

Hope Gardens, South Acton

ARTification is very pleased to be a partner in the Hope Gardens groundbreaking project that imaginatively addresses London's housing crisis. The project is innovative in so many ways.

The Big Issue stated: *"The UK's largest temporary housing development for homeless people will open up this week in west London. Made up of refurbished shipping containers, the bold scheme will give 290 people registered as homeless with Ealing Council a roof over the heads just in time for Christmas."*

Ealing Council are providing emergency housing in the form of converted shipping containers, stacked four high, built by QED. Julian Bell, leader of Ealing Council said: *"As we all know, the housing crisis in the capital is increasingly becoming worse...the council is exploring all options to keep on top of the growing demand."*

ARTification has worked extensively in South Acton with local residents, engaging people actively in community rooted projects. We have endeavored to respond to community issues and ideas that help shape the projects that we develop. This combined with a wide range of artists and arts organisations in the area through our location in the neighbourhood since 2003, has meant that we have built relationships of trust, provided creative opportunities and developed projects that make a difference to peoples lives.

ARTification links artists and communities with the council and developers: this bridging role creates an exciting space. We have been creating public art in South Acton since 2005 with SHIFT, and now includes the two largest pieces in the UK by Stik and Thierry Noir. This

project is different however, not least by embedding the intended public artwork at the planning stage. This is a model that has huge potential to overcome some of the challenges faced by art as an 'add on', with the key being partnership and collaboration in achieving creative solutions. A constructive relationship with Ealing Council enables the positive positioning of the project within council structures whilst being open to creative approaches to housing and art, situates both strongly. Hope Gardens is the result of the efforts of Ealing Council, QED, ARTification, ATM, local residents and the homeless.



Hope Gardens public art design.

Thanks to the initiative and vision of Ealing Council officer Robert Turner, having been struck by the street art in South Acton, he contacted ARTification to explore the inclusion of public art on the Hope Gardens project. This inventive action resulted in planning consent including a condition relating to public art stating: *“The details of the external materials, including the provision of public art...”*

“The Hope Gardens project brings the best of the project partners different skills and expertise together in a powerful statement that addresses social need, explores creative solutions and incorporates expressive art.” ARTifications Director Rachel Pepper stated.



Robert Turner from Ealing Council, Bob Whittaker and the QED team.

On the top section of these, local and internationally renowned street artist ATM will paint a kestrel. Below, artist Karen Francesca will work with members of the local community, including the homeless, to create an image of an abundant and thriving meadow. Community engagement and workshops have already taken place at Bollo Brook Youth Centre, W3 gallery, Acton Homeless Concern, with future workshops with the new Hope Gardens residents planned for the New Year.

ATM commented, “As the combined piece is focused on the theme of homelessness, it is appropriate that habitat and biodiversity loss is addressed. We are painting the wildflowers, insects and animals that would live in a healthy British meadow. In this country we have lost 97% of our wildflowers in the last 70 years. The kestrel is just one of the once-common British birds now in serious decline, as it feeds on the voles and mice that live in these meadows. Insects are at the foundation of life, they make up two thirds of all life on earth. Many depend on healthy meadows to survive and they are now disappearing at an unprecedented rate. As they disappear all else disappears. As we attend to the housing crisis for people, beside this we have to make sure we provide living space for all the wonderful creatures that make up the natural heritage of this country. Alongside each new housing development we should provide a refuge for nature, an oasis of wild abundance, which will also provide a place of respite for the people who live there.”



ATM, Rachel Pepper (ARTification Director), Ross Gilbert (QED Managing Director) at Hope Gardens opening 7th December 2017.

Ross Gilbert, managing director of QED argues that recycled shipping containers offer a highly adaptable form of accommodation to help meet the housing shortage in the capital, stating: *“We are committed to playing our part in addressing the housing crisis. We need short, medium and long term solutions and Meath Court is a short term solution to emergency accommodation.”*



Ross Gilbert (QED Managing Director) and Julian Bell (Leader of Ealing Council) opening speeches.



Hope Gardens

Through design workshops we are exploring themes and imagery with the groups, and designing the piece together. Asking participants to draw on personal experience, and what they would like to communicate visually, we are developing a collage to explore themes. Research and designs will be refined, and then created onsite with the community and new residents of Hope Gardens.



Hope Gardens community art workshop at W3 gallery

The public art will be created in the New Year. Check www.artification.org.uk for updates.

