



b-side festival 2021 – artist / curator brief

'In its every breath it has everything to do with the place and people.' - Festival Visitor 2018

THE BRIEF

b-side festival takes place every two years on the Isle of Portland, Dorset. The whole of the island is the venue and the new projects we commission from artists are site-specific or site-responsive. Our next festival takes place in September 2021 (postponed from 2020) under the theme 'Common Lands'. We commission work that is thoughtful, maverick, poetic, humorous, left-field or just simply beautiful.

As New Curators we invite you to respond to the theme Common Lands, to make your own interpretation based off your instincts and the local communities' interests and work together to curate an event/artwork for b-side festival. What does Common Lands mean to you? What does it mean to your local community?

Portland

Portland is a curious island with a very particular history and ecology offering huge scope for research and inspiration. Located just off the coast of Dorset and approached via a narrow causeway, this hulk of limestone, bounded by steep cliffs and treacherous seas is unlike anywhere else in Dorset. Prior to the first road bridge built in 1839 linking it to the mainland, it was an isolated agricultural community sustained by farming and fishing and with its own unique ways and customs. Many ancient land use and management practices continued long after joining the mainland. However, Portland has been dramatically changed and influenced over the years by quarrying and military appropriation and secret experimentation, resulting in what is now widely regarded as an industrial landscape and economy. It is a small island just 1.7 miles across and 4 miles long, its coastal edges subject to the forces of nature, eroded by the sea, landslips and rock falls, its interior removed by quarrying and mining. With an ever-increasing population, space is at a premium and land use contested. As policies of growth and the impact of climate change collide, the opportunities to develop a sustainable community are challenged. More recently tourism is seen as the growth industry, as former quarries are re-wilded as nature reserves and Portland's unique ecological, historical and leisure attractions are increasingly recognized by climbers, divers, walkers, bird watchers, naturalists, geologists and historians. Portland, as a community and place, encapsulates in miniature the characteristics of what is happening in a wider world context

Common Lands

Over coming months our programme of artist commissions, projects and festival will be developed around a theme with the over arching title of Common Lands. We are regarding the island as a microcosm to explore our relationship to and with land – both here and elsewhere. Common Lands will explore the physical and environmental context: erosion, land exploitation, biodiversity and climate change, together with the human, social context: migration, displacement, land ownership, and rights.

From notions of collective stewardship of our planet to conflict around individual ownership, contested territories and borders, the custodianship of and responsibility for our land and oceans is a continuing debate. Human environmental impact and the climate crisis requires an urgent global, community and individual response. As policies of growth and the impact of climate change collide, the opportunities to develop a sustainable community are challenged.

Within this theme we will be focussing on a number of key research areas (listed below) and are seeking proposals that explore these interwoven themes and relate or respond to the site and context of Portland.



Our Research Areas

- Climate change/crisis – environment and people (human impact/geology/erosion/ sea level rise)
- Migration and Displacement (historic, current and future movement)
- Territory/Borders (islands, enclosures, edges, connections)
- Land Rights & Access (common land/Rights of Way/access land/land appropriation, exploitation)
- Land use (agriculture/food production/growing/gardening/mineral extraction/settlements)
- Nature /Biodiversity (geology, ecology, environment)

INFO

- The festival takes place over a nine-day period with installations and events at a number of locations across the island. Our artist commissions form the core programme of the festival with artists also contributing to talks and other events prior to or during the festival. The event/artwork the New Curators curate will be a part of this core programme.
- Work can be for indoor or outdoor contexts, intimate or large scale, static, mobile, durational or event based.
- Work should be site-responsive and temporary with input and influence from the local community and their interests
- We expect artworks to have a presence throughout the festival or if event based to include a number of performances or audience opportunities.
- Work can be sited anywhere on the island.
- Sites should be reasonably accessible. We encourage visitors to explore Portland by foot using public rights of way and public transport where possible.
- b-side is committed to minimising our environmental impact. We encourage artists to consider the carbon footprint related to the production, materials, installation and any activities as part of their project proposals, including to re-purpose or recycle all materials from installations & performances.
- Applications are invited from artists/curators at any career stage and working in any media including visual art, digital, sound, film, text-based work, live and performance art etc.
- b-side values diversity and is working to make the application and commissioning process accessible to all. We welcome proposals from those currently underrepresented in the arts particularly BAME and disabled artists. We will endeavour to work with artists to mitigate barriers to making their work for the festival. We welcome access documents from artists at any stage of the process. More info on access documents <https://www.accessdocsforartists.com/>
- The selected curators will have access to curatorial support, installation assistance, venue/site facilitation and help with finding accommodation. Artists/Curators will also have the opportunity of using our b-side shop front 'project space' - Outpost, in Fortuneswell, Portland for use as private or public facing research, meeting or work space and engagement venue prior to the festival.



LOCATIONS AND RESEARCH LINKS

Here are a few examples of sites. Additional sites will be developed and negotiated in discussion.

Chiswell Community Garden

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/chiswell-walled-garden.html>

The Governors Community Garden (The Grove)

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/governors-community-garden.html>

Easton Gardens

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/690715/#Gardens>

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/easton-gardens.html>

St Georges Church

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/st-georges-church.html>

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/685720/#StGeorgesChurch>

St Peter's Church

<https://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/st-peters-church.html>

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/695720/>

The Esplanade and Quiddles café, Chiswell

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/chesil-cove.html> <http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/680730/#Esplanade>

High Angle Battery

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/verne-high-angle-battery.html>

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/690730/#HighAngle>

Fancys Farm

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/fancys-family-farm.html>

www.fancysfarm.co.uk

The Engine Shed

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/the-old-engine-shed.html>

The Stadium Bowl

<https://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/portland-stadium-bowl.html>

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/695725/#Sports>

Portland Bill area

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/675680/>

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/portland-bill.html>

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/ministry-of-defence-magnetic-range.html>

<http://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/culverwell-mesolithic-site.html>

More info on Portland:

<https://www.portlandhistory.co.uk/introduction.html>

<http://www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Portland/IndexMap/>

This Dorset Explorer website mapping system is useful for exploring many different layers of information on Portland. <https://explorer.geowessex.com/>