

Media release
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Contemporising the Traditional: Claire A Baker Reinterprets The Bowes Museum's Collection



Claire A Baker, *In Progress and Process*, Flagpole Commission, 2025 ©The Bowes Museum.

North East award-winning artist, maker and researcher, Claire A Baker has been commissioned to create a set of flags, titled *In Progress and Process*, in response to The Bowes Museum's collection that will appear on flagpoles on the terrace at the front of the museum.

Baker has recollected and replaced historical objects through her work, which were originally collected by the museum's co-founder, Joséphine Bowes, including Mary Linwood's *Head of a Roman Soldier* (c.1755-1845), *Gilded Mirror Frame Section* (c.1755-60) and *Hand Embroidered Chair Back* (c.1690) and more. By digitally curating these objects, Baker produces new connections and relationships between them within the context of this commission. Weaving together the past and present, these flags highlight the dynamic relationship between historic crafted artworks and contemporary practice whilst exploring unfinished narratives.

The series of flags, *Process I*, *Process II*, and *Process III*, show a visual journey of making and remaking. Each flag captures a stage in the evolution of a Roman soldier's head, which emerges gradually in increasing detail, culminating in an intricate final collage. Through this artistic progression, the series invites viewers to reflect on how collections develop over time, and how meanings shift depending on context, process and perspective.

A stitched tapestry design, *In Progress*, inverts the traditional two-dimensional format of flags, transforming it into an interactive, tactile experience. Baker invites visitors to physically engage with the work by stitching into the designs themselves, blurring the line between viewer and maker.

Artist, Claire A Baker, said: "I'm so honoured to be invited back to The Bowes Museum after previously working on the *#untitled10* exhibition in 2019, where I explored the loss of craftsmanship, particularly lacemaking. This flag commission has offered me the opportunity to create public-facing artworks, engage new audiences and develop my practice on a larger scale. Also, it has informed my research on historical embroidery, expanded my learning and helped me build valuable connections in the heritage sector."

Senior Programme Manager, George Harris, commented: "We're delighted to welcome back Claire again. These flag commissions are key to delivering our mission to support regional artists, designers and makers and it is amazing to see how Claire has progressed so much as an artist since on the *#untitled10* exhibition. Claire's flags spotlight some of our incredible textiles in the museum and through her techniques they have been beautifully modernised."

Claire A Baker's designs will be displayed on the terrace at the front of the museum from 31 May 2025 – 18 January 2026.

-ENDS-

Note to editors:

A picture of Claire A Baker's flag designs is [here](#).

For film and photography requests and more information, please contact our Marketing & Communications Coordinators:

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About Claire A Baker

Claire A Baker is a visual artist whose textiles-based research is concerned with people, place, memory, remembrance and archiving the lost. She aims to contemporise historical textile craft thereby continuing its legacy by introducing it to new audiences and giving what is sometimes dismissed as domestic or hobbyist pastimes an extended value. Drawing on connections and disconnections, close relationships and personal emotions, Claire creates artworks which blur the boundaries of art, design and craft.

In 2024, Claire was awarded the title of Tees Valley Visual Artist of the Year. Her Red Thread exhibition at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (2021-2022) attracted over 14,000 visitors. She holds an MFA in Embroidery from Manchester Metropolitan University (2018), recently completed her doctorate supported by an AHRC Studentship award and was a lecturer in Textiles & Surface Design at The Northern School of Art for 15 years. Claire is best known for her work with the lost community of the Chernobyl exclusion zone, which she began in 2015 and continues to this day.

About The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited Museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built Museum brings together an extraordinary, Designated collection of European fine and decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. [artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. [discoverdurham.co.uk](https://www.discoverdurham.co.uk)

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £17.70 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £20.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.50 for a day ticket, £21.45 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free.

As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/ for more information.



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