

# BTB23 AND ENGLISH HERITAGE COMMISSION AT GOODSHAW CHAPEL

---

## Background:

Taking place every two years across East Lancashire in public spaces, galleries and historic buildings, the British Textile Biennial (BTB) commissions artists to make and present work in the context of the area. The festival is underpinned by a year-round programme of research, education, residencies, and community engagement projects. Since its inception in 2017, the Biennial has commissioned 36 new artworks and presented work by over 100 artists from around the world in a wide variety of forms and media to tell a contemporary story of textiles that stretches across continents and centuries.

The activity brings a fresh new resonance to these narratives and places and attracts a great diversity of participants and audiences that meet, often for the first time, and engage in conversations that engender a wider dialogue about what culture looks like now, in the 21st century, whether a young third generation British Muslim working at Boohoo in Burnley or a retired weaver whose hobby is embroidery.

BTB are partnering with English Heritage at a time of exciting new developments. In 2022 English Heritage embarked on a national creative programme working in partnership with other organisations to commission contemporary artist to respond to its sites.

Its aims are to:

- Produce outstanding artistic commissions, interventions and projects which draw inspiration from their iconic sites and collections, and imaginatively engage with England's histories.
- Creatively broaden responses to history by employing contemporary visual art, music, theatre, literature, dance and other creative art forms to bring England's stories to life whilst retaining historical authenticity.
- Seek opportunities to make new and relevant partnerships; to work collaboratively and to ensure relevancy and inclusively that reflects England's diversity and better understand the perspectives of others.

---

## The Brief:

English Heritage and BTB are looking to commission an artist/s to respond to one of its sites in Lancashire, Goodshaw Chapel in Rossendale, and create a new work to be shown in October 2023 relating to the premise of this year's Biennial.

The industrial revolution transformed East Lancashire into an engine of fast fashion at the epicentre of a web that stretched across the globe; commandeering human and environmental resources across continents in a cycle of labour, manufacture and trade which we now know is unsustainable. Our landscape and its inhabitants is shaped by the industry that grew over two centuries and has now all but gone. BTB23 invites artists to look back at the historic, more sustainable relationship between the land, the people who lived on it and the textiles that came out of it alongside contemporary alternatives being created by artists across the globe.

The work can be produced in any medium but should respond to the theme of the biennial and the context of the chapel.

Goodshaw Chapel was built by parishioners as a non-conformist place of worship in 1760, using local materials and with limited funds. East Lancashire was an early centre of religious dissent in England and by the early seventeenth century was noted for its strong dissenting tradition. After 1690, when non-conformists (Christians who did not conform to the Church of England) secured freedom of worship, a multitude of meeting places for their congregations appeared. In the early eighteenth century these were often barns or private houses, but by the 1740s purpose-built chapels were more common. Goodshaw Chapel is a good example of this, with a complete set of box-pews, galleries and pulpit dating from 1742-1809. It is located on moorland on what would have been the only road from Burnley to Manchester, used by residents of farms and cottages over a wide and remote area which was typical of early nonconformist places of worship in the area. These people lived from the land, with the main source of livelihood being sheep. Most would have spun and woven wool and supplemented their income by handloom weaving to be sold in Manchester and which, by the mid-18th century, was expanding with the advent of cotton imported to Liverpool.

The congregation grew as the expansion of the textile industry encouraged local population growth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the chapel was extended to its present size, but in 1864 a new chapel was built on the new main road to accommodate the population explosion from the new mechanised mills and this one then saw only occasional use.

This building then captures the moment when capitalism supplanted subsistence living and ruptured the relationship between the land and its people. A document from the Chapel annals is a poignant reminder of lives caught up in history and power as two handloom weavers were arrested for 'having reeled false or short yarn' and hidden 'a great number of reels' there.

This brief is deliberately very open, as we are interested in starting a conversation with an artist or collective to explore the possibilities presented by the partnership, the building, the theme and the context. We are keen to hear your ideas for starting points but recognise that the process ultimately will define the outcomes of the work as it develops.

Selected artists will be supported by the BTB team throughout the process from research and engagement to installation, and the local EH team will be available to support research visits as part of the process.

---

## **Constraints of the venue/tech spec:**

The chapel has a 40 amp single phase electric power supply. There are power sockets internally and some in an external outhouse building so it would be possible to present film/digital/audio work in some form.

The chapel has a number of physical restrictions around hanging related to its heritage status.

The chapel is not usually open to the public except by appointment, therefore, the commissioned work is likely to be presented over one or two weekends during the biennial as opposed to being open for the full month of the programme.

Access to the site is limited for some vehicles and there is very little parking nearby, so please bear this in mind when considering your proposed outcome.

---

## **Budget:**

The overall budget for this project is in the region of £15,000 which must cover fees, expenses and materials. At this point we only ask that you provide us with a simple budget including fees/daily rates/outline costs. If successful, we will work with you to define a detailed project budget over the key stages of delivery.

---

## **Delivery timescale:**

Application deadline: Mon 13th February

Interviews: week of either 20th or 27th February

Installation of work: Late Sept, early October 2023

Presentation of the work: between 29th September - 29th October 2023 - specific dates to be agreed

BTB programme dates

Launch event: 28th September

Open to public: 29th September - 29th October 2023

---

## **How to apply:**

Please send us:

- A short outline of why this project interests communities or groups of people you'd be keen to work with.
- An outline of your previous work and examples of no more than 3 projects that you feel demonstrate why your practice is relevant for this opportunity (including images or links to video / sound based work)
- An outline budget - see above
- Please put all of this together as a single compressed PDF document.

Please email applications to - [zara@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](mailto:zara@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk)

---

## Further background information:

British Textile Biennial:

<https://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk/>

English Heritage:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>

Goodshaw Chapel:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/goodshaw-chapel/>

<https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=3552>

Images/Floorplans

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Jp1aSEbnkHmHueAw8\\_RU4mv4yxKZxjnk?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Jp1aSEbnkHmHueAw8_RU4mv4yxKZxjnk?usp=sharing)

---

## FAQ's:

1. Do I have to be a textile artist to apply? No, BTB is not a biennial of textile art, we are really excited to work with artists whose practice can respond to the textile heritage and context of our area in any medium.
2. Could I apply to make a film or a performance work? Yes absolutely.
3. Can I apply as a collaboration with another artist/s? Yes absolutely.
4. Is the deadline for delivery flexible? No, you have to be confident of being able to deliver the commission as a final outcome during October 2023, so please don't apply if you can't achieve that. We will have more open calls soon for our 2025 programme, so keep a look out for those instead.
5. Do I have to work with a community group to make the work? No, but we are always more excited by proposals which directly engage with people who live and work in our area, who can help add relevance and context to the work and ultimately can host and share the story of the work to our audiences. It's one of the things we feel is most powerful about our programme.
6. Do I have to be local or have a local connection to apply? Not at all, but we are always interested to hear from artists who have a relationship to the areas and communities we work with, so please tell us about it if you do.
7. I am an artist working outside the UK, can I apply? Yes you can, but please let us know about any visa requirements and consider the impact of travel and accommodation within your budget.

For any other questions, please email: [zara@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](mailto:zara@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk) and we'll do our best to get back to you ASAP.