

Artangel

Press Release
21 July 2016

ARTANGEL COMMISSIONS ARTISTS, PERFORMERS AND WRITERS TO CREATE WORKS FOR READING PRISON WHERE OSCAR WILDE WAS INCARCERATED

Ai Weiwei, Neil Bartlett, Marlene Dumas, Ralph Fiennes, Robert Gober, Kathryn Hunter, Maxine Peake, Steve McQueen, Doris Salcedo, Lemn Sissay, Gillian Slovo, Patti Smith, Wolfgang Tillmans, Colm Tóibín, Ben Whishaw, Jeanette Winterson



For the first time in its history, Reading Prison will open to the public for a major new project by Artangel. Leading artists, performers and writers respond to the work of the prison's most famous inmate Oscar Wilde, the architecture of the prison and themes of imprisonment and separation. Titled **Inside - Artists and Writers in Reading Prison**, the project runs from **4 September – 30 October 2016**.

Reading Prison, formerly known as Reading Gaol, opened in 1844 and was a working prison until 2013. Oscar Wilde was incarcerated there between 1895 and 1897, enduring the Separate System, a harsh penal regime designed to eliminate any contact between prisoners. Wilde's imprisonment led to his last great works: *De Profundis*, an extended letter to his lover Lord Alfred Douglas written by Wilde in his prison cell, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, composed after his release.

New works made in response to the prison's architecture and history by leading artists including **Marlene Dumas, Robert Gober, Nan Goldin, Steve McQueen, Jean-Michel Pancin** and **Wolfgang Tillmans** will be installed in the Victorian prison's corridors, wings and cells.

Plans and prints relating to The Separate System, late 19th century mug-shots of inmates, and work by **Vija Celmins, Rita Donagh, Peter Dreher, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Richard Hamilton, Roni Horn** and **Doris Salcedo** will also be exhibited.

Each Sunday in September and October, writers and performers including **Neil Bartlett, Ralph Fiennes, Kathryn Hunter, Ragnar Kjartansson, Maxine Peake, Lemn Sissay, Patti Smith, Colm Tóibín** and **Ben Whishaw** will pay homage to Wilde by reading *De Profundis* in its entirety in the prison chapel.

Writers from around the world - **Ai Weiwei, Tahmima Anam, Anne Carson, Joe Dunthorne, Deborah Levy, Danny Morrison, Gillian Slovo, Binyavanga Wainaina** and **Jeanette Winterson** - will compose letters from their own direct or imagined experience of a state-imposed separation from loved ones. Visitors will be able to listen to and read their letters in some of the cells of the prison.

To coincide, BBC Radio 4 will broadcast five of these contemporary Letters from Inside from 12 to 16 September at 7.45pm, preceded by an abridged version of *De Profundis* on 11 September at 4pm, recorded in Wilde's cell at Reading Prison.

James Lingwood and Michael Morris, Co-Directors of Artangel, said:

“We are excited to be opening up Reading Prison with such a remarkable range of artists, writers and performers responding to the imposing Victorian architecture and the continuing resonance of *De Profundis*, written by Wilde in his cell as Prisoner C.3.3. Inside – Artists and Writers in Reading Prison will offer the public an opportunity to reflect, in a particularly powerful place, on the implications for the individual when separated from society by the state.

It's also a great opportunity for Artangel to work with key cultural partners on the first phase of Reading International, a new three-year arts initiative led by the University of Reading.”

Inside has been made possible with the kind support of the Ministry of Justice and is presented as part of Reading 2016, Reading's Year of Culture.

Inside is part of University of Reading's 'Reading International', which is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through the Arts Council's Ambition for Excellence Programme.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

PRESS VIEW & PHOTOCALL

1 September 2016 09:00 – 14:00

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Address: Reading Prison, Forbury Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3HY

Open: **4 September – 30 October 2016**
Wednesday – Thursday 11.00 – 19.00
Friday – Saturday 11.00 – 20.00
Sundays 11.00 – 17.00

De Profundis Readings: Sundays 12.00 – 17.00

Entry: Timed entry with strict capacity, advance booking
recommended

£9 adults, £7 concessions, £2 children under 18
Further group concessions available
Tickets available on the door and in advance at
artangel.org.uk/inside, on 0118 960 6060

De Profundis reading tickets £20 (including entry to all
other areas)

Visitor Information: artangel.org.uk/inside

A small amount of material is not appropriate for children as it
contains nudity and content of a sexual nature.

Public enquiries: info@artangel.org.uk / +44 (0)207 713 1400

Disabled Access: Those with specific access requirements are encouraged to
visit the Artangel website to read the full access statement or
call the Artangel office for further information before their visit.

Reading Prison is a former prison located in Reading, Berkshire, England. The Grade II listed building was designed by George Gilbert Scott and was formerly known as Reading Gaol. The prison became a Remand Centre and Young Offenders Institution in 1992, closing in September 2013.

Oscar Wilde, born October 1854, was a renowned poet, author and playwright. His works include *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Wilde was incarcerated in Reading Gaol between 1895 and 1897. He spent the rest of his life in Europe, publishing *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* in 1898. He died in Paris on 30 November 1900.

Further reading: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilde_oscar.shtml

Artangel produces and presents extraordinary art in unexpected places in London, the UK and beyond. For over 30 years Artangel has generated some of the most talked-about art of recent times, including projects with Clio Barnard, Jeremy Deller, Roger Hiorns, Michael Landy, Steve McQueen, Rachel Whiteread, and more recently Ryoji Ikeda and PJ Harvey and currently Jorge Otero-Pailos's *The Ethics of Dust* at Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament. Appearing anywhere from vacant apartments stores, to subterranean vaults and London's night sky, Artangel produces art that surprises, inspires and wouldn't be possible within the confines of a gallery.

www.artangel.org.uk

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