

Invitation for Artists to Submit Expressions of Interest
to Develop an Artwork to Commemorate
the 2012 Bicentenary of the Birth of Charles Dickens
Southwark, London

We wish to invite artists to submit expressions of interest. The information below is for contextual information only and to enable artists to establish if they meet the criteria; we do not require design proposals at this stage.

Contextual Information

2012 represents the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Dickens. Dickens has a long and deep association with Southwark, both personal and literary, and particularly with the area historically known as The Borough.

The project is being led by 'Dickens in The Borough', a steering group made up of people representing their local community. This group has a passion for their local environment and the historical wealth it holds. They are working with the support of Southwark Council's Culture Service.

The group wishes to invite professional artists to submit expressions of interest for artworks to be installed on a Dickens trail. This will commemorate the bicentenary and highlight particular sites in the Borough area of Southwark that have a historical relevance to Dickens.

The Proposed Commission

Dickens did not want a monument to himself. He states in his last will and testament:

"I conjure to my friends on no account to make me the subject of any monument, memorial or testimonial whatsoever."

In keeping with his wishes we particularly solicit expressions of interest from artists who are able to convey a contemporary reading of this rich history, rather than a traditional memorial. We wish to animate through the commission a number of significant sites which highlight the relationship between Dickens and The Borough, creating a trail which can be followed by visitors and tourists alike.

Aims and Objectives of the Commission

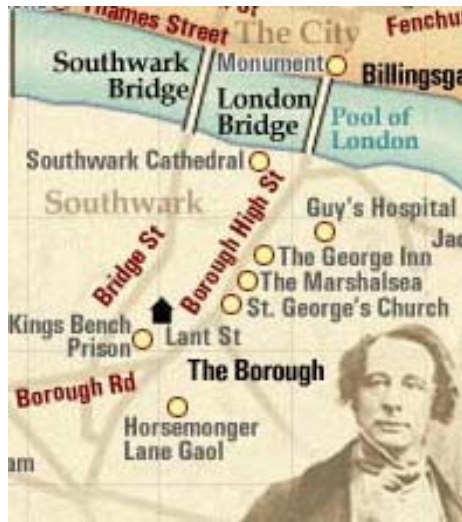
- To celebrate the relationship of Dickens to Southwark, and to The Borough in particular.
- To attract visitors and generate tourism in this part of Southwark.
- To commission an innovative and contemporary reading of local history.
- To open up the history of The Borough to a broader audience and make this history accessible to all.

The Wider Project

Subject to funding the artwork and trail commissioned will be supported by a published leaflet, an application for iPhone and Android phones, Acoustiguide hand-held multimedia players (www.acoustiguide.com) and a website. These tools will provide an overarching resource for Southwark and its relationship to Dickens in the bicentenary year and beyond. The art works within the trail will provide indicators of significant sites, where audiences will be able to download or read further contextual

information as well as viewing the art work. Artists are welcome to exploit these aspects of the proposal should they see a multimedia link with their practice.

The Commission Sites and Context



Extract of map courtesy of David Perdue
<http://charlesdickenspage.com/index.html>

Six key sites for public art have been identified. The most significant of these is a newly pedestrianised public space in Tabard Street which links St George the Martyr – “Little Dorrit’s Church” - with the site of the Marshalsea prison where Dickens’ father was imprisoned for debt in 1824. The steering group have prioritised this site and would like the artist to use this space as the focus for a significant permanent artwork.

1. The church of St George the Martyr, which is one of the few Grade II* listed buildings in The Borough. It sits at the junction of the most important Roman road, Watling Street, which runs east to west across Great Britain. It was rebuilt in 1734 and is commonly known as 'Little Dorrit's Church' after the character in Dickens' tale of the same name, who was christened there. It was in this same church that she slept in the vestry when she was locked out of Marshalsea Prison, and later where she was married to Arthur Clennam. In the bottom right-hand corner of the modern stained glass window at the east end of the church is a representation of Little Dorrit wearing a poke hat.
2. The site of Marshalsea Prison, where Little Dorrit was born and where Dickens’ own father was imprisoned, is just to the north of St George the Martyr. The only part of the prison which survives is the original prison wall at the north side of the churchyard.
3. Nancy’s Steps, the steps that used to lead down to the river to the west of London Bridge were known as 'Nancy's Steps'. It was on the steps of the old bridge that Nancy’s fateful meeting with Mr Brownlow and Rose Maylie took place in *Oliver Twist*. Here she betrayed Fagin, Sikes and Monks and was overheard by Noah Claypole. When Sikes learned what she had done, he murdered her.
4. Dickens himself lodged in Lant Street and this street later became the home of the fictional character Bob Sawyer in *The Pickwick Papers*.
5. The former site of Horsemonger Lane Gaol, which until 1878 stood where Newington Gardens is now. Dickens came to the gaol and witnessed the public execution of Frederick and Maria Manning, a husband and wife who had murdered Mrs Manning’s lover.
6. The Kings Bench Prison was for debtors or for people who had been convicted of libel. It was reputed to be a squalid prison and overcrowded. This often resulted in outbreaks of typhus fever.

As well as these six key sites there are a number of smaller references to Dickens which would maintain momentum along the proposed trail, through street names which have taken their inspiration from Dickens and his characters. The scale of the works for the six major sites and the smaller potential sites and the frequency of their appearance are at the discretion of the artist.

Due to the function of some of the above locations it is important that the individual works are able stand alone independently of the trail as well as providing a narrative to those walking the trail.

The three shortlisted artists will be given a book published by Local Studies and Archives called Charles Dickens and Southwark, which will give a more comprehensive account of the associated history. These three artists will also have access to artefacts available through the Cuming Museum collection and the Charles Dickens Museum library and archive.

Site Restrictions

It should be borne in mind that The Borough where much of the work will be sited is a very historic part of Southwark and much of it is a conservation area. Stricter standards and controls will therefore be applied to protect the character of the area. Planning consent is likely to be required, dependant upon the proposal, and special restrictions will apply to listed buildings.

Form and Materials

We are seeking an imaginative response to this project and welcome a contemporary approach in terms of form. The work can be executed in any material, although the group does seek to commission permanent (minimum 15 to 20 years lifespan), rather than temporary works.

Artists should be aware that these works are likely to be stolen if they are made of valuable metals, and methods of installation which discourage potential thieves need to be incorporated in the designs. The artworks will also need to be durable to external elements, damage-resistant as far as is practical, low maintenance and easily cleaned.

Budget

The 'Dickens in The Borough' group currently has 10% of the total project budget in place for this project which will be used to lever in additional funds. We believe that this is a very attractive project which will appeal to both private and public sponsors, as well as to philanthropic donors.

The target fundraising budget is £150,000. This is the total budget and includes the winning artist's fee, production of the artworks, and installation.

The project is being advertised prior to the full target budget being realised, as we wish to utilise the selected design to illustrate the project proposal to potential funding sources.

It is likely that the winning artist will be contracted in stages as funding is obtained.–

Outline Timetable

Expressions of Interest submitted	6 th July 2011
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Successful artists <u>only</u> informed	18 th July 2011
Selected artists design submission and presentation to panel (tbc)	3 rd October 2011
Public Consultation	4 th October – 23 rd October 2011
Planning permission	November – December 2011
Winning commission announced to the public on the birth date of Dickens	7 th February 2012

Health and Safety

The winning submission will need to meet health and safety guidelines and a risk assessment must be provided by an appropriately qualified individual prior to sign-off of the design. Installation of the work must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified individual in order to comply with health and safety regulations.

The artist must hold public liability and professional indemnity insurance of £5 Million.

Process

A competition panel will be responsible for selection of three artists from the expressions of interest stage. The three shortlisted artists will be awarded a fee of £500 each (to include all fees and expenses) to develop design proposals for presentation to the panel. Agreed proposals will be put forward for public consultation. The winning artist will be given a commitment that once funds are raised they will be contracted to undertake the commission as presented.

We envisage the process for where the works will be sited as being collaborative. It will include the artist selected, those who are familiar with the history of the area and those involved in planning and conservation regulations at Southwark Council.

To submit an expression of interest

Please email dickensintheborough@talktalk.net by 12.00 on 6th of July 2011 with the following:

- A current CV
- Images of recent work
- A short description (less than one page) about how you would approach the commission

To send files over 10MB please Zip the file or use an internet file sender. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Please note that due to the high volume of applications anticipated, we will only respond to those who are successful by 18th of July 2011.