

Spike Open, though, isn't the only weekend to throw up a truly eclectic mix of creative stuff. The following week, the Ashley Court Hotel, high on the hill overlooking St Werburghs, is the venue for 'Hotel' (Sat 7-Sun 8 May), a new and unusual collaboration that'll see 22 artists taking over vacant rooms and installing all sorts of mad, bad and dangerous-to-know work in places where you just wouldn't normally expect to see 'art'.

The likes of gHOSTbOY, Spaghetti Club (Elaine Kordys and the artists formerly known as Live Art Forum South West), Annie Lovejoy, Jonathan Coles (aka DJ Dad of rePUBLICof fame), Terry Flaxton, Mac Dunlop,

Mary Ingoldby and Rik Lander (who, as it happens, has written and directed C4's coverage of the Turner Prize for the last four years) are all signed up for the occasion, and in true spur-of-the-moment Bristol fashion, the whole thing came about thanks to the mini-community that's grown up around the Court's weekend music events. "Terry [Flaxton] said to me one day that it would be amazing just to occupy the hotel with a bunch of artists and see what happened," says ACH regular DJ Dad. "We wondered whether Jackie, the landlady, would buy that - but of course she did. It's one of those ideas which started daft and then got sharper and sharper."

That said, the artists involved have got plenty of leeway. Some are doing their own thing with vacant rooms while others are taking their inspiration from the hotel's more public spaces, like bathrooms, corridors, the dining room, reception and telephone booth. "There's a kind

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Poodle bar

● One of the most unusual events of the entire month promises to be the 'poodle competition' scheduled in for the afternoon of Sun 8 May as part of the 'Hotel' weekend at the Ashley Court. Kicking off at 4pm, this is open to poodles (obviously), other breeds of dogs disguised as poodles and, somewhat more alarmingly, humans who dress themselves up as poodles as well. It's all because the hotel used to be a bit of a magnet for poodle owners and was, at one time, known to its regulars as 'the poodle parlour'. Entries are to be judged and awarded prizes by, erm, Venue's very own editor. See you there.

of similarity to the art trails like Totterdown and Southville; it'll appeal to people's natural curiosity," says Mac Dunlop. "Part of the inspiration for us is the fact that this is a chance to 'have a go' at a hotel room. It's not like displaying work in a gallery. There's a sense of habitation, of narratives, of people who've stayed in these rooms before."

As a hotel and venue, the Ashley Court is certainly scoring well. Many of the performers who play the Cube (routinely cited as one of the west's most important ground-breaking venues) spend their downtime here, and landlady Jackie is clearly aware of the need to give Bristol's arts scene logistical support. "It's just so unusual to have someone like Jackie," says DJ Dad, "who has so much space and who's also got such an open mind." Jackie herself remains suitably modest. "I don't really know much about 'Hotel'," she says, "but that's nice. I like that. You should expect the unexpected."

Indeed. Most of the artists involved are keeping schtum about what they're doing - at least one 'Psycho'-related installation is on the cards: we can't tell you much more than that - but you can be sure that there'll be a wealth of inventive sound and video installations from the likes of filmmaker Carol Stevens, photographer Deborah Weinreb, composer Shirley Pegna and video producer Jon Dovey. Bristol-based Annie Lovejoy will be continuing her 'You've Got Beautiful Eyes' series while Mac Dunlop promises 'The Polisher's Travels', a new piece involving "music, poetry and labour". There'll be a party hosted by DJ Dad, AnaKissed and gHOSTbOY on the Saturday night and, on Sunday afternoon, a wholly bizarre 'poodle competition' (see panel) to round things off.