

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Creativity and Self-Expression Take Centre Stage at  
The Bowes Museum's New Sewing Workshops**



*Sew-cial at The Bowes: hands-on sewing inspired by Vivienne Westwood's rebellious spirit.*

**The Bowes Museum's new sewing workshop series, *Sew-cial at The Bowes*, is now underway, inviting makers of all abilities to explore artistry and creative activism inspired by the newly opened exhibition *Vivienne Westwood: Rebel – Storyteller – Visionary*. This is the museum's first sewing programme of this scale, designed to capture the rebellious spirit and passion for activism at the heart of Westwood's work.**

Each standalone session connects directly to techniques and themes found within the exhibition, guiding participants through Westwood's iconic, rule-breaking approach to fashion. Sessions are led by designer Kelly Ewing, who brings 20 years' experience running

her own label and now works as a fashion lecturer and workshop artist. The series is designed to appeal to both new makers and seasoned creatives, offering an accessible entry point for anyone interested in DIY fashion, customisation and expressive, hands-on design. At the end of each session, participants will leave with a personalised garment and will build both technical skill and personal expression through fashion-making.

**Sunday, 10 May: Rebel Heritage: Appliqué & Embellishment Inspired by The Orb Era (1986–1988)**

Drawing inspiration from Westwood's Orb period (1986–88), designers will rework classic British motifs through appliqué and free-motion embroidery. This session will explore tartan, tweed and the iconic Westwood Orb reimagined in bold, subversive textile art.

**Sunday, 14 June: The Mutineer Wrap: Draping Rebellion**

Inspired by McLaren's Pirates collection (1981), this session invites makers to create a sculptural wrap blouse from a single rectangle of fabric. Designers will experiment with drape, asymmetry and deconstruction, key ideas that shaped early punk-pirate fashion and are visible in the museum's Westwood exhibition.

**Sunday, 12 July: Storm-Stitched: The Eccentric Garden Bag**

Inspired by Kronthaler's Storm in a Teacup (1996/97), this workshop blends expressive machine stitching with hand-finishing to produce a distinctive and intricate textile bag. Think clashing tartans, playful construction and the expressive chaos characteristic of Westwood's English garden party aesthetic.

**Sunday, 9 August: Rebel Reconstructed: Denim Punkature Workshop**

This session draws from Malcolm McLaren's Punkature (1983), bringing together punk and couture. Working with recycled denim, participants will construct either a raw-edged wrap skirt or a patchwork vest, exploring deconstruction, sustainability and DIY couture.

**Sunday, 6 September: The Corseted T-Shirt – Deconstructed Street Corsetry**

Inspired by Westwood's ongoing relationship with historical corsetry, participants will transform an oversized T-shirt into a structured streetwear corset using panel insertion, lacing, raw edges and soft boning.

This workshop series reflects an exciting expansion of The Bowes Museum's public programme, offering a new hands-on way for visitors to engage with fashion history and contemporary craft. Each workshop invites participants to explore Westwood's distinct approach to style and techniques, not just by viewing the garments, but by making something of their own.

**£55 per session. For more information, visit [www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/sew-cial-at-the-bowes](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/sew-cial-at-the-bowes)**

To book the full series, please call The Bowes Museum on **+44 (0) 1833 690 606**.

Workshops are recommended for adults and must be booked in advance, as spaces are limited. All materials are included and all experience levels are welcome.

**- ENDS -**

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**Notes to Editors:**

**PRESS IMAGES can be found [here](#).**

[www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk)

**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](http://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](http://discoverdurham.co.uk)

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £25 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £28 for members (residents elsewhere), £20 for a day ticket, £22 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/](https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/) for more information.