



Artist in Residence Brief

Abundance: An exploration of cloth as a material for artist practice, connection to landscape, and community gathering

We are looking to commission an artist to be part of our Abundance programme through an exploration of cloth as an artistic material for connection and identity. The residency will span the neighbourhoods, people and green spaces we work with across Blackpool. This commission builds on conversations with project partners and residents through our current programme. We have identified cloth as an important material, it forms part of our domestic life through our homes and clothes, it links us to nature through plants for dyes and printing, and it has exciting potential for artistic investigation. We want to explore cloth through a permaculture lens, noticing and exploring patterns in the land and people.

Background



This commission reflects the intersection of a number of interests within our practice that have developed to shape our programme.

Materials from our landscape

Over the past five years we have developed and supported various creative green spaces within Blackpool neighbourhoods. These spaces give us an abundance of artistic material, from food and herbs to plants for dye production and construction. Through our programming we activate the spaces with arts-based activity designed to hold space for communities to come together for conversation, imagination and care.

One of these projects grew from an old housing warden's storage cupboard and underused garden into our Peoples Pantry and Garden project www.leftcoast.org.uk/the-peoples-pantry/. In the last year we have been working with residents on this site to create beds of plants for dying, alongside the herbs and food we have been growing for the past three years. Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and creative gardener, this garden is currently blooming, providing an abundant harvest. It also has recently had a polytunnel installed to increase growing opportunities, workshop space and alternative uses.

This is one of a number of sites providing us with materials that can be used within this commission for experimentation.

We recently took a group of residents to the British Textile Biennial where they saw the Materials Library exhibition. The work developing new textiles from raw materials such as fish or coffee for leather, and experiments with nettle and hemp fibres, showing different uses within one material, really captured everyone's imagination.

Abundance

Abundance is one of our programme strands which looks to investigate connection to place and environment across Blackpool. This programme is broken down into five elements: clay/ wood/ soil/ cloth/ sea. It has come from a growing challenge in our work to build a different narrative for Blackpool, one that is not based on deficit or scarcity, words often

used for place such as Blackpool. We want to investigate what we do have and how, by working, making and experimenting with that, we can connect people to land, place and each other.

“I’ve learnt so much, like how to make jam and chutney! I always thought you couldn’t learn anything else – but I’ve done One Pot, pottery, the garden, just all sorts - I can’t put into words how I feel. It has given me confidence to do other things. I can go into a room and talk to people, which I wasn’t able to before. And the best part is... There’s so much more to come” - Participant from The People’s Pantry

Brief

We would like to work with an artist with a socially engaged practice to collaborate with Blackpool residents to explore the concept of abundance through the material of cloth.

Everyday creative activity is something that often gets overlooked as not having artistic value, from making curtains and hemming school trousers to a simple cushion cover to brighten your home. These are activities that happen in homes around Blackpool, sometimes from skills passed down through necessity, sometimes as a hobby for fun, but either way invaluable knowledge in how to create a home, provide for the family or express a personality. We are interested in why these domestic activities are not perceived to be an artistic practice and what we might make if we did explore cloth as an artistic outlet.

Alongside this we are interested in how we can explore cloth as a natural material. With a large proportion of material we come into contact with in daily life being made from plastic, how can we work with natural fibres to link us to the place that we live. Whether that is traditional fibres such as cotton or wool, or new investigations into seaweed and mycelium. It might also be the dyes and treatments applied to cloth that help us create an identity of place that is unique to our communities.

Blackpool is not a traditional producer of textiles, but it has been very much shaped by the history of Lancashire textiles production as the resort that all the mill workers would visit as part of Wakes Weeks. This is an example of the migration of people into the town through the different seasons that is inherently linked to the identity of our town, we are interested in what our future identities look like.

Our work is broken down into a set of creative rights. This work falls under our Right to Beauty pillar. There is an opportunity with the materials that we encounter in daily life to introduce beauty, connection and a sense of place. These are some of ideas we’d like to use as starting points.

We see cloth as:

- An experimental artistic material
- The vehicle for stories and histories
- Connection between green spaces & communities
- Opportunities to explore alternative Fabrications

“Every time we ‘cotton on’ to something, ‘reel off’ some facts, feel ‘hemmed in’, ‘line our pockets’, laugh ourselves into ‘stitches’, two people ‘cut from the same cloth’, we are referring to the production of textiles” - James Fox ‘Craftland’

The resident artist will work with residents across the Blackpool neighbourhoods of Hawes Side, Mereside, Grange Park, Claremont and Revoe.

Budget

Artist residency from July – December

Artist fee £4,200 (inclusive of travel), suggested breakdown 18 days at £240

This time to include:

- Artist planning and preparation days
- Reflection and idea development time
- Meetings with producer
- Residency days in Blackpool
- Making or workshop days

Materials budget: Up to £800

Deadline 24th June at 5pm

Interviews 7th of July

To apply

To apply please submit a proposal that outlines:

- Why you are interested in this opportunity
- A background to your practice and why you feel it to be relevant
- Documentation or links to three examples of past work/ projects that you think are relevant to this brief
- CV

Please send your proposal as one document to **catherine.peters@leftcoast.org.uk** ideally as a PDF, and no more than 1,500 words.

