



Press Release 16 March 2011

HABITAT: A Floating Garden by Tania Kovats A new environmental art commission for Islington's City Road Basin will launch in May 2011

Islington Council together with UP Projects, have commissioned one of the UK's leading contemporary artists **Tania Kovats** to design a **floating garden** for the newly developed City Road Basin of the Regents Canal.

The City Road Basin site is a beautiful watery haven, connected to the busy waterway system of the Regents Canal. Tania Kovat's **HABITAT** will introduce a floating, organic sculptural element to the Basin that enhances the magic of this hidden public space. The structure will be planted with various botanical species that are sympathetic to the watery environment.

The island 'garden' will also include several sculptural 'nests' based on the nests of birds that might be found in the Basin; Moorhens, Herons, and Blackbirds. These nests are larger than normal, elevated and held on steel structures to give the garden a strong visual focus even when the plants are in a dormant winter phase and to attract wildlife to the island.

This new installation will launch in May 2011 and will remain in situ for several years to allow the garden to establish and encourage local birdlife to inhabit this micro environment.

HABITAT is the fifth environmental art commission to launch in Islington as part of UP Projects' Secret Garden Project. This ongoing programme of installations and events will continue to unfold across central London boroughs, aiming to animate and raise awareness of the city's less known parks and open spaces. In Islington, the scheme brought innovative, artist-led interventions that added a touch of green to greyer corners of the borough during 2010. This year, Tania Kovat's exciting installation will be followed by an artist designed garden for the north of the borough in Finsbury Park.

The Secret Garden Project also hosts a writer in residence, Sarah Butler, whose literary responses to the various commissions can be found on the project website. A new text to compliment Tania Kovat's **HABITAT** will be live on the site in May.

www.secretgardenproject.co.uk

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The Secret Garden Project is curated and produced by UP Projects. It focuses on London's lesser known green spaces including hidden gems such as Cremorne Gardens in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Tibbey Place in Islington, with new, artist's commissions and site specific projects of varying scales that respond to the ecological and historical context of the sites and raise awareness of the ecological and social value of green spaces in city life. The Secret Garden Project is curated by Emma Underhill, Founding Director of UP Projects and Rose Lejeune, Project Manager, UP Projects with support from Laura Harford, Assistant Curator, UP Projects.

www.secretgardenproject.co.uk

UP Projects believes in challenging perceptions of what public art can be. Operating as if a gallery without walls, they are inspired by the complexities of the public realm to create a programme of artists' commissions, projects, strategies and multi-disciplinary events for a broad public audience. Since their first project in 2002, their work has consistently attracted considerable public attention. **www.upprojects.com**

Tania Kovats is a British artist whose primarily sculptural practice is an exploration of landscape. One of her recent works, TREE, was created as a permanent commission for the Natural History Museum to mark both the bicentenary of Charles Darwin and 150 years since the publication of his ground-breaking book *On the Origin of Species* by Natural Selection. TREE is made from a 200 hundred year old oak. A wafer thin longitudinal section of its entire structure – roots, trunk, and branches – was inserted into the ceiling of the Natural History Museum like a vast botanical specimen.

Kovats has exhibited widely both here and abroad and her sculptures and drawings are in many public and private collections. Kovats' drawings were recently on show at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh in the exhibition *Edge of the World* and have been shown in the Hayward Gallery's touring exhibition *You'll Never Know, Drawing and Random Interference* and *International Waters* at Steven Wolf Fine Arts in San Francisco. Kovats has made many works in the public realm, including MEADOW in 2006 in which she transported a wild flowering meadow from Bath to London on a working canal boat via the inland waterways of central southern England. Last year she completed BIRCH, a contemporary Arts Society commission for the Cicely Saunders Institute and her monograph was published by Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford and Lund Humphries last month.

Islington Council's Secret Garden Project aims to "blur the boundaries of the park" taking the green into a variety of other spaces and places. Other projects that can be seen in the borough are *Spontaneous City in the Tree of Heaven* by London Fieldworks in Duncan Terrace Gardens, and *Beestop* by Margot Bannerman on Holloway Road. Tania Kovat's commission is an ambitious addition to this portfolio which supports the development of the City Road basin site.

www.islington.gov.uk