Example brief for commissioning a creative practitioner:



**Art Commission 2024: Call for Lead Artist**

**Commission Theme:** ‘Civic Joy’

**A collaboration with University of Exeter, Cornwall Campuses**

**Artform:** All, Cross-Arts, Interdisciplinary

**Commission Budget available:** £43,000 inc VAT

**Location:** Cornwall, you must be Cornwall- based

**Timeline:** Feb 2024 – Feb 2025, consistent but flexible/part-time

**Deadline for applications:** 12 noon, Wednesday 10th January 2024

**The Commission**

[Arts and Culture, University of Exeter](https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk) isinviting expression of interests for our 2024 Arts Commission responding to the theme of ‘Civic Joy’.

In a world filled with busy schedules and digital distractions it’s easy to forget the true essence of togetherness. Something extraordinary happens when individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to support each other in a common cause – we’re calling it Civic Joy.

Our 2024 Art Commission will explore how University of Exeter, Cornwall and its partners can catalyse Civic Joy in Cornwall and how this is an important element of Civic Action.

**We are seeking a Cornwall-based artist-producer who is excited and ready to lead a collective of interdisciplinary creative practitioners to work alongside our University community in Penryn to shape a creative programme exploring Civic Joy.**

Linked to our commitment to our recently signed [Civic University Agreement](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/aboutusresponsive/regionalengagement/documents/Annex_A%2C_Civic_Universities_Agreement.docx.pdf), we will invite you and the other creative practitioners to explore how curious acts of playful creativity can 1) improve the civic working lives of our campus community and 2) lead to exploring Exeter University’s mission to be a Civic Change Maker in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, linked to our commitment to local priorities and our [2030 Strategy](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/aboutusresponsive/strategy2030/documents/University-of-Exeter_Strategy_2030.pdf), investing in a Greener, Healthier, and Fairer future for all.

**Who are we looking for?**

We are keen to reach a Cornwall-based lead artist from any artform background, but participatory arts, co-creation and community engagement should all be important elements of your practice and art-making ethos. Your interest in how playful creativity and artistic practice can contribute to wellbeing and civic connection will be essential. You will be the holder of the commission and ultimately responsible for the agreed outputs and artistic direction of this year-long programme. However, you should be willing to invite and lead a group of interdisciplinary Cornwall-based artists to be part of your wider creative project team and ensure their input is meaningful and well-resourced from the project start date.

Supporting the wellbeing of our staff and students is incredibly important to us. Both active Arts Participation and Cultural Engamement have been found to lead to lower levels of long-term Mental Distress and higher levels of both Mental Functioning and Life Satisfaction[[1]](#footnote-1) and creativity, joy and community are all cited by NHS professionals as important protective factors contributing to mental wellness.

The Arts and Culture, University of Exeter team believe:

**In order to pour our assets into our community, we must first fill our cups.**

Therefore, we are interested inhow creativity and playful creative practice can equip our University community with the tools to thrive, feel fulfilled, and build a stronger civic culture both internally *and* externally.

This newly formed Creative Team, under your leadership, will invite our staff, students, partners and communities to explore, with open-ended curiosity, what ‘civic joy’ means at the University and beyond. You will do this through co-curating creative content with and for them.

This could take many forms, and could include but is not limited to:

**Civic Joy as Wellness and Rejuvenation -** Burnout is a hot topic at the University, and we also see it in the civic engagement space too. Climate anxiety, polarisation, populism, and physical and mental health concerns all take their toll. Civic Joy doesn’t make these topics less weighty or the consequences less stark; rather, it helps us rejuvenate and stay fresh to the problems we face and to draw strength from the every-day joy in our lives.

**Civic Joy as an antidote to disengagement** – Why would you participate in something that constantly makes you feel drained? Having fun and being creative leads to active participation and long-term engagement in challenging topics.

**Civic Joy as a means of empowering Inclusion and Diversity** – welcoming visibility, celebrating diversity, and facilitating inclusion.

**Civic Joy as Togetherness and Connection** – meet more/different people and have different conversations through shared making and spending time on shared creative collaborations.

**Civic Joy as Action** – an opportunity to talk, make, challenge, and share in meaningful ways that help bring about change.

Through Research & Development, conversation and practical workshops, artistic experiences and the making of new artistic work, you will be tasked with developing a joyful programme of creative civic action.

**Application Criteria**

**We are looking for expressions of interests from Cornwall-based artists that showcase:**

* Exciting, creative ideas which respond meaningfully to the brief and are possible to be realised within the timeframe and commission budget. Your application should present new creative concepts for a joyful artistic programme - we are not looking to scale-up an existing work, although ideas taken from your previous work are welcome.
* Producing as well as Artistic Leadership – as the lead of the commission, producing budgeting, and administering the project (alongside the Arts and Culture Programme Manager) will be an important expectation of your role. You should speak to this in your application.
* Collaboration and Partnership - as the lead artist and the commission holder you will be asked to invite and manage an interdisciplinary team of artists to work with you on this project. Together you will represent an array of lived-experience, artistic practice, and creative skills.
* Ideas for dynamic creative community engagement which is joyful and socially and environmentally impactful
* Ideas which capture the attention of staff and students across the institution as well as diverse public which are important to both Cornwall’s Future and the [University of Exeter’s 2030 Strategy](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/strategy2030/ourplace/).
* Thoughtful representation with regards equality, diversity and inclusion and/or addressing under-representation which have a ‘local’ or ‘place based’ significance (i.e. Cornwall)
* Ideas which support the development and exploration of Civic Joy as an ’object of study’

**Your application should also demonstrate:**

* A track record of working with students/academics/researchers or using robust research and Higher Education resources and expertise in the creative making of artistic work
* Experience of developing work which is for and about Cornwall
* Experience of making work with diverse communities and publics
* A willingness to challenge stereotypes and think critically about your own ideas and narratives
* An interest in recognising and celebrating diversity of perspectives
* Your skills in facilitating and connecting with a range of different stakeholders – e.g. examples of creative approaches to focus groups and public consultation
* Experience of managing and leading a diverse creative team on a long-term project

**FURTHER READING MATERIAL**

**Please ensure you have read the following before starting your application.**

**Time-Frame and Project Schedule**

**Stage 1**

Recruit a lead artist to hold the commission. Between 3-4 Cornwall-based creative practitioners invited to be part of the team and together they become campus Civic Joy associate artists for 2024.

Supported by the Arts and Culture programme team, together the group will begin by devising stealthy acts of creative civic joy directed at/for/with staff and students – introducing civic joy and creativity to everyday working lives on campus. Through this process the project will recruit a network of ‘co-conspirators’ who will work with the artists on shaping Stage 2.

**Stage 2**

Civic Vitality on Campus through Creativity – Building creative confidence, civic-wellbeing, knowledge and skills to equip us for Stage 3. Small creative co-curated projects.

**Stage 3**

August will offer an opportunity for a mid-project review.

The second half of the project Sept 2024 - Feb 2025 will invest in a handful of interventions (Civic Together) for University of Exeter staff and students to come together with local community partners/businesses. These collaborations will be ‘held’ by one of the associate artists and supported by a dedicated ‘community arts producer’ as well as continued support from the Arts and Culture team. These interventions will explore the ideas of Civic Creative Joy within the wider context of the Civic Agreement and University of Exeter’s 2030 strategy (Themes: Greener, Fairer, Healthier) and supporting Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’s Future Prosperity. They should be based on the existing research and teaching strengths of our Cornwall campuses.

[**University of Exeter, Penryn Campus**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/cornwall/about/penryn-campus/) has a unique set of expertise leading interdisciplinary teaching and research across the three themes above.

[**HASS**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/hass/penryn/) **Cornwall** supports research and teaching into societies, cultures and justice in the past present and future.

[**The Institute of Cornish Studies**](https://history.exeter.ac.uk/research/centres/ics/) brings together academic research in and about Cornwall. It aims to better understand the histories that make up this place, what Cornwall is like right now, and what kind of futures it can move towards.

[**The Renewable Energy Engineering Facility (REEF)**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision/capitalstrategy/featuredprojects/research/reef/) **-** enhances teaching facilities for the application of engineering principles to clean energy technologies.

[**Centre for Ecology and Conservation**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/cornwall/research/facilitiesandcentres/cec/)delivers cutting-edge teaching and research to address the factors that influence biodiversity and complexity in the natural world. We host the highest concentration of organismal biology academics anywhere in the UK.

[**Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/ese/earth-enviro-science/) is comprised of Camborne School of Mines (CSM); the Centre for Geography and Environmental Science (CGES); and the Centre for Environmental Mathematics (CEM).

[**Environmental Sustainability Institute**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/esi/) – an interdisciplinary centre leading cutting-edge research into the problems of, and solutions to, environmental change.

[**University of Medical School Knowledge Spa, Truro**](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/cornwall/about/truro/) **and** [**European Centre for Environment and Human Health**](https://www.ecehh.org/) – training our medical students of the future and leading interdisciplinary research into how our environment and health are closely interconnected.

**Commission Aim**

Support our People, Place and Partnerships in Cornwall through a joyful creative programme.

**Commission Outcomes**

This project will be about connections, confidence and creative value and how these can lead to civic actions towards supporting our staff and students and Cornwall’s future priorities. We want to see:

* Increased Reach – new or stronger connections between students, staff, communities, businesses, and artists
* Improved health and wellbeing for staff and students
* Increased confidence and skills to participate, to challenge, to speak up
* Increased confidence to be creative
* Better understanding for the value in creativity and creative skills to 1) process, think and work holistically around the big challenges we face, 2) connect across disciplines and spaces 3) communicate ‘wicked’ problems across wide audiences
* New art works commissioned which could include digital outputs (on and off campus)
* Our Civic University Agreement activated in playful and creative ways
* A joyful programme which creates experiences of quality and legacy, and which are genuinely collaborative and participatory
* Cornwall’s contemporary placemaking and future dreaming supported
* Working and supporting Cornwall-based artists who represent a range of practices and ‘living experiences’
* New creative partnerships and connections made
* The development of the University of Exeter’s arts commissioning programme and increased reputation for supporting creativity and interdisciplinarity

**Budget and Phasing**

As part of your application we want to know how you might spend the budget across the 12 months of the project. Please note that Stages 1 and 2 are to be completed by end of July 2023, and we would anticipate up to 75% of the available budget to be utilised before this mid-project review.

For clarity, the total Commission budget of £43,000 inclusive of VAT is available and must include the following:

* All artist fees (including your own) to deliver the project, using Artists’ Union England to set fair levels of reimbursement. <https://www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/rates-of-pay/>
* Artists’ attendance at training, planning, reflection, evaluation and dissemination meetings
* Relevant training/away days for you and your creative team
* Other creative consultants you wish to work with
* Production and Exhibition costs/materials/resource costs for the engagement of participants and the making of new artwork
* Events and workshops related to the project including resources, hospitality and catering
* Any travel, accommodation and subsistence required

In addition to your budget, the Arts and Culture team will meet additional expenses of:

* Marketing and Publicity
* Producing, Admin and Budget Support (both from the Arts and Culture team and for 10 days of an External Community Arts Producer in Stage 3)
* Support towards organising public community engagement events
* Documentation including photography/film, evaluation and reporting

**The University of Exeter’s Arts and Culture Strategy**

The University of Exeter’s Arts and Culture Strategy focusses on championing creativity and innovation, and to do this we support artists to develop new work, develop creative networks, share diverse forms of knowledge, and foster new connections. Arts and Culture are part of the University of Exeter community and we’re also part of the community of cultural organisations and creative practitioners working in the South-West. We want to facilitate more purposeful encounters across both.

Creativity takes many forms at the University of Exeter, and one of our leading programme strands is the Arts Commissions. This will be the sixth iteration of the Arts Commissions as part of the University of Exeter’s Arts and Culture Strategy.

We are seeking to commission an artist interested in socially engaged practice to lead our next cultural commission. We believe great ideas come from playing with possibilities. Our commissions aim to offer the time, space and resource for creative, interdisciplinary collaborations to take place between arts makers and researchers, educators and learners based at our University.

The University of Exeter is a hive of curiosity, a creator of diverse forms of knowledge, and a facilitator of innovation. We are passionate about socially engaged research and public engagement and are always interested to explore how we can do this differently and improve our approach We want to break the misperception that research is exclusively done by ‘clever people’, in specialist institutions, behind closed doors and never shared or co-produced. Our past commissions have offered a fertile space for the creation and transfer of learning and practice to others beyond our usual stakeholders.

Through our commissions we aim to explore how our University is collaborative and community orientated; embedded in our natural and social worlds.

**Our Art Commissions are intended to be uplifting, enjoyable and supportive experiences but they can also be provocative, disruptive and challenging.**

**Application and How to Apply**

**Timeline**

* **Lead Artist Commission Process Launched – Wednesday 29th November**
* **EOI Application Deadline – 12 noon, Wednesday Jan 10th 2024**
* **Shortlisting and Interviews – w/b 22nd Jan 2024**
* **Commission Project Feb 2024 – Feb 2025 (including legacy planning, documentation and evaluation)**

Application

When you are ready you can complete your expression of interest in the format which works best for you below answering all of the application criteria, questions and budget.

**Video and Film Submissions:** Please complete and upload your video (no longer than 4 minutes in total) to a vimeo or unlisted YouTube account and send the link and password to artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk

**Audio:** Please record and send your audio file (no longer than 4 minutes) to artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk

**Written:** Please answer all of the questions (no more than 4 side of A4 please) and email to artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk

**Support:** If you would like to submit an expression of interest another way or need support to talk through the options please contact Annie at artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk to arrange a follow up call.

**Please note:** you must be available to deliver the project across the full stated time frame: beginning Feb 2024 – beginning of Feb 2025.

Your application should include:

* Your name and contact details
* Why the Commission is of interest to you and why you want to lead it
* Details of your creative process and practice, with examples, and how these help to answer the brief
* Your creative ideas responding to the brief and possible collaborator plans
* Details of your relevant skills and experience relating to the role criteria and brief
* What you as the lead artist can offer and what you will need from us
* How you have worked with academics, students, Higher-Education expertise and resources before
* Details on your commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
* What are your ethics and values when making artistic work
* An example of how you might use the £43k commission budget and details of experience of managing budgets at this scale
* Any access or additional support needs
* 1 professional reference who is happy to be contacted

**Shortlisted Applicant Interviews and Start Date**

All applications will be viewed by an expert panel and shortlisted applicants will be invited to an in person or zoom interview on w/c 22 Jan. A fee of £100 p/p will be provided to cover your interview prep time and travel.

All applicants will be informed of the outcome w/c 29 Jan and feedback will be offered where possible to all unsuccessful shortlisted applicants.

You will need to be available to start the project within the first 2 weeks of February 2024.

1. Wang, Mak & Fancourt, 2019, *The British Journal of Psychiatry* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)