

Temporary art in churches

INTRODUCTION

Art in churches can enliven the spirit, and enrich the soul. Exhibiting temporary art works is a great way of experimenting with the rejuvenating power of art without committing to a permanent fixture.

There are many ways a parish and artist can work together to exhibit temporary artworks. As a parish, you may wish to host an exhibition of paintings from local artists; you may want to take part in a local or regional arts festival; you may want to host a one-off performance by an artist. As an artist, you may wish to use a church as a source of inspiration and focus for your work, or the location and architecture of the church may suit your style of art for exhibition of works you have already produced.

This guidance helps parishes and artists work together to identify the best approach to introduce temporary artwork that benefits the parish, the artist and audiences. It helps you to identify different ways to engage with an artist, the different types of temporary artwork, practical aspects of project management, contracts, marketing, and funding, and on running an exhibition.

Introducing temporary art is a project, therefore you need to think about it as you would any project – what you want to achieve, how you will achieve it, what budget do you have, who you need to involve.

This guidance goes through these questions in turn, giving you ideas on what you will need to do at each stage, and providing inspiration and tips from others in churches and cathedrals who have undertaken similar projects.

WHY EXHIBIT ART IN CHURCHES?

There are many reasons why you may want to put on a temporary exhibition in your church. The mission of your church may involve expression through collective art making, which can be a different way for people to explore and express faith – you may then wish to temporarily exhibit the works produced. You may want to widen your local community links by joining in a local art festival, either offering your space as a place for the artworks, or by commissioning art specifically for the church [[Click here for the Art in Romney Marsh case study](#)]. There may be a particular cause you want to raise awareness of through temporary art. You may wish to take advantage of a touring exhibition. You may want to raise funds for another project through the exhibition of works of art for sale, for which you take a commission [[Click here for the All Saints, Skepton case study](#)]. You may want to celebrate a

particular part of the liturgical year, such as lent, Easter or Advent. You might be approached by an artist who wants to use your building as inspiration, or as a place to sell their current works. Whatever the reason, through good planning and management, you can ensure the temporary exhibition is successful, which may lead to future inspiration and involvement in art.

Being clear at the beginning of why you are introducing temporary art and what you want to achieve will help to guide you along the way.

BEFORE YOU START

What kind of art do you want?

There are a myriad of ways that art can be produced and exhibited. Below are some suggestions to help you work out what might work best for your parish. These can be divided into artworks that already exist, and commissioning new works of art.

Exhibiting existing works of art

A simple first step into the art world is to exhibit existing works of art. You will already know what the work of art looks like, and therefore there are fewer unknowns involved. This is a good option if there is a local arts festival. You can ask the organisers of the festival to put you in contact with artists looking for a place to exhibit their art. An artist may be looking for somewhere to exhibit their works to sell, which can help you raise funds by charging a commission from artworks sold, or a fee for use of the space.

You may want to develop a relationship with local artists and their workshops, and decide to put on your own temporary exhibition. Using existing works of art can be useful as a first step to see how you work together with the artists and workshop, and whether a longer-term partnership could work.

If you don't have particular artists in mind, online databases hosting artists' portfolios can be useful. These are mainly designed to connect early-career artists with those who might want to buy or exhibit their work. Axisweb is one of the most comprehensive databases, and allows you to find artists by region and by media (eg painting, video art, performance art, etc).

You can also ask artists to contact you through an open call for submissions. An example of how to do this is provided in Appendix Y. You can put your open call on websites and listing sites for artists, such as Art Jobs and Artists' Newsletter (a-n).

Touring exhibitions are another way to bring existing works into your church. With touring exhibitions, the artworks have already been selected, and they usually come with interpretation to display alongside the works. They are generally designed to be flexible, for display in different kinds of spaces. This can be a good way to test whether your church building can accommodate exhibitions, and to test how audiences enjoy viewing art in your church [[Click here for the FVU case study](#)].

While exhibiting existing works of art takes away the need to commission something new, you will still need to check that the works fit into your building, that you can meet the installation requirements, including security, for the artworks, and that the content is appropriate for your church.

Commissioning new works of art

Commissioning new artwork may sound daunting but there are numerous ways of approaching it, some of which require relatively little work.

In addition to static works of art such as paintings and sculpture, you may be interested in other types of art, such as performances and artist residencies.

Performance art

Performance art is increasingly prominent in the programmes of cultural institutions, and churches are no exception. The performance may be by the artist themselves, or by a group of people engaged by the artist. Performances can mark the end of a collaboration between the artist and parish/local community, or may mark the opening of a larger exhibition or event. It may involve music, theatre or dance. As a one-off event, it usually requires less intervention into the building, as there are fewer or no 'artworks' to install, unless elaborate staging is required. However, you will still need to enter into a contract with the performers in advance of the event.

To ensure performances are popular, marketing of the event is important. Ticket booking sites such as Eventbrite allow you to manage the ticketing process for free. Even if the performance is free to attend, having tickets or using a booking site allows you to send reminders to those who book in advance of the event and to monitor expected numbers.

[\[Click here for the Coventry Cathedral case study\]](#)

Artist in residence

Hosting an artist residency is a flexible and open-ended way for you to work with an artist over a period of time, and for local communities to see and take part in the artist's work [\[Click here for the All Saints, West Dulwich case study\]](#). It is a good way to build a relationship and sustain interest in a project, as activity can unfold over time. At the end of the residency, the artist usually produces an exhibition, performance or other showcase of the work undertaken.

Artists tend to favour residencies that are relatively open in terms of expectations of what they will produce. A residency is an opportunity for them to experiment, develop their practice, and respond to new surroundings. You can support the artist during their residency by introducing them to useful contacts in the area, arranging visits to places and people of interest, and providing access to local learning resources such as a library, art gallery, museum or public records office.

As residencies can be experimental and exploring, making sure the brief you write when commissioning the project is specific about what you want will help to attract artists who

are willing to work with you, and meet your expectations. It is important that you agree before the residency starts on what you expect the artist to have produced by the end of the residency, and to clarify this in your contract with the artist. If you have a defined outcome in mind, you may prefer to commission a temporary artwork instead.

For a residency, you will usually need to provide accommodation for the artist and space to work. In general, artists expect their board and expenses to be covered when undertaking a residency, and a fee should be provided if possible.

Some of the different types of art project, such as residencies, involve working with your local community. Many artists see this as central to developing and realising their work. Therefore before you start an art project, think about groups whose involvement might be mutually beneficial. Ensure their role is clearly defined, and consider how can the relationship developed between artist, parish, and other community be maintained after the project ends. You will need to make clear what the participants can expect (for example how much time will they be involved for? Will they get a piece of art out of the project?). You may want to provide funding for participants, as drop-out rates can be high amongst unpaid contributors. [\[Click here for the Salisbury Cathedral case study\]](#)

How do you choose the type of art?

When deciding what type of art to choose, think about your building, your resources and your intended audiences. Consider the size, style and architecture of your building. Do you have space to exhibit large or numerous pieces of art? How will people move around a display in a space with lots of furniture? Will the artist take into account the changing light provided by stained glass? Does the artwork disrupt church services and other events at the church? Temporary art need not be limited to the interior of the church. Could you use the outside space around your church building? It may also be possible to adjacent parish rooms. All of these are factors in the choice of artist and artwork.

Consider the resources you have available to you. If you have limited time and resources, a small exhibition of existing work might be more practical than a new commission, for example.

Consider your intended audiences, and whether the artwork will appeal to them. Are you interested in attracting new audiences with the art; will it attract tourists, is it mainly intended for the congregation, and local communities, is there are larger network of art lovers you would like to attract?

If a match between the proposed artwork and context for display is not apparent, it may be better to not pursue that project.

HOW DO YOU BEGIN?

Form an organising committee

Regardless of the scale of your project - whether it is a small exhibition of existing artwork or a major new commission - it is advisable to bring together a group of people to help deliver it. The size of the group will depend on the scale of the project, and the number of people amenable to getting involved. As with any project, agreeing clearly defined roles helps ensure clarity and efficiency.

The following roles are likely to play a part in your project:

Artist(s): In order to get the best from an artist they should be given clear parameters in the form of a brief but afforded as much freedom as possible within it. Artists should be encouraged to spend time in the church in order to understand how it is used. Clergy and church wardens can help to guide early decisions regarding placement, materials and exhibition times.

Project manager: The project manager is the person in charge of the project. As the central point of contact for the rest of the group, the project manager ensures that everyone has what they need to carry out their roles. They also manage the budget, and set a schedule for the project to ensure the project stays on track. The project manager may also be responsible for securing funding for the project.

Marketing: Having someone who can market the project is very important. For a small project, the marketing may be done by the project manager, but for a larger project, having a separate person doing the marketing is an asset. Marketing, promotion and communications include advertising, production of interpretation texts and the communication of activities related to the exhibition with your potential audience. Successful marketing strategies begin well before the opening, to generate interest and build an audience. Promoting an exhibition becomes the primary focus of activity once the artwork is installed and the exhibition is ready to open to the public.

Identifying a project steering group, the members of which have an active interest in your project, can provide additional support. The members should be people with a strong connection to the project, such as members of community groups with whom you are working, project partners, or representatives of audiences you want to reach. The steering group is also a good way to involve people with expertise relevant to your project, such as a person with knowledge of the arts. In order to get the best out of the group, make sure you set up regular opportunities to update them on the progress of the project and garner their help when you can.

Project partners can connect your exhibition to a wider audience, bring expertise and access material resources, useful contacts and funding. Written agreements between project partners should be made, especially if funding is part of the partnership. A local arts organisation could make a useful partner, as they will have specialist expertise and equipment, and an existing audience for arts activity.

If artist(s) plan to make their work in collaboration with a particular community group, formalising that arrangement through a partnership could help ensure a commitment on both sides. Issues around safeguarding must be considered when working with children and

vulnerable adults. Visit www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding for advice, guidelines, and contacts for further information.

Local businesses may be willing to donate funds or materials, particularly if the subject relates to their work. They should expect to be credited in any marketing material.

NEW COMMISSIONS: THE ARTIST'S BRIEF

Progressing your project from this stage depends on the approach you have decided on. If you are going to exhibit existing artworks, you can begin designing the exhibition (see the 'display scheme and installation' section). If the starting point is a theme or idea without particular artists attached, an open call for artists' proposals is the best way to proceed [[Click here for the St Michael's, Discoed case study](#)]. The open call may ask for existing works of art, or for artists interested in making new work for your exhibition.

If you are commissioning a new work of art you will need to produce an artist's brief. The brief needs to clearly communicate the aims of your project and your specifications to potential artists. A good brief will clearly outline your needs without being too prescriptive; artists may be put off if it seems there is not much scope for interpretation and creative response. It should weed out those whose work is unsuitable and encourage unexpected yet exciting possibilities. A template can be found in the appendix, and further examples can easily be found online. In response to the brief, artists will typically produce a proposal for consideration. [[Click here for the St Paul's Bow Common case study](#)]

It is usual for multiple artists to submit proposals in response to a brief. The winning idea should be selected by a panel of no more than five people. Members of the steering group and others with specialist knowledge could be used to form the panel.

The level of an artist's fee is dependent on many factors. Two primary considerations are the artist's level of experience and the anticipated time needed to carry out the work. Along with the fee, the budget for materials should be specified in the brief. The sums offered for fee and materials can either be expressed as a single figure or separated out. Current guidelines for artist fees can be found on the a-n website, visit www.a-n.co.uk/tag/fees-and-payments/ for details.

DISPLAY SCHEME AND INSTALLATION

Unless the artwork you are exhibiting has been made in situ it will be necessary to identify position(s) to display it. Positioning something eye-catching near the entrance may grab the attention of those who didn't know an exhibition was taking place in the church, while valuable artworks and equipment are best positioned away from the door. If plinths and labels are needed, allow plenty of time to make them. Health and safety requirements need

to be addressed, for example freestanding sculpture must be secure and stable, fragile or sharp surfaces protected and flammable materials may need fire-retardant finishes. See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/> for more details.

Interpretive text to enrich visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the exhibition can be made available in a variety of media. Standing panels can be eye catching, though expensive to produce. A simple printed sheet of paper is easy and effective, and can be taken away by visitors. Texts don't need to be long, but ensure that key messages appear in the first part of the text.

Finalising the scheme or layout of the exhibition is an important step, and the responsibility of the project manager to facilitate. To make sure that the plan doesn't conflict with the way others use the space, consult with those who regularly use the church. Make sure that what you are planning has all the relevant permissions (see below).

Installing artwork can be a challenge, but artists and exhibition organisers tend to respond creatively to this, employing free-standing panels and repurposing existing hooks and catches. If you are not experienced in art installation it is advisable to seek advice from a professional who can advise on materials and techniques which do not require permanent fixing. Art Technicians who work on a freelance basis can be appointed to assist with this. Local art galleries may be able to recommend freelance technicians in the area, or consult websites such as www.the-dots.com which host profiles for freelance professionals in the creative industries.

Practicalities for all exhibition types

Contracts and legal considerations

If artwork is not permanently fixed to the fabric of the church building, it is unlikely that a Faculty will be required. However, it is good practice to contact the DAC Secretary and discuss your proposals with them in order to find out whether permissions are needed as dioceses vary in their approaches to temporary installations.

Before any work begins on an exhibition, you must make sure that all parties are protected by law. The contract with the artist(s) should be signed by all parties, the artist must ensure that permission to work in the church has been granted. The artist must ensure that the PCC has obtained any relevant permissions for the artwork to be exhibited, and that the PCC agrees to the exhibition.

The most complex contracts are those for new commissions. These will typically cover the responsibilities of both parties, finances, intellectual property, ownership, insurance, disputes, variations and terminations. In addition, the contract can set out a schedule of work, making it a document to return to throughout the development process.

Traditionally, you as the commissioning body will take ownership of the resulting artwork, but in the case of commissions for temporary display the artist often retains ownership. The matter of who takes ownership of the artwork once the exhibition has finished should be addressed in the artist's contract.

If the artwork you are exhibiting is for sale, agree the commission percentage with the artist(s); 20% is usual. If this is a fundraising exhibition you might agree to take up to 50%. If artists will not be remunerated via the sale of their work it is best practice to pay a fee whenever possible.

When borrowing artworks for exhibition it is advisable to put a loan agreement in place. Loan agreements are primarily used by museums and galleries, which means that they can specify security measures, conditions of travel and environmental conditions which can be difficult to replicate in a church. They can, however, be readily modified on the agreement of both parties. More information on loans can be found at ChurchCare <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/disposals-and-loans>

Funding and budgeting

When looking for funding it is important that the vision for the project is clearly articulated, a developed plan of action and rough estimate of costs are in place. Successful funding applications establish clear links between the criteria of a certain trust, foundation, or individual donor and the aims of the project. Most projects require a combination of several different types of funding. Keep track of the needs and interests of each funder, keep them informed, and thank them for their contribution.

Funding applications require an accurate forecast of projected costs. When external contractors are involved obtain three quotes where possible, and factor in a contingency of at least 10% to cover any unforeseen expenses. Costs to consider include: the artist's fee, travel and accommodation costs, costs associated with marketing, printing of any interpretive material, costs for hosting a launch party, costs associated with installing the artwork and with removing it, supplementary lighting, display cases, security considerations.

If you have a funding gap, it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved and to be upfront with all your collaborators if they start work on the project while funding bids are pending. Formulate a contingency plan in case bids are unsuccessful. Can the project be realised on a more modest scale if necessary? A number of sample budgets can be found in the appendix.

Insurance

Artworks installed in a church under a certain value will often be covered by the church's existing policy at no additional premium, though it is important to check with the parish insurers. Where the value exceeds existing insurance, additional premiums may apply. Churches will have Public Liability Insurance, which is required if holding a public event such as an exhibition.

Marketing

Social media is a cost-effective way of promoting a project, but relies on a wide network for impact; if you don't have an established group of 'followers' on Facebook or Twitter,

consider asking friends and collaborators to share your news. Reciprocal arrangements for sharing news with subscriber groups are also common in traditional marketing (subject to GDPR). Where possible, include visuals to increase impact. Local media such as regional broadcasters and newspapers reach the people most likely to visit. Invite the local arts correspondent and journalists to various stages of the process to generate interest, and issue invitations to journalists for the opening event.

An opening celebration for your exhibition, and any other events to coincide such as artist's talks can also be considered a form of marketing, as they help spread the word about your project.

Risk Assessment

It is good practice to complete a risk assessment for an exhibition project, even if it is not a requirement. A template can be found in the appendix. Risk assessments typically focus on health and safety issues but they can also prompt reflection on more subjective potential risks, such as risk to reputation.

Schedule

The project manager is responsible for drawing up a schedule for the development and delivery of the exhibition. Sign-off points should include the artist's design scheme, opportunities to review any interpretive text you are producing, and the plan for installing the work. Allow plenty of time for the team to review and comment in each case.

ONCE IT'S OPEN...

Managing the exhibition

Invigilation can be a challenge in church spaces, as they are often open throughout the day but unattended for long periods. If continual invigilation is not possible, the exhibition can be designed with this in mind, with any information about the artwork you want to make available to visitors easy to find and use. If invigilation is necessary to protect vulnerable artwork, limiting the opening hours could be considered, and a rota of volunteers drawn up [[Click here for the St John on Bethnal Green case study](#)]. Identifying volunteers to be on stand-by mitigates against last-minute drop outs.

Education and events

Temporary exhibitions offer opportunities to invite community groups, including schools, adult learners, and other local interest/social groups. Events and educational activities, scheduled throughout the run of the exhibition, can increase visitor numbers. Artist talks are often popular, and can be scheduled to coincide with services.

After the exhibition

Plans for removing the exhibition need to be in place before any work is installed, and should be specified contractually. This includes agreeing a method statement, identifying individuals to do the work and ensuring you have sufficient funds in the budget to pay for it. If large items need to be disposed of following their removal, this may need to be organised with the local council.

Evaluation and Legacy

Evaluating the process of organising the exhibition enables reflection on successes and problems vital to future projects. Thorough minutes, photographs, and artists' testimonies, partners and other collaborators can all feed into this.

Processes for evaluating the exhibition itself can range from reviewing comments left in a visitors' book or board, gathering questionnaire data or inviting feedback from focus groups. Social media platforms such as Facebook are also useful places to gather responses.

Recording the exhibition through photography is vital to the legacy of the project. Photographs and/or other records, when made available on websites or other platforms, build the profile of the church as a venue for creative projects. Make sure you have obtained permission from the artists to take photographs, if an agreement on the use of images of the artwork is not stipulated in your contract.

Help

[Artserve](#) Resources for churches

[Artquest](#) Legal advice for artists and arts organisers

[Axisweb](#) For details of artists working in your region

[The Church of England's guidelines](#) For commissioning new permanent works of art in churches

[Church of England, Churchcare](#) Information & support for everyone managing a church building

Your local council may make their cultural strategy available online, which could include funding opportunities.

Appendices

- i. [Artist contract template](#)
- ii. [Artist's brief template](#)
- iii. [Budget example](#)
- iv. [Funding bodies which support art in churches](#)
- v. [Open call submissions form template](#)
- vi. [Simple loan agreement template](#)

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