

24/02/2022

# Smithfield Public Realm Arist-in-Resident - process and takeaways

# Artist-in-residence competition

## Context, brief and selection

### Context

Working with the City of London, Hawkins/Brown identified an opportunity for an artist to be involved in the design team for the redevelopment of the public realm around Smithfield Market. The streets of Smithfield are an important part of the 'Culture Spine' of the City of London, a connecting force for the institutions and activities that form Culture Mile. The artist will be embedded within the public realm design team and will also work closely with the major cultural stakeholders in the area including the City of London, Culture Mile, Barbican, St Bartholomew's Hospital and Museum of London to interrogate planned and future cultural programming and activation in the Smithfield area.

Due to the situation with COVID-19 at the time, attention was given throughout this artist brief for a remote commissioning and delivery process which enables an artist to be embedded into the architectural/design team and make a meaningful contribution to the development of the Smithfield public realm design process.

Smithfield is an area of central London rich in history and character that can be said to be a microcosm for much of London's wider history. There are layers of pre-history, Roman remains, medieval street plan and Victorian innovation all told in its streetscape, and many figures of national importance are connected with the area. Over the next ten years, it is expected that the area will undergo some transformational changes.

The most fundamental change being the potential relocation of the wholesale meat business out of Smithfield, which will alter the character of an area that is currently dominated by this trade. In addition, the Museum of London will move its collections and activities to the General and Poultry Market buildings, operating as a 24-hour space for the people of the city and attracting increased visitor numbers. Crossrail stations will open at Farringdon bringing more visitors to the area and its cultural institutions. The appointed artist needed to work across cultural partner engagement and programming to make connections and identify gaps in partner programmes. Using the knowledge gathered alongside their own research into the history and current usage of the area, the artist needed to develop an iterative response to the cultural space development plan, testing and informing the work of the design team and the development of public space through close collaboration with the team and their design process.

Through this layered approach of cultural stakeholder engagement and design team collaboration, the artist's activity would aim to influence the public realm design, make partner programme strands more visible, identify creative programme space typology commonalities and indicate how provision for culture could be best implemented into the hard and soft landscape.

The opportunity detailed in this artist brief is for an artist to work collaboratively with cultural stakeholders and design team to add

a creative layer to programmatic engagement with Smithfield and to consider how the history of this central area of London, its current narratives and shared futures can be engrained into the permanent use of the public realm impacting meaningfully on its character and use.

### Commission

Tasked with considering the human aspect of the public realm development; how the character of the area is activated, celebrated and protected, the artist would need to develop an overview of public realm programming across all major stakeholders, connecting nodes of cultural activity and drawing out common threads across programming plans. This first part of the artist's research and development was undertaken remotely, which could in itself become a creative project.

The artist would bring their research and knowledge to the design team and work collaboratively using digital platforms which are project focussed and built to immerse participants in all aspects of complex project development, enabling the sharing of data, images, plans and allowing meetings to continue. **The selected artist would bring views and opinions from a completely different experience, understanding and sensibility to the design team.** Together artist and design team would explore how the public realm design can best support current and emerging cultural programming and further creative initiatives.

### Artist Selection

A longlist of artists was drawn up by Contemporary Art Society and these selected artists were provided with the Artist Brief for review. Their commitment was ascertained through an oral expression of interest. Artists were asked to demonstrate:

- Original, considered and imaginative thinking to the collaborative nature of the brief
- Understanding and work with the technical parameters of the Smithfield Public Realm project context
- Process for working inclusively within the context of a project team
- Delivery of project presentations and represent their work positively

Expressions of interest, biographical information, and images of relevant work for longlisted artists are considered by the Public Art Steering Group (PASG) as well as each artist's commitment to the project and their ability to work on site.

A shortlist of three artists were then agreed by the PASG artists were invited to an online site briefing prior to interview.

At interview, artists were invited to:

- Make a short presentation about their practice and relevant previous works
- Discuss the Smithfield public realm opportunity and respond to the vision for the area
- Address any initial thoughts or ideas they might have about the site and how they

# Artist-in-residence competition

## Context and brief

would approach working with the design team

- Identify areas of research and stakeholder activity they would like to explore

Following discussion and assessment, one artist was invited by the PASG to undertake the commission.

### Artist-in-Residence: Larry Achiampong

Larry Achiampong was invited to undertake the commission following his presentation to the PASG. Larry's approach focussed on the aural and sensory – with a view to go beyond the gallery to embed in the city sound as experience into the city.

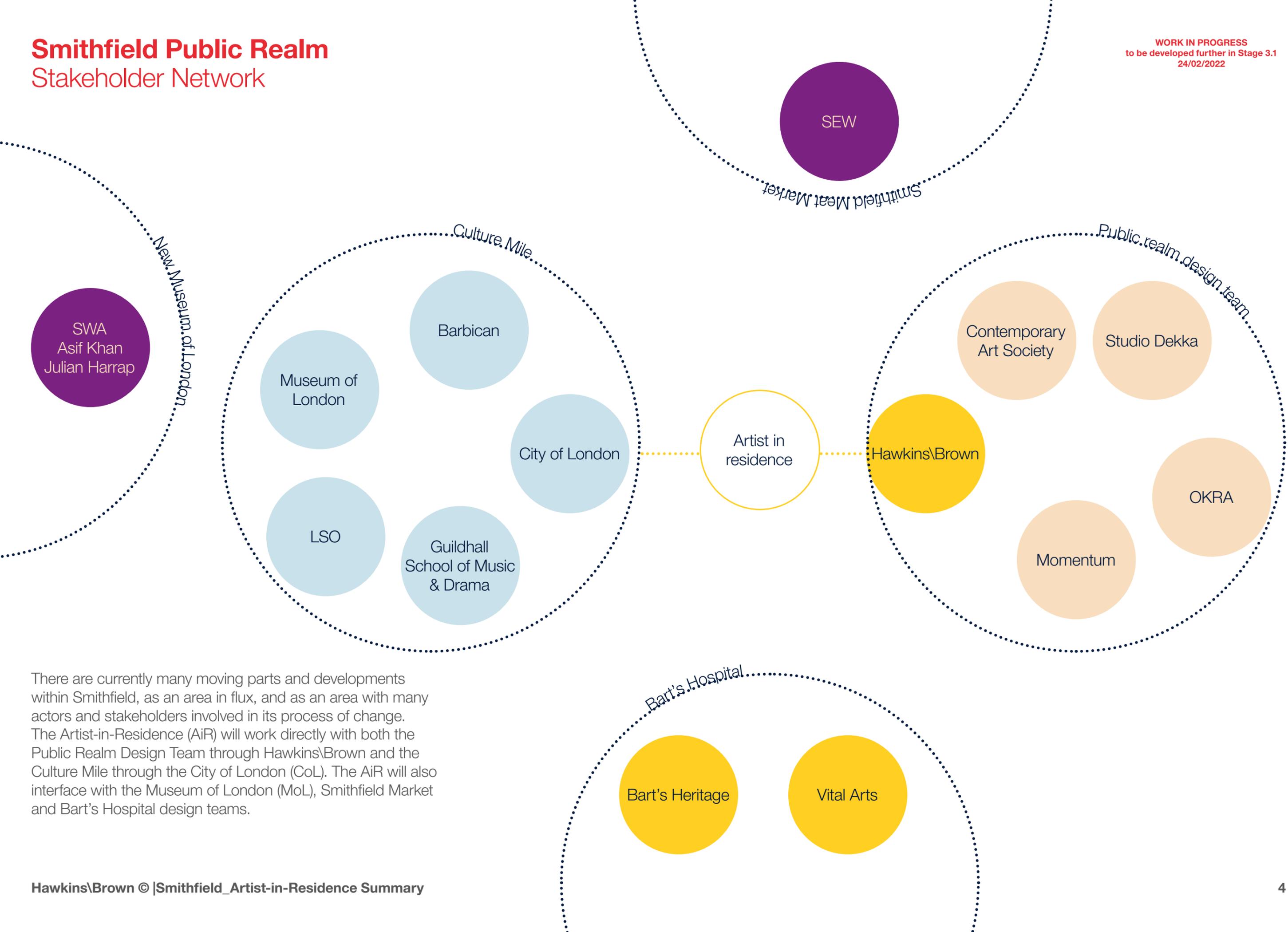
The PASG responded well to the aspiration to give communities a voice and agency, working with schools – to establish a clear role for critical perspectives and underrepresented voices.

The design team was excited to have Larry on board as a Critical Friend, as well as for him to expand on his own artistic research and practice and involvement with stakeholder engagement - with a focus on challenging inequalities in the public realm and through the design process, working in multimedia and fluidly with the design team and bringing attention to the experience of Smithfield for different generations.



# Smithfield Public Realm Stakeholder Network

WORK IN PROGRESS  
to be developed further in Stage 3.1  
24/02/2022

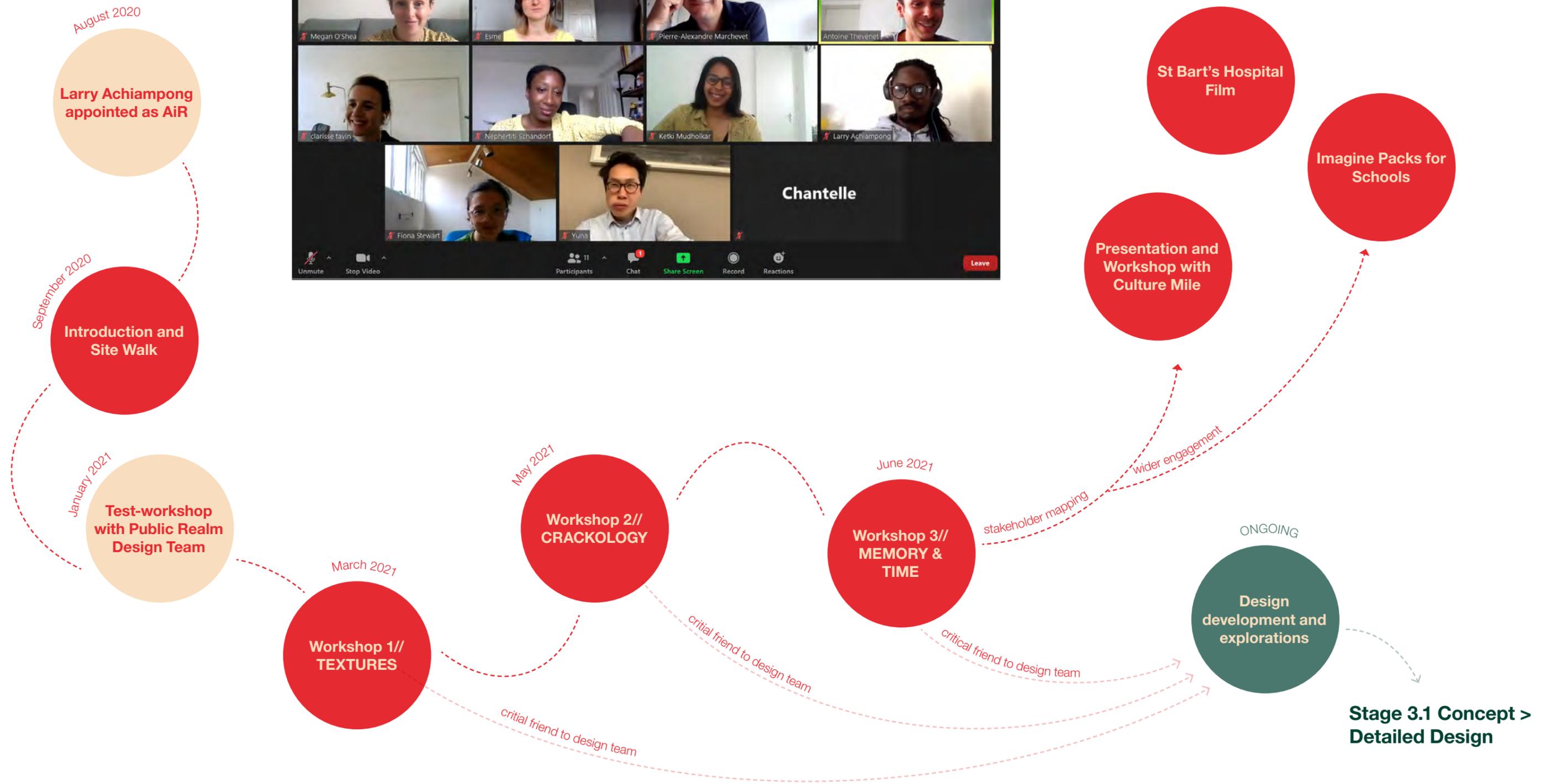


There are currently many moving parts and developments within Smithfield, as an area in flux, and as an area with many actors and stakeholders involved in its process of change. The Artist-in-Residence (AiR) will work directly with both the Public Realm Design Team through Hawkins\Brown and the Culture Mile through the City of London (CoL). The AiR will also interface with the Museum of London (MoL), Smithfield Market and Bart's Hospital design teams.

# Smithfield Public Realm Artist-in-Residence timeline

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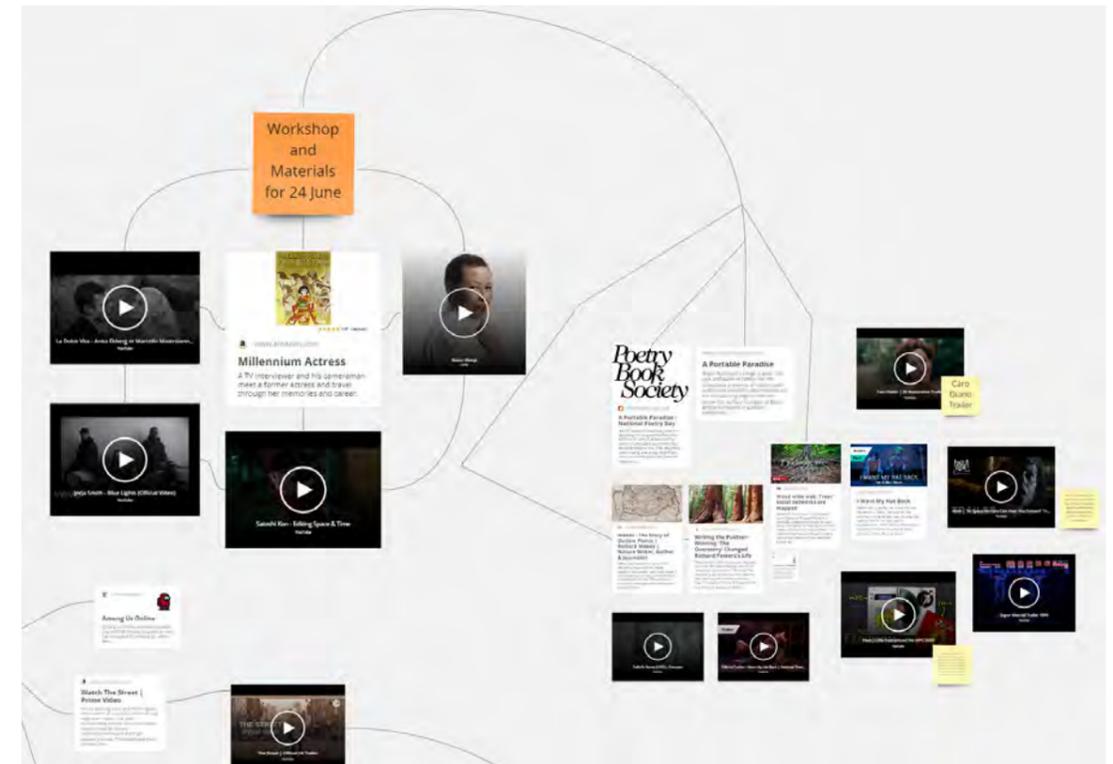
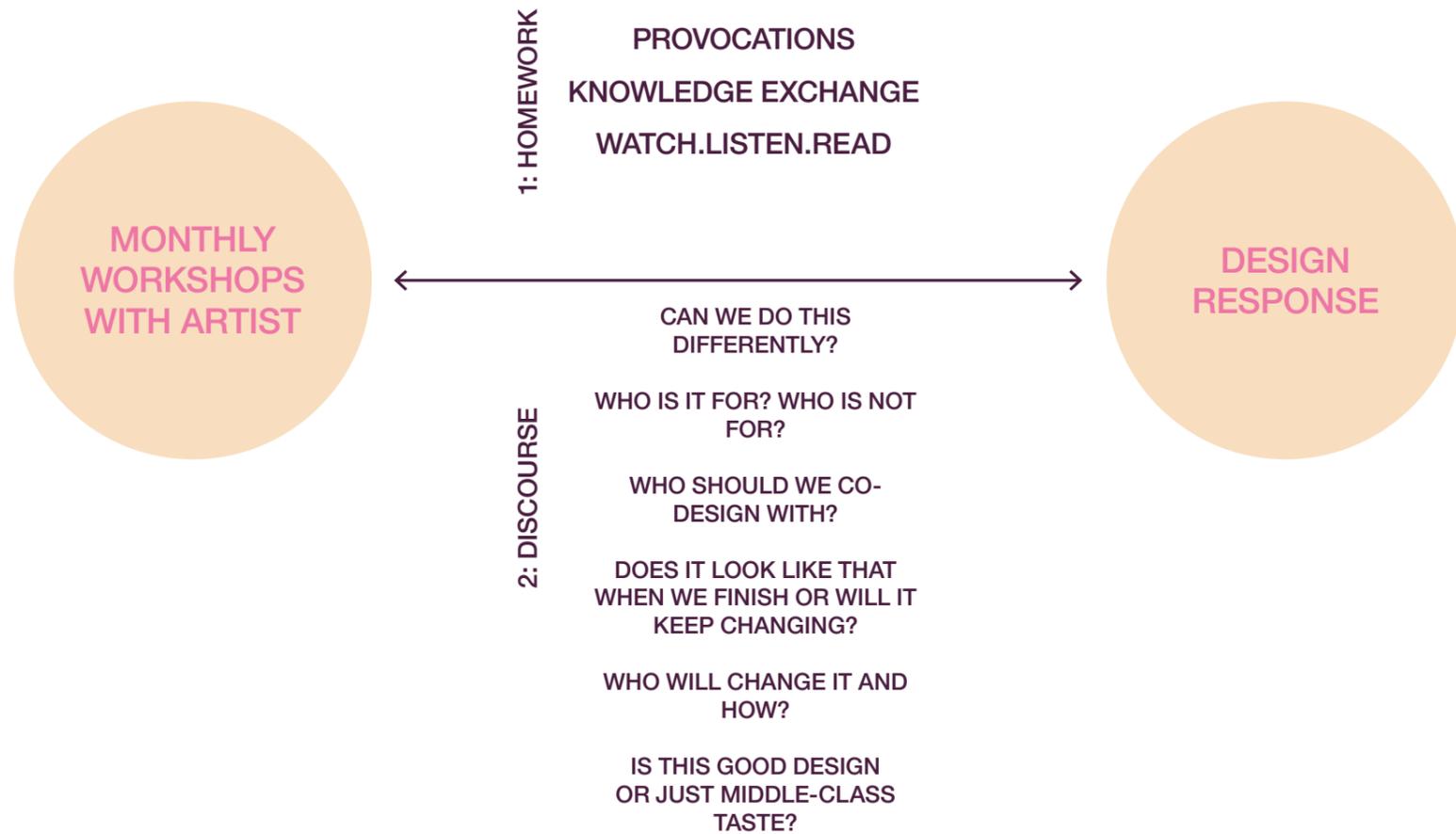
Zoom workshops with the AiR and Public Realm Design teams



# Artist-in-residence : WORKSHOPS

Critical Friend to the Design Team

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**‘put it on the board!’**

In the role as ‘Critical Friend’ with a view to challenge the design team to approach the design process differently, the AiR team ran a series of workshops with the team. This required some preparation in advance for everyone, with some “homework” to watch, listen and read prior to each workshop.

The format of each workshops was consistent, despite the content and outputs deliberately unprescribed at the outset of each session. The workshops would begin with an informal introduction and update, particularly pertinent during the

lockdown where face to face meetings (and therefore the associated small talk) was lacking. This was followed by a discussion about the homework material, often prompting critical and interrogative debate through the first half of the workshop. This would lead to design questions related to taste, participation, inclusivity and access.

This would be followed by an update from the design team and an opportunity to interrogate the approach and changes incorporated since the last workshop. An accompanying Miro

board, became a digital collation of the thought process, bringing together a range of media that was discussed and shared - ranging from documentaries and films, techno and minimal electronic tracks, articles about colonialism, all the way to personality quizzes to highlight introvert /extrovert tendencies. All aspects of these discussions, directly or indirectly related to the design process were given equal weight and value - with a view to holistically influence the design and the designers.



# Smithfield Artist in Residence

## Legacy / continuing conversations

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The key outputs from the AiR research, engagement and workshops are collated as part of Larry Achiampong's Smithfield Dossier

# Future Engagement

## “Make your mark”

Following the AiR workshops and to align with the parallel strand of engagement that Larry and his team are carrying out (set out in the pages before), the Design Team is proposing a series of immersive engagement exercises bringing people to the site and Smithfield and encouraging them to engage with it to ‘make their mark’

### Walking and talking

- Introductory sessions walking around the site structured around how to observe the built environment and relate back to how we feel about different places
- Questions: what are the components that make a place feel the way it does? E.g. Age / use / height / material of buildings, amount of green space / trees, road layout & materials, types of street furniture, lighting quality etc.

### Site observations

- Take observation skills learnt from walking and talking, and document how & why spaces around Smithfield feel the way they do to different individuals
- Photography/sound recording/voice notes
- Questions: What happens where / what’s the vibe?
- Can this tie into Imagine Packs?

### On-site workshops (co-design / co-brief setting)

- Drawing and live [temporary] intervention on site – e.g. spray paint / chalk – to test what could happen here and space needed

### Design workshops

- Online/in person dependent on restrictions
- Testing options / interventions + setting briefs (e.g. MoL stage / the Elms / urban rooms)

### Design Review

- MoL / Market / Culture Mile teams
- Young voices panel
- Questions: is this a place you’d want to spend time in? what would you do here?

### Online resource / documenting the engagement process

- To backdate including engagement with Larry + youth panel + London ambulance + TfL + above engagement sessions - > photographic / sound recording

# Contact

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