

Pollok House and the History of Enslavement: Year of Stories 2022

The National Trust for Scotland seeks a Creative practitioner, focussed on storytelling, to undertake a residency of approximately six weeks at Pollok House in Glasgow.

You will create a suite of stories that explore the connections between the Stirling Maxwell family, Pollok House, and the history of enslavement in the Caribbean. You will then work with teams at Pollok House to create and deliver events that will sensitively communicate the stories to visitors. The results of the project will inform the long-term offering at Pollok House. We are keen that members of our team continue to tell the stories when the residency is over.

We welcome applications from practitioners from a wide variety of artistic backgrounds, whether in the visual arts, creative writing, or theatre. The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate that their practice is focused on people and creating meaningful connections between them.

We particularly welcome applications from artists who have lived experience within, experience collaborating with, or advocating for, Caribbean communities.

Background and Vision

We wish to engage with a storyteller who can help us widen our audiences by widening the range of stories that we tell. Pollok House is a country house situated on the Southside of Glasgow. Its estate was owned by the same family, The Stirling Maxwells, for almost 800 years before being gifted to Glasgow in the 1960s. It is alive with many different types of stories and can help us better understand our history and our present. We are eager to share these stories with as many visitors as possible, particularly our nearest neighbours.

This commission is offered as part of our [Facing Our Past](#) project which has identified connections between National Trust for Scotland properties and the history of chattel slavery. The residency is supported by the Year of Stories 2022 Community Stories Fund. This fund is being delivered in partnership between VisitScotland and Museums Galleries Scotland with support from National Lottery Heritage Fund thanks to National Lottery players.

Sharing these histories can create a complex range of emotions for teams and visitors. Many of us might sometimes struggle to find the vocabulary to discuss harrowing histories with respect, honesty and empathy. This project will help team members and visitors explore their emotional responses and how these histories relate to our lives today. The suite of stories should explore and celebrate narratives of the resilience, dignity and resistance of enslaved peoples or individuals. We hope that the events that launch these stories will provide safe and inviting places for all visitors and team members to begin this process in collaboration with each other.

Project

The project will have four main elements:

Research

- Research connections between the Stirling Maxwell family, Pollok House and the history of enslavement. Previous research experience is not essential, and members of the Engagement team will be made available to support.
- Principal resources for this will be content from the [Facing Our Past](#) research project and from the Stirling Maxwell Archive at the Mitchell Library.

- The residency will coincide with an exhibition of the work of Maud Sulter, due to take place in the Gallery at Pollok House from 15th October which the creative practitioner may also wish to engage with during the project.

Create

- Create a suite of between 4 and 6 stories exploring the connections between Pollok House, the Stirling Maxwell family and the Transatlantic Slave System. Your stories may explore African people's experiences, focusing on creating empathy and describing a history of resistance despite gaps in the archive.
- Develop at least two stories that will speak specifically to young audiences. We imagine age ranges of 5 to 10 years old and 10 to 15 years old.

Share

- Design and delivery of an immersive, inclusive events programme that will unveil the stories to visitors and team members. This programme could utilise a range of artistic mediums including installations, theatre, visual arts and many more.
- Design and delivery of online content to support the public facing events.

Evaluate

- Collaborate with team members on the design and implementation of the evaluation process.

Values

The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following National Trust for Scotland values in their previous work as well as throughout the residency.

Caring

Above all this is a people focussed project. Your previous practice will show a wide body of experience in working with groups of people to create and experience your work. This will be a new area of work for many people who may not be immediately receptive. Your care and communication skills will help to bring them into the project. The VSM (Audience Engagement) will actively help you in this.

The stories that you will uncover during your residency may illicit a wide range of emotions for the team and for our visitors. We will explore them together and support each other. We understand that this will be an emotional project, for the creative practitioner most of all. We understand that materials in the archive may be distressing and that the events/ stories may leave you exposed. We will think carefully about how best to proactively support you and keep you safe throughout the process.

Curious

The residency will be informed by research at Pollok House and the Stirling Maxwell collection at the Mitchel Library. It will seek to tell stories that explore aspects of Pollok's history that have remained untold. There is a lot of material, and you will need a keen curiosity to explore it. The engagement team will actively help you in this.

Brave

Both the events and the stories must offer a new and unexpected way to see Pollok House. Your previous practice will be innovative and progressive.

The archive material will be your starting point, but we acknowledge that the archive is itself a curated form of truth and does not represent all relevant facts and experiences. The stories of enslaved people, and their points of view, are likely to be missing from the archive. As a creative practitioner you have license to use imagination in your work. Saidiya Hartman's 'critical fabulation' is an excellent description of how we can use archival material to bring forward the voices of suppressed peoples. This is a new approach for the Trust.

Inclusive and Vibrant

The principal focus of the residency is inclusivity. The project will be measured by its ability to truly connect with audiences, showing genuine empathy for the experiences of visitors.

Visitors and team members will gain new understanding about the House, the families who lived here and themselves by engaging with your work. Your previous practice must clearly show that you are able to think about your audiences and ensuring that your work is accessible to them.

Fees and Timeline

Offered at a flat fee of £4360. (Separate budget is available to cover production costs of events if required.) We expect the project to take no more than 240 hours of work. We would like the residency to take place between September and November but are flexible on exact dates. The whole project must be completed before 31st November 2022.

Applications

If you would like to apply, please respond with:

A CV, detailing your relevant experience and a portfolio of relevant work comprising no more than three projects.

Completed responses should be sent to Alexis McCluskey, Visitor Services Manager (Audience Engagement), Pollok House, The National Trust for Scotland, Pollok Park, 2060 Pollokshaws Road, G43 1AT, by mail or by email via amclluskey@nts.org.uk to arrive by 17:00 on Friday 26th August 2022.

We are happy to answer any questions about a proposal or to arrange an informal chat. Please contact amclluskey@nts.org.uk or by telephone 0141 616 6410.

Selection Process

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to Pollok House for a discussion on site and be given time to explore and discuss the site with the property team before meeting with the selection panel.

Contract

Successful applicants will need to become registered as a NTS supplier and will be provided with the Terms & Conditions/ Service Level Agreement which forms their contract with NTS. Due diligence will be undertaken prior to signing of any contracts, and public liability and/or professional indemnity insurance will be requested as part of this process. Payment schedule to be agreed upon satisfactory progress of the commissioned works, payment upon invoice, as per NTS terms and conditions for external suppliers.