

Ghost Ship: sixareen leaves Fair Isle for the first time on Monday. At 29'2 she is too big for the Good Shepherd so the MV Snolda took her to the mainland on the first leg of her journey to Southampton University where they will fill her with the technology to sail remotely and carry out tank tests before shipping her back to Fair Isle in July to make her art debut: the solo/maiden voyage from Fair Isle to Newcastle Upon Tyne, during the Tall Ships race. Built by Ian Best from Scottish larch on oak she is painted black below the top strake on the outside looking very like the tarred sixareens of the past, with a varnished inside and deck frames in place ready for her 'virtual helmsman'. This stage of the project has taken 9 weeks to complete, she is the first sixareen to be built in Shetland since Ian Best and Willie Mouat built Duncan Sandison's sixareen in Unst (winter '92/93).

Further general information about the project:

Locus+ is a non-profit arts organisation funded by the Arts Council of England. From its base in Newcastle upon Tyne it has realized over 50 mayor temporary art projects across Britain and internationally.

Through the combined support of Newcastle City Council, Arts Council of England – North-East / New Audience Development Programme, The Northern Rock Foundation and The Newcastle Gateshead Initiative **Locus+** have been able to initiate a major brand new commission by American artist Chris Burden.

Ghost Ship is a major public art project which has been commissioned by **Locus+** as part of the events to coincide with The Tall Ships' Race 2005. *Ghost Ship* will involve the autonomous voyage of a boat from Fair Isle, Scotland to Newcastle upon Tyne, arriving in Newcastle as the Tall Ships prepare to leave on the final leg of the race, and sailing up the Tyne in the wake of their departure. The boat will be built exclusively for this purpose and fitted with the appropriate technology to enable it to sail on this, its maiden and only voyage.

In facilitating such a venture, like many **Locus+** projects, the opportunity to undertake such a project would be impossible without the technical support and financial contributions from a host of individuals and partner organisations. By virtue of its scale alone, the need of such partnerships in realising the ambition of *Ghost Ship* is even more apparent. In initialising the beginnings of this project, **Locus+** benefited from generous technical support from Prof. Grant Hearn and Philip Wilson from The Department of Engineering Science at the University of Southampton. Already further partnerships have developed within University of Southampton to include David Labbe, but also with Ian Best (the boat builder) and Adrian Osler a Maritime historian as well as technical and advisory support from individuals at the MCA, local port authorities etc. As the project develops we hope to expand these partnerships.

Locus+ has a significant history of working in such partnerships and therefore recognises the importance that these exchanges are of reciprocal benefit to the partner organisations. Between Monday July 25th and Thursday July 28th the NewcastleGateshead quayside will host a fleet of over 120 ships, attracting over a million visitors. As one of the leading projects within a co-ordinated programme of cultural events alongside the Tall Ships, *Ghost Ship* will benefit from huge public exposure. As a project itself we are looking for major press coverage and will employ a specialist marketing to maximise the benefit of this exposure.

In the lead up to the project along with a number of press advertisements, and press mailings *Ghost Ship* will also develop its own specifically designed website. There will also be a small catalogue/ brochure. This ancillary part to the project will function on a number of levels. Firstly this website/ brochure will be used to show and archive the projects development; during the sailing itself photographic footage and progress reports will be hosted on the website. The second function of the website is as a mechanism for partner organisations. The site will be a host for information, footage, web-links etc to the integral support organisations who have contributed to the development of *Ghost Ship*. An exact opposite to the image of the archetypical *Ghost Ship*, as a project it will be the many and various partners involved in the project who will prove

indispensable and whose contributions will help form the texture to and ultimately enable the project itself to succeed.

ARTIST: Chris Burden

PROJECT: Ghost Ship

ORGANISATION: Locus+, 17 3rd Fl Wards Building, 31-39 High Bridge,

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1EW.

Chris Burden

Spanning thirty five years, the artistic career of Chris Burden must now be viewed as one of the most fascinating in the history of Contemporary Art. From his highly controversial and seminal performance works of the early 1970's, to his complex, imaginative installations and monumental sculptures, the art of Chris Burden uniquely informs as well as incorporates the major artistic undercurrents of the last three decades. Not only has the artist made a major contribution to the history of body-related performance art, but the artist's fascination with systems of power, societal organisation, architectural structure and technological systems, have resulted in an extraordinary body of sculptural objects and environmental installations. In all of these undertakings, Chris Burden has uniquely maintained an unwavering commitment to aesthetic clarity and purity. In his fusion of aesthetic form and socio-political content, Chris Burden has uniquely combined the essence of minimalist aesthetics with some of the most advanced technological contributions of the industrial age.

Ghost Ship

Proposal

Ghost Ship involves the solo, maiden voyage of a boat, from its birth in Fair Isle, where it is to be built by Ian Best, to Newcastle upon Tyne where its journey ends. Hand-built to a traditional Shetland design, the 'Sixareen' will be modified and equipped with technology enabling the boat to sail without a crew from the uppermost regions of eastern

Scotland due south to Newcastle upon Tyne. Reaching Newcastle on July 27 2005, the arrival of Ghost Ship will coincide with the departure of the Tall Ships on the final stage of the race to Friedrichstadt, Norway.

Ghost Ship is a culmination of both past maritime traditions and new experimental applications of technology and makes a direct reference to the regional heritage of boat building and more recent cultural shifts towards new technologies. From a technological aspect Ghost Ship brings together a variety of creative expertise and existing technologies in a unique synthesis. Whilst the Tall Ships festival commemorates a traditional pedigree of sailing vessels with their inherent bravado of scale, uniformity and manpower, Ghost Ship stages the remote modesty of the unmanned boat, laden with advanced technologies. Ghost Ship, as a phenomenon manipulates a populist myth and archetype into a conceptual vehicle of cultural and mythological significance, the timing of the project is intended to highlight these connections.

As with much of Chris Burden's later work Ghost Ship offers a popular science point of entry into understanding the complexities of universal technologies. As a multi-disciplinary project merging art, history, traditional craftsmanship, science and technology it offers cultural, scientific and educational benefits to its audience.

IAN BEST BOATBUILDER AND THE SIXAREEN

On leaving school Ian went to Western Norway, the birthplace of the sleek Shetland boat type, to learn traditional boatbuilding skills. Living and working back in Fair Isle, Shetland, he has made traditionally built Shetland type boats for the last 20 years, for the local row-racing market and a wider clientele in the U.K. and Europe of wooden-boat enthusiasts and those brave enough to put a fast Shetland boat under sail. He has gained a reputation for high quality craftsmanship and has exhibited in Iceland, Bristol, N. Ireland and Edinburgh and been chosen to built boats in situ for exhibitions of traditional craft both in the National Museum in Edinburgh, and in the Mall in Washington D.C. for the Smithsonian Institute, in front of a million visitors over two weeks.

The Sixareen is a 30" vessel, traditionally used for fishing by oar or under sail. The men of Shetland used to have to travel far out to sea in these open boats in demanding conditions, the sixareen comes from a highly evolved lineage, unbroken for a thousand years – until the advent of mass fisheries.

LOCUS+

Locus+ is a visual arts commissioning agency that works with artists to produce and present socially engaged, collaborative and temporary projects. To date the organisation has completed over 50 projects of which 25 have toured to additional venues. Locus+ has also produced over 25 publications and 10 artists multiples.

Locus+ creates new opportunities for artists, both those with significant reputations as well as others beginning their careers to work in different contexts and across varying formats. Although Locus+ was formally established in April 1993 it was preceded by the Basement Group (1979 to 1984) and Projects UK (1982 to 1992) the first office-based organisation in the UK.

The organisation is recognised as a key regional, national and international agency for the development of new initiatives in the realisation of visual art and cross-media projects.