

Introduction by the Vice-Chancellor



The acquisition of the 10-acre site now known as the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ) by the University of Oxford in 2003 presented a unique opportunity to develop an entire new section of urban realm within the boundaries of the city centre. It is one of the most significant development projects the University of Oxford has undertaken for more than a century, and the first to allow public access through the site.

With the creation of this new Quarter, an unparalleled opportunity exists for the University to invite artists to contribute their unique vision and skills to a project of international significance. Our aim is to embed art firmly within the ROQ's public realm and architecture for the benefit of all.

I am delighted that the University has commissioned the ROQ public art strategy by Modus Operandi, who are also guiding us in the process of selecting artists as the site develops. The strategy explores the potential role of art within the ROQ,

opportunities for artists' collaborations with architects and landscape architects and, importantly, the scope for interdisciplinary projects with academics on site. This rich source material, along with the extraordinary history of the site, presents a unique context for artists to create new work through residencies and research projects.

Art has a key role to play in creating the new Quarter, forming the backbone of its future cultural life and linking it with the wider city; the public art programme as it evolves will also present ways in which local residents as well as students and academics can be engaged in the process. New partnerships with external organizations and funding bodies are now being formed to assist the University in delivering a world-class programme for the ROQ.

Please accept our grateful thanks for your interest and support.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Andrew D. Hamilton".

Professor Andrew Hamilton,
Vice-Chancellor

Vision for art in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter

The University's motive in commissioning a public art strategy is driven by the recognition that art and cultural programming will fundamentally enrich the environment and life of the Quarter.

It is a belief reflected in the commitment of the University Estates Services' strategy and shared by all those involved in the ROQ: the faculties and departments that will inhabit the site, the architecture and landscape design teams and the many cultural stakeholders in the city who have been involved in the development of the public art strategy to date.

The University's academic vision for the Radcliffe Infirmary site – and one of the key principles informing the ROQ Masterplan – has always been that it must work as a whole, providing not a series of independent facilities, but rather an integrated campus capable of phased development. This vibrant new quarter of Oxford will house an academic community, benefiting from state-of-the-art buildings and facilities and enhanced opportunities for collaboration across different disciplines.

Our public art strategy serves a similar purpose, providing the overarching framework for an integrated approach to public art, and a creative catalyst for the development of a high quality, imaginative public art programme. It reinforces the University's role as a patron of contemporary culture, continuing its centuries'

old tradition of supporting the arts by commissioning art for new buildings and refurbishment schemes, and allocating and raising funds to support artists-in-residence, exhibitions and research projects.

Moreover, our aspiration is to ensure the ROQ can become a cultural destination, as well as a major educational resource. The public art programme will encourage greater public access to and enjoyment of the ROQ, thus forming firm links with the wider community.

Our vision for the role that public art can play within the ROQ is articulated in the public art strategy, the aspiration being to capitalize on the great interest in the ROQ's history and new identity – public, civic and cultural. Sustaining the vision and successfully delivering an on-going world-class art programme will rely upon long-term consistent leadership and investment by the University and its funding partners. We hope to commission artists of international quality and explore the potential for synergy and collaboration between art and academic disciplines within the ROQ, working through The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) and in partnership with internal and external funding sources.

Professor Shearer West,
Head of Humanities Division
Chair, ROQ Public Art Sub-Committee



Illustration from the *Oxford Almanac*, 1760.
Allegorical engraving showing The Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford; Dr John Radcliffe presents his hospital to the poor, sick and lame.



The Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford c. 1860.
Hand coloured engraving by unknown artist.
Image courtesy University of Oxford.



Mark Wallinger, *Y*, 2008.
Steel sculpture, Magdalen College, Oxford.
Commissioned by Magdalen College.
Image © John Riddy.



Nicky Hirst, *Glass Menagerie*, 2008.
Fritted glass curtain wall, Biochemistry Building, University of Oxford.
Commissioned by University of Oxford.
Image courtesy Hawkins\Brown, © Tim Crocker.



Alexander Beleschenko, 1993.
Glass Screens, the Garden Quadrangle, St. John's College, Oxford.
Commissioned by PACA for St. John's College.
Image courtesy Alexander Beleschenko, © Raffaella Sirtoli, 2013.



Tania Kovats, *Museum of the White Horse*, 2007.
Commissioned by the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art, School of Archaeology and Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford.
Image © FXP.



Richard Woods, *NewBUILD*, 2005.
Commissioned by the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art and New College, Oxford.
Image © John Riddy.



Langlands & Bell, *Kendrew's Milestone*, 2011.
Carrara marble, lead inlay, resin inlay, stainless steel.
Commissioned by Modus Operandi for St. John's College, Oxford.
Image © Langlands & Bell.



Plan of ROQ.
Image courtesy Townshend Landscape Architects.

The Public Art Strategy: *Tracing Venus*

Built for the purpose of observing the transit of Venus, the Radcliffe Observatory has inspired both the name of the new Quarter and its public art strategy. Entitled *Tracing Venus*, the strategy references an aspect of the site's history, part of Dr John Radcliffe's legacy, whilst creating the context for future artistic trajectories and lines of enquiry. The strategy lays down markers that will shape the cultural identity of the Quarter.

Working closely with the ROQ Public Art Sub-Committee (PASC) and in consultation with cultural and community stakeholders, Modus Operandi has developed the vision and framework for the role of artists within the ROQ, outlining a programme of commissions, installations and residencies. Individual art plans for each building are formulated where required to complement the overarching strategy. The aim is that the ROQ should become a new cultural quarter in Oxford, which will become widely known as a site of an evolving programme of artistic experiment, open-ended research and interdisciplinary collaboration. It will be a place where art of the highest quality and ambition is integrated into the fabric of the public realm and architecture.

An imaginatively curated public art programme will act as a creative catalyst, connecting people and places within and

beyond the ROQ. The art projects proposed by artists may encompass the permanent, the temporary and the process-based. Our role as curators is to present the possibilities and to enable artists' ideas to flourish, taking this unique site as the inspiration.

The history of the site and the future life of the ROQ may spark individual and collaborative projects. Biomedical treatment and research, astronomy and meteorology, time and communication present potential starting points for artists, as do the academic faculties on site such as Humanities, Mathematics and Government. Art commissioned will therefore be site-inspired, conceptually, academically and environmentally.

This publication outlines the key principles of the ROQ public art strategy and the initial programme, which will be taken forward in phases as the Quarter progresses.

Vivien Lovell
Director, Modus Operandi



Emily Alexander, *Untitled (The Radcliffe Infirmary)*, 2011.
Digital print from a series of seven.
Image © Emily Alexander, courtesy University of Oxford.

The Programme: an introduction

The public art programme will evolve over a short, medium and long-term period, as the Quarter develops. The initial phase whilst the site is being transformed offers the chance for artists to create new artworks that map, record, illuminate and enliven the ROQ.

Fellowships, research projects and temporary installations are being planned under the lead-in programme and will form a continuous thread in the future. Interdisciplinary collaborations formed between artists, architects and academics will be showcased in a public seminar series programmed with The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH). These collaborations will have a significant impact in the broad field of Humanities.

Strands of the programme will embrace diverse approaches by artists that might be broadly defined under the following headings:

Mapping the site:

An artist's brief covering the site as a whole offers the opportunity to develop a cohesive creative approach to the Quarter, and one which engages intellectually with its function. Simon Periton's role as site-wide artist will allow him to trace the evolution of the site through a permanent serial artwork. The physical contexts for this

approach are the Development Framework, the Landscape & Public Realm Strategy and the Lighting Strategy; these highlight the possibility of collaborative commissions. The academic disciplines on site, as well as its past and future functions, may also suggest conceptual starting points.

Revealing the ROQ:

By inviting artists to create temporary installations, different aspects of the Quarter's history and new identity will be revealed through light projections, sound and website projects. St Luke's Chapel and the Observatory present the opportunity for installations such as Simon Starling's film *Black Drop*; lighting projections onto existing and new buildings will change perceptions of the ROQ, inviting the public and users of the site to engage with it in unprecedented ways. A lighting commission for Oxford's *Light Night* project is being researched.

Notating the ROQ:

By commissioning artists to create permanent artworks in relation to new and refurbished buildings, elements of the architecture and public realm will be amplified through unique interventions. The first such commission is by Oona Culley, working with Hawkins\Brown on a commission for New Radcliffe House,

a primary care trust health centre for the Jericho community. This will be followed by commissions for the Mathematics Institute by Rafael Viñoly Architects, the Blavatnik School of Government by Herzog & de Meuron and Somerville College's new residences by Niall McLaughlin Architects.

Remembering the history of the site:

By drawing upon people's memories and experience of the Radcliffe Infirmary, artist-led reminiscence projects will be commissioned in diverse media including permanent and temporary installations. The medical history of the site and the series of 'firsts' such as the first administration of penicillin will inform some briefs to artists, as will the work of the Radcliffe Guild of Nurses. Some existing sculptures and artefacts retrieved from the site will be reinstated. Collaborations between artists, biomedical scientists, philosophers, mathematicians, writers and poets are being developed.

Documenting the ROQ:

By inviting artists to observe and chart the progress of the site in such media as photography, film, drawing and print, a complete record of its construction will be formed. Weimin He's appointment by the University Estates Services to document the site's evolution followed on from

his successful project at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Photographer Emily Alexander's initiative to record the interior of the Infirmary prior to its refurbishment was also supported; further artists may be appointed to create complementary documentary projects.

Accessing the ROQ:

By commissioning art and events that engage the wider public as well as University communities the ROQ will connect to the wider city. Methods of engagement and interpretation will vary according to the nature of the art commission, and will involve interpretation in physical and virtual sites. A public series of lectures, seminars, artists' talks and tours, workshops and events will form an integral part of the programme.

The Observatory from the south east (detail) from R. Ackermann, A History of the University of Oxford, 1814. Image courtesy Green Templeton College.





Simon Periton, *Polaris*, 2012.
Resin, steel, perspex, LED lights, timer.
Image © Simon Periton, courtesy firstsite, Colchester, and
Sadie Coles HQ, London.



Simon Periton, *Outlaw III [black eyes]*, 2000.
Green, mushroom, red and black paper.
Image © Simon Periton, courtesy Sadie Coles
HQ, London.



Simon Periton, *Larvae*, 2012.
Resin, paint, steel, solar panel, LED lights.
Image © Simon Periton, courtesy firstsite, Colchester, and
Sadie Coles HQ, London. Photography: Thierry Bal.

Simon Periton

The Alchemical Tree

A site-wide role for an artist has been conceived to create a unique, distinctive and memorable cultural identity for the ROQ. The brief invited artists to propose a concept that addressed the whole site and engaged intellectually with its function, the aim being that the selected artist's interventions would provide a cohesive sense of the new Quarter as it is developed.

Simon Periton was selected as site-wide artist in 2012 following a competitive process. His appointment will be the first ROQ Artist's Fellowship. Periton's response to the brief is rooted in the ROQ's history and future, the physical navigation of the site and the quest for a concept that relates to the site as a whole and evolves with it in the future. The re-siting of several academic departments within the ROQ suggested to him a re-interpretation of a more historical, classical university model where cross pollination and interaction between different disciplines is actively

encouraged, reflecting the development of contemporary ideas within the realms of science as well as art. His proposal is being developed in an initial phase of research through collaboration with the Humanities Division and associated departments, and in discussion with the PASC, the architect Niall McLaughlin and the landscape architect Robert Townshend.

Periton has taken the concept of the alchemical tree as his starting point. Alchemy is concerned not only with transmuting base metals into gold but also with a quest for knowledge, the attainment of a higher state and a realisation of perfection. It represents a school of thought that connects many differing disciplines including philosophy, chemistry, religion, art and mathematics.

Simon Periton graduated from Central St Martin's School of Art, London in 1990. He has exhibited widely in Britain and internationally. Commissions include public sculpture projects for Channel Four, the V&A and firstsite, Colchester. Periton lives and works in London and is represented by Sadie Coles HQ, London and The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

'My proposal for the ROQ is for one large central sculpture in conjunction with some smaller satellite works that are carefully placed throughout the site which relate back to the main piece visually and materially. The whole artwork will eventually be composed of all the elements within it. The discovery of the artwork and the physical experience of traversing/ navigating the site should mirror an educational model that promotes cross-fertilisation.

The central sculptural piece takes the form of a tree with a golden crown hung around the trunk. The crown encircles the trunk but is not fixed to it. This image references an illustration from Salomon Trismosin's illuminated manuscript *Splendor Solis*, a famous treatise on alchemy from the 16th century. The tree symbolises the process of growth and transformation experienced by students as they develop their ideas through focused study at the university; the crown represents the successful attainment of a higher state, a realisation of perfection'.

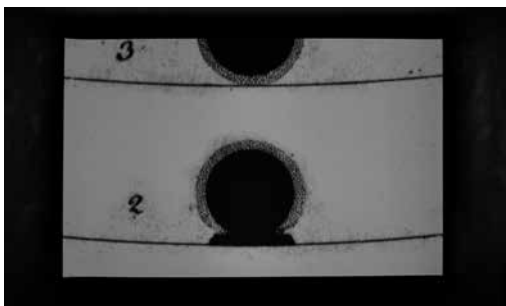
Simon Periton, extract from the artist's proposal, 2012



Illumination from *Splendor Solis* by Salomon Trismosin, 1582 (vellum), German School, (16th century) British Library, London, UK/ The Bridgeman Art Library.



Simon Periton, *Golden Alchemical Tree Proposal*, 2012. Adapted from *Splendor Solis* by Salomon Trismosin, 1582 (vellum), German School, (16th century) British Library, London. Image © Simon Periton.



Simon Starling *Black Drop*, 2012.

Still. 35mm film transferred to HD.

Commissioned by Modern Art Oxford in association with the University of Oxford and presented with the support of Green Templeton College, Oxford and The Radcliffe Trust. Image © Simon Starling.

Simon Starling *Black Drop*

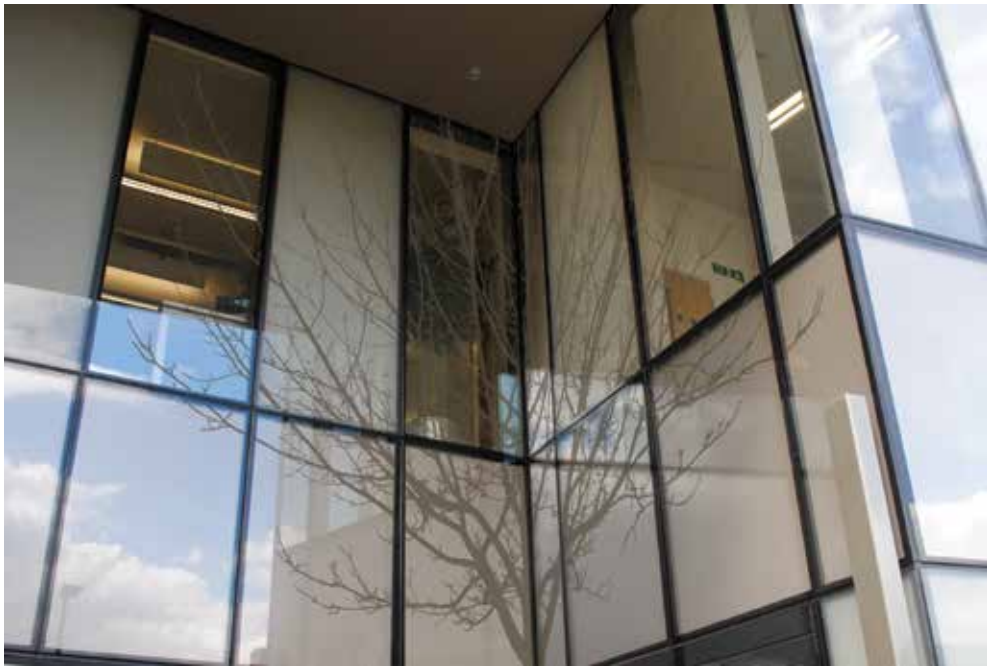
Black Drop, a film by Simon Starling, is presented at the Radcliffe Observatory from February to March 2013. Commissioned by Modern Art Oxford in association with the University of Oxford (ROQ public art programme and the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art), this presentation is supported by Green Templeton College and The Radcliffe Trust. The film is inspired by the history of the Observatory, which was built with funds from John Radcliffe's legacy at the suggestion of the astronomer Dr. Thomas Hornsby, following his observation of the 1769 transit of Venus.

Black Drop responds to the rare planetary phenomenon of the transit of Venus and its relationship to the beginnings of moving image technology. The most recent transit of Venus took place in June 2012, and was only visible in its entirety from the mid-Pacific. The next transit will take place in 2117, making 2012 the last in our lifetimes. With the medium of film rapidly disappearing,

Starling visited Hawaii and Tahiti to film the transit and the sites of previous observations – Point Venus, Tahiti in 1769 and Honolulu in 1874 – documenting the last transit to be recorded using 35mm technology.

Black Drop is a multi-layered documentary illustrated with still and moving images of geographical locations and historical information, set against the backdrop of a 35mm film-editing suite. This intriguing commission highlights how film emerged from early scientific exploration.

Simon Starling studied photography and art at Maidstone College of Art in 1987, and continued his studies at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham and Glasgow School of Art. In 2004 he was shortlisted for the Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Prize and in 2005 he was winner of the Turner Prize. Starling lives and works in Copenhagen, and is represented in the UK by The Modern Institute, Glasgow.



Oona Culley, *Tree of Life*, 2012.
Proposal for New Radcliffe House.
Image © Oona Culley.

Oona Culley *Tree of Life*

Oona Culley has been appointed through invited competition to develop an artwork for New Radcliffe House, a new health centre for the Jericho community, designed by architects Hawkins\Brown, and the first building to be completed within the ROQ.

Culley's proposal is informed by both the history of the site as the original location of the Radcliffe Infirmary and the functions of the new health centre. Drawing on the restorative powers of nature, Culley's design concept creates a visual equivalence between the delicate structure of tree branches and the branching networks of blood vessels, neurons and dendrons within the human body. The artwork is intended to create the impression of an environment of trees, connecting the landscape outside with the interior landscape of the human anatomy. Culley's *Tree of Life* will be incorporated into the building's glazing and wall spaces in areas accessible to all members of the community.

Oona Culley trained at the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art and graduated from the Royal College of Art, London in 2005. She has completed public art commissions for St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Royal London, and at Heathrow for British Airways. Culley lives and works in London.

'Looking at the delicate network structure of tree branches I noticed a visual echo with the branching structures of blood vessels and neurons within our own bodies. Taking into consideration the history of the site as the original location of the Radcliffe Infirmary, and the present use of the building as a GP surgery and base for the University's medical science division, I became interested in incorporating the shapes of branching structures of the human anatomy into the landscape design.'

Oona Culley, extract from the artist's proposal, 2012

Weimin He

Documenting the ROQ



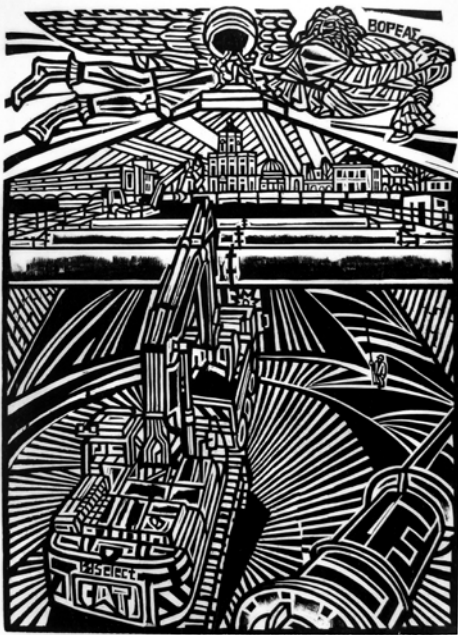
Weimin He, *Mathematical Institute in Construction*, 2012.
Brush and Chinese ink on xuan paper.
Image © Weimin He, courtesy University of Oxford.

Weimin He was appointed in 2009 by Oxford University Estates Services to document the ROQ's development, following his successful project charting the construction of Rick Mather Architects' major refurbishment of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Through a series of drawings and prints, He is recording the ROQ in his distinctive style, chronicling the transformation of the site from the demolition of the old hospital buildings to the current construction of the Mathematics Institute.

'My work is inspired by both Western and Eastern elements but is highly individual. The black bold lines are seemingly 'written' on paper rather than drawn, reminiscent of Chinese calligraphy – especially the seal characters of the Han dynasty.'

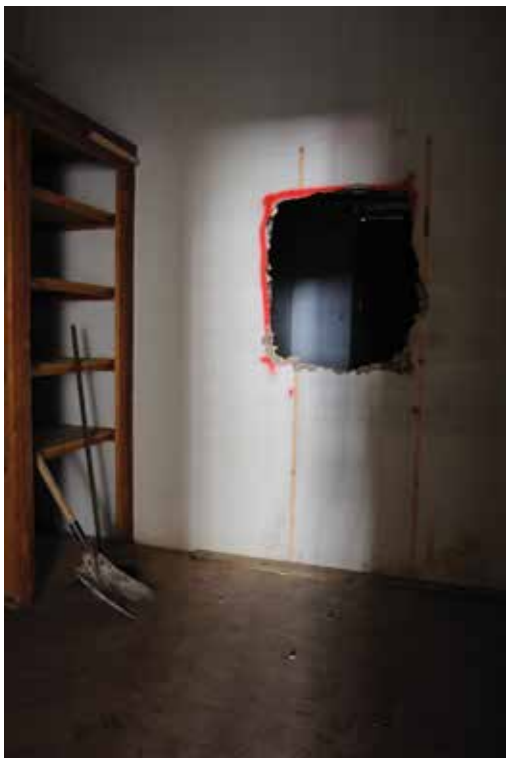
Weimin He

He has also been documenting the people involved in the building process, producing lively portraits of the construction workers in situ. Trained in both North Eastern China and Belfast, his style is a contemporary development on the historical tradition of Chinese ink painting.



Weimin He, *Tower of the Winds VI*, 2011
Woodcut printed on pi paper.
Image © Weimin He, courtesy University of Oxford.

Weimin He graduated from Harbin College of Art, China in 1986. He studied MA Printmaking at the Academy of Fine Arts in Shenyang, Northeast China and in 1991 was awarded a Ph.D by University of Ulster's School of Art and Design. In 2011 he became an associate member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers, and is currently based in Oxford.



Emily Alexander, *Untitled (The Radcliffe Infirmary)*, 2011.
Digital prints from a series of seven.
Image © Emily Alexander, courtesy University of Oxford.



Emily Alexander *Untitled (The Radcliffe Infirmary)*

Emily Alexander approached Oxford University Estates Services in 2009 with an initiative to document photographically the spaces within the Radcliffe Infirmary prior to its redevelopment. Her images form a permanent record of the building's interior in its transitional stage between closure and refurbishment, encapsulating its atmosphere as well as its architectural detailing and furnishings.

As Alexander documented the building, she found it transformed by different lighting effects on each entry to the site, highlighting some features and concealing others at different times of day. Once hidden in the shadows, individual aspects and objects were exposed as the rest of the room was peeled away.

'The potential of light to remain a constant yet shifting element, in a situation of flux, is a driving force behind this series of photographs. Spaces that once contained continuous activity are pierced by shards of light from unexpected sources, infiltrating the punctured structures to reveal traces of their previous purpose. The set of images I have produced question what makes up our experiences and how these are imprinted on the spaces around us. The photographs take on a filmic quality, paradoxically unnerving and beautiful – a mixture of suspense, absence and fractured narrative allow the viewer to be absorbed in the possible plot.'

Emily Alexander, 2011

Emily Alexander graduated from Winchester School of Art in 2004 with a BA in Fine Art Painting, and went on to study History of Art and Architecture at the University of Oxford. She is based in Oxford where she runs the Gallery at the Old Fire Station and is co-founder of the contemporary art collective, *Launch Collaborative*.

Supporting the ROQ public art programme

The initial phase of the ROQ public art programme has been made possible by the University of Oxford. Further support is vital to realising the public art vision in full, from the funding of both temporary and permanent commissions to groundbreaking artists' research, residencies and outreach projects.

If you would like to find out more, please contact:

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Governance

The ROQ public art programme is overseen by the Public Art Sub-Committee (PASC) advising the ROQ Project Board.

Membership of PASC is as follows:

Professor Shearer West (Chair of PASC; Head of Humanities Division)

Professor Jonathan Hodgkin (Department of Biochemistry)

Paul Bonaventura (Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art)

Michael Wigg (Oxford University Estates Services)

Sally Shaw (Modern Art Oxford)

Advised by Guy Graham (PDCM) and Vivien Lovell (Modus Operandi)

How to get involved

The University of Oxford ROQ website has pages dedicated to its public art programme, and new projects and opportunities will be listed and documented as they arise. The site will also provide links to organizations with whom the University is working in partnership on arts projects.

Anyone interested in the ROQ public art programme is invited to visit www.ox.ac.uk/roq or contact modus@modusoperandi-art.com for further information.

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