the commission, they will bring specialist knowledge and streamline the process
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Simon Callery, Wiltshire
Modulor Double Void
Cadmium Red Deep,
2017. © the artist, image
courtesy Stanhope &
Mitsui Fudosan, photo by
Marc Wilmot

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