

Call for proposals**Writer-in-residence – *Hearing Voices: suffering, inspiration, and the everyday*****Submission deadline:****Available fee: £4500****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. The exhibition, 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 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.

Brief

This brief invites a writer to undertake a residency during the course of the exhibition at Palace Green Library. The residency would contribute particularly to the section of the exhibition that will focus on the important role that voices – be they inner, imagined or heard – play in writing and in the reading of literary works. It will explore writers' powerful and unusual experiences of voices whilst writing, including the surprisingly common but little understood phenomenon whereby writers "hear" the voices of the fictional characters they create. Focusing specifically upon the works and lives of three hugely significant literary figures (Woolf, Dickens, and Beckett), it will investigate how voices have inspired writers throughout literary history and how these unusual experiences feed into the representation of voices within literary works. Readers, too, have diverse and fascinating experiences of inner voice (with 1 out of 7 people saying that they experience the voices of characters like hearing somebody speaking in the same room) and so this section of the exhibition will also encourage visitors to reflect upon their own experiences of characters and narrators whilst reading.

The aim of this residency is to actively explore ideas around inner voice in writing and reading through engagement with and interaction between the exhibition, its visitors, and a writer. It is envisioned that the residency will comprise of three main strands:

- contribution to the exhibition setting and content through periods of working within the exhibition setting (i.e. being physically 'in residence') and working with the curatorial team on interactive exercises for visitors during periods outside of being 'in residence'
- facilitation of creative writing workshops
- production of new work as an output of the residency

Together, work on these three strands should:

- aim to explore and expound the role of inner voice in the creation of literary work for exhibition visitors, workshop participants, and through new writing
- draw on the exhibition content and interaction with exhibition visitors and workshop participants in order to do this
- be informed by the research and reference material provided by the project
- create a space in and means by which visitors can respond to the exhibition content and ideas
- contribute to the body of knowledge and research findings on the role of inner voice in the creation of literary work

Scope of residency

The residency is anticipated to run throughout the life of the exhibition and for a short period thereafter. During the exhibition's run it is expected to include a minimum of 10 days working in the exhibition galleries at Palace Green Library and the delivery of no fewer than 2 creative writing workshops held at the Library as part of the exhibition's engagement programme. This should be preceded by a number of research and development days, and followed by time working on the completion and preparation for publication of new writing produced within, and as a result of, the residency. The exact format of the final publication is yet to be determined, but it is anticipated that selections will be made to be included alongside images and text from the exhibition, as a legacy of the project.

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.
- 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). The voices people hear are not always commanding and dangerous or best understood as a symptom of mental illness.
- Voice-hearing can be an important source of inspiration (for example, in artistic, literary, spiritual and everyday contexts).
- Hearing voices need not be an isolating experience, but can form the basis of a community.

Timescales

- Submission of proposals : by Friday 15 June
- Award of commission: by Friday 29 July
- Research and development days, including meeting with members of the exhibition team to be briefed on content and to work up interactive exercises for visitors: October
- Exhibition period, to include days 'in residence' and delivery of workshops: 5 November 2016 – 26 February 2017
- Completion of new writing ready for publication: March
- Delivery of completed writing: by Friday 31 March

How to apply

Proposal submissions should be sent to Emma Slinger, *Hearing Voices* Project Officer at Palace Green Library, Palace Green, Durham, DH1 3RN or at e.l.slinger@durham.ac.uk by 12noon on Friday 15 July.

Proposals should comprise:

- A CV or similar including information on your suitability to undertake the commission and any relevant experience or past projects, particularly evidencing at least one of the following: (a) work that engages with sensitive and potentially problematic subject matter; (b) work that sits within a wider project context, such as an exhibition or similar public engagement setting; and (c) reflexive work that engages particularly with process as product
- A bibliography of published work, including a small number of examples, if available/possible
- A statement giving an initial response to the brief, detailing your approach to this project, explaining how your work is an effective and appropriate fit, and how your experience equips you to undertake the commission
- An estimated breakdown of costs. Please note: the available fee must cover all time and materials for the commission, including those relating to the workshop sessions

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.