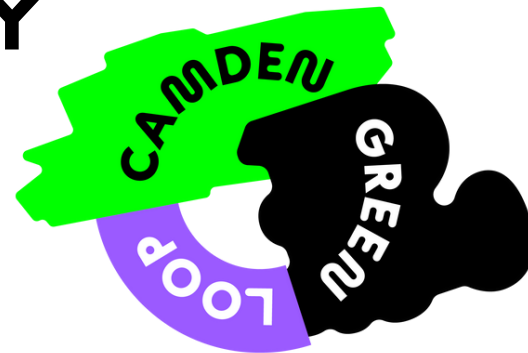


# DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

EUSTON  
TOWN

## SOMERS TOWN POETRY IN LIGHTS BY ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Innovative co-design practices  
bring light to Chalton Street



ASPACE  
FORUS  
PEOPLE'S MUSEUM  
SOMERS TOWN SPACE  
■■■ ■■■ ■■■ ■■■

mtart.  
AGENCY

A project within the neighbourhood strategy the Camden Green Loop, by artist and poet Robert Montgomery in collaboration with the Pople's Museum Somers Town.

Funded by Euston Town BID.

# EUSTON TOWN BID OBJECTIVES

Euston Town BID is democratically elected by businesses in the Euston area to represent their interests. In recent years, the BID's focus has been predominantly on mitigating the impact of HS2 construction which has had a hugely destructive impact on small businesses, particularly around the Drummond Street neighbourhood. With a million-pound regeneration scheme underway on Drummond Street that includes shop front redesigns, creative lighting scheme and new green infrastructure, the BID has turned its attention and resources to Chalton Street.

Chalton Street is treasured as a community hub which local people are fiercely proud of. Despite extensive development either side and two major transport links, it has resisted any encroachment of chain businesses and is unique in its offering. Chalton Street has a range of restaurants, cafes, pubs and shops which are independently owned and often have family ties to the Somers Town area that go back generations. Its market has historical significance being established around 1795 (then named The Brill) alongside Somers Town's first housing developments.

The Ossulston Estate was built in 1927 and was noted for its inner-city location and modernist design. All original parts of the estate are now Grade II listed buildings. At one point, Somers Town's estates had 116 finial posts designed by Gilbert Bayes, bringing pops of colour and joy with blackbirds, fish, devils and saints on horseback atop finials that would usually surround a central post with a larger ceramic design. Locating these finials and bringing them back to Somers Town has become a high profile local campaign that has ignited a passion for the area's heritage and the damaging impact the vandalism, development carelessness has had on the community.

# SOMERS TOWN POETRY IN LIGHTS BY ROBERT MONTGOMERY

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project was born from consultation with local businesses, who put lighting and artistic interventions in their top priorities for public realm interventions on Chalton Street.

Euston Town business improvement district allocated funding to achieve this in a project that combined both art and lighting.

The project was to be implemented under the Camden Green Loop banner - a neighbourhood strategy to better connect our business and resident communities with more beautiful, flexible public spaces that welcome active travel, social interaction and exploration of our precious neighbourhoods.

Robert Montgomery was mooted because of his known commitment to community co-design. Robert's interest in poetry that tells stories of the working class, marginalised communities and changing urban landscapes would be particularly relevant to Somers Town and the work being done there to preserve and celebrate the area's heritage.

The Peoples Museum Somers Town were engaged to meet with Robert. Ultimately their agreement that this would be an appropriate creative partnership would decide whether we commissioned Robert.

The poetry-writing workshops that took place were inclusive, lively discussions that gave creative outlets to topics that could be joyous, distressing, hopeful and frustrating. Robert has written and refined eight poems that are an honest reflection of the creations to come from these sessions.

## OBJECTIVES

- To support the businesses of Chalton Street by uplifting the public realm with an interesting, thought provoking installation that attracts footfall
- To respond to business requests for lighting and art installations
- To position the identity and heritage of Somers Town as a draw for new footfall that supports the local economy
- To create a sense that this is a cared for, populated and monitored environment to address local concerns that antisocial behaviour on Chalton Street goes unchecked in an environment of anonymity
- To engage local people in a creative outlet that allows expression and a sense of empowerment over a project they will see implemented
- To make use of the committed work of the People's Museum, celebrating the stories they have uncovered through the years.

## ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Robert Montgomery creates 'visual poems' with the intention of making poetry and art accessible for all. His expression of personal grief connected with a wide audience and began his journey of democratising poetry's sacred reflection. His installations adapt to their locations, from lights to burning letters, woodcut pieces to paintings.

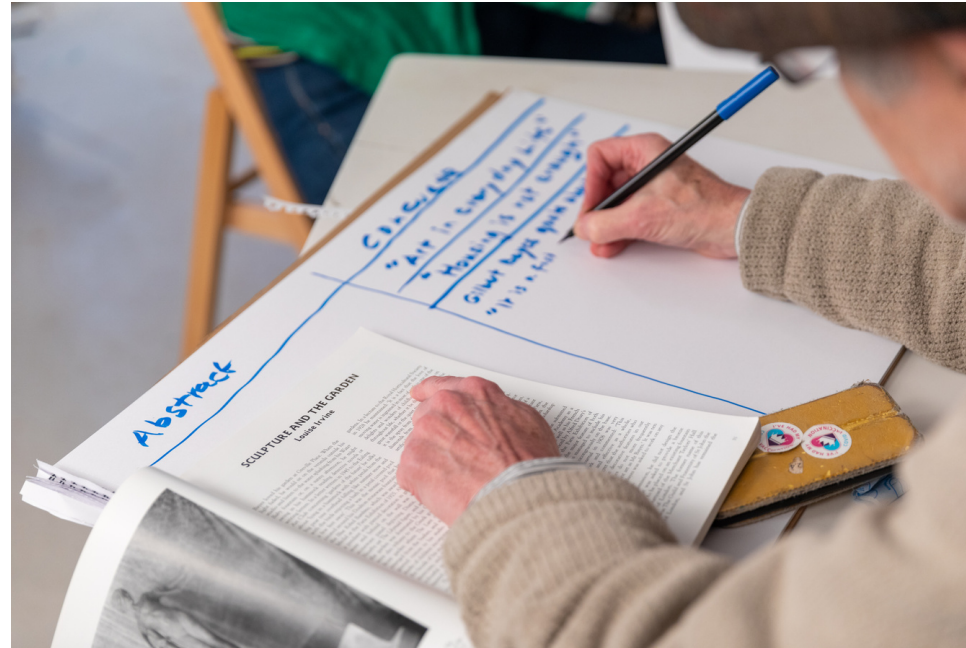
His work on the Somers Town project is a commentary on site and space that relates to the local history. It tackles omnipresent themes such as development, community heritage, shared experience and the urban landscape.

Robert's work is also aligned with climate change conversations. In 2008 he developed an ecological alternative to neon lights, and in 2021 collaborated with Little Sun (co-founded by artist Olafur Eliasson) on Grace of the Sun - a solar powered light poem urging commitment to renewable energy at COP26.

[Guardian article on Robert's work.](#)



# POETRY WORKSHOPS



March 17th 2023: initial research workshop

May 13th, 2023: Public walk-in poetry workshop hosted as part of People's Museum anniversary

July 21st, 2023: Poetry writing with Robert and the People's Museum network

July 27th, 2023: Final workshop refining poems.





# SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

**May 17th, 2022:** Euston Town BID invited all Chalton Street businesses to a workshop at the Somers Town Coffee House to discuss public realm priorities. Representatives from P21, Gazelle, the market, Cheezelo, Coffee House, and Somers Gallery attended. Businesses agreed that updated signage at the entrance from Euston Road was a priority. They requested signage that reflects the area's character, signaling a destination with a wide business offering. And lighting – businesses were very keen on lighting for multiple reasons. They wanted to create a lit path which would draw footfall from Euston Road, help to address antisocial behaviour and activate the space in the evening times particularly for businesses open late. They also were keen on an art installation which would create a new point of interest on the street.

**January 2023:** Euston Town BID engaged artist Robert Montgomery who was already working on a local project elsewhere. It was considered a potential match for the Chalton Street project because he works with both light and poetry, meeting the priorities of businesses from the first engagement session.

**March 17th, 2023:** An initial workshop with the People's Museum and their networks to start exploring the local heritage they wanted poetry to focus on.

**May 13th, 2023:** A public walk-in workshop as part of the Museum's anniversary celebrations saw dozens of local people taking part in writing their own poetry about their experiences living in Somers Town.

**May 2023:** Euston Town BID records stories of local people to feed in to a wider exploration of the sentiment and heritage of people towards Chalton Street. These are to be published and celebrated alongside the public realm interventions of lighting and signage.

**July 14th, 2023:** On-street consultation event hosted by Euston Town BID and Jan Kattein Architects. The intention was to collect a general understanding of people's ambitions for Chalton Street. Signage was the main focus but lighting and art regularly discussed.

**July 21st, 2023:** A further workshop with Robert Montgomery, the Museum and a few from their network to refine the poetry they have collated from their sessions.

**July 27th, 2023:** The group reconnects to decide on the final seven poems they would like to put forward.



# SITE ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL

The proposed projector installation will be located in seven locations on Chalton Street with site boundaries at Euston Road and the Somers Town Coffee House, and building lines to either side of the high street.

This section of Chalton Street is comprised of listed buildings (all on the eastern side and connected to the Ossulston Estate) and non-listed. Most buildings are commercially occupied at ground level and those with upper levels are either commercial or residential. Street lighting is currently provided by 6 lighting columns. There are around 18 mature trees lining the East side pavement.

The street boasts a very pleasant public realm with generous pavements lined with mature trees and the backdrop of the listed estate buildings. Multiple businesses such as the Somers Town Coffee House, Gazelle, Pinner Café, Albertini and Cheezelo have active frontages with outdoor seating that activates the high street. Lunch times in particular can be buzzing with local people meeting, and there is a very positive sense of community and familiarity.

Despite its energized community spirit and unique independent identity, Chalton Street is suffering and some businesses, and the market itself, are at risk of failing. Seismic changes are taking place either side of Chalton Street and the businesses here are under immense pressure to compete with the convenience of surrounding developments such as Kings Cross station which offers a full retail and social experience under one roof. Chalton Street requires a set of interventions that will entice new footfall and change perceptions of this area.

Chalton Street is one of the areas of focus of the very proactive and involved Tenants & Residents Association. It has also attracted much attention from Camden Council who have put much resource in to reviving its market. It is also the focus of a part of the Future Neighbourhoods Fund, which will see funding invested in to public realm improvements that will help the high street become a more sustainable, climate-adapted civic space. Euston Town BID is one of a contingent of organisations taking part in the Future Neighbourhoods fund and is leading on business engagement for the project, capitalizing on connections already made to gain meaningful feedback from business owners on how the Future Neighbourhoods funding can best be spent to support them.





# DESIGN APPROACH

Our engagement and research of the area made it clear that there is a strong passion for the heritage and history of Somers Town, and the role its public spaces play as a hub of community activity and connection. Euston Town BID first approached the chair of the Neighbourhood Forum, who helped to build an engagement strategy that would satisfy local communities and create a genuine co-design process.

We understood that in order to incorporate the area's history in to the project, the People's Museum would be a key partner. We approached them with the artist Robert Montgomery and his artist agency MTart to discuss the plausibility of a creative partnership.

The People's Museum were very interested in the artist's committed approach to community engagement, sharing his poetry writing skills, and telling working class stories. It was agreed that his approach was an appropriate fit for the project, and that it left enough room for creative input for this to be a genuine product of co-design.

The poems range from being rooted in local significance and history, to being an exploration of personal experience and emotion. They reflect local sentiment towards the changes that are happening, but maintain positivity through an obvious love for the neighbourhood.

The references to themes such as the maypole, social housing, air quality and Gilbert Bayes ensure this project is rooted firmly in local context. The intention is to provoke the curiosity of visitors and encourage them to actively explore the area's tapestry of history. Ultimately, the lighting is a unique art installation which straddles two objectives:

- To provide local communities an installation that reflects them, the neighbourhood they know and proudly responds to local sentiment
- To entice visitors who are interested in the art installation, in turn impacting their perception of Chalton Street as a destination





# PROJECTOR LOCATIONS

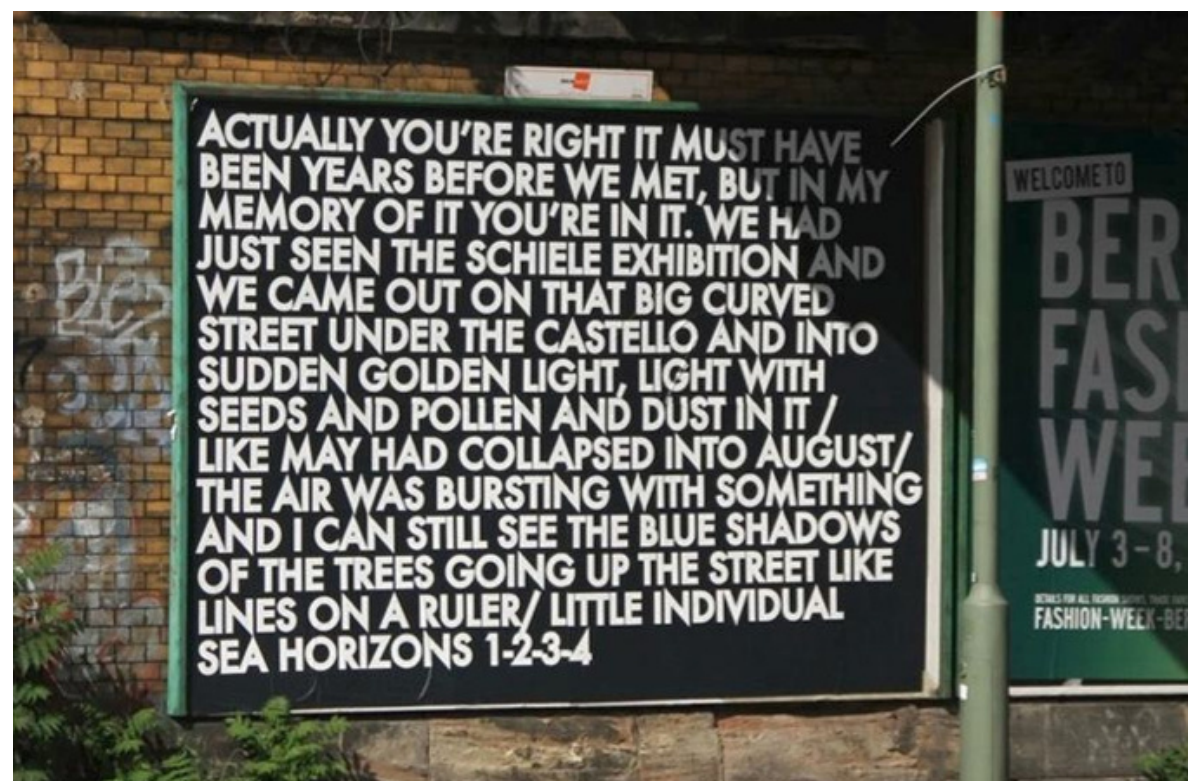
The projectors are proposed to be installed at the following locations (also to be found on [this map](#)).

- **Lamppost outside the Rocket Pub, Chalton St**
  - Projecting on to the Pullman Hotel
- **Wall of the Rocket Pub**
  - Projecting on to the wall of Yatri restaurant
- **P21 Gallery**
  - Projecting on to pavement below
- **Lamppost at entrance to Levita House**
  - Projecting on to entrance archway
- **P21 Gallery**
  - Projecting on to pavement below
- **Lamppost at Levita House entrance**
  - (projecting on to the entrance archway)
- **Lamppost outside Gazelle, Chalton Street**
  - Projecting on to pavement
- **Top of shop facade of Cheezelo**
  - Projecting on to pavement
- **Walk of Somers Town Coffee House**
  - Projecting on to pavement
- **Wall of the People's Museum**
  - Projecting on to pavement





## PREVIOUS WORKS





# IMPACT

## IMPACT ON CARRIAGEWAY

The proposed installation will have no impact on the carriageway. The height of the projectors will differ, but each will be far out of reach of pedestrians. Locations that are easy to climb up will be considered and the projector will be placed in a way that cannot be reached.

## IMPACT OF ILLUMINATION

The projector lights will animate the high street at night and support businesses operating in the evening time. As well as catching the eye of the incidental visitor, our intention is to frame a public realm that feels like an interesting, cared-for, attractive place to visit at night. The installation will complement the lighting already installed on the street

## SUSTAINABILITY & BIODIVERSITY

The projectors are LED lights, designed to minimize glare and maximize energy efficiency (which is also aligned with the sustainability goals of the Future Neighbourhoods scheme). The lights will not project towards trees so they will not impact wildlife.

The lights face downwards and will be placed on a timer to avoid any disturbance to residents or wildlife.

# MAINTENANCE & SAFETY

Maintenance is minimal due to the projectors being LED. The advised maintenance plan is a check every 12 months including wiping down the front glass element, and checking the mesh grid at the back of the unit. Euston Town BID would fund this work to be carried out either by Gobo Plus or Local Authority contractors.

Maintenance is guaranteed by Euston Town business improvement district, the legal owners of the projectors. Euston Town BID will arrange for regular maintenance to be carried out by Gobo Plus, the providers and installers of the projectors.

Euston Town will pay for this maintenance from the budget the organization keeps for maintenance of all public realm projects. We guarantee to keep the projectors in good working order. In the event that Euston Town BID is not re-elected at the end of its BID term (spring 2025), the BID will have the projectors removed using a fund allocated for the removal of any public realm interventions – unless another organization applies to take responsibility for the projectors and the Local Authority is in agreement.

The installation of the projectors will be covered and guaranteed by the installers, Gobo Plus. Aside from product or install defects, Euston Town BID takes responsibility for any damage caused by or to the projectors and they will be covered by the BID's £10,000,000 public liability insurance.