

Freelance Artist Brief

Creative Conversations 2026

Introduction

This is a very exciting time to work with our creative and collaborative team. We have our exciting 'Inspiration for a Fairer Future' project to deliver which will transform our Museums and we are also an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation. Here at Ripon Museum Trust (RMT) we are passionate about delivering our vision to 'use our heritage assets to inspire people to seek a fairer society'. The Workhouse, Courthouse and Prison & Police Museums, all within walking distance of each other, create a rich tapestry which tells the complex story of poverty, crime and justice. Woven from the lives of the real people who were judged, housed and punished within these institutions, these museums offer visitors a unique insight into Victorian society.

Our Mission is:

- To use the unique trio of the Workhouse, Prison & Police and Courthouse Museums, our collections and the stories they tell to help people explore big issues such as fairness, equality, justice and welfare.
- Through excellent engagement, programming and outreach together we will inspire people to become compassionate and active citizens, shaping society for the better.
- To work for greater participation in our heritage which will enrich lives and improve wellbeing.
- To work as one team, with volunteering being integral to our organisation.

- To make a positive impact on the cultural and economic capital of Ripon and its region.

1. Scope

Ripon Museums Trust is looking to commission an artist to create textile-based artwork for a temporary exhibition in Ripon Workhouse Museum. The work will be informed by historic textile artworks created within institutional settings, such as the embroidery of Lorina Bulwer, and the experiences of women in Ripon Workhouse.

The completed work or works will be installed in the Workhouse, after which the artist will run four workshops with groups connected to mental health and two drop-in sessions with the public. The pieces created by the participants will be displayed as part of the exhibition, alongside contributions by visitors. The installation must therefore be conceived of as an organic structure which will grow and develop over the duration of its exhibition.

2. Project Overview

- **Artist role:** Create textile artwork, deliver six workshops (four with mental health groups and two public drop-ins), and support public engagement.
- **Workshops:** Participants' creations will be incorporated into the exhibition.
- **Outcome:** A collaborative, evolving exhibition that highlights historical and contemporary experiences for women in 19th-century institutions.

3. Participant Outcomes

Ripon Museums Trust aims for participants to have a positive, meaningful and empowering experience through their involvement in this project. We hope participants will:

- Feel welcomed, respected and safe while taking part.
- Feel that their voices and experiences are listened to and taken seriously.
- Feel that the creative work shown in the museum reflects what they wanted to express.
- Feel proud to see their creative responses included in the exhibition.
- Gain confidence in sharing their views or experiences through creative activity.
- Feel that their contributions help visitors better understand the themes of the exhibition.

These outcomes support the project's aim to create a safe, collaborative and inclusive space for creative expression, particularly for people with lived experience of mental health challenges.

It is also equally important that the artworks created make a positive impression upon the visitor experience and enable visitors to make connections between the past and present.

4. Considerations

The project will;

- create an artwork that encourages reflection on historic and contemporary experiences.
- explore the lives of women in 19th century institutions.
- Collaborate with RMT craft groups such as Slow Stitch who want to make their own creative response to the works of Lorina Bulwer.
- Create a safe, meaningful way for people with experience of mental health issues to engage and express themselves (the artist must have experience of trauma-informed practice).

- Meet with leaders of the community groups to shape the involvement of participants.
- Make it interactive: create opportunities for hands-on involvement, reflection, or discussion for visitors to the exhibit.

5. Conceptual Themes you may want to consider:

- Textiles as storytelling;
 - Mark-making as communication.
 - Embroidery as personal testimony
 - Fabric as archive
- Presence and absence; whose voices are recorded in museums and whose are missing.
- Expression and voice: Textiles as a way of making feelings visible and ensuring voices, especially those often unheard, can be expressed and acknowledged.
- Textiles as protest: Stitching and fabric historically used to challenge injustice, assert identity, and speak back to systems of control.
- Healing, mindfulness and expression: using textiles as a tool for a mindful, reflective process that supports wellbeing, resilience, and storytelling.
- Many contributions creating a powerful collective statement.

6. Practicalities

- RMT will provide research on Lorina Bulwer, personal stories of real people from the workhouse and a general overview of women in institutions in the 19th Century.

The successful artist will;

- Contribute to marketing material and work with RMT Comms Lead
- Attend regular catch-up meetings with the Community Curator and/or Creative Engagement Officer online or in person.
- Create project timeline and workshop plans to be shared with Community Curator and/or Creative Engagement Officer online or in person.
- Work with the Community Curator to develop an installation plan and any accompanying interpretation.
- Work with community leaders to develop the community engagement elements of the project, ensuring sessions are appropriate, accessible, and supportive for participants, and that the installation is something they endorse and are eager to engage with.
- Attend and facilitate one 'Meet the Artist' session with museum volunteers in order to explain the project and discuss the final creative output.
- Document the creative process by means of photography and text.
- Take part in and assist with the evaluation of the project.

7. Key Dates

16th March – post advertised.

6th April – deadline for submissions

w/c 13th April – artist interviews. Artist appointed.

20th April – artist begins work.

19th July – installation completed by now.

20th July to 30th September – six workshops to be run.

8. Fee

The fee is £7500.00 and this is to cover all workshop and exhibition materials, transport, any accommodation which might be required and all and any other associated costs.

£2500 will be paid at the start of the project, £2500 after successful installation and £2500 at the completion of the workshops.

How to submit your Proposal

Please submit a two page or five minute audio or video proposal by 5pm on Monday the 6th April Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview during the week commencing the 13th April. The artist will then be appointed and will commence work on the 14th April. Applications should be sent via email or Wetransfer to Curator Laura Allan at laura.allan@riponmuseums.co.uk

The two page or five minute proposal must include the following;

- something about who you are and about your practice.
- A proposal for what the installation might be
- a description of how you will engage a community of people who might want to take part. Examples of such groups might be Orb Arts <https://orb-arts.org/> and Brighter Futures <https://www.brighterfutures.org.uk/ArtWell/>.
- a summary of how you will manage your time in order to ensure that your installation is in place by the 19th July.
- Proposed timeline for the six workshops after the installation.

If you wish you can also email us with images of your work, a link to your portfolio, website or social media, and your CV.

Ripon Museums Trust is committed to ensuring that the recruitment process for this project is inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all artists. We welcome applications from artists of all backgrounds, including those with lived experience of disability, mental health challenges, or who are underrepresented in the arts.

To support this, the recruitment process will:

- Be accessible in format, allowing submissions via email, Wettransfer, or audio/video proposals.
- Offer reasonable adjustments or support for applicants who may need assistance with the application or interview process.
- Be transparent and fair, with selection based on artistic merit, experience in participatory and trauma-informed practice, and ability to deliver the project objectives.
- Encourage artists with experience of collaborative, community-based work, particularly involving participants with diverse needs, to apply.