

Agenda Item	FAQ
<p><b>Barbican – Purple Hibiscus by Ibrahim Mahama</b></p>	<p><b>1. Why has this application been submitted at short notice?</b></p> <p>The installation is due to be installed in February 2024. The proposal was submitted to City Arts Initiative on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and therefore the application was not able to go to November CHL. The Barbican Team have been made aware of the risk and tightness of the timeframe and have since been recommended by officers to submit future proposals at the concept phase of projects.</p> <p><b>2. Who has been involved in the consultation process?</b></p> <p>In house engagement with: Barbican Business Events, Barbican Renewal, Barbican Centre Manager and Barbican Building Services and Engineers.</p> <p>External engagement with the Barbican Board, the Barbican Library, Barbican Gardeners, District Surveyors, Planning, City of London Girls School, GSMD and the Barbican Association.</p> <p>Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent applications were submitted 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and decisions are pending (estimated to be determined prior to the CHL Committee). As part of these applications consultation has been undertaken to include: Barbican Library, District Surveyors, Highways, City Police and Environmental Health. In addition, external organisations: English Heritage, Gardens Trust and St Giles Cripplegate. Resident consultation includes Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Estate Forum, representatives from all House Groups and other relevant residents as well as site notices and a press notice.</p> <p>A Special and Temporary Buildings and Structures Application was submitted on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and a decision is pending and estimated to be determined prior to the CHL committee.</p> <p><b>3. How will the installation be promoted?</b></p> <p>The Barbican has contracted Sam Talbot to lead on the Press and Marketing Campaign. Talbot and his team will be supported by the Barbican in house communications staff. Talbot oversaw the very successful press campaign Barbican had for the Ranjani Shettar Commission which had coverage from the FT to BBC and numerous art and design magazines. Alongside press efforts, the Centre will be devising a special marketing campaign for the installation which will involve special signage across and around the Centre. A dedicated webpage and social media content will also be distributed on all Barbican social media channels. Finally, there will be a short promotional video made for the installation that will include an interview with the artist and behind the scenes footage of the making and installation of the piece at the Barbican.</p>

The Destination City team will promote the project with a dedicated listing on [www.thecityofldn.com](http://www.thecityofldn.com), newsletter inclusion and social media support across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The City Corporation's Communications team will amplify messaging via social media and newsletters to residents and workers.

#### **4. How will visitors be able to engage with this activity?**

The commission is part of a Barbican's new visual arts programming strand celebrating the value of art in the public realm. A large part of this programme is about creating work that is accessible and as many visitors to the City and the centre can experience as possible. Interpretation and accompanying materials in the Barbican's foyers will be available to allow visitors to better understand and engage with the project and its themes. The lakeside terrace where the installation can be viewed has full step-free access from the Centre's Silk Street entrance.

Barbican Library and creative collaborations team will also be creating education programmes around the installation related to the local makers project the library currently runs.

Mahama has commissioned a local filmmaker in Ghana to document the process and digital assets will be created. As well as visitors at the Barbican, the programme will engage with communities in Ghana. Mahama is committed to ensuring his projects have legacy and provide an arts and education infrastructure in his home country.

#### **5. Who is Ibrahim Mahama?**

Ibrahim Mahama is a Ghanaian artist whose work explores the themes of commodity, globalisation and economic exchange. He is known for his large-scale installations, using collections of objects and materials that carry stories often with a socio-political and/or historical reference. His wider work in Ghana reflects important and relevant conversations around unseen labour and the global distributions of power. Mahama is an award-winning artist and has been listed 6<sup>th</sup> in the Power 100 Art Review. His work includes artist residencies, and he is represented in international public collections. His exhibitions are many including White Cube (International), Manchester Whitworth and Venice Biennale.

Mahama is an educator and curator, he is active in Ghana in bringing his art back to the people and has opened 3 arts education centres and artists' studios in Ghana which represents his contribution towards the development and expansion of the contemporary art scene in his home country.

#### **6. What is the artist concept behind the installation?**

Purple Hibiscus brings together textiles and materiality with a focus on communities – craftspeople, weavers and makers in Ghana, but also references the many workers that contributed to the making of the Barbican’s iconic building. Comprising approximately 2500 metres of bespoke cloth in pink and purple, woven by weavers and sewn together by hundreds of women from collectives in Ghana, the fabric will be fitted around the Lakeside façade of the Barbican Centre.

The pink material will have up to 100 antique smocks, robes worn by kings, embroidered on to it. These are precious textiles that are often saved by families over generations as talismans of lineage and power.

The pink and purple colour of the woven cloth is intended to project a joyful vista, but also reflect connection and allyship with marginalised communities, including LGBTQIA+ groups in Ghana and the UK. Further detail can be found in appendix 5.

**7. How will it be ensured that there is no damage to the Barbican (as a grade II listed building)**

Structural engineers Buro Happold have been commissioned to design a framework of metal trusses and steel cables which will be in place to support the fabric. The supporting structure is proposed to be made of either steel or aluminium frame. To avoid any damage to the building, the supporting structure will not be physically fixed to the existing structure and will be entirely reversible.

**8. Which weather conditions have been tested on the fabric? How will the quality of the fabric be ensured?**

Testing of the fabric has been undertaken by Buro Happold Engineers and Millimetre to address concerns around extreme weather. Most pertinently heavy rain, cold, snow and high wind conditions, but also to ensure that the artists’ vision for the work is not compromised.

Please see supplementary information in the structural engineering report (appendix 4) for a detailed breakdown and data on wind, noise, weight management for the commission and how this has been built into the installation strategy.

The fabric will be sewn to a supporting nylon mesh. It is this mesh that will form the structure and hold the weight of the fabric. The mesh will be securely tied to the supporting frame and structure. This strategy was designed to mitigate any potential stretch in the fabric after rainfall or other adverse weather conditions. The two layers are securely sewn together, so any stretch or sag to the fabric will be minimal.

The fabric is a close woven cotton, produced in strips by weavers in Ghana, and hand sewn. The Barbican can provide a sample if this would be helpful. Images of the fabric can be viewed in appendix 1.