



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



CURATORIAL COMMISSION BRIEF

The Alasdair Gray Archive Curatorial Commission Brief 2025

1. Background - Curatorial Commission

The Alasdair Gray Archive, an interdisciplinary arts and heritage organisation with public engagement and creative commissioning at its core, which was established in March 2020 following his death. In 2023 we became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and we have created a socially-conscious model of making using Alasdair's approach as a methodology for creating new work. It is a fully accessible space and contains a part recreation of Alasdair's front room in which he lived and worked. Visitors can handle and explore our collection and the items that surrounded him, much of which were incorporated into his work. The Archive is generative and aims to amplify the social impact of creativity through a range of activities.

Our Custodian Sorcha Dallas's background lies in the DIY visual art scene where the radical lies in self-initiated action. This is something she has striven for within her own practice as a facilitator and curator through developing an approach that is centred on care. She chose the title of Custodian because she believes caring, and relationship building is central to creating an equitable resource and a horizontal community. This is a feminist approach to archiving called *radical empathy*, which is the "ability to understand and actively consider another person's point of view in order to connect more deeply with them." Such empathy is radical if it is directed precisely at those, we feel are least worthy and least deserving of it.

Dallas graduated from the painting department at The Glasgow School of Art in 1998, co-founding post-graduation a nomadic artists run space called Switchspace which she ran until 2003. This developed into her own commercial gallery which she ran from 2003 until 2011. During this time, she represented the Scottish polymath Alasdair Gray. When Alasdair died, she was tasked with legacy planning and thinking through how to reflect Gray's own approach to making as a model for his archive. Critical to this was stabilising the collection and organisation through financial and partner support from others and fixing Gray's ethical approach in all AGA does.

Over the last 4 years AGA has worked to create opportunities for creatives to respond to Gray's work via our Creative Commission series. Over the last three years, through mentoring MLitt Curatorial Students, we have seen the need to also support early-stage curators, and this opportunity is the first time have been able to offer a formal opportunity for an early-stage curator. This opportunity has been supported by Creative Scotland.

2. AGA x Curatorial Commission

We are seeking to engage an early-stage curator via an 'open call' to work with AGA on:

- 2025 program delivery
- Developing a self-led project under the theme of 'The City'

What we mean by 'an early-stage curator' is someone who has limited experience in delivering public curatorial projects but who is keen to grow this side of their practice as part of this opportunity. You don't need to have formal training in curatorial practice, but your application must evidence an interest and initiative in this area. The selected candidate would become part of our

growing community and will benefit from AGA's network and support alongside having the economic stability brought via this commission. We will mentor the selected candidate to sensitively explore our selected theme in relation to AGA's collection alongside the individual supporting our 2025 program delivery. As part of this opportunity, we will offer connections to our network of independent curators, museum partners and HEI providers including the MLitt Curatorial practice course at Glasgow University/ The Glasgow School of Art and Curatorial Practice (MFA) at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design/University of Dundee.

3. Theme: The City

Gray and the people and places of Glasgow are inextricably linked. There is a wealth of material within our collection that offer a jumping off point to explore making work inspired by physical or imagined landscape, real or imagined people, rootedness or displacement. The outcome for the commission will be to deliver a physical exhibition in our new space with public engagement and online programme. This is a rich body of material to draw on and develop via this Curatorial Commission alongside supporting delivery of our existing program.

Outcomes for curator:

- New and improved opportunities
- Economic wellbeing
- New opportunities to shape future learning, widen audiences etc. in partnership with AGA

Outcomes for AGA:

- Internationally recognised organisation – reputational gain and reach
- Regularly funded/secured income – organisational sustainability
- Innovation/role model for other heritage organisations

4. Programme Delivery

Budget

- The successful candidate will become a salaried staff member and paid at a Living Wage rate of £12 per hour for 21 hours per week over 30 weeks. This is flexible and can be agreed based on commitments/needs.
- A contract will be issued with details of leave entitlement and benefits.
- The role will involve the candidate being based at AGA in Glasgow for the duration of this contract.

5. Application Process

Please send a proposal which includes; a cover letter, CV and example project. Within the application, please respond to our selection criteria, you can do this by using them as headings within your proposal. We are looking for experience, or an interest in:

- Organising and delivering curatorial projects with public engagement
- Working with partner organisations
- A knowledge of Alasdair Gray's visual and/or literary works
- An understanding of what AGA does and how you feel your skills would be support our program delivery

- What you'd like to learn as part of this opportunity
- How you would develop a self-led project under the theme of 'The City' in relation to AGA's collection and Alasdair Gray

A panel of selectors including Sorcha Dallas (Custodian of AGA), Katie Bruce (Curator/Producer at The Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow) and Dr. Alexandra Ross (Lecturer in Contemporary Art & Curation at The University of Glasgow) will assess all applications, using the above criteria to enable a collective decision on the most suitable candidate to take up the commission.

- We will prioritise applications from early-stage curators
- A collective decision will be made to select up to 4 candidates to interview with the successful candidate being appointed, detailed feedback will be offered to the unsuccessful short list.

How to Apply

Please send applications by 08.11.24 at 5pm to sorcha@thealasdairgrayarchive with a cover letter, CV and example project. Within the application, please respond to our selection criteria, you can do this by using them as headings within your proposal. Applicants may submit up to 6 digital images or 2 video files. (Images should be no larger than 2MB, with a resolution of 72dpi – Images should be JPEG files, please note you may need to send images over 2 emails as our server accepts a maximum of 10 MB). Video files should be no more than one minute long. Please upload these to YouTube or Vimeo and paste links into the cover letter or email.

Key Dates:

Application live via Open Call: 11.10.24

Application deadline: 08.11.24

Interviews: Week of 11.11.24

Candidate appointed 18.11.24, start date to be agreed.



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