

# CONTEMPORARY COMMISSIONING

*A survey of commissioning projects and public art consultancies around the UK.*



1

Situated on the edge of the village of Worrall opening onto farmland and with dramatic views to the Peak District, Bradfield School has a rural context and also benefits from the cultural, economic and industrial opportunities of the nearby city of Sheffield. As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, which will see the development of a new building to accommodate 1,050 students, Bradfield are commissioning an artist to work with students and staff to produce an outdoor artwork for the site.

Its views and pastoral setting, its dry-stone walls and gateposts are distinctive features of the school. Staff and students are very aware of the environment around them and of its seasonal flows and fluxes. The artwork is to be installed near a grassed amphitheatre, and the work will respond directly to this natural environment and to the changing weather and other cycles.

Bradfield's is one of sixteen artworks being commissioned as part of the BSF project in Sheffield, which will see the rebuilding or refurbishment of twenty schools by 2013. Artists' works will be at the heart of these new developments and are intended to provide both a point of engagement for the schools and their wider community and a lasting legacy for the region.

[www.sheffieldbsfschools.com](http://www.sheffieldbsfschools.com)

Also recognising the benefits the arts can bring to an area, in terms of social and economic development but also in terms of general well-being, Better Bankside is a Business Improvement District (BID) committed to improving the area around London's South Bank for commercial activity.

Over the past seven years, the company – which is owned and led by local businesses – has been involved in a number of public art commissions within the Southwark neighbourhood. It now wishes to develop a more

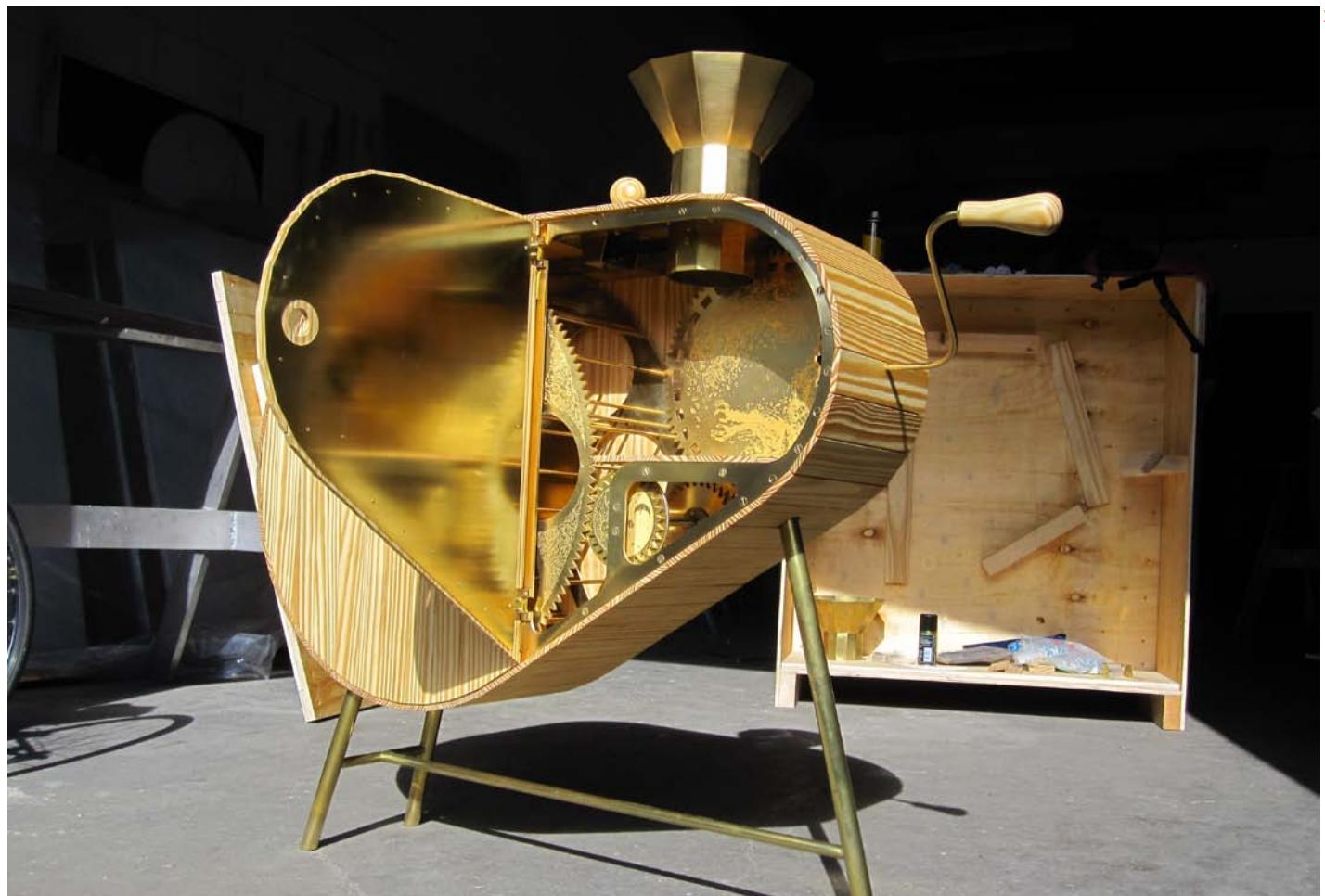
proactive and consistent approach to commissioning and is looking to establish a strong curatorial framework for future partnership and commissioning programmes. Following appropriate processes of procurement; transparency of process; delivering and meeting shared aims; and supporting artists to produce outstanding work are some of the points of best practice that will be central to their curatorial policy.

Better Bankside are currently inviting artists to submit proposals for a temporary art work to be sited within the Union Street environs (see page 37). This project represents a first step in delivering Better Bankside's objectives of embedding creativity in day-to-day activities in the capital.

[www.betterbankside.co.uk](http://www.betterbankside.co.uk)

Founded in 2011 by designer and project manager James Shearer, SmallProjects is a new, London-based fabricator specialising in bespoke work for artists and designers. Shearer previously spent eight years as project manager at design and fabrication facility Mike Smith Studio during which time he was instrumental in the realisation of Michael Landy's installation *Semi-detached* at Tate Britain (2004); Troika's digital sculpture *Cloud* in Heathrow's Terminal 5 (2008); and Tania Kovats *TREE* at the Natural History Museum – a seventeen-metre section of a 200-year-old oak tree, which was inlaid into the mezzanine gallery ceiling (2009).

SmallProjects selects teams and facilities according to the needs of individual projects, which allows for specific collaborations of skilled individuals, smaller fabrication studios and specialists from the company's extensive network of suppliers. Working in this way, Shearer aims to offer a fully flexible service where design and fabrication methods can be adapted to accommodate projects of any scale and budget.



SmallProjects has recently completed a commission for Philips design as part of their 'Microbial Home' exhibition, which combines an intricately engraved brass mechanism with a brushed timber cladding. *The Paternoster* is a concept mechanical product of the future which granulates domestic waste plastic, on which an edible fungus can then be grown in glass jars held in the rotating drum. Shearer has also been working with Mike Smith and Tonkin Liu Architects on 'RainBow Gate', a large stainless steel and glass pavilion in Burnley. The structure is made up of thin steel profiles, curved and twisted over wooden formers and seam-welded to form rigid three dimensional structures. The roof holds 133 glass prisms, which create rainbows on the ground when the sun shines.

[www.smallprojects.co.uk](http://www.smallprojects.co.uk)

Maggie Bolt Associates is a multidisciplinary public art consultancy based in Exeter. With clients ranging from Dorset County Council to the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, their services include: mentoring; strategic planning and policy formation; partnership building; advocacy and promotion; training and professional development; specialist urban design planning and legal expertise; research and curation; placement of lead artists and creative content for conferences and events.

The company ethos is to first explore the problems and establish the right approach for each unique project, then to reflect the needs of the task through the skills brought on board to meet them; this can be either through a single lead consultant or collaborative teams. Maggie Bolt has a wide ranging knowledge of public art practice in the UK and internationally; her strategic approach to creating frameworks in which artists can contribute to our changing built and natural environment has resulted in the creation of public art posts in Bristol, Poole, Plymouth, Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Cornwall; she has been Director of Public

