

# Digswell Arts Trust

## Heritage Arts & the Community – Digswell Arts Trust

### ***Background to the Trust***

For over forty five years the Digswell Arts Trust has a record of service to the arts generally and to over 200 artists or crafts persons of which it is justifiably proud. The range of activities supported is startlingly varied - sculpture, stained glass, painting, pottery, lettering, industrial design, jewellery making, silver smithing, black smithing, jazz, book illustration, weaving, etching, wood-working, photography, electronic music, furniture making, dance, poetry, print making, community arts, film-making, theatre, rock music and performance art. And through exhibitions, festivals, commissions, classes, film shows, open days, workshops, demonstrations, advice, school visits etc., the Trust's artists have combined and continue to combine their private work with community involvement

### ***The Project***

The project will employ an archivist to catalogue, advise on conservation to national standards and publicise an archive of national importance both through traditional media and the Access to Archives (A2A) website: [www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk) .

Digswell Arts Trust (DAT) has extensive archives dating from 1958. They are presently stored in 26 boxes at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) (Ref. Acc 3393).

An education/outreach officer will be employed to bring the heritage of Digswell Arts Trust to the attention of the community, showing how the Trust and its activities contributed to the development of British art in the second half of the 20C and how it contributed to the development of post war New Towns communities.

The resource pack will consist of a CDrom with images of items from the archives of materials referring to the artists the Trust has supported, particularly the ones that have gone on to successful careers as professional artists such as Hans Coper, Michael Andrews RA, John Brunson, James Butler RA, Liz Fritsch, Anthony Slinn, John Wragg RA, John Mills and Ralph Brown RA. It will also include information on how their careers developed after their time with the Trust and how the Trust and its artists contributed to the development of the community in the New Town of Welwyn Garden City - details of exhibitions held in the local Gallery run by the Trust where Henry Moore had an exhibition, classes held for local people, festivals and local arts organisations.

The project will have four aspects on which grant funds will be spent:

1. A professional cataloguer will catalogue the existing archives and prepare the catalogue

for setting up on the A2A website using DS CALM 2000 software. A conservator will conserve the archives to national standards

2. An Education/Outreach worker will use the catalogued archive and existing databases to prepare a record of all artists the Trust has supported. They will be contacted and an 'alumni' record created for each one. Selected artists will be the subject of video interviews. More archive material will be gathered from the artists

3. The Education/Outreach Officer will recruit volunteers (probably ex-fellows) to lead 'reminiscence' meetings involving people (including local residents and Trustees and former Trustees) who had some involvement with the Trust over the years. More archive material will be gathered from the people interviewed.

4. The Education/Outreach Officer will be responsible for using the archive to tell the story

of the Trust from the basic information gathered. It will look at the development of the artists careers and the relationship between the artists as a community in themselves and their relationship with the wider developing community in the new town. The story will be told through creating a CDrom and a physical exhibition. The CDrom will be made available free to 123 secondary schools, 4 colleges and a minimum of 20 community groups in the county and will also be mounted on the Trust's existing website ([www.chilternweb.co.uk/digswell/](http://www.chilternweb.co.uk/digswell/)). The Education/Outreach Officer will arrange up to 12 venues for the exhibition to tour across the county and the region.