

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

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| PROJECT TITLE | | | | |
| Centring the Rural: Organisational Identities, Public Engagement and Curatorial Practice at Wysing Arts Centre, 1989 to today | | | | |
| LEAD INSTITUTION | | | | |
| Name of HEI institution | | University of Leicester | | |
| Lead regional city | | Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/> | Coventry <input type="checkbox"/> | Leicester <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/> |
| PARTNER ORGANISATION | | | | |
| Name of organisation | | Wysing Arts Centre | | |
| URL for organisation website | | www.wysingartscentre.org | | |
| <p>Project</p> <p>Founded in rural Cambridgeshire in 1989, Wysing Art Centre provides alternative environments and structures for artistic research, experimentation, discovery and production. Examining Wysing's organisational identities and curatorial practice as a central case study, this project investigates the changing relationship between contemporary art and rural places over the last 35 years.</p> <p>There is little scholarship investigating the relationship between contemporary art and rural places. Art history traditionally centres on the association between contemporary art and the city and when the rural is considered, it is often through the lens of the landscape genre. This project works enhance understanding of the complex intersections between rural places, contemporary art organisations, artists and publics.</p> <p>Central Research Question: What can Wysing Art Centre's organisational identity, approaches to working with diverse publics and artists, and evolving curatorial practices, tell us about the changing relationship between contemporary art and rural places over the last 35 years?</p> <p>Candidates will have the option to shape the direction of the research in discussion with the supervisors, examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has Wysing understood and described itself in relation to its rural location over 35 year history and how has this influenced the organisation's practices of curating/producing contemporary art? • How Wysing has engaged with diverse artists and publics over time? • How has Wysing engaged with its rural location in relation to environmental sustainability in the past and how might this relationship inform long term strategies on environmental impact and climate change? • How can Wysing's histories and practices inform and contribute to wider critical understandings and networks of rurally based contemporary art organisations? <p>Process</p> <p>Key activities include exploration of Wysing's archive and conducting interviews with a range of stakeholders. Candidates have the option to develop interventions into Wysing's events programme to generate collaborative research/dissemination activities and to contribute to the development of a network of rural arts organisations.</p> | | | | |

The candidate will be supported to draw on an interdisciplinary range of literature and methods such as art history, curatorial studies, cultural geography, and organisational studies to construct a framework for understanding the rural and Wysing's place within it as a complex arena of inter-related locations, communities, imaginaries and histories.

Wysing is in the process of re-evaluating its organisational identity in relation to its rural location and understanding how it can shape long term strategies on environmental impact and climate change, the knowledge generated by the project will feed directly into this process. It is also addressing how it can better support artists / publics with a range of access needs, identities and experiences, for whom its rural location may be a barrier.

Places

This project takes full advantage of the collaborative working opportunities offered by an M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award. The candidate will be based within the world leading research community at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, where they will be supervised by Dr Rosemary Shirley who has written widely on the relationships between art and rural places. They will be also be supported by second supervisor Prof Becky Shaw, from the College of Art and Design at Birmingham City University, whose expertise as an artist researcher working within different public institutions will be invaluable to the project. The candidate will be able to access and contribute to the vibrant research activities in both these institutions.

The project will also draw on Wysing's well established model for artists in residence, to support the candidate in becoming a "researcher in residence" at Wysing for the duration of the PhD.

The format of this residency can be flexible to suit the candidate's needs. It is anticipated that they would visit Wysing on average once a month, with free accommodation being offered to support this. Whilst onsite, the researcher will be invited to attend Wysing team meetings and regular meetings with Director, Rosie Cooper and Curator, Amy Jones. Periods of time spent at Wysing may vary during the project according to the activities taking place for example more time might be needed at the start of the project and during the archival research phase and less time during the writing up phase.

Person

The candidate may have a background in art history/theory, museum/gallery studies, curating, public practice, arts management, fine art or cultural studies. Experience in archival research and interviewing would be desirable, however a full range of doctoral skills training is available. The project is conceived as a predominantly theoretical (as opposed to practice based) with the opportunity to bring in some practice-based aspects such as developing research related interventions into Wysing's programme.

(750 words)

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE. Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

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| Lead HEI Supervisor: | Dr Rosemary Shirley |
| Lead HEI Supervisor Email: | Rosemary.Shirley@Leicester.ac.uk |