

Image Control: The Power of Perception Then & Now Artistic Commission

Artist Brief

No.1 Royal Crescent is offering an opportunity for three contemporary artists to create a new public artwork in response to our exhibition in 2019: 'Image Control: The Power of Perception Then & Now'. The work will be displayed in the museum as part of the exhibition from **13th April 2019 - 1st January 2020**.



Overview:

We are seeking artists with an interest in creating a representation of Henry Sandford, the first resident of No.1 Royal Crescent. Drawing on the historical information, portraits of his family and other sources, artists will be able to develop new work that will have a lasting impact on how we view and present Mr Sandford to the public. These commissions will be a key contemporary element in our new exhibition about how we understand and interpret historic images, in particular the messages that 18th century artists and sitters wanted to portray about themselves and their lives. A parallel will be drawn with 21st century images and include an exploration of the negative impacts of social media in terms of wellbeing and mental health.

The work will be displayed inside No.1 Royal Crescent, a Grade 1 listed historic setting and so will need to be sympathetic to the conservation management of the Museum with advice from the curatorial team at No.1 and Bath Preservation Trust.

We are inviting artists to undertake site visits to No.1 and deliver a sample of work and proposal for the project which has an overall commissioning and production budget of £1500 (per artist).

The commission is supported using public funding by Arts Council England. The team involved in this project includes Lizzie Johansson-Hartley, Museum Manager, No.1 Royal Crescent; Dr Amy Frost, Senior Curator, Bath Preservation Trust; Isabel Wall, Assistant Curator, Bath Preservation Trust; Polly Andrews, Learning and Engagement Officer, Bath Preservation Trust; Katie O'Brien, Gallery Director, 44AD; and Amina Wright, Art Lecturer and Historian.

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1. Introduction:

No.1 Royal Crescent is a historic house museum in the heart of the City of Bath World Heritage Site. We are an exceptional restored grade 1 listed Georgian townhouse, showcasing life in Bath 1776-1796. Featuring historic furniture, pictures and objects, we reveal what life was like for Bath's fashionable residents - both upstairs and downstairs. No.1 forms part of Bath Preservation Trust, along with three other museums showcasing different aspects of Georgian Bath.

1.1 About us:

Bath Preservation Trust was founded in 1934 as a small pressure group, with the object of protecting the city's unique architectural heritage. Its first action was to fight plans to pull down parts of the picturesque Georgian city of Bath, England, to make way for a new road. The road was never built. Since this victory, the Trust has saved hundreds more listed buildings from demolition, and has successfully confronted many similar threats to the city. Today the Trust has approximately 1,400 subscribing members from the UK and overseas supporting its work.

The Trust is also a major provider in the tourist economy as it owns and runs museums and educational activities at No. 1 Royal Crescent, Museum of Bath Architecture, Beckford's Tower and the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, all of which have been restored by the Trust and provide a valuable resource for the city and its visitors.

The Bath Preservation Trust is an independent charity, registered with the Charity Commission of England & Wales, and is a company limited by guarantee.

No.1 Royal Crescent: Statement of Purpose:

To enable as many people as possible to explore the exceptional recreated historic interiors of a late 18th Century Bath Town House to support the enhancement of the City Of Bath World Heritage Site, providing inspiration, learning and enjoyment, also fulfilling the educational objectives of Bath Preservation Trust. We aim to uncover the typical daily life of its residents, also illustrating and revealing aspects of the wider world of Georgian Bath and Georgian England in which the occupants lived and worked, achieving the educational purpose of BPT.

1.2 History of No.1 & Henry Sandford:

The Royal Crescent is the culmination of a sequence of buildings and public spaces conceived and designed by Bath architects, John Wood the Elder (1704-1754) and his son, John Wood the Younger (1728-1781). The sequence begins with Queen Square (1734-36) and continues up Gay Street to the Circus (1754-67) designed by the elder Wood. The younger Wood concluded his father's grand scheme for Bath by constructing the Royal Crescent. These three key places by the Woods combine architecture and geometry



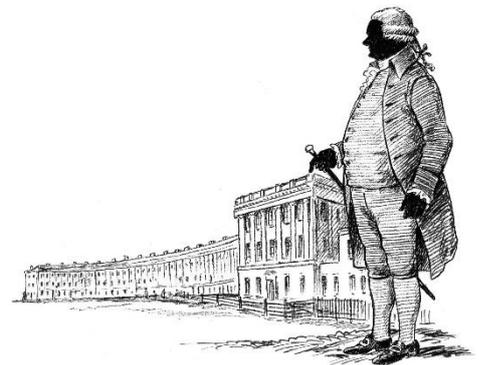
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with a clever manipulation of nature to create a processional route through the city that went on to greatly influence the development of British architecture and town planning.

The intention of the eighteenth century townhouse terrace was to unite individual houses behind a palatial façade and in doing so provide the high-class occupants of those buildings residences in the city that emulated the grandeur of their country seats. The Royal Crescent was the first crescent shaped townhouse terrace to be constructed anywhere in Europe and following its completion, it soon became the most fashionable address in Bath.

The completion of the Royal Crescent prompted a change of focus in Bath towards the upper town. By 1776 when Henry Sandford moved into No.1, the Crescent was already one of the most desirable streets in which to live. Although built for rental, houses here were probably let to people of rank for long term residency. With the exception of No.1, they benefited from stables and coach houses and most had gardens, as well as access to the private lawn at the front. Sedan chairs were available for hire in the terrace walk below, making light work of the climb down the hill to the town centre, and there were local shops too, such as Mrs. Lambe's tea and grocery warehouse in Bennet Street. Houses in the Crescent were much sought after.

The well-appointed houses with their large rooms lent themselves to entertaining and by the last decades of the eighteenth century the Crescent was the centre of a sparkling social scene. Its popularity meant that it soon became the place in Bath where polite society promenaded. Livestock were also grazed in the Crescent fields, prompting one commentator to remark, 'There is something whimsical, yet pleasing in seeing a number of well-dressed people walking in the same fields where cows and horses are grazing'.



Henry Sandford

The first known resident of No. 1 Royal Crescent was Henry Sandford, whose name appears in the city rates book for the property from 1776 until 1796. Sandford was fifty-seven when he moved here, and the owner of Castlerea House, a large estate in County Roscommon, Ireland. A widower with four grown-up children, he had recently retired from a thirty-five year career as an Irish MP and, leaving his estates in the hands of his son, he came to Bath, where he could take advantage of the healing properties of the waters and enjoy the bustling society of one of England's most popular cities.

It is through Henry Sandford's two surviving common place books that we have a window into his mind. These books, now held in the National Library of Ireland, contain over 450 pages of notes about things that he saw and things that he read. They reveal a man who was more than usually interested in the world around him. Among the many works to which he refers are Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, C. T. Middleton's *New and Complete System of Geography* and Captain Cook's *Voyage Round the World*.

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Although no portrait of Sandford has been found, we do have pictures of his son, Henry Moore Sandford and his daughter-in-law Catherine, referred to in his will as 'my Dear Catherine Sandford' and left a legacy of one hundred guineas (£105) 'as a small acknowledgement of the constant attention and regard shown to me on many occasions.'

On 15 February 1796 the *Bath Journal* announced that on the previous Friday there had died 'Henry Sandford, Esq, in the Crescent - a Gentleman of the most benevolent disposition'. Sandford was buried at St Swithin's Church in the parish of Walcot - the same church where Jane Austen's parents were married in 1764 and where her father George Austen was buried in 1805.



2. The Project:

In 2019, our exhibition entitled 'Image Control: The Power of Perception Then & Now' will be exploring how 250 years ago, the Georgians in Bath manipulated their own portraits to express messages about their lives and interests. We are setting this against how living in the 'Age of Instagram', people are surrounded by carefully created images of ideal lifestyles and standards, increasingly impacting mental wellbeing. We aim to show how this theme is not new and that this can be seen through different mediums throughout history. Through historic depictions, interactive displays and new artistic commissions, we will invite the public to dissect images of the past. We will encourage visitors to question both historical and contemporary pictures and decide what they perceive to be the truth behind the image.



We are also looking how we can create an image of a historic figure where no known image exists. The most famous example of this is Jane Austen - whose image features on the £10 note; yet even then that image is questioned and challenged by earlier portraits and images, of which none but one actually dates to a time when Jane Austen was alive. Following this line of thought, we look to the first resident of No.1, Henry Sandford. As far as we are aware, there are no known images of him, yet we know him intimately through the historic record and also the clues he left behind in his writings, his career and his family. Using this information, we are looking to invite three artists to create their own personal interpretation of him. The contrasts between the three works produced will be a creative demonstration of the exhibition's themes, provoking discussion and debate.

2.1 Our Aims:

- Georgian society excelled at controlling and manipulating images of themselves and their lifestyles. Through the exhibition, workshops and events we want to invite the public to see that social media and its tendency to be used to portray idealistic lifestyles is not a new invention but has a history that can be explored through Georgian Bath.
- By dissecting portraits from our own collection and from lenders, we will encourage visitors to question both historical and contemporary pictures and decide what they perceive to be the truth behind the image.

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- Two engaging interactives (recreating a 'Conversation Piece' image using magnetic parts and using costumes and props to bring a Georgian character to life in the 'Portrait Studio') will enable the public to understand how easy it is to craft a message.
- The exhibition will explore how we can use sources to uncover the past. We will examine the different images of the iconic Georgian Bath personality Jane Austen, how they were made and how they created an idealised character in the public mind. To further explore this theme, we want to take advantage of the lack of any known portrait of the first resident at No.1, Henry Sandford. Using a brief informed by family portraits, personality traits and behaviour gained from his writings, we will commission three artists using different art forms to create representations of Sandford and then invite the public to comment on which of these 'fictional' images they feel is the most 'truthful'. The purpose is to stimulate discussion and encourage reflection on the subtle ways in which we read images, both historical and contemporary. The images will have a lasting impact as well in that we will be able to put a face to the name so to speak and will be able to use the images in future interpretation around the museum.

These aims are our overall ambitions for the exhibition - we do not expect the artists to respond to all of the elements above but rather use them as a framework to develop ideas.

2.2. Materials/Specifications/Location/Dates:

The project team are open to all art forms and practices but are particularly interested to see proposals from artists that have an interest or experience in developing engaging and accessible artworks that are rooted in research and are sensitive to an historic museum setting

- An open brief for materials and approach. We do want contemporary artist's responses and as stated previously this can include any art form but does need to account for infrastructure and environmental and conservation requirements on site
- The final piece will need to be durable and use materials that are sensitive to the museum environment.
- Scale to be appropriate to the site and commission budget and **under 1m** in height/width.
- The works will be displayed between April 2019 - January 2020 and should require minimum maintenance during this time
- The commission should be fabricated as suited to a museum environment and will not be invigilated.

3. Project Team & Conditions

3.1 Project Team

This is a commission by No.1 Royal Crescent, funded by Bath Preservation Trust and Arts Council England.

Communication and Project Lead: Lizzie Johansson-Hartley, Museum Manager

Artistic and Curatorial Support: Dr Amy Frost, Senior Curator and Isabel Wall, Assistant Curator at Bath Preservation Trust; Polly Andrews, Learning & Engagement Officer, Bath Preservation Trust; Katie O'Brien, Gallery Director, 44AD; and Amina Wright, Art Lecturer and Historian.

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3.2 Planning & Maintenance

The art works will be displayed in a sensitive museum environment. Maintenance during the display period should be minimal.

3.3 Copyright & Ownership

Following the display of the work, it will be de-installed and retained by No.1 Royal Crescent. Copyright will be retained by the artist. Subject to request, the artist may be able to borrow their finished piece once the exhibition has finished in 2020 for set periods or for further exhibition elsewhere. This can be negotiated as part of the contract arrangement.

3.4 Documentation and Press/PR

No.1 will document the artwork in situ. No.1 and Bath Preservation Trust reserve the right to use these images for any press, marketing and interpretation for an unlimited period. The artist will be provided with copies of these images. It is essential that the artist is open to being involved in media coverage, interviews, press and PR.

4. Process, Selection, Budget & Timeline

4.1 Process and Selection

The project team as detailed above will be responsible for the selection of the three artists. We will invite artists to undertake a site visit and discuss their previous work and ideas for this project. Contractual agreements will be entered into upon selection of the final three artists at the end of January 2019.

Selection Criteria:

Selection of the final three artists will be based on the following criteria:

- The quality of your artwork and ideas and how they relate to this project
- Your reasons for applying and willingness to discuss and share ideas
- Your interest in working in the context of No.1 Royal Crescent

Interviews will take place at No.1 in mid-January 2019 and will comprise a discussion of the above criteria with the artist and project team.

No.1 wants to ensure that all artists have the best opportunity to secure an opportunity with us. If you have any specific access requirements, please let us know prior to making an application so that we can discuss possible support for participating in the interview process and project. Please note given the nature of No.1 as a heritage site we cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet all requirements. Any information that you provide about your requirements will be handled separately from your application and in confidence.

4.2 Budget

The budget for this commission is £1500 per artist - this includes all artist fees and the production of the work. All costs must include VAT.

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Shortlisted artists will be invited to undertake a site visit and discussion with the Project team about the project.

Following any feedback and development, once the proposal has been accepted for commission, the contract will be issued for £1500, paid in instalments. The budget must cover (but is not limited to) all artist fees, artist travel, artwork shipping, the fabrication and materials of the work and installation. This budget includes VAT. Display equipment will be provided by No.1 upon discussion with the project team. The project team will also de-install and store the final piece.

A separate budget managed by the property will cover interpretation, programming, promotion and insurance of the work for the time it is presented at the venue. No.1 will also further support the project with marketing and curatorial and conservation advice.

4.3 Timeline

20 th January 2019	Deadline for Applications
End of January 2019	Interview and Selection of final three Artists Contracts Issued
February 2019	Artist Announcement & Marketing Campaign begins
February - 7 th April 2019	Work developed in liaison with site team and fabrication
8 th April - 11 th April 2019	Installation
11 th April 2019	Private View & Launch of Exhibition
13 th April 2019 - 1 st January 2020	Exhibition Period

5. Making an Application

Please ensure that your application includes the following:

- A statement about your artistic practice and why it relates to this historic site and project (no more than 1 A4 side. Please bear in mind that some readers will not be used to 'arts language' so we advise that you keep your language clear and accessible).
- In a single PDF (no more than 5 A4 pages in total) Up to 5 examples of recent projects with images/video links and a short outline of how the project responded to the brief and the processes you undertook to deliver it.
- A summary artist CV

This should be emailed to: Lizzie Johansson-Hartley [ljohanssonhartley@bptrust.org.uk](mailto:l johanssonhartley@bptrust.org.uk) by 20th January 2019

Although the museum is closed to the public from 2nd January, please get in contact with us if you would like to arrange a visit to No.1 Royal Crescent prior to applying. Two sessions will be available, please contact us if you are interested.

Further information:

For queries relating to the project, please contact Dr Amy Frost afrost@bptrust.org.uk or Karen Power kpower@bptrust.org.uk