

Artist Brief – Harper Street Textile Project



Re-Form Heritage is an independent charity which specialises in the restoration and rejuvenation of heritage buildings at risk of decay or demolition.

Re-Form Heritage’s objective is to transform historic buildings into local assets, creating job opportunities and catalysing wider social and economic benefit. Re-Form Heritage owns and manages Middleport Pottery and Harper Street in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.

During 2021, Re-Form Heritage is undertaking the restoration of eleven Victorian terraced houses adjacent to Middleport Pottery. The project will see the transformation of these original workers’ houses into a new heritage attraction, studio and workshop space, publicly accessible archive and community centre for Middleport’s residents. The project will contribute significantly to growing Middleport Pottery and Burslem’s reputation as a major visitor heritage destination.

Short History

Harper Street sits within the designated Trent & Mersey Canal conservation area in Stoke-on-Trent. This conservation area has been described as being ‘of outstanding industrial archaeological importance, both nationally and locally’, due to the presence of early examples of England’s canal network and associated industrial buildings, which include Middleport Pottery.

The terrace typifies pottery worker’s houses built in Stoke-on-Trent in the late 1800s. The corner house at one end of the row is known as the ‘Lodge Keeper’s House’ of Middleport Pottery, as reportedly this was the home of Middleport’s lodge keeper and his family during the early twentieth century. The Lodge Keeper’s House retains much of its original layout.

The houses are intrinsically linked with Middleport Pottery. It is likely that Harper Street was built at the same time or shortly after the construction of Middleport’s factory in 1888, as the houses do not appear on maps of the area predating the factory, however do appear on a later map of 1899. It is known that the Middleport residential area grew in the late 19th century with the erection of factories, as houses were built intended for the increased number of workers brought to the area.

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The Commission

Re-Form Heritage is looking to work with a locally based artist who can create a textile-based work in collaboration with local school children during Autumn 2021 to contribute to the new interpretation of the Lodge Keeper's House in Harper Street. This could take the form of a soft furnishing for example, to be based in one of the rooms of the house.

The interpretation scheme for the houses is framed around the 1950s but reflects much of the over 100-year history of the terrace. These conventional two-up-two-down houses, though modern in their conception, became doorways to the past, with gas lighting lingering into the 1960s and family heirlooms, skills and traditions passed from generation to generation.

Embedded at the heart of the project is oral testimony – this is a place for conversation, for listening and engaging. Co-curation with the local community is therefore an important aspect of the project's interpretation and activity plans. We'd therefore like the created work to be embedded in the interpretation of the Lodge Keeper's house, forming a point of intervention or reflection that the community have been a part of creating.

We can offer the following support:

- Access to the Middleport Pottery Collection
- Volunteer support and knowledge
- Information relating to the current interpretation plan for the Lodge Keeper's House

Fee

The commissioning budget for this project is £1750 inclusive of VAT to cover:

- Creation of a textile-based work to be included in the interpretation of Harper Street's Lodge keeper's house
- Undertaking Research and Development
- Creating and leading in person workshops with local primary school children to develop/create the work during Autumn 2021
- Cost of materials for the work and travel should be included in budget.

Timescale

We envisage the commission to be installed into the Harper Street interpretation space in December 2021 prior to the opening of the new attraction (Early 2022). Dates for engagement with local children will be agreed between the artist and ourselves when we appoint the successful artist. We hope that these can take place in person during Autumn 2021.

Criteria

- Currently living in the local area (Staffordshire and Cheshire)
- Able to evidence previous textile-based work
- Willingness to co-create work in partnership with community/school groups

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How to Respond to this Brief

Middleport Pottery is inviting responses to this brief from artists based in the local area (Staffordshire and Cheshire).

Please email the following to Rebecca, the Collections and Activities Officer for Harper Street at the following address: harperstreet@re-form.org

1. A copy of your CV including links to any previous work that demonstrates your relevance to this commission.
2. An outline of an idea for a new work in relation to the brief and budget, including how you might work with local partners to create the work (one side of A4, or if sending film, please edit to 2 mins).
3. Please title your email: Harper Street Textile Project.

Shortlisting and Interviewing

Deadline for receiving Expressions of Interest will be **Wednesday 16th June 2021 at noon**

Shortlisted artists will be interviewed **w/c 21st June 2021**

Deadline for receiving Expressions of Interest is noon, Wednesday 16th June 2021

Thank you to all of our supporters who are making the Harper Street: Engagement in Heritage project possible.



The Pilgrim Trust



Hazelhurst
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