

Collections in Dialogue: Artist Commission

British Library in partnership with Leeds Art Gallery



Contents:

• Introduction	2
• The Partners	3
• The Collections	4
• The Commission	6
• Fee and Budget	6
• Application	7
• Deadline	8
• Selection Process	8
• Appendix	9

Introduction

The British Library and Leeds Art Gallery seek to commission an artist or artist collective based in the North of England¹ in 2023 and 2024. This commission will culminate in the creation of new work by the artist to be exhibited at Leeds Art Gallery from July – December 2024. The research and production period will be from December 2023 – June 2024. The commission may also include online elements.

The selected artist or artist collective will be invited to engage with digitised and physical collections at the British Library and Leeds Art Gallery as a catalyst to produce new work that creates a dialogue between the two collections. The focus will be on exploring ideas of identity, activism and social change within the Oral History collections at the British Library and the Leeds Sculpture Collections at Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Institute. Further information about these collection areas is detailed below. The selected artist or artist collective may wish to use digitised versions of parts of the collections in their work directly, or make reference to them. The commissioned work should seek to link the two collections in some way – conceptually, thematically or otherwise.

Applications are especially encouraged from Disabled and LGBTQA+ practitioners, ethnically diverse artists who may identify as black, brown, people of colour or global majority. We also encourage applications from those who have experienced disadvantages due to their socio-economic background or who have otherwise faced barriers to a career in the arts.

The artist fee for the project is £8,000 and there is a budget of £6,500 for materials to realise the project, along with additional resources to cover expenses which are detailed below. If an artist collective is successful, the fee is to be split equally among all members. Any collective will need to be contracted either through a named lead individual or with a formally constituted organisation, i.e. a Community Interest Company (CIC) or a Company Limited by Guaranteed charitable status (CLG). Further information can be found on the Government website at [this hyperlink](#).

¹ The artist should have resided at their main residential address in the North of England for at least one year. Definitions of the three Arts Council England North regions can be found [by clicking this hyperlink](#).

The Partners

British Library

The British Library is the national library of the UK and we are here for everyone. Our shelves hold over 170 million items – a living collection that gets bigger every day. Although the Library's roots extend back centuries, we aim to collect everything published in the UK today, tomorrow and far into the future. Our trusted experts care for this collection and open it up for everyone to spark new discoveries, ideas and to help people do incredible things.

We have millions of books, and much more besides. Our London and Yorkshire sites hold collections ranging from newspapers and maps to sound recordings, patents, academic journals, as well as a copy of every UK domain website and blog. Our public spaces are a place to research, to meet friends, to start up a new business or simply to get inspired by visiting our galleries and events. We work with partners and libraries across the UK and the world to make sure that as many people as possible have the chance to use and explore our collections, events and expertise. And we're always open online, along with more and more of our digitised collection.

We're making a new home for the British Library in the heart of Leeds. An open, welcoming hub where people and ideas flow freely. A place for progress and creativity where anyone can connect with their heritage, with culture and with each other. In anticipation of a new site, we're already working with local people and partners to open up our collections.

Leeds Art Gallery

Founded in 1888, Leeds Art Gallery has strong collections of 19th and 20th century British painting and sculpture, widely considered to be one of the best outside national collections. With half a million visitors every year, it is one of the city's most visited attractions and is free to visitors. Alongside an extensive painting and sculpture collection, the gallery holds a significant collection of moving-image work.

To accompany the collection, Leeds Art Gallery presents a dynamic and diverse programme comprising exhibitions, commissions, acquisitions and projects by artists whose work is globally significant

and locally relevant. In recent years, Leeds Art Gallery has launched British Art Show 8, established Yorkshire Sculpture International and has co-commissioned major new moving-image works.

Leeds Museums and Galleries has a long-established partnership with the Henry Moore Foundation, which began with the development of the Sculpture Study Centre in Leeds Art Gallery in 1982 and led to the development of the Henry Moore Institute in 1993. This special relationship represents an unparalleled collaboration in the collection, study and presentation of sculpture. The Leeds Sculpture Collections form the heart of this collaboration, underpinned by the curatorial and research expertise of both the Henry Moore Institute and Leeds Art Gallery. To find out more, visit [this hyperlink for Leeds Art Gallery](#).

The Collections

The focus will be on the artist or artist collective engaging with the following key aspects from the two collections:

British Library

The British Library is home to the national Sound Archive, an extraordinary collection of over 6.5 million recordings from the UK and around the world. The Sound Archive forms a vital part of the nation's collective memory and tells a rich story of the diverse history of the UK. Many recordings can be explored online at the following hyperlink to the [British Library Sounds website](#).

The focus for this project will be on the commissioned artist exploring the Oral History collections. Relevant sub sections of Oral History collections can be found at the following list of hyperlinks:

[Hall-Carpenter Oral History Collection](#)

[Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare](#)

[Oral Histories of Social Policy](#)

[Oral Histories of the History of Women](#)

[Oral Histories of Disability, Personal and Mental Health](#)

[Society and Family Recordings](#)

It may also be possible to work with material from other parts of the Sound Archive. These can be explored online at the following hyperlinks: [Accents and Dialects](#) and [National Life Stories Artists' Lives collection](#).

Copyright restrictions mean that not all recordings are able to be used directly in a new work. This commission is part of the British Library's growing culture programme in West Yorkshire.

Leeds Art Gallery

Leeds Art Gallery's fine art collection has been 'Designated' by Arts Council England as being of national and international significance. The collection has particular strengths in the areas of 18th and early 19th century English watercolours, 20th century British Art, particularly the period 1910 to 1950, and a modern sculpture collection more extensive than any other regional gallery in the UK, which has been developed in partnership with the Henry Moore Institute.

The focus will be on the commissioned artist exploring the Leeds Sculpture Collections, which comprise over 800 objects, 400 works on paper and an Archive of Sculptors' Papers of over 270 archival collections. The collections are principally British from c.1875 to the present day, with a particular focus on 20th and 21st century works and an emphasis on diversifying the collection through new acquisitions. The collections seek to narrate the development of sculpture being made in Britain over the last century as broadly as possible by representing neglected practitioners as well as established ones, by incorporating monumental and architectural sculpture by means of drawings, maquettes and archival material, and by using the works on paper collection to represent the scope of contemporary practice alongside acquisitions of three-dimensional work. The commissioned artist will be able to explore and engage with the collections of sculpture and sculptors' works on paper housed at Leeds Art Gallery and the Sculpture Research Library and Archive of Sculptors' Papers based at the Henry Moore Institute.

The Commission

- We are open to artists working in a range of media, including the virtual and digital. The work will be exhibited in the West Gallery at Leeds Art Gallery (see appendix for gallery floorplan). You can find out more about previous Collections in Dialogue artist Jill McKnight's 2022 exhibition *Desire Lines* [at this hyperlink](#).
- The artist will be expected to keep a log of their research, visually document the various stages of their project and produce a minimum of two blogs on the project for the Leeds Museums and Galleries website.
- The artist will be expected to develop a final proposal for the work and exhibition after their research phase.
- It is anticipated that the first part of the commission will involve the artist exploring the collections and contextual information about them, supported by staff from the two organisations. We will enable physical access to collections in Yorkshire and London and digital access where possible.
- We are open to applications from early or mid-career artists. We seek to commission an artist or artist collective able to manage the scale and nature of the project and for this to be of benefit to the further development of their practice and career.
- Ownership of the final work will remain with the artist or artist collective, however, they will be expected to grant image usage permissions to the British Library and Leeds Art Gallery for publicity and archival purposes and to credit the partners as the original commissioner of the work in future displays.

Fee and Budget

- Artist fee: £8,000 (to be paid in instalments and inclusive of any VAT or other taxes that may arise).
- Materials/production/exhibit realisation budget: £6,500 (this budget can also be used for the rental of equipment, access to software or specialist technical support required for the production of the work).

- Travel funds are available for the artist to undertake visits to Leeds Art Gallery, the Henry Moore Institute and the British Library sites. Additional travel funds to undertake visits to other sites in the UK may be agreed on a case-by-case basis if relevant to the project.

- Funding is also available to cover accessibility needs that may arise for the artist in the delivery of the project.

Application

Please include the following information and documentation:

- An artist's CV including name, contact details and exhibition history. If applying as a collective please submit all artists' CVs.

- An artist's statement of up to one page of A4 including links to past projects/work. If applying as a collective you may submit a joint artists' statement.

- Up to 10 images of your work (including titles and dates). Individual images or media files must be below 2MB in total or emailed via a WeTransfer link to: leedsartgallerysubmissions@gmail.com

- A proposal of up to 500 words or a 5-minute video outlining:
 1. why you are applying for this project and which aspects of the two collections are of interest. The links supplied provide some online access to the collections.
 2. A summary of how you would approach the project.
 3. What the potential creative outcomes will be and how they will be presented in the gallery [we understand this is hypothetical at this stage].

Please email proposals and supporting documents to leedsartgallerysubmissions@gmail.com. We encourage you to submit any large files using WeTransfer. If you face any barriers to using these methods or require assistance with the application process, please contact us at the email address above.

Deadline

The deadline for proposals is at midnight on Sunday 8 October 2023.

Interviews are likely to be held in the final week of October 2023. Artists will be notified and given a minimum of two weeks' notice to prepare for interview.

Selection Process

- Shortlisted artists will be invited to interview, where they will be asked to present their proposal to a panel of selectors including organisational staff from Leeds Art Gallery, the British Library, the Henry Moore Institute and an artist. Artists invited to interview will be paid for their time for preparation, to be invoiced after interview.
- Interviews will take place in person or online via Zoom.
- Artists invited to interview will be asked about their access and support needs. Funding is available to cover such access requirements as BSL interpretation, taxi fares, communication support or any reasonable adjustments. Interview questions will be shared in advance.

Appendix – Gallery Plan showing the West Gallery, Leeds Art Gallery

