

LIVING ARTS PROJECT

Project Brief for Lead Artists: Primary Schools Residency Programme

Wexford County Council (WCC) and Wexford Arts Centre (WAC) in partnership with the Arts Council invite applications from interested visual artists residing in County Wexford and working in all manner of visual arts disciplines for a Visual Artist Residency Programme commencing September/October 2023 and running to February 2024.

Background

The mission statement of the **Arts Department of Wexford County Council** (WCC) is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of County Wexford by enabling people to engage in high quality arts experiences and by stimulating and supporting standards of excellence among artists in their practice.

Arts in education is a key goal prioritised in Wexford County Council's Arts Plan "Advancing the Arts" 2018-2022 and the national "Creative Youth" programme being developed by the Arts Council, and Department of Education and Creative Ireland. One of the higher goals of the Arts Plan:

'Improve educational fulfilment through the development of high quality, accessible, inclusive arts in education programmes that promote involvement and engage children and young people, placing their needs at the core.'

The *Living Arts Project* an artist devises and implements an enlivened and experiential arts project in collaboration with students and teachers in schools throughout County Wexford. Schools will be asked to contribute 15% to the cost of programme. The additional 85% of the cost of the programme will be funded by the Arts Department of Wexford County Council and the Arts Council.

Wexford County Council, via the Arts Department, has provided funding to **Wexford Arts Centre** (WAC) to deliver this service. WAC has delivered a vibrant arts programme to the Wexford community since 1974. Recognizing the importance of the visual arts within its overall programming, WAC developed a clear identity for its visual arts activity and since 2006, an innovative strategy plan was implemented with emphasis on promoting contemporary art practice and participation. This led to the development of a visual arts policy which has enhanced WAC's profile as a leading visual arts centre on a local and national level, and has enabled the delivery of a multifaceted, high quality exhibition and education programme.

Operating a three-tiered approach to deliver this programme, WAC showcases a diverse range of mediums and, through our auxiliary educational activities, offers audiences the opportunity to become acquainted with the various contexts in which visual artworks are generated. This approach involves providing exhibition opportunities for recent graduates, emerging and established artists, and originating and producing touring exhibitions.

WAC is acutely aware that today more than ever the arts are needed by young people as a forum for expression, communication, exploration, and cultural and historic understanding. Research confirms that arts education strengthens the child's ability to problem solve, enhancing critical reasoning skills with emphasis placed on using imagination and creative thinking to formulate and hone ideas. Learning through the arts can also serve as a crucial motivating tool for children who are not naturally inclined to more academic modes of teaching. Motivation is critical in terms of identifying and attaining both short and long-term goals.

Together with the collaborative nature involved in many art processes, there is potential for the child to develop essential skills in relation to decision-making, leadership and clear

communication. Regular participation in the arts also develops self-discipline and the knowledge that to undertake and produce work requires sustained effort and, in many cases, multiple revisions.

Living Arts Project – Lead Artist Strand

The Living Arts Project presents an exciting opportunity for visual artists to develop their personal practice while using this work as a catalyst to fully engage children through a school residency. In order for an artist to meaningfully engage with the school and to allow the time needed for the children to develop work, under the structure of this project, two residencies of fifteen weeks and two residencies of eight weeks will take place in four primary schools in the County beginning September / October 2023.

Overview of Application and Selection Process

Artists currently residing in County Wexford are invited to apply for the Living Arts Project detailing their work practices and experience to date. We encourage a wide variety of practices to be included in the project including drawing, painting, printmaking, filmmaking, storytelling, sculpture, performance and sound.

Primary schools will submit expressions of interest in participating in the project by providing an overview of the work undertaken in the area of visual arts education to date and outlining potential areas of investigation.

Based on the expressions of interest received from each school, artists will be short-listed and selection will be determined by the schools needs. Wexford County Council will pay selected artists a fee for the residency in addition to materials and travel costs.

Structure of Residencies

Through the Living Arts Project, **two selected artists will work four hours a week on workshop facilitation for a total of fifteen weeks and two artists will work four hours a week for eight weeks on workshop facilitation over the school year.** For the fifteen-week residency, a fee of €5,000.00 will be made available and for the eight-week residency, a fee of €2,960.00 will be made available. The successful applicants must be flexible in terms of contact hours and will be required to work at least five/six hours per week (including workshop preparation time). The project will start this September/October and run to February 2024.

Schools will be informed that teacher/s must be actively involved in the workshops to support the lead artist. It is envisaged that participating schools will nominate at least two class groups to participate in the programme. In collaboration with the school, the artist will decide how to divide his/her workshop time between the classes. The content of the work with the school will be determined by the artist. However, over the course of the residency, importance will be placed on the learning process with the direction of the programme determined by the response and engagement of all those participating. The eventual outcome or nature of the work created should manifest as a result of this overall process.

The programme will culminate in an exhibition of work produced through the residencies from all four participating schools at Wexford Arts Centre in April 2024. This is of particular importance as not only do pupils have the opportunity to benefit from the detailed guidance of such a programme, they also will see their work realised and exhibited in an art gallery context

Mentorship

A mentorship programme will run alongside each residency. Participating artists will nominate one independent artist or curator they feel pertinent to their practice as a mentor and WAC will

invite this candidate to partake in the programme. The aim of the mentorship is for positive critiquing of the artist's work to occur and for expansion and refinement of the methods of engaging the students throughout each residency. This ensures that the aims of the project are met, the work and processes are of high quality and the dynamic between artist and students is challenging and productive. WAC will co-ordinate three mentoring sessions with each artist.

Assistant Artists

To further develop the Living Arts Project and offer additional opportunities for meaningful exchange and collaboration, the 2023-2024 project will see the continuation of the assistant artist strand. The primary aim of this strand is to provide an opportunity for graduates and artists with limited experience of workshop facilitation in a school environment to gain applicable skills and improve their career prospects in the field of visual arts education.

Throughout the project, the assistant artist's role is to support and assist in the preparation, facilitation and cleaning up of all sessions with the lead artist in accordance to any practice-based workshop. This role also includes undertaking tasks assigned by the lead artist ranging from workshop facilitation to technical support. There is an opportunity for the assistant artist to facilitate one workshop session with students in the school and one session with the students in Wexford County Council and Wexford Arts Centre through consultation with the lead artist. If the assistant artist's practice is appropriate to the nature of the project, he/she may be invited to present their work to the class groups; however, this is subject to direct consultation with the lead artist.

The lead artist will support the development of the assistant artist throughout the residency and provision of dedicated meetings to encourage collaboration will be built in to the structure of the project.

Joint applications from artists seeking to fulfil lead and assistant roles are welcome. In such a case, the lead artist must indicate in their letter of application who they would like to partner with and their reasoning for this.

Application requirements and guidelines for artists

To be considered for a lead artist role please submit **one PDF file** with the following information:

1. Full C.V. including qualifications, relevant employment history, experience, details of exhibitions, previous residencies, etc. The C.V. should also include contact details for two referees.
2. A letter of application outlining your artistic practice to date, detailing your competencies and areas of expertise, stating how you feel the residency would enable the growth of your own practice and what you feel you would bring to the residency.

In addition, artists must submit the following:

3. 10-12 Jpeg images of previous art works, exhibitions, workshops/projects which clarify the nature of your practice and support your letter of application. Please caption the images with relevant details: artwork titles, dimensions, medium and year.

Please note that if you have experience of working with children with special needs this information should be detailed within your CV and letter of application.

Selection Criteria

- Response to project brief;
- Artistic experience in participatory arts and a high standard of work e.g. demonstrated vision for participatory arts projects and a demonstrated understanding of community arts practice.

- An ability to expound on their work – an ability to explain how they created their work and why, and to articulate the value of the creative process.
- An ability to overcome challenges and a willingness to collaborate and in particular, work and support the development of the assistant artist.
- Experience or interest in working in the challenging environment of a classroom setting.

Submission deadline, details and additional information

All application information should be sent by email to lisa@wexfordartscentre.ie no later than **4pm Thursday 11th May 2023**. Please include *Artist Application, Primary School Residency, Living Arts Project* in the subject box of the email. Please note, **ONLY** email applications will be accepted. Postal applications will not be considered.

Should you require any further information on the Living Arts Project please email lisa@wexfordartscentre.ie or alternatively you can visit www.livingartsproject.ie.

For further information on Wexford County Council's full arts programme please visit www.wexfordcoco.ie/arts-and-culture or call 053-9196441 / email arts@wexfordcoco.ie.



The *Living Arts Project* is funded by the Arts Department of Wexford County Council, The Arts Council and participating schools. The project is programmed and administered by Wexford Arts Centre.