

1. You and your work

Taxi Gallery – the final year

Taxi Gallery is literally a black cab situated in a council estate on the outskirts of Cambridge (Abbey area). Each month a different artist is invited to make new work in response to the specific context offered by the gallery and its location. Through Taxi Gallery I am proposing a model of practice that involves other artists within a framework constructed by myself, as an artist. A framework that reaches for an extended (over time) conversation with both local and translocal audiences in response to a broad range of challenging contemporary artworks, approaches and ideas. Taxi Gallery is a project central to my practice, a direct development from my interest in site-specific, collaborative and participatory frameworks.

please refer to:

www.taxigallery.org.uk

www.kirstenlavers.net and enclosures

Begun in September 2002 as a self-funded initiative, since July 2003 Taxi Gallery has developed and consolidated with the help of a small (under £5000) award from Grants for the Arts.

To date there have been exhibitions by both local and national artists exploring approaches to the specific context of the gallery ranging from audio monologue to video, sculpture, drawing and interactive media. Opening/talk events held in conjunction with each exhibition have been well-attended attracting audiences from the local neighbourhood, Cambridge itself as well as further afield. The gallery has attracted considerable positive media attention from local and national newspapers, radio and TV. On the strength of the Taxi Gallery programme I was asked to curate WIDE OPEN - an exhibition of challenging contemporary artworks for Cambridge Artworks' ArtSpace - July 10 – 18. Cambridge Artworks are now planning and have secured funding for an onward programme of exhibitions.

Taxi Gallery has worked closely with Abbey Meadows Primary School on three projects bringing professional artists into school to work with children on an exhibition for the gallery – work has included; miniature portraits, street poetry and junk sculpture. These projects have been extremely successful both in educational terms and in engaging local audiences of all ages. As a result of this relationship Taxi Gallery is co-hosting with Abbey Meadows school a Community Summer Exhibition celebrating the creativity of all ages and kinds - July 6 –9 2004. A strong network has been established with key members of the community and in March, Taxi Gallery hosted a well-attended networking/ event.

Taxi Gallery was never intended to be a permanent project – the provocation of the Taxi as a site for artistic intervention would eventually exhaust itself, inevitably. From the outset I was interested in discovering what was possible to achieve and initiate through an extended sited intervention of this kind. Taxi Gallery is now well positioned to embark on an ambitious final year of interlinked activities building upon the success of the first two years of the Taxi Gallery project bringing it to a considered and final conclusion and enabling artistic and community initiatives and networks created through Taxi Gallery to continue to develop independently.

Proposed Activities

1. Odd Saturday Art Club*

In response to local interest, this club will meet fortnightly initially using the Scout Hut venue next door to Taxi Gallery. It will be open to people of all ages but specifically targeted as a ‘family learning’ opportunity for children accompanied by parents. Each 2 hr session to be led by an invited artist (usually one exhibiting in the gallery) and offering a particular achievable activity or art approach. It won’t be obligatory for all participants to engage in this activity – there will always be a play area for younger children with crayons, plasticine, building bricks etc and a range of good quality art materials available for people to experiment with on their own, if they prefer.

There will also be music playing, maybe the occasional artist’s short film/animation playing on a TV Video, tea/coffee/squash etc I’d be aiming for a relaxed atmosphere where people can feel comfortable to hang out and get drawn in when they’re ready. I’m as interested in creating a space where people talk as I am in a space where people “make”.

The Club will run for 8 pilot sessions at which point it will be reviewed and evaluated with participants. If the group want it to continue I will support them in taking responsibility for running the sessions, inviting artists etc etc sourcing funding/sponsorship etc in order to make this an ongoing community resource/activity.

**The club will meet on dates that are an odd number – hence the name.*

2. Exhibition Programme

Curation/artist liaison and administration of a programme for the final year of Taxi Gallery. These 5 exhibitions will run for 6-8 weeks. Each artist will give a talk about their practice at the opening event (there has been a very good response

to these events over the last year particularly from Cambridge based artists who welcome the chance to hear and talk about work in the relaxed atmosphere offered by Taxi Gallery) – they will also deliver a practical workshop related to their work at the Odd Saturday Art Club. Artists will receive a bursary from Taxi Gallery and will be contracted to write a reflective report on their exhibiting experience for the Taxi Gallery website. Artists will be given support in attracting further funding or sponsorship for their exhibition where necessary/appropriate.

3. Taxi Radio

Artists working with sound and radio interventions is one of the most exciting features of the contemporary art scene and since my involvement with TORK RADIO at the Junction in 1998 I have been keen to see further work in this area happening in the region.

Taxi Gallery will operate as a Short Range FM (3 mile radius) and Internet radio station for 9 consecutive days, broadcasting 24/7 (12 hrs live, 12 hrs pre-recorded). This project will include a close relationship with Coleridge Secondary School as an extra curricular activity involving teachers and pupils in recording their own programmes/music and gaining hands on experience in all aspects of working with sound technologies and radio/internet broadcasting.

Two artists-in-residence will work on the project –

cris cheek will work on the overall programming, provide an anchor role as presenter wherever appropriate and oversee live mixing as well as working with students and teachers from Coleridge School and a range of local resident initiatives/involvements. Cris has extensive experience in radio and sound art and won a Sony Gold award for his BBC Radio 3 programme – The Music of Madagascar. **CV available at www.crischeek.net**

Simon Keep will be composing sound works onsite during the 9 day broadcast and providing tech support leading up to and throughout the broadcast period. Simon is an exciting young sound artist (based in East Anglia), coming from a visual arts training – he has considerable technical expertise and experience in short range radio broadcast. **More info available at www.holkham.net**

Community involvement will be actively encouraged through the network established by Taxi Gallery and will extend beyond the Art Club and Coleridge School Student/teacher initiatives.

Taxi Radio programmes will include:

Play List – favourite music and spoken word tracks nominated through leafletting the neighbourhood and local taxi companies (people will be asked to bring

recordings to be played and to “introduce” their track with a reminiscence, anecdote etc)

AdHoc conversations with passers by

Arranged conversations with a range of people including neighbours, taxi drivers, artists, local historians,

Round table ‘after dark’ style themed discussions live from the Scout Hut.

Programmes/tracks created by Coleridge School and other participants (for example sonic topographies, short dramas, local documentary, local news,

Work by Simon Keep and cris cheek

Artists working with sound will be invited by national advertising (e-listserves and AN Newsletter) to submit works for broadcast on Taxi Radio, submissions to be curated by cris, Simon and myself..

Features on previous interventions into local radio, such as Hearing IS Believing (1995); Tork Radio (1998), Radio Radio (2001), Wish You Were Here (2002), MIMA FM (2004) and Resonance FM.

All of the above to be live mixed (with the sounds of the street and gardens around Taxi Gallery) and compered for 12/24 hrs per day – the other 12 hrs being live audio / and repeats from the day’s broadcast. Timing of this split will vary day – to day.

Taxi Radio will be actively publicised, additional to Taxi Gallery’s standard publicity strategy – including leafleting, postcards, adverts in neighbourhood Abbey Action Newsletter and Cambridge Evening News, through local Taxi Services and local TV/Radio.

Taxi Radio will be launched at a special event to include a cavalcade of cars driving through the Abbey Barnwell area with Taxi Radio playing on their car radios.

Whilst FM radio is expensive and technically challenging to set up on a permanent basis – internet radio is a relatively simple and cheap possibility as a longer term outcome from this project. If participants, including Coleridge School, wish to further develop upon this venture they will have gained valuable experience and skills that would enable them to do so.

4. TAXI GALLERY FINAL COMMISSION

Taxi Gallery will advertise nationally for proposals from artists for a final and permanent artwork created for/with Taxi Gallery and in response to the project as a whole. A shortlist will be drawn up by myself and an invited committee to include neighbours, and local housing officer will meet with the shortlisted artists in order to decide on the commission award.

The work will be launched at a special celebratory event which will also mark the end of the Taxi Gallery project and publicised (additional to standard Taxi Gallery strategies) through postcards distributed in key venues around the city and through liaison with the City Council Tourism Bureau I intend that the artwork will become listed as a local landmark and “place to visit”.

5. Developing A & B New Partner’s Project

Over the course of the year I shall develop upon contacts with potential business partners (I have already made initial contact with Panther Taxis and London Taxis International) to work on an application for an Arts & Business New Partners Project which will result in a staff training days led by Taxi Gallery and the publication of a comprehensive full colour catalogue and CD Rom documenting the entire Taxi Gallery Project. Half of the published edition (figure to be decided) will be distributed by Taxi Gallery to regional and national art bookshops, the other half will be used by the business involved as corporate gifts/promotions.

2. Making It Happen

My work to date on Taxi Gallery demonstrates my ability to plan and administrate a programme of activities such as this efficiently, effectively and intuitively. The overall schedule for these activities is October 04 – August 05.

Oct – Aug **Curation of exhibition programme, artists liaison, event planning and hosting, publicity etc will be ongoing throughout.**

October Art Club commences
Application for RSL Radio licenses
Initial discussions with potential business partners

Nov – Jan Prep + submission of New Partnerships application

Feb	Review/Evaluation of Art Club – following pilot period Workshops with Coleridge Teachers commence
Mar/Apr	Prep work with Coleridge students and community groups for Radio project Publicity prep for Radio Project Advertising for Final commission proposals
May	Radio Project Broadcast
June	Final commission selection Documentation and evaluation of Radio Project
July/August	Installation of Final Commission Closing celebratory event Evaluation + Final Report

Partners for these and previous activities include: Coleridge School, City Council Development Committee, County Council Family Learning Unit, Abbey Action community group, Abbey Meadows Primary School, 29th Cambridge Scout Group, Panther Taxis, Tesco Supermarkets.

3. The Finances

The budget as completed in the application provides basic information on the financial aspects of the proposed activities. I have also provided here a budget in a slightly amended version of your format so that the budgetary aspects of each activity are more clearly identified in greater detail.

A Taxi Gallery business account is in place. Receipts will be retained for all expenditure and accounts will be kept using a standard spreadsheet software package allocating all expenditure to the relevant budget headings. Invoices will be required for all fee payments and I will account for my own fees through my audited self-employed accounts.

I have considerable experience in managing projects of this scale efficiently as demonstrated by previous experience in administering the work of the Things Not Worth Keeping Millennium Collection project (Arts Council NTP award of £26,000), The Zwillinge Project and managing emergency winter nightshelters with budgets in excess of £150,000

4. Benefits

This programme of activities will enable Taxi Gallery to reach its full potential through a concluding programme that aims to provide local impetus for onward initiatives inspired by the project. It will enable me to provide a greater degree of support and resources to Taxi Gallery's community network and also to the artists contributing to the exhibition programme.

It will significantly underpin Taxi Gallery's two central aims as follows:

1. **To provide a supportive opportunity to a range of artists to create challenging contemporary artworks in response to the particular context offered by the gallery.**

The year long exhibition programme culminating in the final permanent commission provides a further 8 substantial creative opportunities to artists interested in the context specific remit of Taxi Gallery. It will also enable continued access to challenging contemporary artworks of a high standard – combined with the opportunity for audiences to meet with artists and discuss their work. The closure of Taxi Gallery at the end of the year effectively “hands the baton” to Cambridge Artworks and their future exhibition programming in ArtSpace – with which I have been closely involved as invited curator of their WIDE OPEN show in July 2004.

2. **To engage with Taxi Gallery's local audience by providing 'means of engagement' which are inclusive and responsive to the neighbourhood.**

Funding support will enable me to build upon the achievements of the past year in terms of a gathering goodwill, interest and local community involvement in the Taxi Gallery programme. In addition to the Taxi Gallery talk events, audiences will have the chance to get actively involved with a range of art making practices and strategies and will be offered support to make these resources their own ventures running independently of Taxi Gallery once it has closed.

The Taxi Gallery website and electronic mailbase marketing strategy has already proven a success reaching national and international audiences. The journal advertising and hard copy (postcard) publicity enabled by this funding application will further raise the profile of Taxi Gallery both locally and nationally. This will also be of benefit to the artists exhibiting at the Taxi Gallery (both past and future) since it will enhance their personal CVs and provide them with a continued archived online presence to which they can refer potential commissioners/funders.

5. Meeting Your Aims

The Taxi Gallery Project is about exploring new ways in which contemporary art practice can meet (without compromise or condescension) with a diverse audience within the context of an ordinary city council estate (also a designated area of deprivation). This final series of activities provides real opportunities to the local audience network to engage with both viewing *and* making art. Taxi Gallery is about building networks of support and engagement and stimulating discussion through direct interaction as well as through documentation and debate via the website. The final year of Taxi Gallery sets out to create opportunities with potential, resources and skills carried forward by participants.

Taxi Gallery provides a tangible opportunity to artists to make, show and see new site-specific/context related work within a framework that is supportive of their individual practice and provides a context for discussion and feedback/response. For instance as a direct result of his show 'Roof Rack' at Taxi Gallery in February 2003 Desmond Brett was invited to make a new work for The Simple Truth show at Norwich Gallery May/June 2003.

This project will result in the production of at least 6 new exhibited artworks as well as several new soundworks composed by the Radio Project's 2 artists-in-residence. The continued enhanced profile of the gallery will support my aim of developing a mixed programme that includes artists of national standing as well as younger less experienced artists. The programme to date has included artists such as Rona Lee, Lesley Halliwell, Clare Charnley, Ruth Claxton, Matt Rogalsky and Chloe Steele – all of whom have exhibited nationally and internationally for a number of years. It has also included artists such as Desmond Brett, Laura Robinson, Anna Townley, James R Ford for whom this was a tangibly useful opportunity to showcase their work at an early stage in their careers.

6. Evaluation

Evaluation is ongoing using means such as; a Comments Book, online website comments facility and online curator's log book. Attendance at events and workshops is recorded and whilst it is impossible to log every viewer of the exhibition (a 24/7 task!) estimated figures are recorded for each show. This data will enable me to assess the effects of the various initiatives outlined above.

Participating artists will now be required (hitherto it has been voluntary and therefore sporadic) to provide a short reflective report on their experience of making work for the Taxi Gallery, these will be added to the website archive for each show.

As part of the Radio project – there will be a discussion programme with an invited local audience – and open to online message board comments and telephone calls - the agenda of which being to discuss the contribution made by Taxi Gallery to the life of the local community.

As part of my evaluation of Year 2 of Taxi Gallery I have commissioned Caravan Gallery (<http://www.thecaravangallery.co.uk/Surveys.htm>) to carry out an evaluative artwork in the form of one of their inventive, fun and accessible context-related questionnaires – due to be carried out July 6 & 7. It will also be included for online completion on the website. This will provide me with an invaluable source of information regarding the work of Taxi Gallery and how it is currently perceived / valued by its local/translocal audience etc.

This commission suggests a potential model for evaluation as an artwork in itself and I intend to repeat this approach with an evaluation commission (not necessarily Caravan Gallery again) to evaluate the whole of the Taxi Gallery project at the end of Year 3 and have budgeted accordingly.

The final report and evaluation data/material will feed into the Taxi Gallery Publication and CDROM to form a permanent record of the project to accompany the permanent remaining artwork.

APPENDIX

Check List of URLs referred to in this proposal:

www.taxigallery.org.uk

www.kirstenlavers.net

www.crischeek.net

www.holkham.net

<http://www.thecaravangallery.co.uk/Surveys.htm>

DETAILED BUDGET BROKEN DOWN INTO SEPARATE ACTIVITIES

INCOME

County Council (Family Learning)	£800
City Council (Community Development)	£530
Tesco's Sponsorship (of Saturday Art Club materials)	£150
Coleridge School	£4500
Private Income	£2000

TOTAL INCOME **£7980**

EXPENDITURE

General Costs

Overall Coordination/evaluation Fee 35 days @ £175	£6125
Admin/telephone/webspace	£200
Display sundries/taxi security /maintenance	£300
Evaluation Commission	£500

Odd Saturday Art Club

Materials/equipment	£500
Refreshments	£50
Publicity Leaflets (500 A5)	£75
3 x invited artists @ £75 per session	£225
Session assistant @ £17.50 per hour (16 hrs total)	£280
Venue hire charge @ £10 per session	£80

** these are artists invited who are not concurrently exhibiting at Taxi Gallery – the 5 artists exhibiting will give a Saturday Club workshop as part of their bursary*

Exhibition Programme

Artist's Bursaries: 5 x £300	£1500
Event costs (include venue hire + hospitality) 5 x £80	£400
Event assistant 5 x £30	£150
Exhibition Advertising (Artists Newsletter)	£174

Final Commission

Artist Fee	£1000
Materials	£1000
Publicity/advertising	£250
Launch/closing Event	£300
Selection expenses (artist's travel, committee hospitality etc)	£250

Radio Project

Artist – in – residence (programming + school) Fee 25 days	£4375
Artist in residence / broadcast tech support Fee 15 days	£2625
Studio Tech Assistant (logging, archiving, liaison) @10 days	£750
Transmitter Equipment hire/installation	£500
Studio + recording equipment hire	£2000
Materials CD, mini discs etc	£400
OfCom RSL Licenses 9 days broadcast + £200 app fee	£920
Customized/adfree Internet Radio <i>inc internet message board provision + royalties</i>	£500
Performing Rights Society License	£372
Publicity leaflets/postcards	£400
Launch event costs	£300
Documentation – selected extracts CDRom + booklet (10 copies)	£500
Contingency @ 10% of costs (excluding fees + commissions)	£847

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **£27848**

TOTAL GRANTS FOR ARTS FUNDING REQUIRED **£19868**