

Call for proposals***Communities and Collectives: the story of a people's movement*****Submission deadline:** Friday 11 March**Available fee:** £6,000**Background**

Voice-hearing, or hearing a voice in the absence of any speaker, is one of the most unusual, complex and mysterious aspects of human experience. Although typically viewed as a symptom of severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, voice-hearing is now being recognised as an important aspect of many ordinary people's lives and one that has had profound individual and social significance across cultures and historical periods.

As part of the ongoing, Wellcome Trust funded, *Hearing the Voice* interdisciplinary research project, Durham University is staging an exhibition at Palace Green Library from 5 November 2016 to 26 February 2017. *Hearing Voices: suffering, inspiration, everyday*, together with its supporting programme of events and activities, will be one of the key means by which the project seeks to improve public understanding of voice-hearing, reduce stigma and discrimination and challenge some of the myths and misconceptions that surround this experience.

The exhibition aims to explore the cultural, clinical, scientific and spiritual contexts of voice-hearing from the medieval to the present and to demonstrate how this phenomenon illuminates fascinating questions about many vital aspects of human experience. The displays will incorporate material from the University's own collections as well as those of other institutions both local and national, including links with Wellcome Collection's *This is a Voice* exhibition. The exhibition will also contain a section exploring the communities that have formed around voice-hearing; it is that section to which this commission pertains.

Brief

This commission invites an individual or group from the voice-hearing community to co-curate a section of the exhibition, in collaboration with the exhibition's academic and curatorial team, dedicated to an exploration of the communities that have formed around voice-hearing, with a particular focus on the Hearing Voices Movement. It is not the intention that this will be a comprehensive history or an endorsement of the movement, or a definitive representation of the views and many achievements of its members. Rather, the purpose of this section of the exhibition is to acknowledge that there is something distinctive about voice-hearing (that is has given rise to a powerful people's movement, that it has a politics, that it is an experience that people come together in groups to explore) and to provide a space for voice-hearers themselves to tell this story.

The content of this section of the exhibition should:

- Bring the general public's attention to the existence of the Hearing Voices Movement and some of its major animating figures and ideas, showing that voice-hearing is not always a clinical or solitary experience but can be the basis of a community
- Celebrate the ways in which the Hearing Voices Movement has helped people around the world accept and make sense of their experiences and fight for social justice
- Underscore the significance of the movement to public and clinical understandings of hearing voices
- Include accounts and experiences of voice-hearers of the Hearing Voices Movement

It is crucial that the presentation of these points and stories also includes practical information for visitors to the exhibition who may wish to get in contact or connect with networks and organisations within the Hearing Voices Movement.

The exhibition team includes individuals from the *Hearing the Voice* project, as well as a curatorial lead and a graphic designer. This team will be curating the rest of the exhibition and will work alongside the group or individual appointed to ensure that the necessary points are covered in this section, and that the interpretation is distinct and clearly authored by members of the voice-hearing community whilst also retaining stylistic consistency with the rest of the exhibition. The exhibition has an underpinning ethics statement, to which the curating individual or group will be expected to subscribe and adhere, and a Steering Group, which includes experts by experience, members of which will be invited to give feedback on plans for the interpretation part-way through the development process.

Those submitting proposals for the commission should be aware that, should they be appointed, they will be responsible for sourcing and securing verbal agreement to borrow all objects for display. The University Library will take care of the logistics of transporting and installing objects for display, as well as ensuring that the requisite written agreements for borrowing them are in place, but it is the role of the commissioned individual or group to find and secure these things. This can include 'off the shelf' purchases, but these should be budgeted for within the commission fee.

Allocated gallery space and specifications

This section of the exhibition will be one of a number within Palace Green Library's Dennyson Stoddart Gallery.

- 131m²; this includes space occupied by structural columns
- Walls are lined with panels, each measuring approximately 2500mm x 3000mm, and there is a suite of demountable walls that can be placed in a variety of configurations, on which graphics and framed display objects (such as posters and paintings) can be hung
- Power, network cables and a uni-strut system in the ceiling allows for the use of audio-visual equipment and the hanging of graphics or display structures
- Flexible flooring allows power and data at a range of points within the gallery

It is anticipated that the space available for this section will allow for:

- an introductory graphic panel, 75-125 words
- up to three 'sub-sections', each with a graphic panel of 75-125 words
- up to three upright showcases in which to show objects with accompanying captions
- some wall space for showing a small number of wall-mounted objects with accompanying captions

Exhibition key messages

Through the written interpretation, objects and artworks on display, and interactive opportunities that will form the exhibition, the principal aim is to actively engage many and various audiences in a better understanding of the experience of voice-hearing in its many different forms. Underpinning this aim is a number of key messages. These are:

- Hearing voices can sometimes be an intensely distressing experience, but people find many different ways to cope with this.
- The voices people hear are not always commanding and dangerous or best understood as a symptom of mental illness. There are many different kinds of voice-hearing experiences and they can be part of everyday life for a wide variety of people (and for people at different points in their lives).
- Voice-hearing can be an important source of inspiration (for example, in artistic, literary, spiritual contexts).
- Hearing voices need not be an isolating experience, but can form the basis of a community.

Timescales

Commission brief – Communities and Collectives: the story of a people's movement

- Briefings – Monday 29 February (attendance not essential)
 - Guided tour of the exhibition galleries at Palace Green Library, including an opportunity to see the space in which the *Hearing Voices* exhibition will be held
 - Briefing on the exhibition as a whole and the role within it of this commissioned section
 - Opportunity to meet and discuss the commission with members of the exhibition team
- Submission of proposals – Friday 11 March
- Award of commission – by Thursday 31 March
- Development of content – April-August
- Electronic/virtual presentation to Steering Group – early July
- Delivery of final images, text and objects – by end of August

How to apply

Proposal submissions should be sent to Emma Hamlett, Exhibitions Curator at Palace Green Library, Palace Green, Durham, DH1 3RN or at emma.hamlett@durham.ac.uk by 12noon on Friday 11 March.

Proposals should refer to the assessment criteria below but, at a minimum, should comprise:

- A CV or similar for the group or individual applying to carry out the commission, including information on their suitability to undertake the commission and any relevant experience or past projects, particularly evidencing work with communities and instances of collaborative working
- A statement of the group or individual's understanding and experience of voice-hearing and the voice-hearing community, including any specific experience of the Hearing Voices Movement
- Details of how the group or individual would propose to go about working on the commission, including information on approach and available networks and potential display objects
- A breakdown of costs

Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be considered and assessed by the exhibition team and Steering Group.

Proposals should demonstrate how they will:

- contribute to the delivery of the stated aim to improve public understanding of voice-hearing, reduce stigma and discrimination, and challenge some of the myths and misconceptions that surround this experience
- highlight the distinctiveness of voice-hearing: that it has given rise to a powerful people's movement, that it has a politics, that it is an experience that people come together in groups to explore
- bring to the general public's attention the existence of the Hearing Voices Movement and some of its major figures and ideas
- ensure that authorship belongs to members of the communities that have formed around voice-hearing
- celebrate the ways in which Hearing Voices Movement has helped people around the world accept and make sense of their experiences and fight for social justice
- underscore the significance of the movement to public and clinical understandings of hearing voices
- provide the space and practical means by which visitors can find out about, contact, and connect with networks and organisations within the Hearing Voices Museum

Proposals should include practical information on how they will:

- source and secure objects for display
- make effective and appropriate use of accounts and experiences of people in the Hearing Voices Movement
- approach the creation, collation, and communication of content for the exhibition displays

Individuals or groups submitting a proposal should:

Commission brief – Communities and Collectives: the story of a people's movement

- have relevant experience or examples of past projects, particularly evidencing work with communities and instances of collaborative working
- describe their understanding and experience of voice-hearing and the voice-hearing community, including any specific experience of the Hearing Voices Movement and the networks within it of which they are a part
- demonstrate an understanding of the practicalities of the commission including the necessity of working with and to the allocated showcases, number of graphics, word counts, and budget

Informal enquiries ahead of submission

For any enquiries ahead of submission please contact Emma Hamlett, at emma.hamlett@durham.ac.uk or on 0191 334 1214, who will either answer your query or pass it onto someone within the team who can.