

# Manchester Art Gallery

## Evaluation Brief: Platt Hall In-between

October 2020 - April 2021

### 1. Context

*Platt Hall In-between* is a two-year research and development project to secure the long-term future of Platt Hall, an 18<sup>th</sup> century house in an urban park, managed by Manchester Art Gallery. For 70 years Platt Hall 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 June 2021, the project aims to:

- Evidence the value and potential of the Hall and its associated collections as a medium for social change, through a programme of experimental activities and encounters.
- Work with local communities and stakeholders to develop a clear and communicable identity for the Hall, premised on the intersection of people, place and collections.
- Produce a funded strategy to enable 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 a historic house in a city park into a unique and responsive environment for talking, thinking, making and doing, driven by local priorities, interest and need. It is the first phase in a projected eight-year programme to realise this ambition, and sits within a wider programme of improvement across the collections in all three of Manchester Art Gallery's sites that will enable them to be used for maximum social benefit. It is an evolving process in which the product *is* the process – the communities and residents of the local area are positioned as constituents and co-owners of Platt Hall's development over time. Funded by Manchester City Council (MCC) with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund (ECFC) and Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF), *Platt Hall In-between* focuses on laying the groundwork for this process.

### 2. Evaluation

As we reach the end of the first year - and as the world around us adapts to changing circumstances - it's time to look at what we have done, assess what we have learned, recognise what we've missed, and plan the next stage. We are seeking an experienced evaluator to be a critical friend across two key interconnected areas:

- Impact on external constituent groups including local residents, community partners, stakeholders, and wider publics
- Impact within the organisation, across areas of responsibility and working practice including learning, collections care, and building management

Across these areas, the evaluator will support us to evidence and articulate the value of the work done to date, maintain and develop clarity of thought and communication, unpick and challenge obstacles to progress, and make best use of the project data to lever support for further development.

The objectives of the current programme of work are to:

1. Develop foundational relationships with constituent communities in the vicinity of Platt Hall that foster cultural capital, build mutual understanding of priorities, interests and needs, and develop community investment in the Hall as a valuable local resource.
2. Explore and evidence the potential of the building and collections as a medium for social impact through a variety of experimental creative and dialogic approaches with constituent communities that inform longer-term development priorities.

3. Support organisational development around working with collections and communities, building mutual understanding of the opportunities and challenges this affords to establish a creative problem-solving approach that informs MAG-wide working practices.
4. Provide a strong evidence base to secure MCC financial commitment to the wider capital programme and external grant funding to realise the next phase of development over a five-year period.
5. Develop a strategic five-year development programme to follow on from this phase of work, in co-production with local communities and stakeholders.

### 3. Evaluation tasks

The evaluation at this stage in the project has several purposes.

Although there has been a significant amount of activity to date, milestones and outcomes set at the outset have changed, both due to the responsive R&D nature of the project and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, both the Project Logic Model and Evaluation Framework, created at the start of the project for funders, and the principles of Participatory Action Research which informed our initial approach, are only starting points for this work and require review.

The project is currently multi-faceted and difficult to articulate coherently. It has drawn attention to wider organisational challenges around professional accountability, principles of co-production, and the shortcomings of language. This evaluation will draw together all the activity, feedback, findings, successes and mistakes and create a compelling narrative that can be used to determine the future direction of travel and make things happen.

As such, we seek a critical friend: someone who will feed in learning and updates on an ongoing basis, get involved, ask good questions, check our thinking, and provide challenge.

You will:

- Analyse, interpret and report on data (qualitative and quantitative) already collected to inform future work and to evidence success.
- Identify gaps in data collection and undertake additional research to meet those gaps, as required (e.g. stakeholder interviews, session observation).
- Evaluate the relationship building undertaken with stakeholders, make recommendations on how existing relationships can be sustained and further relationships developed.
- Investigate how the project has, to date, established the relevance of Platt Hall and its collections as a focus of local identity.
- Identify organisational barriers to progress and make recommendations on addressing these.
- Input into the commissioning of a film (separately budgeted) that will document *Platt Hall In-between* for use as a PR tool with funders, stakeholders and influencers. We would be interested in your suggestions for film-makers with experience of creative evaluation, collaborative research and documentation.
- Provide content and evidence that will support our applications for further funding from multiple external funders including, but not restricted to, PHF More & Better, the DCMS/Wolfson Museums & Galleries Improvement Fund, The Foyle Foundation, The Pilgrim Trust, and the Clore Duffield Foundation. The final evaluation report should centre on sharing evidence and learning in this context.

### 5. Budget

We hold a budget of £8k for evaluation to include all expenses (usually capped at 10% of fee). The fee will be paid in instalments by arrangement, with the balance payable on receipt of the final report.

## 6. Timescale

Work to begin in October 2020, and be completed by end April 2021 (6 months).

The final schedule of work to be agreed with the successful evaluator according to their proposal.

The evaluator should attend project team meetings and/or Project Board meetings monthly. These can be on Zoom or in person, depending on the nature of the meeting. Dates to be confirmed.

## 7. Application process

Please send an expression of interest, outlining your approach and methodology, a proposed schedule of work (with dates/milestones), and a costed breakdown of activity and outputs. A CV, demonstrating experience, skills and previous relevant work, is essential.

Closing date Friday 2 October.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a Zoom interview in the following week.

If you have any questions, need further information or would like to talk through any aspect of this brief, please contact Jo Beggs, Head of Development at [jo.beggs@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:jo.beggs@manchester.gov.uk).

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## Supporting Information:

Platt Hall sits in the North East corner of Platt Fields Park, at the junction of Platt Lane and Wilmslow Road between Rusholme, Moss Side and Fallowfield in Manchester. Built in the 1760s for textile merchant John Lees and his wife Deborah Worsley (heiress to the Platt estate), it is one of Manchester's most historically significant surviving Georgian buildings. Platt Hall has been many things in its lifetime – domestic home, park tea room, refugee accommodation, temporary police headquarters, junior art school. Since 1926 it has been part of Manchester Art Gallery. From 1947 it was the Gallery of Costume, the world's first museum of fashion and dress. In 2017, the Gallery of Costume closed, since when a team of staff and volunteers have been working to prepare the dress and textile collection (some 24,000 objects) for eventual relocation to a new space at Manchester Art Gallery. In 2019, work began to develop a new vision for Platt Hall. More information is available on our project website at [www.platthall.org](http://www.platthall.org).

## Project Management Structure

The Project Board has overall responsibility for Platt Hall In-between and this piece of evaluation. It comprises:

Amanda Wallace (Senior Operational Lead)  
SRO for Platt Hall Development, and wider capital programme

Jo Beggs (Head of Development)  
Fundraising, evaluation and bid writing

Claire Grundy (Senior Conservator)  
MAG Collection Care programme, supporting access to and use of collections at Platt

Liz Mitchell (Curator, Platt Hall Collections)  
Platt Hall Inbetween project lead

Ronan Brindley (Lead for Learning and Engagement, Manchester Art Gallery)  
MAG Learning and engagement programme, supporting partnership and community development at Platt

The evaluator will also work directly with the Project Delivery Team. This will include the following staff who deliver activity to support the current project:

Liz Mitchell (Curator, Platt Hall Collections)

Rosie Gnatiuk (Curator - Costume, Manchester Art Gallery)

Sarah Walton (Conservator, Manchester Art Gallery)

Ronan Brindley (Lead for Learning and Engagement, Manchester Art Gallery)

Meg Parnell (Learning Manager - Volunteers, Manchester Art Gallery)

Ruth Edson (Learning Manager - Community Learning, Manchester Art Gallery)

### **Supporting documents (available on request)**

MCC Business Case for Capital Development  
EFCF Logic Model and First Year Report  
PHF Evaluation Framework

### **Data generated through activities to date**

- Notes, audio files, transcripts and written reports from consultation events Oct 2019 to June 2020.
- Growing mailing list of local supporters and advocates keen to be involved.
- Visual documentation, evaluation questionnaires and partner review findings from health and well-being 'Collections chat' programme carried out in partnership with Robert Darbishire GP Practice, Manchester Rape Crisis and Women's Voices.
- Conversations on the doorstep and in the park, evaluation questionnaires, partner review findings, social media response and phone app data relating to Platt Hall in the Park programme of changing window displays and park trail.
- Platt Hall Inbetween website traffic and content, and social media presence and following on Twitter and Instagram.