

Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW)

Brief for the Soil Culture residency at the Eden Project

June 2014

Background on the Eden Project

The Eden Project is an educational charity and social enterprise that creates gardens, exhibitions, events, experiences and projects that explore how people can work together and with nature towards a better future. Its first project was to build a global garden in a crater that was once a china clay pit as a symbol of regeneration. This 'Living Theatre of Plants and People' is an international visitor destination. It celebrates our relationship with and dependence on plants: plants that feed us, clothe us, cure us, make and colour our fabrics and our lives and even supply the very air we breathe. Two vast covered Biomes house wild landscapes, crops and stories from the Rainforest and Mediterranean regions and serve as a backdrop to the Outdoor Biome (the one without the roof), which grows the plants from our own climate. Our cafés take plant to plate with a range of delicious foods. The Core, the Eden Project's Exhibitions and Education Centre, brings the threads of the story together with a range of permanent and temporary exhibitions, many of which communicate the work of our global outreach projects.

www.edenproject.com

Residency Brief:

Without soil there would be no life. However, all too often, this living, brown skin of the earth is called 'dirt'. It doesn't look like it does much and, for many, it's not until it's used to grow that first lettuce or rose, explored to reveal its living secrets or lamented by its loss that it becomes revered.

In the year 2000 the Eden Project decided to mark the new millennium by building a global garden in a china clay pit that had near-vertical sides, was 15 metres below the water table and had no soil – not the best place to grow a garden! With help from Reading University the first thing the Eden Project did was to make 83,000 tonnes of living soil in 18 months. In nature it can take 200-400 years to form 1 cm of soil.

The mineral component came from local mine wastes: sand from IMERYS china clay works and lignite (a waste material from ball clay manufacture which = lots of bits of ancient plant carbon remains that act a bit like the humus 'sponge' + clay particles) from WBB Devon Clays Ltd. In the Biomes, composted bark provided the organic matter component because it needed to be long-lived. The rapid growers in the Rainforest Biome needed a rich organic soil capable of holding lots of water and nutrients while the slower growers in the drier Mediterranean Biome used a sandy mix with less of both. A specialist nutrient-free mix was used in the South African Fynbos, where fertile soil is toxic to some of the plants. Outdoors, the Eden Project used composted domestic green wastes. The ingredients were mixed with a JCB in a nearby clay pit, and worms were brought in to help dig and fertilise the new earth. Eden's soils help to show that environmental regeneration is possible. The soils

where made in 18 months and have steadily changed and improved over the years with more and more creatures and microbes coming to set up home in them.

The Eden Project aims to engage the disengaged, to reconnect people with their world connecting to the heart as well as the head. This residency invites an artist to work with the Eden Project team to re-engage visitors with the brown gold beneath our feet, revealing the secrets of the life within and the life-giving force of the soil, helping to communicate how Eden turned a recipe that usually takes 200 years to cook into an 18-month process and to provoke curiosity and ultimately create a love affair between humanity and soil. It would be an opportunity to investigate and convey, to Eden's diverse audience, soil's mineral make up, its role as a food, the life contained within it, its importance in farming and feeding the global population and its role as carbon sink.

Date: from mid-November 2014 to April 2015, to be agreed between the artist and the Eden Project

Location of the residency: Eden Project, Bodelva, St. Austell, Cornwall, PL24 2SG

The residency includes:

Travel budget (up to £300)

An artist fee of £1500 (£150 per day for 10 days)

Materials and production budget of £1200

Use of office space and shared workshop facilities.

An opportunity to work with the Eden Project team, including soil experts e.g. Dr Jo Elworthy, Director of Interpretation and author of *Managing Soil without using Chemicals*

Basic accommodation close to the site

Discounts on food at the various catering outlets at the Eden Project

Support from staff at the Eden Project and the CCANW team

Inclusion in a CCANW touring exhibition of the residency outcomes (from Spring/ Summer 2015)

The artist will:

Undertake a 10-day residency at the host organisation

Organise (with the host organisation) a public participatory session (e.g. an interactive talk or workshop)

Create a work to be included in a touring exhibition, which will subsequently become a component of a permanent exhibit at Eden

How to apply:

Please complete the application form and return it together with up to 6 images of recent works and an up-to-date CV or biography (totaling 10MB max.) to Sally Lai, Residency Coordinator at s.lai@ccanw.co.uk by **30 July 2014**.

Short-listed artists will be invited to attend an interview on 20 August or they may be conducted on Skype.

The Soil Culture residency at the Eden Project is being kindly supported by the hosts and by: Arts Council England and South West Water