

the Wharf

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Partnership
unveiled by
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at bank's Wharf
headquarters

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ART

Andrea Coltman



Andrea Coltman's work



A site to behold

Transforming a building site into a complete work of art

By Olivia Palamountain

As Canary Wharf's New District continues to rise it's becoming impossible to ignore the tireless activity that will transform 23 acres of building site into London's most desirable residential district.

But among the drilling, bashing and hammering, work of a more esoteric nature is underway.

The New District has spent the last six weeks playing host to an artists' residency to comment on the development.

Believed to be the first of its kind in the UK, perhaps even in the world, the project follows a successful pilot scheme last year, run by artist and project leader Andrea Coltman who engaged 16 artists to participate in the current residency.

But what do they actually do? Different from an artist in residence - where an individual is commissioned to respond directly to a brief - a residency doesn't necessarily follow a tight brief and can include a number of artists, something Andrea was quick to point out.

She said: "The whole idea behind this residency is as a resource and research gathering process. I've been on site at least two core days a month for the past six weeks viewing and observing the

“I'm interested in places of transformation, transitional places... creating a dialogue with other artists

Project leader Andrea Coltman

goings on and will allow these ideas to develop organically in the coming year.

Andrea's preferred medium is paint and inspiration could come from something "as simple as a ceiling with some interesting patterns on it", or from just looking at the site as a whole.

"I'm interested in places of transformation, transitional places," she said. "And also creating a dialogue with other artists.

"We all come from different practices, different disciplines and have been brought together because of this residency."

The other artists on the program are an international bunch, of no specific demographic and from countries as diverse as China, Belgium and Sweden.

According to Andrea many of them have found common ground in responding to the limitations of life on a

building site. It seems creativity flourishes in adversity.

"We're working on one floor beneath the ground, in what is essentially a converted meeting room," she said.

"The light's not great, and there are health and safety issues so you can't just bring any old materials in, meaning that most work is produced off site."

Further parallels have been drawn between the New District construction site and the process of the residency.

Andrea said: "What people here are looking to achieve isn't that dissimilar from what artists do. They have to work with limited resources, they have years of experience and, in most cases, both a practical and technical knowledge base.

"You've got people who are experts in concrete and people who drive the cranes, and ultimately they all have to work together. In a different way that's what we're trying to establish."

It is hoped this artist residency will culminate in a show - thanks to last year's pilot scheme. Andrea already has a fully formed body of work ready to present, including some paintings that will be exhibited next week.

"We've been given a lot of support from Canary Wharf Group Contractors who have done an amazing job in supporting this initiative and they are trying to facilitate a show", she said.

"Now we're also talking about running art classes and working with community projects going forward."

Surrounded by corporate giants this is one grassroots project bringing a human touch to the image of construction.

"There are real people here everywhere," said Andrea. "But we want to make that more real than ever."



Art on display



Go to cwndresidency2017.wixsite.com/residency for more information

16 will take part in the current residency at the building site

23 acres of land being transformed into a desirable place to live