

Putney Embankment Foreshore Hoarding Engagement Activities

Introduction

#14daysofwashingup, 2017

A collaboration between Amy Pennington and residents of Putney
commissioned by Tideway



#14daysofwashingup installed on the hoarding at Putney Embankment Foreshore. Photo: Bridget Sawyers

#14daysofwashingup is a temporary artwork made for the hoarding around the Tideway construction site at Putney Embankment Foreshore, 2017–2019.

The artwork is the result of a series of workshops organised by the artist in August 2017 for residents of Putney, which ranged from mudlarking, drawing and sculpting, exploration of the value of collecting and collections, to a roaming performance by the pier.

The Thames' anaerobic mud preserves objects and washes up discarded objects and treasures that can be revealed by mudlarking. Pennington's mudlarking activity resulted in a new collection of objects all found at Putney that connects the area to a rich history of trade, river passages and leisure activities and speaks of our consumption habits.

#14daysofwashingup features hand drawn objects from this new collection such as clay pipes, horseshoes, bones, 18th century pottery fragments and broken toys, accompanied by labels that offer unexpected, imaginative insights into these finds. Some of the texts on the labels were written by the participants and further developed by the artist. Contemporary items are arranged next to Victorian pieces resulting in unpredictable and unexpected displays of history determined by what the river offered up.



Details of the installed artwork. Photos: Bridget Sawyers

Credits

Amy Pennington in collaboration with Henrietta Armstrong, Kevin Clarke, Carole Crane, Kirsty Harris, Julie Rafalski and children and young people who attended the workshops.

Thanks due to

Battersea Arts Centre's (BAC) Moving Museum, Steve Brooker aka 'Mud man' for their contributions to the workshops. Berni Griffiths, Verger from St Mary's Church, Susie Gray, Cultural Planning Manager, Enable Leisure and Culture and Katie Ashton, Community Relations Manager, as members of the artist selection panel.

About the Artist

Amy Pennington is a British artist based in London. Working primarily with drawing and people she often ventures off the paper into mediums such as performance, installation and conversation. Pennington works collaboratively with people as participants or co-creators and makes work that sensitively takes notice of human relationships and socio-political issues.

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Artist's Brief



Workshop participants on the foreshore. Photo: Amy Pennington

Amy Pennington responded to a brief to develop designs for the hoarding around Tideway's construction site at Putney Embankment Foreshore in collaboration with local community groups / organisations or others identified by the artist.

The overarching theme of heritage was identified as the main focus of this site-specific commission, and Pennington was asked to develop the theme with the community. She was also asked to consider project elements or components such as water, movement, time and ecology and place, which could inform the artwork in addition to the rich historical context.

Development of Artist's Proposal

Amy developed her initial proposal and planned a series of workshops and drop in sessions to take place during weekends and afternoons in August 2017, which would appeal to a wide demographic and coincide with leisure time of local residents. The majority of the drop-in workshops were hosted in St Mary's Church, close to the construction site in Putney. All local residents' associations were informed about the workshops and information about the project was shared widely online, on Tideway website, on social media and was picked up by a local news service Putney SW15. Posters advertising workshops were also distributed in the local area. The artist's intention was to be present at Putney Foreshore for 14 days

during low tide to develop in depth relationship with the area and the people, offer stimulating experiences to local people and a high-quality artwork.



Mudlarking finds during workshop with Amy Pennington. Photos: left Henrietta Armstrong, right Amy Pennington

Workshops

Workshops took place during ‘14 days of washing up’, between 13 and 28 August 2017.

The first workshop on 13 August 2017 was dedicated to mudlarking. Amy involved mudlarking specialist Steve Brooker AKA ‘Mud-man’ to lead a mudlarking session on the foreshore. Nine people attended this session and objects found during the afternoon formed the core of the collection that Amy worked with to develop the artwork for the hoarding.

The second workshop on 20 August 2017 was dedicated to drawing the river. Five people attended the workshop and drawings produced informed the background of the design. During the workshop participants were introduced to a number of drawing techniques and explored ways of capturing the river, its flow, form, density, colours and textures. Drawings created at this session also feature on the hoardings.

The third workshop on 23 August was dedicated to the concept of collecting and collections. Amy invited representatives from BAC Moving Museum: Wandsworth Collection who brought along objects from their collection that linked to Putney. Amy presented alongside it a growing collection of objects found on the Putney foreshore. 15 people attended including four people who participated in the previous sessions.



Performance by Amy Pennington as part of final workshop. Photo: Fiona MacDonald

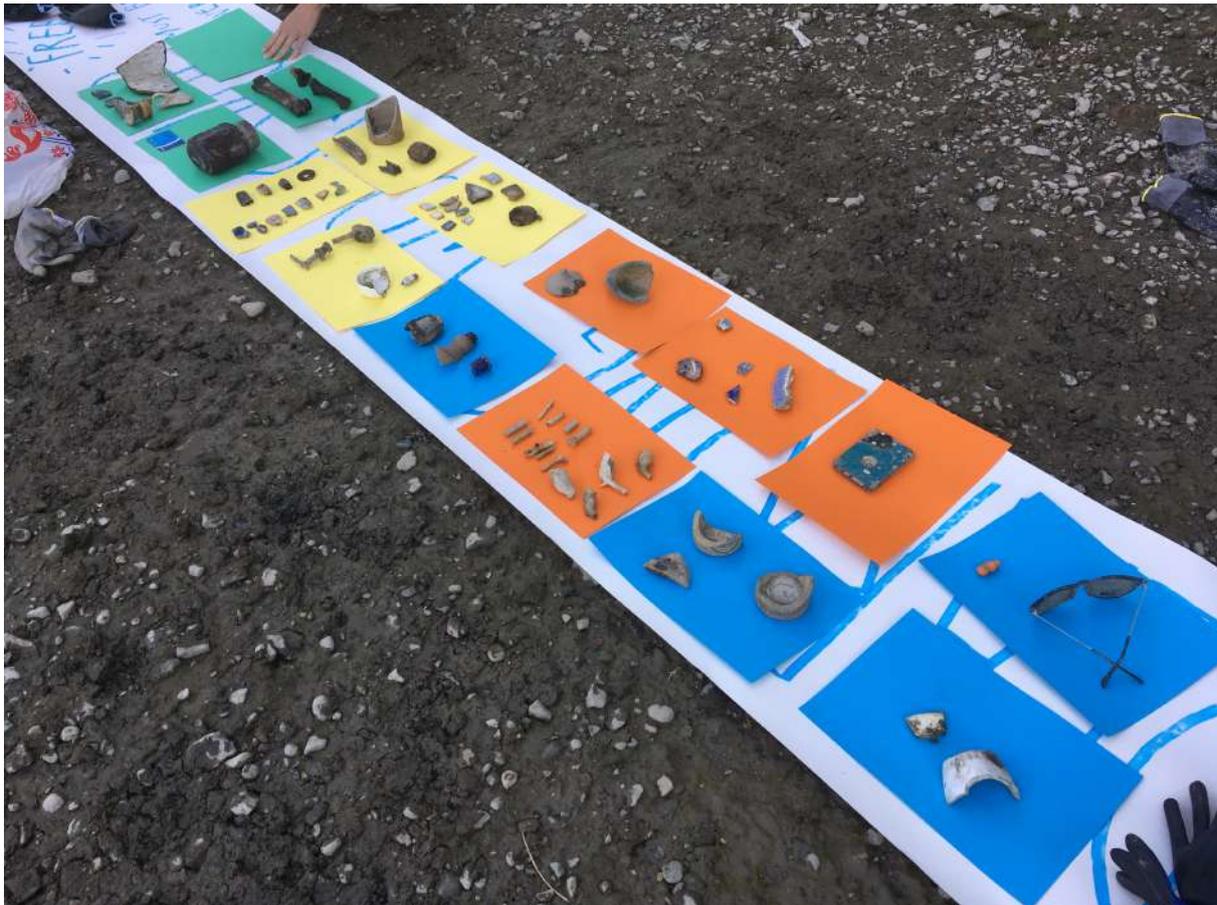
The fourth workshop took place by the foreshore where Amy accompanied by two other artists staged a roaming performance of washing up the finds from the Thames. Whilst artists scrubbed the objects they invited passers-by to inspect the collection and develop imaginative narratives that could be attached to the objects. It was a hugely successful afternoon with approximately 70 people participating.

The workshops attracted repeat visits and the narratives created by the participants feature on the hoarding.

Participants

Amy engaged with nearly 100 people aged 2 to 80 during the course of her presence on the foreshore. She introduced people to techniques that she uses in her work: observational drawing, cartoon sketches, rubbings, sculpting in clay and performance and people's contributions informed the final design.

One local resident, Carole Crane, who lives directly opposite the site, attended three workshops and joined Amy on a number of mudlarking outings during the course of the project. Her work is featured on the hoarding.



Collection of mudlarking finds during workshops. Photo: Amy Pennington

Feedback from Participants

Local resident, Carole Crane, spoke highly of Amy's sessions and through attending three of them and joining Amy on a few other occasions for mudlarking outings on the foreshore has reignited her interest in and passion for drawing and is keen to continue working with Amy on other projects.

A couple of children who attended Amy's 'Drawing the river' session were so inspired by it that they convinced their parents to come along to another workshop and brought with them their friends. The mothers of the children (all local residents) were impressed with the project, quality of work that their children produced and were keen to be informed about how the project progresses. They commented on sessions being fluid, open, catering to children's attention span and interests and allowing them to experiment, play and engage whilst learning about their area, history and gaining new skills. Both mothers commented on how enjoyable and stimulating the sessions were and also how much they connected them and their children to the river, a resource that is often taken for granted.

Feedback from Passers-by



#14daysofwashingup installed on the hoarding at Putney Embankment Foreshore. Photo: Bridget Sawyers

"When you take your time, when you look at it, it really speaks to you."

"It is very immediate, colourful. The more you look, the more you think about our throw-away society and pollution."

"I actually think about river passing through the city [when I see this work]. Polluted by people. Objects that we look at in the artwork are both engineered and natural. It makes you reflect about the ongoing relationship between humans and natural world. The river has been here for a very long time."

"Very inspired by it. So much thought went into work and it is so well executed."

"I like the informative stuff that you can see in the labels. It teaches some new things, stuff that I didn't know."

"This kind of work brightens up the streets of London that are normally quite grey. It challenges you and makes you reflect on current issues that are affecting the planet and how we are not taking care of it. On the other hand the artwork contributes to make you feel better because it is quite nice to look at it. I love street art; I find it a great way to get children involved in art."

"It is nice! It makes me feel happy! There are local things. The artwork refers to things that you can find in Putney."

"It makes you more aware of the nature. The pictures represent day to day things but they distract you from the building site and the buildings around so in that sense it makes you more aware of nature because you are forgetting about what is around."

"I am a landscape architect so I like the fact that it is very contextual. It is positive. It is like a puzzle and you need to solve it. You have got all these objects and you need to look at the artwork holistically in order to solve it, to understand the meaning."

Feedback from the Artist



Amy greatly enjoyed engaging with Putney and its community:

"#14 days of washing up was a great way to unearth some hidden treasures of the Thames specific to Putney. It was really interesting being present for the 14 days and meeting local people, being told stories, finding objects that relate to past Putney and the Putney of today. The workshops allowed for playful investigation and it was great to see young people drawing outdoors and by the site. I also loved it that a local resident became actively involved and since the project has started drawing again."