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MODERN ART OXFORD



PRESS RELEASE

Where art and science collide

***Salt Bridges*: Contemporary Art and Architecture for Oxford University's Department of Biochemistry**

Thursday 21 June, 5-7pm

Martin Woods Lecture Theatre, Department of Physics, Oxford University

Three leading UK artists producing new work as part of a ground-breaking collaborative art and architecture programme at Oxford University will present their works in progress at a one-off event this June.

Speakers include artists Nicky Hirst, Peter Fraser and Tim Head who will present their commissioned works in tandem with their collaborative partners, leading researchers and professors at the University, and architects Hawkins\Brown.

The four-year project – *Salt Bridges* - began in Autumn 2005 following the appointment of Hawkins\Brown as Architects of new research facilities for Oxford University's Department of Biochemistry. The scheme replaces the Walter Bodmer and Rudolph Peters' buildings and is currently under construction.

Salt Bridges brings in partnership the Department of Biochemistry headed by Professor Kim Nasmyth, consultant artist Nicky Hirst, architects Hawkins\Brown, the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art and Artpoint in association with Louise O'Reilly Visual Arts to deliver an outstanding site-specific contemporary art collection within a world-class scientific research facility.

By appointing artists at the embryonic stages of the design of the building and engaging them in the intellectual life of the department the project aims to produce a truly collaborative programme, delivering a body of work which embraces experimentation, inter-disciplinary discourse and the exchange of ideas.

The project name - *Salt Bridges* – is a phrase that Lead Consultant Artist Nicky Hirst encountered during her research. In protein chemistry it refers to ion pairs, a form of strong interaction between oppositely charged residues. It is used here literally and metaphorically to describe the dynamic relationships between artists and scientists that the project is supporting.

The art programme is underpinned by a desire to introduce chaos and chance into the rigor of the building, drawing an analogy with the serendipitous moments of chance in scientific progress when a connection or discovery is made.

Nicky Hirst is working in collaboration with Hawkins\Brown to produce two interventions in the building; *The Glass Menagerie*, a screen printed design inspired by Rorschach's Inkblot Test and a large 'Portal' work in the atrium. She will speak at the event with Morag Morrison, Associate Director of Hawkins Brown about the development of her interventions.

Photographer Peter Fraser is undertaking a residency as the site undergoes construction, creating a body of work that documents the environmental and cultural changes taking place during the reincarnation of the department building. Peter has worked closely with Jonathan Hodgkin, Professor of Genetics and will present an evolving archive of images in conversation with Professor Hodgkin.

Digital artist Tim Head has been working with Professor Mark Sanson and his team in the Structural Bioinformatics and Computational Biochemistry Unit, where computational programming and modelling are a central activity. They will discuss their ongoing dialogue, which will culminate in design proposals for the atrium west wall and flooring.

The event will take place on 21st June as part of Architecture Week and will be chaired by Professor Kim Naysmyth and *Salt Bridges* Art Consultant Louise O'Reilly.

A temporary exhibition showcasing the work of all three artists and a model of the building will take place at:

Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford

Dates: Friday 15th June – Sunday 24th June

Opening times: Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10am-5pm, Sunday 12-5pm (closed Mondays).

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Press RSVPs for the event to Claire Curtice

Notes to editors

- Salt Bridges has been generously supported by the Department of Biochemistry, Gulbenkian Foundation, Wellcome Trust, Arts Council England and private donors. The project has received £250k, with a target of £500k to complete the programme. Further information at: <http://saltbridges.bioch.ox.ac.uk>
- Salt Bridges is led by an experienced Arts Steering Group with representation from the Department of Biochemistry, Hawkins\Brown Architects, Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art and Artpoint Trust Ltd in association with Louise O'Reilly Visual Arts. The Department of Biochemistry is represented by Jonathan Hodgkin, Professor of Genetics and Mark Sansom, Professor of Bioinformatics
- The research facilities for the Department of Biochemistry represent Phase One of an £83 million masterplan addressing the core of the Science Area of the University. The new facilities, valued at £47 million, will bring together European-wide researchers in Bioinformatics, Gene Cultures and Biochemistry working in a 24 hours networked environment. The building, which features a 420 sqm atrium and a glass curtain wall envelope, went on site in September 2006 and is due for completion in July 2008.

Nicky Hirst

Nicky Hirst studied Fine Art at the Maidstone College of Art and went on to study Art and Architecture at the Kent Institute of Art and Design. She lives and works in London and has exhibited in art spaces of national importance, including InIVA, the Courtauld Institute and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.

Peter Fraser

www.peterfraser.net

Peter Fraser has exhibited extensively in the UK, including a solo exhibition at The Photographers' Gallery, London (2002). His work is included in many national and international collections including Arts Council England, Arthur Andersen, British Council, St Louis Museum of Art, Siemens, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and Washington University Art Gallery. In 1999 he was awarded a grant from the EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) to work in the Physics and Applied Physics Department of Strathclyde University.

Tim Head

www.timhead.net

Tim Head studied sculpture at St Martin's School of Art in 1969. He represented Britain in the 1980 Venice Biennale and has subsequently exhibited in British Art Now: an American Perspective, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Royal Academy, London (1980); Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965 - 1975, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2000), Days Like These, Tate Britain, London (2003). Commissions include the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford and the Science Museum, London.

Hawkins\Brown

www.hawkinsbrown.co.uk

Hawkins\Brown have been at the forefront of British architecture for eighteen years, producing buildings of a consistently high quality for a wide variety of clients. Hawkins\Brown actively seek inspiration and parallels with arts' practice and have collaborated on projects with artists such as Anya Gallacio, Hans Op de Beeck, Martin Richman, Bob and Roberta Smith, Rachel Whiteread and Richard Wilson.

The Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art

www.ruskin-sch.ox.ac.uk/research/laboratory

The Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art is represented by Paul Bonaventura, Senior Research Fellow in Fine Art Studies. The Ruskin School opens up facilities across Oxford University to creative individuals and organisations nationally and internationally.

Artpoint Trust Ltd / Louise O'Reilly Visual Arts

www.artpointtrust.org.uk, www.lorva.co.uk

Artpoint Trust Ltd is a creative company working with artists to support new thinking for the built environment and public space. Artpoint receives regular funding from Arts Council England and is the strategic agency for public art commissioning in south-east England. This project is being developed and managed by Louise O'Reilly as a Freelance Associate of Artpoint.

The Wellcome Trust

<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk>

The Wellcome Trust is the largest charity in the UK. It funds innovative biomedical research, in the UK and internationally, spending around £500 million each year to support the brightest scientists with the best ideas. The Wellcome Trust supports public debate about biomedical research and its impact on health and wellbeing.