



Historic Houses, Global Crossroads, UKRI Standard Research Grant
Brief for Creative Artist Residency at
Mount Stewart, 2026 [AHZ506436/1]



View of the house from the formal Italian Garden at Mount Stewart, County Down,
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Budget/Fee: £10,000, in two instalments, paid to the artist to cover all aspects of the residency (including personal liability insurance whilst at Mount Stewart, should this be deemed necessary, any other fees arising, materials costs, all travel, accommodation and subsistence, and production/removal of the artistic output and supporting materials).

Deadline for applications: Monday 29 September 2025

Creative Residency Duration: May to June 2026

The Opportunity

The '[Historic Houses, Global Crossroads](#)' (HHGC) UKRI project is working to reposition two of Northern Ireland's most significant historic houses and grounds at Clondeboy Estate and Mount Stewart, County Down as significant sites of intercultural and environmental exchange. The project is funded by UK Research & Innovation (Arts & Humanities Research Council) and managed by the University of Birmingham (PI Porter) in collaboration

with the University of Newcastle, Queen's University Belfast, University of Toronto, National University of Singapore and the National Trust. This opportunity operates in parallel with a similar opportunity based with HHGC project partner Clandeboyne Estate, County Down.

As part of the project's work, we invite proposals for a six-week creative artist residency in May to June 2026 at Mount Stewart, a historic property and demesne cared for by the National Trust on the shores of Strangford Lough, County Down, Northern Ireland.

This residency will explore Mount Stewart's globally significant plant networks and their intercultural and ecological legacies. By interpreting the property's history of plant acquisition and landscape design, the selected artist/creative is invited to reimagine Mount Stewart as a site of global ecological connection. Their output will contribute meaningfully to contemporary dialogues around biodiversity, climate adaptation, and cultural exchange in heritage landscapes.

The selected creative resident will be supported to develop a site-specific body of work that responds meaningfully to the property's global connections. Their work will incorporate research, community co-production and provide opportunities for visitor interactivity, creating meaningful connections between Mount Stewart's heritage and today's audiences.

This residency offers a platform for an artist/creative to engage with Mount Stewart's rich history and ecological significance, contributing new perspectives that illuminate the layered narratives of plant migration, cultural exchange, and environmental stewardship. It offers an opportunity to pose questions for the future around global ecologies and their meanings for communities today.

The National Trust has the motto 'For everyone, for ever' at its heart. It is working hard to create an inclusive culture, where everyone feels they belong. It recognises the importance of reflecting and represent the diversity of the communities and audiences it serves. Therefore, applications from artists of all backgrounds are strongly encouraged.

The Commission

About Mount Stewart

Mount Stewart is a significant National Trust property in Northern Ireland consisting of a historic house with an internationally important collection, world class gardens and historic demesne. Located on the Ards Peninsula it is celebrated for its global plant collections, rich microclimate, and the Gulf Stream ecosystem that attracts diverse bird species. Please visit the website for articles about the property's rich history and significance: [Mount Stewart | Northern Ireland | National Trust](#)

Aims and objectives

The creative residency at Mount Stewart will:

1. Generate new, engaging site-specific work/s exploring the heritage and global narratives tied to Mount Stewart, focusing on one or more of the core concepts and themes (specified below) linked to plant networks and ecological connections. This work will yield digital likenesses of physical/digital outputs produced by the artist, who will grant license to the University of Birmingham for their non-commercial use and dissemination regionally and globally. The artist will retain ownership and intellectual property rights to the artistic output produced. Publications and other forms of media communication produced must acknowledge the support received from UKRI, quoting the funding agency in full (Arts & Humanities Research Council), project title

(Historic Houses, Global Crossroads: Revisioning Two Northern Ireland Historic Houses and Estates)and grant reference number [AHZ506436/1].

2. Promote public awareness and discussion of the themes of the project, including through the appointed artist's reasonable participation in media and social media content organised by HHGC and the National Trust.
3. Empower substantive community co-production through a workshop facilitated by ArtsEkta, in which participants will engage with and respond to the project themes.
4. Support visitor creativity and engagement by providing opportunities for online or onsite visitor interactivity.

Audience

Our intended audience includes visitors, local and global communities, environmentalists, and those interested in global histories and ecological conservation. In line with the National Trust's Everyone Welcome values, and our commitment to inclusion and diversity, artists may need to make adjustments to ensure accessibility (e.g. step-free access, subtitled videos etc). Read more about our commitment to inclusion and diversity [here](#).

Artist Opportunity

We seek a resident creative artist in any medium. The appointed creative resident will engage in a six-week residency from May to June 2026 based at Mount Stewart. The artist should be physically located at or around Mount Stewart for as much as possible of that period, taking into account the personal circumstances of the appointed artist. A statement of residency intentions should form part of the proposal.

During the residency, the creative resident should work to develop benefits for their practice and research, which may include creating new site-specific works that reflect and interpret the complex histories of Mount Stewart, engaging with the themes for artistic response specified below. The resident should also work collaboratively with the HHGC project's community engagement plans as specified below.

Outputs and Deliverables

1. Creative Works: The primary outputs will be new site-specific artworks inspired by Mount Stewart, realized through the artist's chosen medium, and aligned with the Themes for Artistic Response set out below. The works will incorporate community co-production and facilitate visitor interaction.
2. Media Content: Artists will contribute to reasonable media and social content to engage wider audiences (e.g., podcasts, video documentation, interactive digital exhibitions).
3. Residency: Artists will be based at Mount Stewart for a period of 6 weeks or as practicable for the appointed artist. A statement of residency intent and of proposed activities during the residency should be included in the application.
4. Community Engagement: To support the community co-production element, the commissioned artist will engage directly with community participants at one or more workshops facilitated by ArtsEkta. These interactions should meaningfully inform the creative process and final works.
5. Final Presentation: Artists will, in collaboration with HHGC and National Trust, prepare a showcase of the results of their residency highlighting the collaborative nature of their work with community participants. The form of this will be agreed with the appointed artist after appointment, taking into account the proposed vision,

format and medium of the residency.

Timescales

Before interview/recruitment (September-December 2025):

- Contact the project team with enquiries on practicalities/ideas and resources.

Post-recruitment (January-April 2026):

- Further co-develop the proposed residency plan with the project team.
- Meet the project, ArtsEkta and Mount Stewart teams (if possible, through a site visit).
- Map out the workshop activity and establish dates/timelines for those.

During the residency (May-June 2026):

- By the mid-point of the residency, the project aims to have completed the workshop and community collaboration work, to enable time for evaluation and integration into the creative work.

Themes for Artistic Response

The artwork/s should be site specific to Mount Stewart, and directly connected to its histories and landscape.

The artwork/s should be original, creative works engaging with **all of** the following core concepts:

- **Global Crossroads:** Mount Stewart's historical connections to the wider world
- **Heritage and Identity:** Community diversity and global cultural heritage.
- **Plant networks and ecology:** Historical plant networks connecting Mount Stewart to the wider world, the environmental history of the estate and its role in global ecological networks.

Within the concept of plant networks and ecology, artists should respond to one or more of the following project themes:

- The histories of 'bio prospecting' which brought plants and trees from Asia, Australia and the Americas to European gardens including Mount Stewart
- Global inspiration and connections behind the local expertise which created the landscape at Mount Stewart
- How non-native and 'exotic' plants and landscapes became an everyday part of the grounds at Mount Stewart, supported by the Gulf Stream ecosystem
- Exchange of plant commodities across distance
- Conservation, ecology and environmental 'improvement'

Creative Resident Description

The appointed creative resident should:

- Be at any career stage, including emerging artists
- May be an individual or a group or collective working together
- Work in any artistic medium suitable to the aims and outputs of the residency, including garden design, sculpture, poetry, etc.

- Come from any practice background, including those with non-traditional artist backgrounds, such as practitioners of crafts or horticulture
- Be passionate about engaging the public through inspirational artistic work
- Bring that passion into community co-production and visitor interactivity
- Be committed to sharing community cultural stories and inclusive histories
- Work collaboratively with the HHGC team and National Trust team to ensure the artwork produced engages with and responds to the themes of the project
- Respect the precious nature of Mount Stewart's buildings and landscapes, and work with the National Trust team to understand the specific requirements of working at Mount Stewart
- Participate in reasonable media / social media requests as part of the marketing and communications plan to promote the project.

We particularly welcome applications from artists who bring diverse lived experiences that will enrich their interpretations of complex historical and environmental narratives.

Budget and Support

- **Residency Award:** The creative resident will receive £10,000 to cover all aspects of the 6-week residency (including personal liability insurance whilst at Mount Stewart, should this be deemed necessary, any other fees arising, materials costs, all travel, accommodation and subsistence, and production/removal of the artistic output and supporting materials). All such aspects of the Residency are the responsibility of the artist. The artist must be in a position to accept payment in UK currency and is responsible for the payment of any taxes that may be incurred by them as a result of accepting the award.
- **Resources and Facilities:** Artists will have access to HHGC project staff, archival resources, and to on-site facilities at Mount Stewart by prior and explicit agreement with National Trust staff and under their supervision. Limited additional resources for a marketing and communications plan and multimedia engagement will also be made available by agreement.
- We strongly recommend an early enquiry to Professor Annie Tindley (Annie.Tindley@newcastle.ac.uk) and/or to the HHGC project team for a conversation about specific needs/ideas and access requirements, for example in relation to the planned artistic medium and access needs to the gardens, estate or collections and NT staff time.
- The National Trust does not usually purchase creative outputs resulting from residencies: the resident will be responsible for the packing and transportation of the work produced at the end of the residency.

How to Apply

To discuss your interest in applying, please contact:

Professor Annie Tindley (Annie.Tindley@newcastle.ac.uk)

Application Process

Interested artists should submit the following by e mail by **29 September 2025** to Lynn Wadding (l.wadding.1@bham.ac.uk):

1. A proposal and engagement plan of not more than 1 page detailing the artist's approach to the residency, how the planned work will engage with the stated themes and concepts, how it will engage in community co-production and facilitate visitor interaction, and how potential public sensitivities will be addressed in an inclusive way. The proposal must contain a statement concerning plans to be based at Mount Stewart for six weeks (or as appropriate given personal circumstances) in the period May-June 2026.

2. A brief CV of not more than 1 page.
3. A portfolio not exceeding 6 pages demonstrating relevant experience in public or community-engaged art or other evidence of ability to complete the project successfully.

Shortlisted artists will be invited to interview by Zoom.

Key Dates

- Application Deadline: Monday 29 September 2025
- Residency period: May to June 2026
- Community Workshops and Public Engagement: Concurrent with residency

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed based on:

1. Artistic Quality: Originality, relevance, and clarity of the artist's approach
2. Capacity for Completion: Previous experience or other evidence of capacity to complete the project successfully.
3. Engagement with HHGC project Themes: including global heritage, intercultural exchange, and environmental history.
4. Visitor Appeal: Potential to attract, engage and involve onsite visitors and remote audiences.
5. Community Engagement: Potential to work with diverse communities in a meaningful, accessible, and sensitive manner.

Equal Opportunities

The National Trust celebrates diversity and is committed to creating a fair and equal society, free from discrimination. You can read more about our commitment to inclusion and diversity here: [Our commitment to inclusion and diversity | National Trust](#)

Separate to your application we encourage you to complete this [equal opportunities monitoring form](#) which helps us to understand more about whether our opportunities are reaching artists from a wide range of backgrounds. This is optional and anonymous.

Contact Information

For further details, please contact:

Professor Annie Tindley (Annie.Tindley@newcastle.ac.uk)