

The Radcliffe Observatory Quarter Public Art Programme
University of Oxford

Susan Collins *Brighter Later*

A temporary lighting installation commissioned for the Radcliffe Observatory at Green Templeton College

Susan Collins, one of the UK's leading artists in digital media, has transformed the historic Radcliffe Observatory at Green Templeton College into an artwork. Her lighting installation *Brighter Later* has been commissioned by the University of Oxford as part of Oxford's Christmas Light Festival 2013, and is one of the first projects in the Public Art Programme for the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter.

The Radcliffe Observatory will be transformed into a beacon, lit from within, from 22 November until 1 December. The interior of the Observatory Tower Room will be illuminated from dusk until midnight each night, becoming a lantern visible - weather permitting - across Oxford.

The light installation is informed by the Observatory's prominent role in the history of astronomy and meteorological recording. Collins has taken her cue from the origins of the Observatory and its architecture, which is based on the Tower of the Winds in Athens. The Tower of Winds was erected in 100-50 BC by Andronicus of Cyrrhus and functioned as a 'timepiece' featuring a combination of sundials, a water clock and a wind vane. Although the Radcliffe Observatory is no longer a working astronomical observatory, the Radcliffe weather station in the gardens of Green Templeton College is still monitored daily by the Department of Geography.

Brighter Later will respond in real time to nature, the wind and the elements. Driven by data from a bespoke weather measuring system, each light responds dynamically to meteorological variables, linking it very specifically with the north Oxford location. The Observatory will glow a rich amber colour at dusk when the external temperature is likely to be at its warmest. A fall in temperature will be reflected in a corresponding change to the colour of the lights, moving through red and purple to reach a deep blue when the air temperature drops to its coldest.

Wind direction, wind strength and rainfall will create fluctuations in colour and brightness, transmitting and revealing changes through rapid and smooth transitions. Each elevation of the Observatory faces a point of the compass. The decorative relief frieze of the Eight Winds around the top of the stonework represent the winds that blow from that direction, based on designs from the original Tower of the Winds. A wind vane has been calibrated to match the octagonal form of the building: as the wind vane turns, the corresponding window is illuminated, and the four, small, upper lights in the Observatory will glow green. Rainfall is accurately measured in the weather station and transmitted to the lighting display: for each 0.01 inches of rain recorded the entire lighting display pauses for a spectacular flash of blue.

The title of the Radcliffe Observatory light installation is taken from the Nick Drake

track and album *Bryter Layter* and is an oblique reference both to weather forecasting, and the Light Festival itself.

The installation is part of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter Public Art Programme commissioned by the University of Oxford and curated by Modus Operandi. It has been funded by the University of Oxford and supported using Culture funding from Oxford City Council.

Please note: The installation is designed to be viewed from the outside and there is no public access to the Radcliffe Observatory or Green Templeton College.

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The Public Art strategy and programme is commissioned by the University of Oxford and curated by Modus Operandi. The Radcliffe Observatory Quarter is a 10-acre site in central Oxford, bound by the Woodstock Road, Somerville College, Walton Street, Observatory Street, and Green Templeton College, and will accommodate new teaching and learning space for the University over the next 20 years.

www.ox.ac.uk/roq

Susan Collins

Susan Collins works across public, gallery and online spaces employing transmission, networking and time as primary materials. Most of her work is made in response to specific sites and situations. Key works include the BAFTA nominated Tate in Space for Tate Online (2002); live pixel-by-pixel transmissions from remote landscapes including Fenlandia and Glenlandia (2004 and 2005); Seascape (2009) and Love Brid (2009), a short film for Animate Projects. Public Commissions include Underglow (2005-6), a network of illuminated drains for the City of London. Susan exhibits extensively both nationally and internationally. Collins is Professor of Fine Art and Director of the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL where she established the Slade Centre for Electronic Media in Fine Art (SCEMFA) in 1995.

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The artist would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance in realising Brighter Later: Matthew Jarvis and Simon Emberton; Rob Page and Stage Electrics; Ian Ashpole, School of Geography, University of Oxford; Sue Wilson and Sarah Gauntlett, Green Templeton College.

