

Walworth Memorial Public Engagement Programme

Report on Findings from Sessions with Local Groups and at Two Public Events.

Commissioned by Contemporary Art Society for Southwark Council.

Introduction:

Between May and August 2016 artist Albert Potrony and curator Vivienne Reiss worked with four local groups* and engaged members of local and wider communities at two public events - one at East Street Market in collaboration with the Cuming Museum and a second event hosted in collaboration with the Imperial War Museum.

During the engagement period the group's members and the general public learnt about the development of the new Walworth Square and the commissioning of a contemporary memorial within it. Participants were invited to create collective designs for a new memorial embroidery for the local communities while contributing to discussions about the purpose of a contemporary space for memorial.

We engaged over 200 people during the programme. 91 people responded to our main question, which was designed to gather as many diverse thoughts and ideas as possible that could contribute to the brief for the new artwork:

HOW WOULD YOU USE A SPACE FOR MEMORIAL?

The responses at a glance:

Despite the variety of contributions there are a number of recurrent ideas or threads that surface through the various responses. There seems to be a general desire for a 'democratic' space, a space that could be used in different ways by the various communities of Southwark and where both reflection and shared activity could take place. A space that could be both intimate and social. A space that could be different things at different times.

* Two women's groups: LAWRS' Espacio Mama (a group of young Latin American mums) and Creation's Tuesday 1pm group (a group of retired local women that have lived in the neighbourhood all their lives). A group of Year 6 children from St John's Walworth CoE Primary School and members of the Royal British Legion in Southwark.

The responses in more detail:

The contributions were two-fold, a section of participants focused on what they thought should happen in a contemporary space for memorial - or how they would like to use such a space (as the original question asked) while others preferred to imagine what the space/artwork could look like or what elements it could contain.

- A space for quiet reflection, introspection, peace - a place of calm in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the city:

"I would like the place to be a place where I can be alone and a place to relax".

"I think it should be a calm and quiet place where you can chill out and listen to music or read".

"A space for reflection".

"(A place) where we can lie down and think and dream all year round".

- A space for sharing and exchange that the community/ies of Southwark can take ownership off, a space to learn about others, a space of active participation:

"A meeting place".

"A public picnic place".

"A place where mothers can share our experiences".

"A space that invites people to participate as a community, to share, to get to know each other, to remember".

"A place where locals can go and do things".

- A space that is interactive and intergenerational and as many people as possible can have a varying degree of investment in, owned by the community - from old to young and accessible to all:

"A place for everybody".

"A place with seating. A place where kids can go to make out. Organic. A place to linger and reflect. With no text to read to make it accessible to all".

"Something not just to revere the dead but to interact. Something that will attract children".

"A good sculpture that can be interacted with, climb, touch, walk...(like Conrad Shawcross's sculptures in Dulwich Park)".

- A space to hold celebrations/events. A performative space. A space that can hold performances from various local groups:

"A place for some quiet time and have an event on memorial day and enjoy with friends and family".

"I would use the memorial space by dancing, reading, celebrating special occasions, listen to music, drawing and having a picnic".

"A space for cultural exchange, food, popular dances, to remember culture and the past".

"A nice quiet space, a space where people can perform, sit and have a quiet cup of coffee. Tables and benches".

Regarding the responses that started imagining what the space could look like or what could contain there was a strong desire for a design that would allow for seating and also there were repeated comments suggesting the incorporation of natural elements like trees, plants and water within the design:

“A memorial garden to sit in”.

“A space with trees - varied and “edible” : Lime trees, Walnuts, Cobs, Sweet Chestnuts... Wooden benches”.

“An area created using stone from the land, a plain water fountain, drinking fountain. A “cheap” community cafe”.

“Gardens are always a good idea. People tend to like a green environment and it will be a nice communal space”.

A space that could hold temporary displays - personal items:

“A place with chairs and benches. A place where children are included. Plaques or drawings to commemorate veterans in Southwark, to commemorate different communities that live in Southwark”.

“A wall / area where people can put a photo / object that will personalise the area for them”.

“I would use the space to display images of the “human family” from around the world. Displayed on screens”.

“A place to display things temporarily”.

Finally, a contributor questioned the limits of what a memorial can do:

“I question the whole concept of memorialisation. I also have a problem with the word memorial which is too limited”.

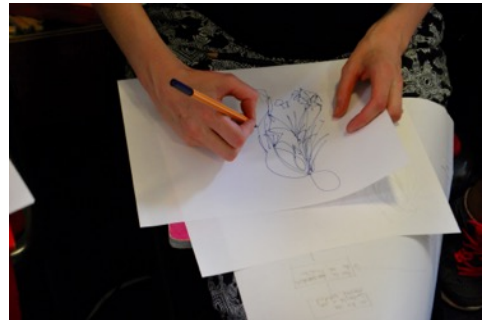
We believe that a design arrived after carefully considering how to incorporate or translate the ideas above into a physical space could become truly open/democratic and answer these sort of questions.

A final thought:

From these contributions it feels that both the design of the square and the memorial should be considered together with as close a dialogue as possible between architect, landscape architect and artist.

All contributions have been transcribed and collected in the complementary document provided.

LAWRS/Espacio Mama Sessions



Creation/1pm Tuesday Group Sessions



St John's Walworth CoE Primary School. Session at IWM



East Street Market Event



Imperial War Museum Event



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

HOW WOULD YOU USE A SPACE FOR MEMORIAL?

**Walworth Memorial Engagement Programme /
Responses from sessions with local groups and public events.**

St Johns Walworth C of E Primary School

I would use the memorial by reading, dancing, celebrating special occasions and drawing and bonfire night.

A space where people can play and have fun such as a park and next to it where you can play video games.

I would like to do a parade so the English are remembered for their greatness and have a space for reading and communion.

On a football pitch when I get ready for a match I love thinking about what I am going to do on the pitch.

A place for some quiet time and have an event on memorial day and enjoy with friends and family.

I would build the biggest park in the world.

A place where there are facilities for people to use (such as sports activities, games etc.)

I would go with my parents somewhere where we had a great time. I will play with my parents or perhaps if my friends came along we can set some fireworks or explore.

I will like to have it with old pictures and symbols such like poppies. And have it with an open space. And for there to have relaxing calm music. And to meditate in peace.

I would use the memorial for picnics, bonfire, 1 min silence.

Every year I would like to shoot fireworks out of cannons to remember the war.

With an explanation board, a quiet seating place.

Listen to music, park, picnic table, water fountain, swimming pool, flower garden.

Graveyard. To remember where people died.

I would like the place to be a place where I can be alone and a place to relax.

A community place where people could sit and spend time together, be peaceful and enjoy some time alone where active sports could take place. A great chilling and thinking area.

I would use the memorial space by dancing, reading, celebrating special occasions, listen to music, drawing and having a picnic.

I think it should be a calm and quiet place where you can chillax and listen to music or read.

I think it should be a place that you would be able to think and have peace and quiet, listen to music and chill out and keep calm.

A place to listen to music. Have fun or play around with friends families. A place to relax. A picnic spot. Once a week people going together to do fun activities. We can have barbecues and fireworks or a bonfire. We could have a fountain.

In a memorial I be quiet remember and pray for the citizens. We keep calm and keep them in your thoughts and hearts.

Football pitch. Water fountain. Bench.

A statue of the world to think about others and unfortunate people in the world.

Have a bbq and family time.

I would want it to be a quiet place where we can chat and have fun.

A public picnic place.

Creation Tuesday 1pm Group

A memorial garden to sit in.

A meeting place.

Church gardens.

A space for reflexion.

LAWRS / Espacio Mama

Un lugar donde las madres podamos compartir nuestras experiencias.

A place where mothers can share our experiences.

Un espacio que invite a participar en comunidad, a compartir, a conocerse, a recordar.

A space that invites people to participate as a community, to share, to get to know each other, to remember.

Yo compartiría todas las experiencias vividas aquí en Londres acerca el transporte, la gente.

I would share all the experiences I've lived here in London, about transport, the people.

Un lugar con una entrada donde se pusiera un monumento en el que ponga mum space, rodeado de flores blancas y por dentro sea un sitio espacioso donde en el que se pueda interactuar.

A place with an entrance with a monument with a sign saying mum space, surrounded by white flowers and inside a spacious place to interact with others.

Un mural donde las personas que han vivido por carne propia sus experiencias puedan plasmar y así todos podamos saber.

A mural where people that have lived in their own flesh their experiences (war and conflict) can share so we can all know (them).

Un lugar en la naturaleza, con juegos para niños, pileta para el verano, mesas y bancos para poder compartir.

A space in nature, with games for children, a pool for Summer, tables and benches to be able to share with others.

Una plaza con plantas que haya una parrilla que se pueda hacer barbacoa y mesas y sillas donde se pueda descansar a gusto.

A small square with plants with a barbecue and tables and chairs where one could rest and enjoy.

Reunirse con las mamás y los niños en un espacio libre para que los niños jueguen y dialoguen con los demás.

Get together with the mums and the children in a free space for the children to play and to dialogue with others.

Un espacio para intercambios culturales, comidas, danzas folklóricas para recordar la cultura y el pasado.

A space for cultural exchange, food, popular dances, to remember culture and the past.

Un lugar con una enterada en arco con flores. Arboles decorativos en forma de animales, corazones. Para tomarse fotos. Y en el centro un mesa para compartir.

A space with an entrance in the shape of an arch of flowers. Decorative trees in the shape of animals and hearts. To take photos. And in the centre, tables for sharing.

Royal British Legion / Southwark

A space to seat and reflect and think.

Seating area.

A garden space.

A memorial garden.

I would like to recover the war memorial that used to be in front of St George's Church in Wells Way and re-house it on the new Walworth Square.

PUBLIC EVENT / East Street Market

A space with trees - varied and "edible" : Lime trees, Walnuts, Cobs, Sweet Chestnuts... Wooden benches.

An area created using stone from the land, a plain water fountain, drinking fountain. A "cheap" community cafe.

A good sculpture that can be interacted with, climb, touch, walk...(like Conrad Shawcross's sculptures in Dulwich Park).

QUALITY TO LAST, materials that age well - patina.

Gardens are always a good idea. People tend to like a green environment and it will be a nice communal space.

A nice quiet space, a space where people can perform, sit and have a quiet cup of coffee. Tables and benches.

MUSIC + DANCE, dance creating movement of time. In conflict & times people will join without judgement. e.g.: - "Serious Roadtrip"

TEA Dance. Learning new dances which can encompass(?) memories & history.

A memorial to motherhood's struggle.

A quiet place of worship. A place to chat.

A place where locals can go and do things.

A place to display things temporarily.

A rotation of ancient villages that represent all the cultures that live in Southwark.

Something British, Natural. From THE AREA. For Contemplation

A quiet space. Tranquil. Calm. A place where people can sit down and think. Maybe a 'garden' space.

A place with chairs and benches. A place where children are included. Plaques or drawings to commemorate veterans in Southwark, to commemorate different communities that live in Southwark.

A place for everybody.

Have some sort of seating arrangement, to sit down and have a coffee or your lunch. A place where people can sit and relax.

A place with seating. A place where kids can go to make out. Organic. A place to linger and reflect. With no text to read to make it accessible to all.

Something not just to revere the dead but to interact. Something that will attract children.

PUBLIC EVENT / Imperial War Museum

A wall / area where people can put a photo / object that will personalise the area for them.

(A place) where we can lie down and think and dream all year round.

Garden - community involvement. Fruit trees. Bushes.

Water feature like a fountain. Seats - so people can seat nearby.

(It would be) nice to have it for people (to) meet from all the world to have fun.

I would like to see a lovely garden to sit and eat, with a water feature in the centre to remember the 21st Century.

A quiet place in the garden with wifi and a phone charger place.

I question the whole concept of memorialisation. I also have a problem with the word memorial which is too limited.

A large water feature / fountain with sculpture on top with seating around.

A layer of grass so you can have a picnic with your family.

I would use the space to display images of the "human family" from around the world. Displayed on screens.

I like water and plants. Nothing too literal. Atmosphere above objects.

A space to have a family picnic.

I would plant spring flowers.

I would like it to have: Peace, activity for little children that is secured so you can leave them there to see the place. Flower, lake or river birds , a little snack shop, free wifi, trees, plants, stories of people, nice views, fountain.

The memorial would be a nice quiet place to be able to look at old photos of the people that have been to war. Somewhere where you can bring the family for a picnic.

A waterfall to create a relaxing atmosphere, a very peaceful place to reflect on people everywhere who have sacrificed their lives in service for others.

Duck pond.

(A place) to meet your friends and have a chat.

People - We are all in it together. Maybe a series of figurative studies... or figures in the 'landscape'????

Garden with fountain, trees, flowers, seats.

I would like a colourful maze.

A waterfall inscribed with messages of peace. And picnic area.

A multicultural place to interchange opinions, knowledge, important things for you and how other people can understand it. Meet other cultures, people, helps you to know the real world.

I would love to see a memorial for a peaceful Europe.

A place for peace: birds, flowers, water fountain. A place just to remember God is amazing.

Healing garden.

The Memorial: A space of acknowledgment; respectful, serious - beautiful and full of hope.

APPENDIX II

ONLINE CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Walworth Memorial Engagement Programme

The aim of Southwark's online consultation was to give local people the opportunity to have input, through their stories or thoughts, on a new memorial. The consultation posed the artist's questions to people who were not able to attend the live events but were nonetheless interested in the idea of a memorial and the nature of memorialisation.

1. Have you, a friend or family member experienced war and conflict. Please tell us about your experiences/story?

- *In my family war is something that my grand parents generation were deeply affected by, having fought in WWII overseas. As they have passed away in recent yerars that direct family connection has been lost, and war risks feeling more remote. It would be good if the memorial could have some direct link to local people who have been affected by more recent conflicts, perhaps even if they weren't part of the British forces, but have ended up living in Walworth as migrants. It could capture a moment in time that reflects how multicultural the area is, but that in being multicultural residents are much more closely affected by war than us white British middle class might think. One of my neighbours (who terrifies us with occasional violent acts in communal spaces) and has mental health issues, was apparently a child soldier in Africa. This memorial needs to be clearly connecting directly with local residents like him, that we can then witness.*
- *Yes, as a 5 year old in 1943 our house was flattened by a V2 landing next door. We survived in a Morrison shelter, were then transferred to the public shelters, and thereafter evacuated to a farm in Polruan, Cornwall.*
- *One of my grandfathers was a soldier in WW1.*
- *Great uncle, grandfather involved in first world war. Limited knowledge about their experiences. Letters home tended to skirt over the painful parts and they did not talk about it. Great uncle lost his best friend and he found that very painful.*
- *Yes Israel*
- *Yes there has been such experience but I would prefer to leave it as it is in my mind.*
- *several famliy members died and were maimed in 2nd world war. friends have experienced war and had to leave thier homes and move to UK*
- *You'll be hard pressed to find a person who does not have a friend or family member who has not experienced war and conflict. My grandfather was a Second World War firefighter*
- *Two generations were involved in war...their experience - and particularly injuries - did much to shape their lives after the war.*

2. What was helpful in rebuilding life after your experience? - What was most helpful in helping rebuild normal life after your experience?

- *Mt family & Reeds School*
- *it is on going*
- *Stamina hope and help from the London Borough of Lambeth when I was active 70-80-90 in business helping the locals to create business and progress in life*
- *Place to live and work without fear. Open spaces to roam and reflect in whilst meeting others*
- *Not being reminded by watt memorials on every street corner?*
- *Just getting on with it - like the millions of others who'd been involved...this is a pretty dumb question , really..*

3. For you, what words relate to friendship and hope? (Please note in your own language or in English).

- *Surprises, Sunrise, Silliness*
- *kindness, improvement, future*
- *Tenderness, touch, smile, eyebrows lifted, holding hands, looking to horizon*
- *Don't kill me.*
- *humanity, tolerance, freedom, voice, respect, learn, charitable*
- *Friendship and Hope is an ambiguous subject. How long is a piece of string? True friendship is an extremely rare commodity in our today's society thanks to non existing efforts of all our politicians primarily, and secondly of our too many liberal views. Friendship was stronger in earlier years due to various facts affecting all of us like, family, close knit neighborhoods, the traditional Bobby walking all streets acknowledging everybody, the milkman, the postman and even the weekly dustmen. All these have vanished in the name of profit, but the Politicians call it modernization. Absolutely nothing wrong with that but there must be some limits.*

- *Friendship creates hope and these two are strictly connected with close knit families where family values are observed and expressed. I see people walking in Grove Lane next to 10 rubbish bins and throw their objects in the street. People like them have no hope at all in life and they certainly don't know what friendship means. Whose fault is that ? The fault more likely rests with our Politicians irrespective of their political beliefs. Some try to teach hope using, religion which is entirely wrong, some contemplate violence which constitutes a crime, and of course our Politicians, masters on that subject, HOPE! using very attractive phraseology! Something that insults our intelligence. At the end of the day all of us have a duty to love our country that provide for us whatever is that and we have an obligation to fight for our country, no matter where you were born, but above all humility and respect must always prevail. The financial burdens today on most Local Authorities are unbearable and if Local Authorities really wish to address this they need to have a practical approach that balances out the people's needs and guidelines from Central Governments. In conclusion Hope can only become part of most people starting from the foundations of every society, Schools, Family, Health.*
- *safeopen no borders light*
- *God*
- *Agenda driven nonsense question*
- *Another meaningless question , where the phrase ""in your own language or English"" shows just how addled thinking hss become...multiculturalism rules, OK...with English a very poor second, if that...*

4. What do you think a memorial can be today and in the future?

- *Sorry, but that's a ridiculously obtuse question. I'll try: it should aspire to have a meaning to onlookers that is as powerful today as it is in 100 years time. That is likely to work if communicated emotionally rather than rationally. It shouldn't take too much decoding, but speak to our hearts first, not our heads It should try and avoid following fashion, but sep aside from prevailing trends.*
- *I believe the memorial should not be for a " memorial to war and conflict" per se - the last thing we want is a glorification or war, but much more to those that fought both to end the war and to build a better future.*
- *Having no war memorial would be a huge help.*

- *London is littered with war memorials, so why 'someone' is suggesting yet one more is appalling. How dare do-gooders choose to degrade our public spaces? Who gives the do-gooders that right? Shame on you!"*
- *A centre for reflection, an improvement to the public realm, aesthetic value, something to clamber on for children. Something to be a centrepiece for people to take photos of. A focus for remembering people who have died is really important.*
- *A reminder and a warning. This 'memorial' should be as repulsive as possible. A baby from Fallujah, horribly mutated by depleted uranium, for example.*
- *statue, art in a mainly austere colouring with a 'ray of light'*
- *If we are to remain a united country, primarily the memorial must reflect our English heritage and History. It must continuously reflect our glorious past and history. It must be something that will attract visitors like tourists to see it, something that is not too complicated with artistic explanations something Imperial reflecting past periods arriving to today's era.*
- *People visit the millennium bridge, St Paul's Cathedral, The palace and so many other interesting places all over London, so let's hope Southwark Council will create something not associated with politics or misery or immigrants or poverty, but something that people will look and admire. The place is so close to most central London attractions and it must be something that will give this take off for the area. Perhaps a square monument depicting the four continents adorned in every facet with something from our past history arriving to today, but not political motivated. This memorial blended with properly controlled from Southwark Council continental coffee places and take away not necessarily the huge corporations but individuals adhering to strict standards, collecting refuse for which shopkeepers are charged separately, nicely display chairs in the pavements would definitely create something Southwark can be proud of. Paris became renown some 50 years ago for their pavement coffee places, but properly controlled. Athens in Greece produces the best coffee places in terms of decorations and layout. Italy gives the most antique effect with their pavement chairs and tables. Lets for once create something that starts making people to feel happy and hope to come out from misery and poverty.*
- *open spaces with trees and plants that renew themselves over the year. Little money should be spent in building and maintaining the area. It is more important to spend funds in providing homes and service that benefit all the community*
- *Something like the Angel of the North.*
- *Is this question an attempt at the surreal - or are you being serious ? ...it's getting more and more bizarre...*

5. What do you think is important for a memorial for the community within Southwark?

- *A very specific tangible connection to residents today, not something abstract that risks being generic and potentially located anywhere else. Think of the classic village war memorial, that lists the fallen of that community, the list itself presents the volume of impact, the specific names make it real. It should have scale too, not be a shy, discrete potentially discrete inscription in a paving slab. If we're having a war memorial, be bold and brash and proud, not pathetically fearfully trying to avoid peace protestors.*
- *No memorial is the best memorial.*
- *Something that recognises the sacrifices made by so many people in the borough - particularly in recent conflicts.*
- *A memorial is completely unnecessary, unless it commemorates the community that has been displaced to make way for this new development.*

- *serve as a reminder, inspiration and contemplation*
- *Open space with trees and plants and water to relax in and meet with others and areas for solitary reflection*
- *To remind us of pain, suffering and God*
- *It is imperative that you engage imperial war museum who's flagship branch is located in Southwark and take direction from them and their war art programme.*
- *There's more than enough memorials to the past in London...it's like we know somehow , our best days were in the past. Stop wasting the taxpayers' money !*

6. How would you like to use the memorial and surrounding environment?

- *Well it should feel like a space with some gravity, not just another cafe piazza, but a space where one could imagine a political gathering, an important community speech, a Remembrance Sunday silent gathering, as well as a place with the wow factor for wedding photos etc.*
- *Difficult to say until one sees the environment, but something dignified and respectful.*

- *An invisible memorial would allow people who want to remember war to do so as they choose. The rest of us - hopefully the majority - can then choose not to remember war. Being able to forget war must be a sign of the greatest progress.*
- *A place to sit and pause and think*
- *As a focus of public protest & insurrection.*
- *meeting, social, relaxation and useful in a fun way, dance, theatre, tai chi*
- *A place to breathe and relax, alone at times with others*
- *For quiet prayer and contemplation.*
- *A venue for counselling sessions for people suffering chronic political correctness.*

7. Tell us about you.

- *Southwark resident x 10*
- *Live or work in neighbouring borough x 1*

APPENDIX III

CONTACTS ESTABLISHED

**Walworth Memorial Engagement Programme /
Contacts made through the artist's work with local communities and cultural organisations**

Overview of contacts established during the progress of the community engagement project:

Marina Comandulli, Development and Outreach Coordinator, Latin American Women's Rights Service LAWRS. Their group of young mums Espacio Mama participated in the project.

Zara Lloyd at InSpire, who gathered contacts for local groups and introduced us to Gil Mutch who runs women's group at InSpire and the Sea Cadets based in Surrey Square - to involve in next phase.

Gil Mutch and the women's group at InSpire (although the women were really interested in the project it was not the right time for them - we could involve in the next phase)

Anthea Godfrey (expert embroider ex chair Embroiders Guild involved in Cornelia Parker's Manga Carta at the British Library and large scale community project with Embroiders Guild, The Royal School of Needlework, Hand & Lock and Fine Cell Work. She will act as our adviser on the production of the embroidery.

Grant Rogers and Nic Vanderpeet Learning Department at Imperial War Museum - our partners at sessions with School group and second public event and Judy Aitken Curator of the Cuming Collection - our partner at the East Street Market Public Event.

Southwark Cathedral Guild of Borderers (they will act as consultants for the production of the embroidery and may be part of next phase)

Angharad Thain, St Ethelburgas who advised us on content of workshops and approach / techniques around dealing with issues of conflict resolution to be incorporated within the sessions.

Ryan Allain and Sarah Stephenson from the British Legion, advised on project outcomes and brokered meeting with Southwark Branch. Michael Cook and other members of the British Legion Southwark Branch.

Daphne Ward-Anderson St John's Walworth CE Primary School who took part at the IWM session.

Sarah McCarthy Communications and Engagement Manager at Creation Trust and 2 groups - craft group and Tuesday club social group who took part in the project.

Zahra Abdall who runs Walworth All Women sewing classes from UAE School on Trafalgar Street, SE17 (interested in taking part in embroidery on second phase).