



KNOWLE WEST MEDIA CENTRE

The Beauty Within: new furniture making commission

October 2014

(1) Introduction

Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) is an NPO digital arts charity. Since it was set up in 1996, KWMC has used the arts and digital technologies to support people to imagine and develop ideas about social change, prototype new approaches, and share the learning across the UK and beyond.

The Beauty Within is a new commission that will explore how obsolete, conventional office furniture can be re-imagined and re-purposed for people's changing work-life needs.

The project will mix art, up-cycling and digital fabrication techniques. It will involve artists and designers working alongside local people to design and bring to life a new generation of desirable office furniture, and in the process, test whether a sustainable social enterprise can be created.

KWMC is now seeking to commission an artist/designer/craft practitioner to help design and deliver the project.

(2) The background

Knowle West is a neighbourhood in south Bristol with approximately 15,000 residents. It was built on Garden City principles in the 1930s following slum clearance in the city centre. The neighbourhood ranks high in indicators of deprivation, including housing, health, employment and educational attainment.

Bringing in and growing more jobs in the area is a critical priority. One opportunity KWMC, working with the local community, has seized upon is the arrival of a new green business park on the edge of the area (<http://www.filwoodgreen.co.uk/>), which is due to open in March 2015.*

* Filwood Green Business Park will create 40,000 sq ft of workspace, including workshops, offices, incubation space and hotdesks, all built on a brownfield site. The building will open in Bristol's year as European Green Capital. The BREAM "outstanding" hi-tech building has many innovative environmental features and will provide an innovative space to encourage green start-ups and businesses in an area of South Bristol that has tended to be neglected economically.

KWMC has secured the contract to design and build the furniture for the green business park. So, rather than the furniture being picked out of a catalogue and shipped in from China, the furniture will be sourced and made locally, using a mix of digitally-fabricated new furniture and up-cycling second hand office furniture.

(3) The project

Changes in the way people work and the miniaturisation of technology mean that a lot of conventional office furniture now fails to meet people's needs. For example, the conventional office desk was designed in a time when computer monitors were the size of a small washing-machine. Now, with hot-desking and slim-line monitors and tablets, at least half of the space on the average desk is redundant.

Rather than consigning these hulks of the past to landfill, this project asks, can a more sustainable solution be found which re-designs and re-purposes them to better meet productive and aesthetic aspirations? For example, can a desk be hacked to include growing space for plants? Can the inner beauty of a desk be revealed with new graphics laser cut into it? Can an old desk be retro-fitted with new technology to make it 'smarter'?

The Beauty Within will include:

- Developing and testing designs for re-using and up-cycling a range of office furniture (which has already been sourced) including desks, cabinets, tables, chairs, storage units;
- Developing branding, motifs and design interventions that can be replicated and bring design and narrative coherence across a mix of different furniture types;
- Working with local partners to design, make and deliver a collection of up-cycled furniture to fulfill the contract for the Filwood Green Business Park.

The project will involve working with:

- Knowle West Media Centre, Re-Work, and 00 Architecture, who are the project partners;
- the kit and resources at the Eagle House Pop-Up Furniture Factory- a temporary space in a community building in Knowle West, including a CNC milling machine and laser-cutter;
- community-based organisations and local residents to select, clean, re-design and make the furniture;
- Bristol City Council and the contractors building Filwood Green Business Park.

The furniture created will need to meet the access, fire and health & safety requirements of supplying furniture for use in an office.

(4) Call for artists

KWMC is seeking to commission an artist/designer/craft practitioner to help design and deliver this project. We are particularly looking to commission an individual or collective with the following skills and experience:

- 2 years+ experience of working as an artist, designer or craft practitioner;
- Knowledge of design and making of furniture or comparable objects/products;
- Knowledge of carpentry;
- Knowledge of digital fabrication techniques and technologies;
- Up-cycling and sustainable construction techniques;
- Experience of delivering to standards demanded by commercial contracts;
- Engaging and collaborating with local people and communities in a socially engaged way.

KWMC will be able to provide producer assistance for the project, including project management, community engagement, technical support, research assistance, press and communications, and studio/making space.

The project runs from November 2014 to February 2015. All furniture will need to be designed, made and delivered by the end of February 2015, for when the Green Business Park opens in March 2015.

The fee for this commission is £2500, with an additional materials budget.

(5) How to Apply

If you are interested in this commission, please make a submission in a single Word or pdf document outlining the following:

- Your full contact details;
- Describe your practice and the way you work in no more than 300 words.
- Outline a collaborative or socially engaged project, exhibition, commission or work that has pushed your practice forward and your key highlights in no more than 300 words.
- Explain why you are interested in this project in no more than 300 words.
- Include up to four jpeg images to illustrate your work and/or links to up to three websites that show your work.

Send your submission to:

melissa.mean@kwmc.org.uk, with "The Beauty Within" in the subject line no later than noon on Friday 24th October 2014.

For more information, please contact Melissa Mean, at melissa@kwmc.org.uk, or on 07984 745 175.