

Firstsite Ken Kiff Curatorial Research Associate

Firstsite, Colchester

About Firstsite

Firstsite is an award-winning contemporary art gallery in Colchester, Essex connecting exceptional artists with diverse audiences and communities.

Our programme combines ambitious artistic practice with deep civic engagement. We believe contemporary art belongs in everyday life and we work with internationally recognised artists alongside audiences who may never previously have felt contemporary art was for them.

Through exhibitions, learning programmes and partnerships, Firstsite explores how creativity helps people understand the world, connect with one another and imagine the future.

About the Project

Firstsite is developing a major exhibition, tour and research project exploring the work and legacy of the British artist Ken Kiff. The project will bring together artworks, research, interpretation and public programmes to explore Kiff's visionary practice and its relevance to contemporary artistic thinking today.

Supported by collector and patron John Talbot and the Ken Kiff Estate, the project aims to create new scholarship and curatorial perspectives while opening Kiff's work to wider audiences.

Role Purpose

The Firstsite Ken Kiff Curatorial Associate (FKKCRA) will lead the research and development of the Ken Kiff project. Working closely with the Director and Firstsite programme team, the Curatorial Associate will help shape the intellectual and curatorial framework for the exhibition and associated programme.

We welcome applicants from a range of curatorial pathways, including museum and gallery practice, independent curating, artistic practice, research or writing. We are particularly interested in curators who bring fresh perspectives and an inclusive approach to interpretation.

Key Responsibilities

- Undertake research into Ken Kiff's work, context and legacy
- Develop the curatorial framework and exhibition narrative
- Identify and liaise with lenders, collections and galleries holding Ken Kiff works
- Contribute to interpretation materials including exhibition texts and catalogue essays
- Collaborate with Firstsite teams to ensure the project reaches broad and diverse audiences
- Contribute to talks, events and public programmes connected to the project
- Build relationships with artists, scholars, collectors and partner institutions

Touring Research and Partnerships

An important element of the research phase will be identifying potential touring venues for the exhibition following its presentation at Firstsite. The Curatorial Associate will support the Director in mapping where Ken Kiff's work is held in UK public collections and exploring how these institutions might become future partners for a touring programme. This research will help shape the long-term ambition for the exhibition to travel nationally and reach wider audiences.

Person Specification

Essential

- Strong engagement with modern and contemporary art
- Curatorial, research, artistic or writing experience in a gallery, museum or related context
- Excellent research and writing skills
- Ability to communicate complex artistic ideas in accessible ways
- Strong organisational skills and ability to manage projects

Desirable

- Knowledge of Ken Kiff or related artistic context
- Experience developing exhibitions or public programmes
- Experience writing for catalogues or publications
- Networks within contemporary art communities

Fee and Time Commitment

Curatorial Fee: £20,000 freelance commission.

The role is expected to involve approximately 65–70 days of work across a two-year period. Work will be scheduled flexibly in discussion with the Firstsite Director and may vary depending on different phases of the project.

Diversity and Inclusion

Firstsite is committed to building a diverse and inclusive cultural sector. We particularly welcome applications from individuals whose voices and experiences are underrepresented in the arts. We recognise that curatorial insight can come from many different pathways and encourage applications from artists, researchers, writers and independent curators.