

News



Celebrated sculptor Nick Hornby is collaborating with painter Sinta Tantra on *An Arch Never Sleeps*

Landmark Sculpture for the Borough

By Jeremy Hunt

Two public works of art are being commissioned by the Borough as part of the Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre scheme. One is destined for inside the building while the other will be outside in the redesigned open space of Lancaster Green near Latimer Road station. This is part of a £57.8m investment in North Kensington with £40.2m of funding committed by the council and an additional £17.6m Government funding for the Kensington Aldridge Academy.

The opportunity for a large scale landmark sculpture has already attracted a shortlist of five world renowned artists. Nigel Hall RA, Nick Hornby working with Sinta Tantra, Paul Hosking, and Julian Opie are all working on proposals.

Celebrated sculptor Nick Hornby is collaborating with painter Sinta Tantra on *An Arch Never Sleeps*. This symbolic arch touches on the diverse cultures and histories of the local landscape; from the colours of Carnival to Holland Park Opera, the V&A, the Royal Parks, Imperial College, Leighton House, Madonna's recording studio, and even the film Notting Hill. Hornby and Tantra have recognised the multiple demands and implications of public art commissions:

'Public artworks are often asked to

do the impossible,' Hornby says, 'to deal with the narrative of the site, appeal to audiences and the commissioner, to be relevant to today and also in one hundred years time; to withstand the presence of architecture but also be a genuine art object, which is true to the experimentation of an artist's studio work. We believe this object does just that, it is a risk, it is ambitious and it pushes our individual practice whilst also appealing to a wide range of people.'

If their work wins a place, they will become part of the Borough's famous public art landscape. The sculptural glyptotheque of Kensington and Chelsea celebrates an array of historical figures in the form of war memorials, obelisks, fountains and bronze sylphs. The Royal Borough is aggrandized by the commemorative sculptures of figurative simulcræf men, and very few women, of derring-do. From the heroic Volodymer the Great, in Holland Park Avenue to Ernest Shackleton, in polar clothing outside the Royal Geographical Society on Exhibition Road. Contemporary sculpture tends to be domestic in scale, and is represented by Eilis O'Connell's *Unfurled* at Kensington Gate, and Vaclav Voklek's *Haiku* at the Czech Embassy on Notting Hill Gate. Community projects also feature widely, including large scale murals and mosaics such as the mural for the Urban Eye/Westway Project on the Carnival Bridge at Portobello Road.

Later this month, an interview panel with representatives from the Kensington Aldridge Academy, Leisure Centre, the Public Art Panel and local Councillors, will meet to select the final artist.

Chelsea Barracks redevelopment given the go-ahead

Westminster Council took just 15 minutes to wave through plans for the next stage of the controversial £3 billion redevelopment of Chelsea Barracks into luxury flats. Work on the first three, eight-storey, apartment blocks has started.

Squire & Partners' designs for the 13 acre site were given the go-ahead by Westminster Council on 20th May.

Due to be completed by 2018, the 448 new apartments on the site are expected to be priced at between £2m and £50m. According to the Chelsea Barracks Partnership, 123 of the 448 apartments will be 'affordable units'. The site will also feature a sports centre, community gardens and retail outlets.

Mayor Boris Johnson welcomed Westminster Council's decision last month stating, 'I am pleased that Westminster City Council has granted permission for the redevelopment of Chelsea Barracks. This scheme will create new schemes and jobs for the capital'. However, the redevelopment

was subject to some opposition including the Chelsea Barracks Action Group.

Last month's planning approval comes after Middle Eastern property development fund Qatari Diar purchased the site for nearly £1 billion in 2008 from the Ministry of Defence. Five years ago previous plans drawn up by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour were dropped after private lobbying by the Prince of Wales. The Prince of Wales labelled previous plans for the site as 'brutalist' and 'a gigantic experiment with the very soul of our capital'.

The consortium originally involved in buying the Chelsea Barracks site (Qatari Diar and CPC Group Limited) have also previously been embroiled in a tax dispute with HM Revenue and Customs. In July 2013, the First-Tier Tribunal Tax Chamber found that the consortium owed £50 million in unpaid stamp duty land tax.

Originally built in the 1860s, the Chelsea Barracks has a long and rich history, and, as the largest army barracks in Central London, formerly housed the Queen's Guard.

Qatari Diar, current owners of the Chelsea Barracks site, have previously been involved in other major redevelopment projects across London, including the former Olympic Village in Stratford and Grosvenor Waterside by Chelsea Bridge. Smriti Gopa I

