

Platt Hall In-between – Visual Identity Design Brief

We are seeking a graphic designer to develop a visual identity for the project *Platt Hall In-between*, a three-year development project to secure the future of a historic house and museum in an urban park in Manchester. A group of local residents and staff from Platt Hall have come together to develop this brief; our aim is to engage the wider communities that surround the Hall as key stakeholders in the transformation of a historic local landmark. For more information about the project see www.platthall.org.

Context

Platt Hall is an 18th century textile merchant's house in Platt Fields Park, managed by Manchester Art Gallery. For 70 years it was the city's Gallery of Costume. Now it is entering a new phase, as a different kind of museum focused on the use of creativity and culture as a tool for social change. This project lays the groundwork for this transformation. Between now and 2024, it aims to:

- Build a foundational network of community stakeholders invested in the Hall and its associated collections.
- Work in partnership with stakeholders to develop a new identity for the Hall that realises its potential as a dynamic, vibrant and relevant local resource.
- Produce a funded strategy and plan for the longer-term development necessary to realise this ambition and secure the Hall's future sustainability.

Platt Hall In-between brings together diverse collections and equally diverse communities to begin the process of transforming Platt Hall into a unique and responsive environment for talking, thinking, making and doing. It is an evolving process in which the product *is* the process – the communities and residents of the local area are positioned as co-owners of Platt Hall's development over time. It is funded by Manchester City Council with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Visual Identity

We want to develop a coherent but flexible visual identity for this project that will:

- Build key relationships within the local communities of Rusholme, Fallowfield and Moss Side, situating the Hall as part of the wider community.
- Clearly communicate the message that Platt Hall is changing and will evolve during this time.
- Invite local residents and communities to be part of that change and help shape the future identity of the Hall.

Platt Hall Gallery of Costume closed to the public in 2017; the building has remained closed ever since. Much of it is currently occupied by collections being prepared for re-location elsewhere, making public access difficult. Over the past year, and in the context of lockdown, we have hosted online conversations, used the windows of the Hall as an exhibition space, created a park trail and developed plans for a garden. This work has enabled the development of a core group of local advocates and supporters, some of whom have shaped this brief. However, wider perceptions locally remain mixed, ranging from frustration at the lack of access, to confusion about if and when the Hall will ever open again, to curiosity about what it is and what is inside. The building still feels closed.

Between now and 2024, we will begin the process of publicly re-occupying the Hall, working with partners to develop a programme of activity that will shape its longer-term transformation and return it to full public use. This is the first step in a longer journey, not the final destination. It sits alongside the work to conserve and re-house the collections that currently occupy much of the space. And offers the opportunity to open up this 'behind-the-scenes' work, to share the workings of the project openly and involve local communities in shaping where it takes us.

We require a visual identity for this transitional period that will enable us to:

- Connect, listen to and be active with local communities.
- Promote the community programme and dispel the perception that Platt Hall is completely closed.
- Communicate the 'in-between' - the transitional, process-driven focus of this project.
- Open dialogue, invite participation, and manage expectations.

It should:

- Reflect the rich visual and material qualities of the Hall and its associated collections. These include dress and textiles, domestic objects and handicrafts, paintings and drawings from all over the world.
- Speak to the diverse cultures of Rusholme, Moss Side and Fallowfield. This neighbourhood comprises a rich mix of cultures, histories, styles, languages – its residents come from all over the world.
- Visually embody the transitional nature of this project and that Platt Hall is in the process of becoming.
- Sit alongside the wider Manchester Art Gallery visual identity – Platt Hall is part of Manchester Art Gallery, which has its own distinct brand and house style.

Platt's visual identity will be manifest in some or all of the following spaces and formats:

- Physical manifestation on the building – utilising the windows and other architectural features (within the restrictions of listed building status).
- In the grounds, park and surrounding neighbourhood – in print, information points, noticeboards, railings and other physical landmarks as appropriate.
- In digital space – on the Platt Hall In-between website, through film, and in social media.

Approach

The process for developing this work needs to:

- Be intrinsically participatory. Everything we do within this project is intended to strengthen and extend local relationships and build a sense of collective ownership. We are therefore looking for someone who can work collaboratively with local residents and communities.
- Work with the challenges of both the historic fabric of a Grade II* listed building and current Covid restrictions and find creative opportunities within them.
- Embed sustainability as a core principle. Working with what we've got, reducing our climate impact, preservation and material care and repair.
- Be inclusive and sensitive to cultural associations, symbolism and language relevant to diversity of the neighbourhood.

Practicalities

Timescale

Deadline for applications – Friday 16 April

Shortlisting and notification of interview – Wednesday 21 April

Interviews – Tuesday 4 May

Start-up meeting: presenting initial ideas and group discussion – Tuesday 11 May

Presentation of draft designs and/or prototypes – Tuesday 25 May

Final work to be signed off and delivered - end of June.

Covid-safe celebratory event - July

Budget

There is a budget of up to £6000 for the design, implementation and delivery of this project.

Please give a breakdown of how you would propose to break this down to include time, labour, design, production and installation costs.

Application process

Please provide an expression of interest that includes:

- A summary of your proposed approach (no more than two sides of A4)
- Examples of previous work
- Indicative breakdown of budget, to be further negotiated on appointment

More information about the project, including mood board and contextual images developed to support this brief can be found at <https://www.platthall.org/visual-identity-project.html>.

Please send your expression of interest to Liz Mitchell, Curator, Platt Hall Collections at elizabeth.mitchell2@manchester.gov.uk by Friday 16 April 2021.