



Archive as Catalyst

Creative Open Call

Deadline for submission: 9am 16 April

Grants of up to £3,000 for individual artists or collectives

'The present economic crisis created the impulse for historical investigation. This crisis has caused great changes in most of our major industries. Thousands of people have lost their jobs. Whole communities have been threatened with annihilation. In self-defence, these people have turned to their common history.'

– Sven Lindqvist, [Dig Where you Stand](#) (1979)

Background

[Platform](#) brings artists, campaigners and researchers together for climate and social justice. We're organising to block the flow of money, power and political influence to fossil fuel companies and to build power for energy, food and land justice.

Platform was founded in 1983 as a radical theatre collective. In 1984, our first action was *Addenbrookes Blues*, a public performance in support of hospital staff on strike against privatisation. Since then, we've amassed a huge archive. Held at the [Bishopsgate Institute](#), it comprises over 300 boxes containing photos of oil pipelines in Iraq, Azerbaijan and Turkey; flyers from strikes by dockers, doctors and teachers; plans for a steel sculpture commemorating the Ogoni 9; banners calling for a Free International University, an end to war and climate chaos, and the release of political prisoners; minutes from meetings about community energy companies; Freedom of Information requests; music scores, play scripts, press cuttings, hand-drawn maps... Even more artwork and investigative research is stored offsite, yet to be comprehensively catalogued.

Scope

This programme will explore how creative approaches to activist and community archives can spark social transformation today.

Proposed projects will take historic objects, documents, archives or actions as their starting point for a new creative work or event/s. You can start from Platform's archive, materials held at another institution, or materials from [community](#) and [grassroots](#) archives or [personal collections](#).

Proposed projects should focus on struggles for environmental and climate justice in any form, anywhere in the world, and can be as broad or specific as desired. We welcome applications from groups and collectives exploring their own histories, and particularly welcome projects that spark intergenerational and intercultural conversations.

Participants can work within any creative discipline. These small grants are intended to support the first stirrings of exploration and experiment: we welcome proposals for creative gatherings and workshops; responses to archival materials (such as poetry, performance or visual arts); and creative works *as* archives (such as oral histories or printmaking). **We particularly welcome applications from people exploring these ideas for the first time.**

Previous iterations of this programme have been in collaboration with [Voices that Shake](#), and have included [academic workshops](#), [intergenerational conversations](#), [riso publications](#), contributions to exhibitions like [Blockadia](#), [Fuel for Thought](#) and oral histories like [Fighting Sus](#).

Provocations

Today, social movements are organising in dark times: climate collapse, genocide, the rise of the right and the capture of common goods - energy, food, land and water - by corporations and colonisers. These are acts of slow violence that are deeply rooted in historic structures of oppression. In this context, movement archives can be a refuge and a rehearsal.

We invite artists to consider one of the following provocations:

- **Imagination:** We can't build a new world in the shape of the old. How could creative approaches to movement histories expand our political imaginations, spark dreams of liberation, and help us build collective power? How can activist and community archives orient us toward a just future, a history *against* history?
- **Resistance:** How have social movements and communities mounted creative resistance to corporate and state power? How can archives record what it feels (or felt) like to resist? What remains of solidarity across struggles? How have our tactics (and our opponents') changed over time, or not? What - and who - have we lost?

- **History from below:** What could a people's history of environmental justice look like; what grows there? Who would create such a place, where? How would it confront violence and silence from *within* environment movements and ally organisations? What can environment activists learn from antiracist, feminist, queer and working class archives?

To apply, please [complete this application form](#) (max. 600 words), or [email us](#) a voice or video recording (up to 5 minutes long) of your answers.

Locations

Platform's archive is located at the Bishopsgate Institute in London, EC2M 4QH. The Special Collections Researchers' Area is open to the public. Visiting information is [here](#) and Platform's catalogue can be accessed [here](#). Artists are encouraged to visit the archive and make use of it in their thinking, but projects needn't be limited to Platform's holdings.

Participants can be based anywhere in the world, but - as this work is funded by the Arts Council of England - their work or public events must be accessible to audiences in England. If your project includes events, installations or performances, they may be live or online, but the max. £3,000 commission must cover all expenses.

At the end of the project, any physical texts or artworks will be deposited at the Bishopsgate Archive, stored in Platform's office at Oxford House, Bethnal Green, or at another community or cultural institution by prior agreement. Digital work will be stored on, or otherwise linked to, Platform's website. Recording of live events will be agreed as appropriate.

Budget

Our total commissioning & events budget is £15,000. We aim to commission at least five artists or collectives, up to £3,000 each. When planning your project, please consider that this will need to cover your time, materials, travel expenses and venue costs (where applicable). We welcome applications for projects with smaller budgets, in which case we will make more commissions, up to the total budget.

Commissioned artists will be asked to provide a simple, indicative budget. Artists will invoice Platform directly for their time, up to the value of the award, and provide receipts or invoices for other expenses. We can't offer guidance on day rates, but some [artists' unions](#) offer guidance on fee levels.

People with additional funding are welcome to apply as part of larger projects. We are also open to pitches for joint bids or other collaborations. Please [get in touch](#) to discuss.

Support

Artists will be expected to manage logistics relating to their work - such as venue and equipment hire - please bear this in mind when planning and budgeting for your time.

Platform will publish the Archive as Catalyst programme and offer remote promotional support. When commissioning work, we'll discuss and agree a bespoke support offer with each artist. Artists will be expected to attend a 1.5hr online programme call in May 2025 to share plans with one another, and a 1.5hr online evaluation call at the end of the programme.

Application

To apply, please [complete this application form](#) (max. 600 words), or send a voice or video recording (up to 5 minutes) of your answers to archives@platformlondon.org.

We're committed to challenging discrimination in the arts and encourage applications from anyone from a marginalised or underrepresented background. We also encourage applications from people exploring these ideas for the first time. When applying, feel free to use language that feels appropriate to you and your practice.

Applications will be read by: Radhika Jani (Arts & Food Justice Organiser), Marianne Brooker (Communications Manager) and Farah Ahmed (Platform Trustee). Please send any questions to archives@platformlondon.org.

All commissioned projects must be completed in 2025.

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Funding

Austerity has restricted access to the arts and to arts funding, and application processes can be unnecessarily time consuming and competitive as a result. We aim to mitigate that as far as we can, by keeping our application process short, accessible and open to different creative approaches. If you need support in order to submit an application, please [get in touch](#).

We are actively seeking additional funds to support this work. If you would like to offer support or discuss working together, please [get in touch](#).