



The Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art

Press Release: EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 hrs, 20 MARCH 2010

Photographer Simon Roberts selected as 2010 British Election Artist

Election artist asks the public to get involved

The House of Commons has selected British photographer Simon Roberts as the nation's official Election Artist, commissioned by the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art to document the campaign activity in the run up to the 2010 General Election.

The artwork will be Simon's own interpretation and record of the General Election, based on special access to the election campaigns. His photographs will join the Parliamentary Art Collection in the House of Commons. As part of the project Simon is also giving the public the chance to get involved in the commission, by submitting photographs relating to political activity in their local area leading up to and during the election.

Simon commented:

"I'm thrilled to receive this commission and be able to play a role in documenting what's likely to be one of the most exciting and historically significant elections since 1997. I am also appealing to the British public for input. Utilising photographs taken by the public, uploaded from digital cameras or transmitted via mobile phones, will create an alternative photographic vision alongside my own and will add a collaborative and democratic dimension to the overall work. They will also help to provide an antidote to the more stage-managed photographs increasingly seen from the campaign trail."

Simon's project will centre on the relationship between the politicians canvassing and the voting public with images from battle-buses and village greens to polling stations and shopping centres. He plans to traverse the country in a motorhome during the three weeks of canvassing, photographing with a traditional 5x4" plate camera on film, his multi-layered and detailed tableaux images will provide an enduring and unique artistic response to the next General Election.

There have been two previous election commissions; Jonathan Yeo's *Proportional Representation*, a series of three portraits of the party leaders painted for the 2001 General Election and David Godbold's *Forward not backward*, a series of eighteen drawings made for the 2005 General Election. This will be the first time photography has been selected as the medium.

Works of Art Committee Chairman Hugo Swire commented: ***“Since the days of Hogarth, elections have provided artists with a rich source of inspiration. This is the first time we have commissioned a photographer to follow the election and we are therefore very excited about what Simon Roberts is going to produce. Getting the public involved in the project also emphasises the democratic process Simon is documenting.”***

The public’s photographs will be published on an online gallery, with some selected to be displayed at the official exhibition in the House of Commons after the election. More details about the public’s participation in the project and how to submit photographs can be found on the website:

www.theelectionproject.co.uk

Press interested in getting more information/interviewing Simon should contact Laura Humble in the House of Commons Media Office on 020 7219 2003/ 07917 488489. Photographs of Simon’s work are available on request including from We English, currently on display at the National Media Museum in Bradford. <http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/simonroberts/>

Notes to editors:

Simon Roberts (b.1974) graduated with a first class BA (Hons) Degree in Human Geography from the University of Sheffield (1996) followed by a Distinction in Photojournalism from the NCTJ, Sheffield College (1997). His photographs have been exhibited widely with recent shows at the National Media Museum in Bradford, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai. They are represented in major public and private collections, including the Deutsche Börse Art Collection, George Eastman Kodak House and the Wilson Centre for Photography.

In recognition for his work, Roberts has received several awards including the Vic Odden Award from the Royal Photographic Society (2007) - offered for a notable achievement in the art of photography by a British photographer, a grant from the John Kobal Foundation (2009) and a World Press Photo Award (2010). He was also a student on the World Press Masterclass in Amsterdam (2003) and identified by Photo District News as one of their PDN30 Emerging Artists (2004).

Motherland, his first monograph, was published in 2007 (Chris Boot Ltd) followed by *We English* in autumn 2009 (Chris Boot Ltd), both to critical acclaim. A major exhibition of the *We English* series is currently on show at the National Media Museum, Bradford, until 5th September 2010.

www.simoncroberts.com

The Speaker’s Advisory Committee on Works of Art was established in 1956 to advise the Speaker on matters relating to works of art in the House of Commons collection. The current members of the Committee are: Mr Hugo Swire (Chairman), Mr Peter Ainsworth MP, Mr Frank Doran MP, Lady Hermon MP, Brookes Newmark MP, Anne Main MP, Judy Mallaber MP, Christine Russell MP, John Thurso MP, Derek Wyatt MP and Peter Wishart MP.

Further information on the Palace of Westminster art collection can be found at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/acwa.cfm