



## Artists Residency, Robert Owen 250

**3 month p/t residency for an artist, April to June 2020.**

**Fee: £3000 (+ £500 for materials)**  
**Deadline for applications: 20 March 2020**  
**Interviews: Early April**

### Executive Summary

Robert Owen was born in Newtown in 1771 and was one of the most influential thinkers and social reformers of his time. His writing and campaigning were pivotal to 19th century advances in universal education, factory reform, and the development of the co-operative movement. The Museum is in the centre of Newtown just a few feet from where Owen was born. It tells Owen's story through a collection of pictures, objects and papers. But there are also some play items for younger historians and visitors can explore the museum website (<http://www.robertowenmuseum.co.uk>) or watch videos about Owen.

Owen left Newtown at the age of 10 to be apprenticed as a draper. By his early twenties he was the owner of the largest cotton mill in the world at New Lanark in Scotland. Despite his commercial success, Owen had become concerned about the living and working conditions he had seen in the cotton towns and became convinced that universal education and better living conditions would improve lives 'a hundred fold'. He built schools, houses and a co-operative shop for his own workers in New Lanark and campaigned throughout his life 'to promote the well-being and happiness of every man, woman and child without regard ... (to)...sect, party, country and colour'.

Robert Owen loved Newtown and records in his autobiography happy days playing in the hills around the town. He returned home in 1858 and in his last hours spoke of his dream "to make Newtown a paradise and all its inhabitants angels". He is buried alongside his parents in the grounds of the ruined St Mary's church on the banks of the River Severn.

Robert Owen, son of Newtown and founder of the co-operative movement, is celebrated in the Robert Owen Museum, situated at the top of Broad Street in the centre of Newtown. The museum features paintings, drawings and artefacts which explain his visionary ideas about the relationship between employers and employees.  
<http://www.robertowenmuseum.co.uk>

## 1. Introduction – Exploring the potential for a permanent, engaging and informative artwork in Newtown commemorating Robert Owen



The Arts Council of Wales in partnership with the Welsh Government, Robert Owen Society and Museum, Powys County Council, Newtown and Llanllwchaearn Town Council and Oriel Davies, are working together to support innovative artist engagement with the legacy of Robert Owen in Newtown to celebrate his 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the heart of this is a desire to use democratic engagement to ensure local buy-in before any commissioning decisions are made. The project aims to open up Robert Owen's life and some of the sites, stories and objects relating to him to fresh interpretation. It is envisaged that any subsequent commission would help us to engage with places and the histories that shaped them.

There are already a number of sites commemorating Robert Owen throughout the town including a museum, plaques, sculptures, reliefs, and a tomb.

It is hoped that this project will help to establish and develop a mutually beneficial way of working for the partners that enables us to nurture a productive longer-term relationship. The project will offer an opportunity for relevant communities (including Welsh speaking communities), groups, schools, families, workers, staff and volunteers to explore new ways of looking at the legacy of Robert Owen in dialogue with an artist to scope out potential for an artistic commission that will celebrate 250 years since Robert Owen's birth. Oriel Davies has been working creatively with artists and arts organisations over recent years to look at Newtown's stories and believes this is a powerful way of approaching narratives relating to the local and international. This residency will deepen this work and will connect Robert Owen with our local communities and also relevant communities further afield. We are looking for applications that resonate with Robert Owen's aim 'to promote the well-being and happiness of every man, woman and child without regard ... (to)...sect, party, country and colour'.

## 2. Project Overview

In 2015 Oriel Davies worked with artist Owen Griffiths on a commission for the exhibition Flora. For his project Becoming Garden; Dolerw Park, Newtown Owen worked with a group of local volunteers, to transform a section of Dolerw Park into a space to encourage people to gather and as a site for biodiversity. Owen, and the volunteers, actively created a garden site within a public environment, liberating civic control through re-wilding and wildflower seeding (in partnership with Powys County Council). Some areas were seeded and nurtured, whilst others are left to go wild. These two approaches provide examples of our connection and disconnection with shared green landscapes surrounding us and invite us to consider these spaces as classrooms, alternative public spaces and to us as rhizomatic beings (where we learn and explore ideas without boundaries).



This 'garden', presented the opportunity for walkers and other users of the Dolerw Park to engage with the flora in new ways. Owen and Oriell Davies encouraged people using the spaces in any way they wished to – from dog walking to taking family picnics, from children playing to nature spotting. Alongside the everyday interaction, Owen organised a dedicated programme of discussions, radical thought and reading, organized by the artist and inspired by Robert Owen's legacy and the poetry and writing of struggle and the question of work.

This residency seeks to listen effectively to responses and stories that Robert Owen sparks and to find new ways of sharing those stories with others, so that a decision can be made as to whether or not a new large scale commemoration should be commissioned and what that commission might look like. It should be participatory and meaningful to all communities who live in and visit Newtown, now and in the future.

**The key aims of the residency are:**

**To provide a participative approach to exploring the legacy and potential of a newly commissioned work of art commemorating Robert Owen.**

We would like the artist to work with three distinct communities -

- Local communities including Welsh speaking communities
- Visitors to Newtown
- Communities of interest, such as the political community and the business community (this can form part of the proposal)

To work with these groups, we would like the artist to use creative methods to ask questions, listen and present the responses to ways in which Robert Owen might be remembered for future generations.

Key questions might include:-

- What stories from Robert Owen stand out to you and why?
- How should we talk about the legacy of Robert Owen in Wales, the UK and the world?
- How might we remember Robert Owen?
- What form might the commission take?
- How would you like to be included in the conversations?

To build our relationships with community groups who may not currently be aware of Robert Owen and engage local audiences in social political histories, and their local connection.



To bring new voices to influence Newtown and future programming.

To engage local people in decision making, giving them the experience of working with contemporary artists in a heritage context, to develop skills and confidence and to value the role of the arts in telling our histories.

To create opportunities for artists to explore their practice in response to Robert Owen.

To begin a legacy of this way of working in Newtown and to suggest ways the stories that emerge can have a life beyond the period of this residency.

To create a report for the Welsh Government and Partners to consider that will inform a decision on whether to proceed with a commission.

### **3 The Residency**

We expect the artist to work 14 days on this project with a suggested approach of six days with local communities and eight days with communities of interest.

#### Pattern of work: April – July 2020

This is a broad and flexible framework upon which to structure the activity of the residency:

#### Period of research: April - May 2020

Conduct research in Newtown and with local groups including at least one school.  
Develop an understanding of Robert Owen and his legacy.

#### Period of Engagement / Presentation: May - July 2020

Develop and deliver participatory engagement approach with the three groups in response to the story of Robert Owen.  
Present the responses creatively at Oriell Davies as the project continues in order to engage staff, volunteers and visitors in the conversation.

#### End of period:

Produce 'report' that includes community voices, artist learning over the residency and suggestions of how to continue these conversations effectively. The report should show examples of how Robert Owen might be remembered and whether there is an appetite for a large scale commission.

#### Throughout:

Capture the process for sharing (images/text/sound/video)



Maintain an online presence to share the practice and process of working, with peers and with the public.

#### **4 The Artist**

Proposals for this part time 3-month residency are now invited.

We welcome proposals from artists based in Wales and beyond who have experience of working in a social context. They can be working in any media.

We particularly welcome artists who have experience of social reforms, cooperative movements, and challenging inequalities.

Experience of working with outlined groups is desirable.

The artist should demonstrate a collaborative approach, with experience of working creatively with a variety of groups and communities.

The artist must be confident in producing and presenting work to non-arts audiences and members of the public.

We would welcome proposals from a collaborative partnership (although please note the artist fee is fixed).

#### **5 Artist Fees and Support**

There is a total fee of £3,000 with £500 for materials in staged payments, to be inclusive of all fees, expenses and production (to include materials).

The contract will be between Oriol Davies and a nominated lead artist.

Travel and Accommodation must be included in the fee.

In addition to the fee the residency will provide:

Background information from the Robert Owen Museum and Robert Owen Society

Information on community groups from the partners.

A working space may be available, dependent on the exact needs of the creative artist.



Support with the community engagement aspect of the commission from [Oriell Davies](#).

## **Oriell Davies**

Oriell Davies is the largest and most significant visual arts venue in the region and a key gallery of Wales, showing groundbreaking national and international art and craft. Oriell Davies Director, Steffan Jones-Hughes, and Creative Producer, Kate Morgan-Clare, will provide mentoring and artist support during this residency.

## **6 How to apply**

Artists should submit a residency proposal **by 9am Friday 20 March** to [odgteam@oriell Davies.org](mailto:odgteam@oriell Davies.org)

We'd like to know about your work, and what you would bring to this project through this opportunity. Interviews will take place in early April and these will allow you to discuss your proposal.

The format for the proposal is a single PDF, containing:

1. A statement of intent (maximum 500 words) with a response or method statement for responding to the residency.
2. A brief CV (2 pages max)
3. Up to 10 images of your work/links\* to other media.

\*Please provide hyperlinks to online files or a Dropbox containing the files. Time-based media should be limited to up to four clips of no longer than 5 minutes; images should be no larger than 1600 x 1200 pixels.

Information submitted in other formats will not be accepted.

**The artist will be appointed in early April.**

**For queries please email: [desk@oriell Davies.org](mailto:desk@oriell Davies.org)**



Advert:

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**For an information pack please email: [desk@oriell Davies.org](mailto:desk@oriell Davies.org)**  
**Deadline 20/04/2020**



Hysbysebu:

**Galwad Agored: Cyfnod Preswyl i Artistiaid: Robert Owen 250**

**Cyfnod preswyl o dri mis ar gyfer artist, Ebrill i Fehefin 2020.**

**Ffi: £3000 (+ £500 am ddeunyddiau)**  
**Dyddiad cau ar gyfer ceisiadau: 20 Mawrth 2020**  
**Cyfweliadau: Yn gynnar ym mis Ebrill**

Mae Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru, mewn partneriaeth â Llywodraeth Cymru, Cymdeithas ac Amgueddfa Robert Owen, Cyngor Sir Powys, Cyngor Tref y Drenwydd a Llanllwchaearn ac Oriell Davies, yn gweithio gyda'i gilydd i gefnogi ymgysylltu artistiaid arloesol ag etifeddiaeth Robert Owen yn y Drenwydd i ddathlu ei ben-blwydd yn 250. Yr hyn sydd wrth wraidd hyn yw'r awydd i ddefnyddio ymgysylltu democrataidd i sicrhau bod unrhyw benderfyniadau comisiynu yn cael eu gwneud yn lleol. Nod y prosiect yw agor bywyd Robert Owen a rhai o'r safleoedd, a dehongli rhai o'r straeon a'r gwrthrychau sy'n gysylltiedig ag ef o'r newydd. Rhagwelir y byddai unrhyw Gomisiwn dilynol yn ein helpu i ymgysylltu â lleoedd a'r hanesion a'u ffurfiodd.

Mae'r cyfnod preswyl hwn yn ceisio gwrando'n effeithiol ar ymatebion a straeon Robert Owen, ac ar ddod o hyd i ffyrdd newydd o rannu'r straeon hynny gydag eraill, fel y gellir gwneud penderfyniad ynghylch a ddylid comisiynu coffâd newydd mawr ai peidio, a sut y gallai'r comisiwn edrych. Dylai fod yn gyfranogol ac yn ystyrlon i bob cymuned sy'n byw ac yn ymweld â'r Drenwydd, nawr ac yn y dyfodol.

Gwahoddir cynigion ar gyfer y cyfnod preswyl 3 mis hwn. Rydym yn croesawu cynigion gan artistiaid sydd wedi'u lleoli yng Nghymru a thu hwn, sydd â phrofiad o weithio mewn cyd-destun cymdeithasol. Gallant fod yn gweithio trwy unrhyw gyfrwng. Rydym yn arbennig, yn croesawu artistiaid sydd â phrofiad o ddiwygiadau cymdeithasol, mudiadau cydweithredol, a herio anghydraddoldebau. Mae profiad o weithio gyda grwpiau a amlinellir yn ddymunol. Dylai'r artist ddangos agwedd gydweithredol, gyda phrofiad o weithio'n greadigol gydag amrywiaeth o grwpiau a chymunedau. Mae'n rhaid i'r artist fod yn hyderus wrth gynhyrchu a chyflwyno gwaith i gynulleidfaoedd y tu allan i'r celfyddydau ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd. Byddem yn croesawu cynigion gan bartneriaeth gydweithredol (er, os gwelwch yn dda, dylech sylwi bod ffi yr artist yn sefydlog).

Rydym yn chwilio am geisiadau sy'n atseinio â nod Robert Owen, sef ' hyrwyddo lles a hapusrwydd pob dyn, menyw a phlentyn heb ystyried ... (i) ... enwad, plaid, gwlad a lliw '.

**Am becyn gwybodaeth e-bostiwch: [desk@oriell Davies.org](mailto:desk@oriell Davies.org)**

**Dyddiad cau 20/04/2020**