



# BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

## **Background:**

British Textile Biennial (BTB) is a free festival of contemporary art, commissioning artists and designers from all over the world to make work inspired by the context and legacy of the textile industry in East Lancashire and its global impact, often in the places that were created by it.

For our 2025 edition, BTB explores themes of invention and innovation, spanning indigenous knowledge and cutting-edge technology, and examines the global impact of pioneering textiles from Lancashire.

Working with our partner venues, producers and funders we have created 4 significant new commission opportunities to be presented as part of the BTB25 programme during October.

- 1. The BTB Emerging Artist Award - working in partnership with In-Situ to develop a new work in collaboration with local people in Pendle, supported by the Fenton Arts Trust.**
- 2. A British Council supported residency and commission to work with our partners at La Condition Publique and La Manufacture in Roubaix, Northern France, The Making Rooms in Blackburn and the industrial textile collections across Lancashire.**
- 3. A co-commission with The Harris Museum & Art Gallery in Preston, to explore their collection relating to the Courtaulds Factory and production of Rayon in Lancashire**
- 4. A residency and co-commission with Creative Spaces Burnley at the brand new One Two Three Gallery and Studios responding to the cyclical relationship between innovation and science fiction which has influenced fabric and fashion over the past century.**

We are particularly keen to commission artists, designers or collectives whose work could:

- Engage with local communities: Build connections with the people and places of Lancashire, incorporating their voices, stories, and experiences.
- Respond to the region's 20th century textile legacy: Explore Lancashire's textile legacy, from high-performance materials used in historic expeditions to innovative fabric production in the 20th century.
- Address contemporary challenges: Reflect on the environmental impact of textile innovation and investigate sustainable or restorative practices inspired by traditional knowledge.
- Respond through a variety of media: We are really excited to work with artists and creatives whose practice can respond to the textile heritage and context of our area in any medium, not just textiles.

While we welcome proposals across all disciplines, we are especially excited by projects that establish meaningful dialogue with local residents and collaborators. The work should not only be inspired by the region's industrial heritage but also resonate with its communities today, fostering pride, awareness, and conversation.

**For full details of BTB25's curatorial theme please visit - [BTB25](#)**

## **OPPORTUNITY 1: The BTB Emerging Artist Award - in partnership with In-Situ**

BTB is dedicated to providing a platform for homegrown talent and artists from a wide range of backgrounds, helping them take the next step in their creative careers. We're delighted to be awarded funding from the Fenton Arts Trust to launch the BTB Emerging Artist Award and offer an opportunity to an exceptional early career artist from the North West.

Supported by our partners at In-Situ you will work with local people in Pendle to develop a new work to be presented in a site specific context, relating to the BTB25 themes. You might be interested in the idea of nature as an innovator in relation to sustainable material futures, or the interrelationship between sci-fi and the evolution of high performance fabrics. Whatever your focus, we are looking to commission an artist committed to developing their practice in a social context, who wants to work with people and explore ideas collaboratively.

As ever with BTB commissions you don't have to be a textile artist - we work with artists across all disciplines and are more excited to hear about your approach, your ideas and what you've been working on recently.

For this co-commission we are specifically looking for artists who meet some of the following criteria:

- Early career artists based in the North West of England - that means someone within 3 years of graduation/or who has never received a professional commission/or who is embarking on an arts career with no/little formal training.
- Artists from under-represented backgrounds, particularly those who have direct lived experience of the communities and contexts within the BTB geography.
- Artists whose practice engages with the theme of 'Invention and Innovation', and responds to the site-specific context of BTB's venues and the textile industry heritage.

The successful artist will receive:

- £7,000 commissioning budget to cover fees and materials
- Curatorial and creative mentorship
- Professional documentation of work
- Inclusion in BTB's wider events programme, including podcasts, panel discussions, films/publications
- Opportunities for national and international exposure

The overall budget for this commission is in the region of £7,000 which must cover fees, expenses and materials.

Beyond the commissioning fee, selected artists will benefit from the full support of the BTB and In-Situ teams, including curatorial, production, engagement and PR expertise. The BTB team will ensure that the selected artist has the support they need to make the most of this important early career opportunity.

## **OPPORTUNITY 2: La Manufacture and Queen Street Mill**

Supported by a grant from British Council France, this commission will provide an opportunity for a British artist, designer, maker or collective to undertake a residency, spending time both in Lancashire within industrial museums and collections such as Queen Street Mill Museum in Burnley and La Manufacture in Roubaix, Northern France supported by partners, La Condition Publique in Roubaix and The Making Rooms, Blackburn. The two regions share a parallel textile industry heritage and the selected artists will make work that explores and responds to these shared legacies and, in particular, looks at contemporary innovation proposing a new era of textile production.

The resulting work will be shown firstly as part of the BTB25 programme at a location to be confirmed depending on the nature of the work created, with an opportunity to re-present in Roubaix at a partner venue (TBC) during 2026.

The overall budget for this commission is in the region of £15,000 which must cover fees, expenses and materials and covers the period up to and including the first presentation within BTB25.

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## **OPPORTUNITY 3: The Harris Museum & Art Gallery - Courtaulds**

The Harris Museum & Art Gallery is due to re-open during Summer 2025 after an extensive renovation programme, involving the creation of beautiful new galleries and community spaces and the re-imagining and presentation of collections throughout the building. We are looking for an artist to respond to the collections with particular focus on the Courtauld Factory story and the production of Rayon in the county - of which there are extensive oral history recordings, photographs and social history records. Working closely with the curatorial teams at both BTB and The Harris, the successful artist will be invited to create an ambitious new physical work, ideally of scale, which will inhabit a non-gallery based space within the building, providing striking visual impact, sparking conversation and fostering pride in the local community, many of whom were part of or are related to people who worked at Courtauld's.

The overall budget for this commission is in the region of £15,000 which must cover fees, expenses and materials.

## **OPPORTUNITY 4: Creative Spaces Burnley - Sci Fi & Textiles**

This residency offers an artist or collective to explore the inter-relationship between science fiction and the evolution of high performance fabrics in Burnley in the 20th century. The 20th century saw a rise in adventure and exploration, with humans determined to conquer land, sea, sky and space driven by a utopian vision of the future. There was a parallel rise in science fiction, first in literature and later in film, that often presented an alternative, more dystopian view. Presented in Burnley, the work should spark a conversation around this theme and deliver an impactful exhibition, installation or film outcome that could be presented within the gallery or a nearby outdoor location. This residency will involve support from the Burnley Creative Spaces team as residency hosts and the BTB team around the curatorial direction and production delivery.

The overall budget for this commission is in the region of £5,000 which must cover fees, expenses and materials.

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### **Delivery timescale:**

- Application deadline: Friday 28th March
  - Interviews: Week of 7th April - exact dates TBC
  - Projects to take place between: April/May - Sept 2025
  - Installation of work: Late September 2025
  - Public presentation of the work: Minimum period 2nd October September - 2nd November 2025 during BTB with possibility of extension in some venues
  - BTB opening event: Thursday 2nd October
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### **How to Apply - Please send us:**

- A short outline of why the commission opportunity interests you including communities or groups of people you'd be keen to work with.
- An outline of your previous work and examples of no more than 4 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 - 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.
- Specify clearly which of the commission opportunities you are applying for - you are welcome to apply for more than one within the same submission, but please articulate your interest and approach to each one separately.
- Put all of this together as a single compressed PDF document.

**Email applications to - [emily@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](mailto:emily@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk)**

## Further background information:

- **British Textile Biennial:** <https://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk/>
  - **In-Situ:** <https://www.in-situ.org.uk/>
  - **La Manufacture:** <https://lamanufacture-roubaix.com/en/>
  - **La Condition Publique:** <https://laconditionpublique.com/>
  - **Queen Street Mill:** <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums/queen-street-mill-textile-museum/>
  - **The Harris Museum & Art Gallery:** <https://www.theharris.org.uk/>
  - **Creative Spaces Burnley:** <https://creativespacesburnley.co.uk/>
  - **The Making Rooms:** <https://makingrooms.org/>
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## FAQ's:

- 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 and creatives whose practice can respond to the textile heritage and context of our area in any medium.
- Could I apply to make a film or a performance work? Yes unless the brief states otherwise.
- Can I apply as a collaboration with another artist/s? Yes absolutely, but the budget is fixed so you would have to accommodate all parties' fees within it.
- 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 2025, so please don't apply if you can't achieve that. We will have more open calls soon for our 2027 programme, so keep a look out for those instead.
- Do I have to work with a community group to make the work? For the Emerging Artist Award commission - yes. For the other commissions 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 with our audiences. It's one of the things we feel is most powerful about our programme.
- Do I have to be local or have a local connection to apply? For the Emerging Artist Award commission - yes, please note the specific criteria. For the other commission opportunities 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.
- I am an artist working outside the UK, can I apply? Both the Emerging Artist and British Council commissions are aimed at artists from specific geographies. The other 2 opportunities, 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: [emily@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](mailto:emily@britishtextilebiennial.co.uk) and we'll do our best to get back to you ASAP.**

