

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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PRESS RELEASE

WILLIAM COBBING'S SITE-SPECIFIC ART COMMISSION, WRITTEN IN WATER, FISH ISLAND VILLAGE, EAST LONDON

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Fish Island based artist William Cobbing has won the commission for a new permanent site-specific artwork in the public realm of Fish Island Village, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The site is a new 2.85 hectare canalside neighbourhood comprising 588 mixed-tenure new homes and 5,522m² workspace, opposite Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London.

The open call was organised and funded by Hill and Peabody, joint venture partners on the development.

Drawing on the community of artists local to the area – historically, Hackney Wick Fish Island has been home to one of the highest concentrations of artists, designers and artisans in Europe – the selection panel sought proposals from local artists who could reflect on their own experiences of the area.

Masterplanned by Haworth Tompkins, Fish Island Village is planned as an ensemble of 21 mid-rise blocks arranged around a public square and series of yards. The brief called for a work of art, or series of small works, that responds to the architecture and setting; addressing identity, placemaking, and navigation of the public space.

Cobbing's winning proposal for a £40,000 artwork, *Written in Water*, is a site-specific installation comprising a constellation of twelve cast iron plates embedded in the ground. Redolent of manhole covers, they are integrated into the paving of the new development's public square and yards, and embossed with quotes or local stories, creating a portal to the area's past.

The texts, derived from many sources including oral histories, provide a kind of psycho-geographical exploration of Fish Island. They reveal the memories rooted in the area, from the recollections of horse drawn barges and old factories, to personal and cultural reflections marking particular spots.

Written in Water's enhancement of the site with distinct visual markers allows the pedestrian pause points and linear views, and in the process creates 'thresholds' between visible and hidden worlds.

It is envisaged that the work will be a navigational aid to residents, workers and visitors to the development and will providing a playful moment of discovery for pedestrians exploring

this newly developed canalside public realm.

The selection panel was led by arts consultant Kathryn Standing and comprised representatives from Hill, Peabody and Haworth Tompkins. Other shortlisted artists included Agata Madejska and Kate Terry.

Fish Island Village welcomed its first residents in autumn 2018, and The Trampery announced its first workspace tenants in November 2019. Phases 1 and 2 are now complete, phase 3 has planning approval and is currently under construction. The final phase of private sale homes launched earlier this year, with London Help to Buy available on homes priced at £600,000 and under. *Written in Water* is now being fabricated in an iron foundry with anticipated installation in late 2020.

William Cobbing said:

"This project has a special significance to me as my mother and grandmother were from the east end, and my studio is now on Fish Island, so I cycle here along the River Lea towpath. I've seen this extraordinary area transform over the years, and the sculpture commission aims to reimagine the area's histories by bringing forth echoes from the past."

Adam Boylin, Senior Technical Coordinator at Hill and competition judge, said:

"Residents of Fish Island Village and the surrounding community will be able to enjoy Will's artwork for years to come. His work not only pays homage to Fish Island's heritage but also celebrates the area's vibrant canal side setting. We are delighted with the concept presented and are really looking forward to seeing the artwork in place later this year."

Graham Haworth, Haworth Tompkins, said:

"With help from the existing community of artists in Hackney Wick, we identified a strong shortlist of local artists and chose Will's narrative proposal because it provides an accessible link to the cultural memory of the place, which helps to reinforce the connection of the new buildings and spaces with the existing neighbourhood."

Kathryn Standing said:

*"Much of Will's past work has looked at the boundaries between body and landscape, and *Written in Water* is an insightful evocation of this theme. Revealing the hidden layers of the evolving landscape through the spoken word, people's lives across generations are brought into view, where they can be seen as both inherent and contiguous to the development of this part of London."*

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Fish Island Village

Fish Island Village is a new neighbourhood on a site in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which is bordered by the Hertford Union Canal to the north and the East Cross Road (A12) to the west. The new development, which is being delivered in phases, will provide 588 mixed-tenure new homes (25% of which are affordable) and 5,522m² workspace. Fish Island Village is a joint venture development between Peabody and Hill, with workspace managed by social enterprise The Trampery. The site has been masterplanned by Haworth



Tompkins, with buildings designed by Haworth Tompkins, Pitman Tozer Architects and Lyndon Goode Architects. The development is a phased construction: phase 1 completed in autumn 2019, welcoming its first residents; phase 2 completed summer 2020; phase 3 was awarded planning permission in April 2020, and is currently under construction. Fish Island Village will be London's largest campus of fashion studios. The campus is a key project within Hackney Wick's Creative Enterprise Zone, and an important part of the Fashion District Initiative, a hub of ambitious businesses, academic institutions and investors in east London.

William Cobbing

Starting from a sculptural sensibility, Cobbing's works include installation, video and performance. His work dwells on material narratives, exploring links between people and place. Cobbing has recently completed major public sculpture commissions, including 'Paradise Garden' for Westgate Oxford in 2018 (Modus Operandi Art Consultants), and 'Lilae' (2020) for Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University. His 'Gradiva Project' manhole cover public art commissions have been installed at the Freud Museum and Camden Arts Centre since 2007.

Cobbing has exhibited internationally, with forthcoming exhibition 'Human After All' at Keramiek Museum Princessehof, The Netherlands, opening October 2020. He studied BA Sculpture at Central St Martins (1994-7), De Ateliers in Amsterdam (1998-2000) and PhD by Practice at Middlesex University (2004-10), and has undertaken residencies in Japan and Afghanistan. He was awarded the Helen Chadwick Fellowship at Ruskin School and British School at Rome in 2006.



Aerial view of Fish Island Village © Kilian O'Sullivan



Visualisation of Written in Water installed in a yard at Fish Island Village © William Cobbing



Cast iron maquette fabricated at Hoyles Foundry, Hackney © William Cobbing