

Steina and Woody Vasulka
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3 pages

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Dear Steina and Woody Vasulka

Art Project Management is currently in the process of commissioning a number of video and light installations for the public spaces of Medway, the area of the neighbouring cities of Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham. Further to experiencing your work at the Venice Biennale last year (the most memorable experience) and in the Guggenheim exhibition 'Mediascape', we would very much like to discuss the possibility of a presentation of your work.

The video and light project is part of a larger ongoing programme of visual arts events, installations and residencies etc. contributing to the feasibility and establishment of a permanent gallery/museum in Medway and for the South East of England. A fuller description of the objective of Medway are enclosed.

We are currently in the process of fund-raising for this aspect of the arts programme. The video and light installations are scheduled to take place in the first weekend in November '99 and will coincide with an existing fireworks and bonfire event based in Gillingham. It is intended to create a sequence of light installations which complement the focus of the popular bonfire event, using modern media in the projection of light.

Clearly we need to give you a full account of the project, including budget, timetable etc. before you are able to make a decision regarding your potential participation, however, we should be very grateful if you would let us know if the project is of interest to you at this stage. We should also greatly appreciate further material on your work - the only reference we have for the time being the Venice Biennale and the Mediascape catalogues.

I look forward to hearing from you and would like to thank you in anticipation for sending some material.

Yours sincerely

Bergit Arends

(no signature;
sent via computer)

INTERNATIONAL VISUAL ARTS IN MEDWAY

Strategically situated on the River Medway between London and Dover, the City of Rochester upon Medway and the towns of Chatham and Gillingham are rich in historical association and imbued with the presence of the river, which has made a unique impact on their cultural and commercial life. Forty minutes from the centre of London, they inhabit a different geographical realm, enveloped by the North Downs to the south, and the wilder marshlands to the north reflecting a lightness and airiness not enjoyed by the neighbouring capital.

Bounded by an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Downs), and in proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (the marshlands), Rochester upon Medway, with Strood, Gillingham, Chatham and the surrounding villages present an exceptional mix of rural and historic urban environments. The area is visited by overseas, national and local tourists and enjoys a variety of events and festivals reflecting its cultural and historic heritage.

Having, like other important river locations, played an important role in the history of our maritime nation, Rochester upon Medway, Chatham and Gillingham have more recently been pressed into a supporting role for their great neighbour, London. Like other ports in post-industrial Europe, the towns now find themselves seeking a new role. The winds of industrial decline have dealt a blow to employment, and there is scope for audacious and imaginative steps to be taken to change the perception of the Thames Estuary, once characterised by the Department of the Environment as a place where "London generates power and dumps rubbish".

Once discovered, the riches of the Royal Naval Dockyard, Rochester and Upnor castles, Fort Amherst, the Kentish villages, Rochester's Norman Cathedral and so much of its Dickensian heritage inspire delight and amazement in the new visitor, and banish any such negative preconceptions. It is clearly in the interests of tourism to sustain and, where possible, restore the region's built heritage. But a balance needs to be found between the enjoyment of heritage and the continuing need to foster vitality and optimism in order to create a positive climate for investment which will address the economic needs and the

Part of the revitalising strategy has been a developing arts program which includes an initiative to create a permanent facility for the visual arts and a desire to hold a major international festival, a 'Biennale' or 'Triennale UK' of the visual arts in 2001. To provide a context for these initiatives, an evolving programme of events, commissions, exhibitions and residencies are being devised for the run-up period between 1998 and 2001.

These ambitions come under the generic title of *Art in the Environment* and it is the Medway Council's view that all projects should be integrated into the life of the city and its locality. In pursuance of this, partnerships and collaborations are being sought with schools, colleges, universities, local groups and places of training whereby the arts activities engage in a relevant dialogue with the community.

For the next three years exciting projects are being planned for sites throughout Medway in historic and contemporary settings. Important international commissions will coexist with small-scale festivals of film and video; the applied arts will accompany projects which address architectural and rural space; electronic media and ICT will be employed to reach a wider community locally, nationally and internationally. All this will be in preparation for the major event in 2001 which is seen as the first of a series of Biennale/Triennale focusing on the magical built environment of Chatham Historic Dockyard and distinctive sites beyond.

The Medway Biennale/ Triennale UK is an opportunity for artists in the UK to participate in an international event which will host the most dynamic current visual arts practice from the rest of the world. The scale of this endeavour reflects the ambition of the Local Authority and the South East Arts Board who originated the idea.

One of the initiatives of the original Arts Council of Great Britain was to name the year 2000 as the 'Year of the Artist' to conclude a series of art form celebrations in the preceding years. Site 2001 is one more step taking the success of the visual arts in Great Britain into the next Millennium thereby creating a new destination for the universal language of artists.

to Melissa Dubbin
Manager
The Vasulka Inc.
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from Bergit Arends
Isabel Vasseur & Associates (APM)
fax 0181 347 6046

date March 18, 1998

pages 1 (including this page)

Dear Melissa Dubbin,

Thank you very much for your fax. I just had a look at Steina's and Woody's web sites, but could not download Steina's files. Would it be possible to send us a catalogue in printed form, please?

As I mentioned in my fax, we are planning an arts programme for Medway, Kent. We would like to consider Steina for a commission for a light installation to take place in November '99. We are also setting up a web site which will run concurrently with the arts programme. We will also commission artist's works especially for the site and will present other works produced throughout the arts programme on the web site.

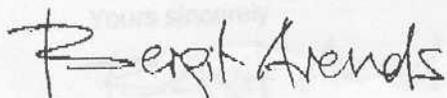
For the light installation we are particularly interested in Steina's projected video environments. We are considering having a projection in an outdoor space. Is that possible at all? I would very much appreciate if you were to send me slides of the projections.

Please let me know if Steina and Woody Vasulka have an interest in the arts programme. We are in the process of applying for funding and could only make a firm invitation in November '98. A web site would then start running from April/May '99, the light installation would take place in Nov. '99.

We are budgeting for an artist's fee, travel, accommodation and production costs. I imagine that it were best if Steina would choose the projection area herself.

I look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours sincerely,


Bergit Arends