

Rationale:

The title of the project is deliberately ambiguous; on the one hand it is an art project **about place** - responses to places in Derbyshire, or the place that Derbyshire is - and on the other it is about **re:placing** the simplistic perception of Derbyshire as a bucolic wilderness, a romantic landscape, and responding to the complexity, creativity and richness of the place. It is also about replacing this view of Derbyshire with one which foregrounds contemporary art practice. Other suffixes will be added to indicate other manifestations of the project as it progresses:

re:view, critical writing about art practice in relation to the rural context;

re:print, publications relating to the project;

re:search, a conference exploring thinking around contemporary art practice in rural contexts, and a series of ongoing exploratory conversations between curators;

re:distribute, a programme of touring and collaboration with other arts organisations outside the county.

Derbyshire:

Derbyshire has eight districts and boroughs - Amber Valley | Erewash | Chesterfield | Bolsover | Derbyshire Dales | High Peak | North East Derbyshire | South Derbyshire.

Derby City is a separate unitary authority and we are **not** actively considering siting work in the city of Derby, so we will not consider proposals which are for work to be located in Derby, unless the work refers to a Derbyshire site or has a split site location and there is a clear rationale for the Derby location to be selected.

Derbyshire is a county with strong local distinctiveness, but eludes description as a single entity: it has the landscapes of the Peak District in Derbyshire Dales and High Peak, with prehistoric sites, agriculture, quarrying, lead mining, dry stone walling and the grand houses such as Chatsworth and Haddon; in NE Derbyshire, Chesterfield and Bolsover the more recent mining and industrial heritage sits alongside the medieval fortress of Bolsover Castle and the Tudor Hardwick Hall; and the World Heritage Site of Derwent Valley Mills stretches through the Amber Valley down to the city of Derby. It is a dynamic area both physically and in demographic terms.

Background: the core of this project is the commissioning of contemporary, site-specific visual art in the public realm. This is how we define it.

background 1: visual art

The definition used here includes traditional visual media (painting, drawing, sculpture) as well as photography, artists' film and video, installation (including sound), visual artwork created or distributed using digital media and live art. It specifically excludes performing arts and public art. As public art is intended to be permanent or semi-permanent and broadly speaking celebratory or decorative rather than critical in its approach, this does not fit the nature of the proposed programme, as it is likely that the work produced will be temporary, transient or ephemeral. It also excludes traditional craft other than where a craft form is the medium of a visual artwork, in which case the craft medium would be subordinate to the critical interpretation or meaning of the artwork.

background 2: contemporary practice

Quote from the ACE Visual Arts Strategy, “Contemporary art is the art of our time. It is more a way of seeing than a defined art form; the practice is often interdisciplinary with a range of media including photography, new media, fine art, artists’ moving image, live art, crafts, design and architecture. It is a driving force in popular culture, nurtured through creative innovation, entrepreneurial risk, new curatorial processes and critical debate ... Imagination combined with critical intelligence, shaped by historical knowledge, in conjunction with contemporary thought and practice is crucial to any attempt to create in a distinctive way.”

background 3: site specificity:

By this we mean that the work responds to, interrogates, reveals or refers to a particular site. The work might not necessarily be physically placed at a site (it could be a publication or web based work) and the site might be generic or conceptual rather than specific (the work might respond to 'Derbyshire', or 'landscape', for example). It is also possible that existing work might be placed at a site with which it has a particular resonance and the possibility of doing this is not excluded.

background 4: public realm:

The intention is that all of the works commissioned will be in the public realm. By this we mean that they will be in non-traditional sites for contemporary visual art rather than in galleries (which are largely absent from Derbyshire). In general these will be sites that can be accessed by the general public without restriction or charge (though this may not be the case at some heritage sites), and may be deliberately sought out or accidentally happened upon.

background 5: underpinning ideas and values:

The initial consultation for this project involved discussion with artists, and some key concerns emerged which are integral to the project, which broadly fall into three categories:

1. landscape, history and physical characteristics;
2. communities and people;
3. particular types of artists’ interventions that were suggested, and sites where they might occur.

They also revealed some key concerns. This is a brief summary followed by the fuller text below:

1. A concern with complexity and multiple meanings, rather than simplistic celebrations of landscape, history or place.
2. A wish to avoid high-profile venues, such as Chatsworth, but an interest in revealing unseen and overlooked places, hidden gems, in exploring the ugly as well as the beautiful, and critically appraising the multiple meanings of sites through their interventions in those places.
3. The nature of community, especially in rural areas, emerged as a key theme.
4. Travel to and through the county, as a physical means of exploring and understanding the county as a site.

The discussions revealed some underpinning thoughts and values. These should not be read as a menu of projects we want to commission, but simply as indicative of possible strategies:

1. Landscapes and history/physical characteristics:

- Industrial - Tarmac and quarrying (sedimented histories) - Industrial heritage - pretty/unpretty - mill strikes/political history - Natural resources - quarrying/water/cotton/lead/silk manufacture
- Wild • Primordial • Grim • Stunning • Atmospheric • Epic but modest
- Damp, grey, gritty (physically and emotionally) • Ragged, leafy, surprising
- Physical formation of the landscape - geology - light and dark peaks - The apparentness of history - industrial, geological - written on the landscape
- Contrasting - light and dark peak/rural and urban/agriculture and industry
- Crowded peaceful places - Full-empty - Negative space - empty space - is Derbyshire defined by omission? Is it a place at all?
- Managed unreal state of peak district-ness
- Diverse - a bit of everything physically, economically and culturally
- Land-locked - central - neither North nor South
- On the edge - surrounded by cities - TV regions - which way do Derbyshire people face?
- Iconic ideas of landscape and freedom, space ...
- Huge variety within a physically small space
- The layering of routes (roads/railways/paths/canals) a place that is passed through en route to somewhere else - moving/travel - the Trans-Peak Bus - alternative routes to the direct, using buses and relying on chance, rover tickets, zig-zag tickets - superimposing one journey onto another (in a Situationist derivee manner, allowing alternative discoveries)
- Layers and contrasts - hidden elements and revealed elements - the unsung fabulous places
- The interface between man-made and natural
- Sublime - especially quarries - and the application of relative value to the industrial and natural
- Milestones (in particular 'Alfreton - 0 miles')

2. Communities and people

- Generally a white place, but with some diversity (Polish, Italian, Grenadian, West Indian) • Culturally unfocussed
- A place where people make their own entertainment • Festival county
- Rural - commuters/tension between locals and incomers/strong communities - Overlapping communities - Pub/church/village hall (the essentials of being a village) - Pockets of rural deprivation and isolation, and lack of transport • What you see is what you get (WYSIWYG) • Leisure versus industry (historically and currently)
- A place of myths and mythology • The Derbyshire neck - goitre

3. Interventions and sites of interest

- Moving/travel - the Trans-Peak Bus - alternative routes to the direct, using buses and relying on chance, rover tickets, zig-zag tickets - superimposing one journey onto another (in a Situationist derivee manner, allowing alternate discoveries)
- Take a holiday to home - travel from outside Derbyshire into it for a holiday in your home environment as a means of rediscovering
- Green plaque/blue plaques - celebrating the Unsung Heroes (real and fictional)
- Work responding to memories of people who have been displaced - nostalgic recreations
- Quarries (sedimented histories), caves, derelict mills, rivers, dales, disused railways, stone circles, agricultural buildings, outdoor adventure centres, triangulation pillars
- Churches and historic buildings (though not necessarily the obvious ones)
- The points of interface between the man-made and the natural • Chip shops, pubs, other sites for social interaction

- Work specifically contrasting with its environment, ie critical interventions • Unexpectedness of scale and materials
- Revealing the overlooked and unseen • Surprise, challenging expectations, causing bemusement, switching on critical faculties of the viewer
- Works which change over time in their physical location - degrade or deliberately altered over time
- Responding to planning policy - anti-historical architecture - exploration of the relation of architecture to landscape - the idea of neo-vernacular architecture
- Relating untold stories rather than those already articulated • Linking works geographically - games and trails
- Dislocating site - juxtaposing work and site • Location work out of Derbyshire but referring to it (off-site works)
- Event as community participation • Creating alternative meanings to the 'official' ones by concentrating on lived and personal histories rather than authorised histories
- Inside/outside - exploring the psychology of inside and outside experiences (interior and exterior meanings)
- Stange Edge - a participatory performance of climbing routes • Synaesthetic immersive environment - perhaps in Belper North Mill
- Installation trail - using natural materials, creating fictional narratives, guerrilla sculpture, perhaps with music, and a live art element/event- based format
- Artist replication of walks from existing Derbyshire walk books • Artworks as features of walks in remote places

Weblinks for research:

<http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/>
<http://www.ambervalley.gov.uk/>
<http://www.erewash.gov.uk/>
<http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk/>
<http://www.bolsover.gov.uk/>
<http://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/>
<http://www.highpeak.gov.uk/>
<http://www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk/>
<http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/>
<http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/>
<http://www.peakdistrict.org/>
<http://www.artsderbyshire.org.uk/>
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>
<http://www.derwentvalleymills.org/>
<http://www.nationalforest.org/>
<http://www.buxtonfestival.co.uk/>
<http://www.matlocklive.co.uk/>
<http://www.bakewellfestival.com/>
<http://www.melbournefestival.co.uk/>
<http://www.thebeetroottree.com/>