

# Made in the Middle

## Display Furniture Commission Brief

June 2024 – January 2025

Craftspace is seeking experienced exhibition or three-dimensional build designer/s to design a flexible, robust and contemporary build, adapting existing display furniture for the organisation's next touring exhibition. Made in the Middle will open at Leicester Gallery on 25 January 2025 before touring throughout the region into 2026.

Fee: £5000

Deadline: Monday 17 June 2024



## The role

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## Background

Made in the Middle first launched in 1988. This recurring touring exhibition by Craftspace has a reputation for showcasing exceptional contemporary crafts being made in the East and West Midlands. It explores a wide range of craft processes, expertise, skills and thinking by artists living and/or working in the region.

The exhibition plays an important role in raising the profile of individual artists and excellence in making. Touring to galleries and museums in the region it creates accessible opportunities to see and purchase work by regional artists.

In each version of Made in the Middle the work selected highlights current innovation and trends in craft. Always curated through an open selection process, artists are supported to show work which extends their interests and practice.

The ninth iteration of Made in the Middle will launch at Leicester Gallery at De Montfort University in Leicester on 25 January 2025. It will then tour throughout the Midlands.

The exhibition will feature work by up to 36 artists who are living and/or working in the region. The work will be a mix of new work and existing pieces.

Work selected will highlight the wide range of innovative and excellent contemporary crafts being made in the Midlands today. We intend to show work that experiments with materials, techniques, form and new technologies. Also work that reflects the world we live in; it may connect with issues e.g. climate justice or sustainability or reference personal experiences.

In addition to the open selection, Craftspace will be working with an external curator to invite up to six artists whose work will highlight the positive cultural impact of global migration to the region. This section will reflect how the influence of artists from a continuing diverse diaspora of people has enriched creativity in the region.

## Scope of work

The brief is to develop an overarching build for the exhibits, by utilising and adapting build from the Made in the Middle 2012 and We are Commoners 2021 exhibitions. This will be developed in discussion with the graphic designer in order to develop a strong and integrated identity which runs through all the exhibition elements and reflects the exhibition themes. The design solutions will develop from the exhibition brand established by Common Curiosity.

## Services

The Exhibition Design commission will include the following:

### Target audiences

- Creative adult learners/ everyday makers – further education craft courses
- Diverse everyday makers – migration stories
- Young people 16-25
- Students of craft and design courses – higher education courses
- Artists
- Diverse audiences – through community making

### The key messages of the exhibition

- Craft practice in the Midlands is world class, diverse and artists are experimenting with materials and techniques.
- Learners of all ages will be inspired by the wide range of objects, skills, processes on display.
- The selection of crafts on display conveys powerful stories about the world we live in and reflects the influence of global migration on regional creativity.
- Contemporary craft contributes to the economy, with work being for sale visitors have the opportunity to support creative enterprises.

### The designer/s should also consider

- Changes to existing Made in the Middle wooden showcases and plinths are not to be permanent or create ongoing maintenance requirements.
- Accessibility of design including: consideration of space for wheelchairs, pushchairs; height of exhibits.
- Subtle and understated design which does not overpower or dominate the exhibits but at the same time reveals qualities of concept and making.
- The ethos of the key messages and exhibition themes and how they translate into visual presentation – more information below.
- Design that is sensitive to the needs of the exhibits and allows for permutations of combination.
- Utilising existing build pieces, develop bespoke display solutions for the different exhibits where required, including interactive/participatory works that is flexible and allows for different configurations.
- To ensure the resulting/repurposed exhibition build can sit comfortably in a gallery space of 150 square metres and of 250 square metres as gallery spaces will vary in size.
- To ensure all display structures continue to be/ are fit for purpose and will withstand a two year tour.
- To re-work the display structures to incorporate the needs of different work, for instance heavier work or security for valuable or vulnerable pieces.
- To develop (if required), additional display structures for exhibition resources and the potential for visitor feedback.
- The display structures must continue to be straightforward to assemble, to pack, lift by two people, and transport and can fit through a normal size door. Any new fittings and ironmongery need to be of a quality that can sustain repeated assembly over the length of the tour.
- To meet the requirements of health and safety.

- To consider total access including physical, sensory, intellectual and emotional.
- To consider the needs of packing and transporting the display structures.
- To potentially incorporate colour, text or images, in collaboration with the graphic designer but recognising that the exhibits will be juxtaposed with labels and information about the artists. Any text should also be accessible: font size, contrast and clarity - please see further information below.
- To ensure sustainable production when re-purposing the display structures or creating additional build e.g. reclaimed or recycled materials – steel, FSC timber.

## Accessibility / Interpretation

Accessibility is very important. Craftspace's ethos is to provide information in a variety of ways to suit different learning styles. For example using a combination of text, visuals, film and audio across the interpretation methods used within the exhibition.

We envisage the interpretation will include written information panels, wall and plinth based written captions, a leaflet/guide/pamphlet exhibition guide, resource/s for families with visuals & text and a digital Teacher's Pack for schools.

We will be seeking to include new accessible interpretation techniques including BSL and audio description which we will aim to add to the exhibition after they have been recorded once it opens.

## Text

Although the exhibition interpretation is the responsibility of the Graphic Designer/s we have included information about using text in case it becomes part of the exhibition build.

We want all visitors to be able to read any text easily so they should follow standard access guidelines. Many people have dyslexia so consideration should be given to font size, contrast, clarity and legibility.

In general full stops should only be used in the body of a long piece of text. In headings and short pieces of information there should be no full stops. We prefer words not to be split with hyphens unless it is grammatically correct for that word. We prefer not to use ligatures because they make the text more difficult to read for some people. Don't use all capital letters or broken letter forms, as this makes text more challenging to read.

Large blocks of coloured text are more difficult to read. However, coloured text on panels, captions & leaflet could be accessible if on pale background with high contrast using darker colours like dark blue, grey, brown, green but avoiding red, orange, yellow, bright green.

If the text is printed onto a material (board, paper etc.) this should be fixable on the wall or propped safely at eye level for ease of reading.

Craftspace requests that designers use sustainable interpretation methods and formats in the design of the exhibition.

## Additional notes

Craftspace is keen to consider new sustainable production methods and formats in the design of the exhibition.

The designer/s will be responsible for the design and manufacture of the display structures, although there is the expectation that they will use the existing components from Craftspace exhibitions as previously outlined. The designer/s are also responsible for the delivery of the build to Leicester Gallery at De Montfort University in Leicester. The provisional date/s for delivery are 13-15 January 2025. They will also be responsible for the insurance of the structures during the transport to the gallery.

The existing build components are in Craftspace's store in West Bromwich. Images of examples of the components are included at the end of this document.

## Deliverables

A flexible, robust and contemporary exhibition build, adapted from existing display furniture, which has a clean aesthetic, is fit for purpose and has space for all 37 exhibits plus interactives and feedback.

## Timescale

26 June	Exhibition Build Design interviews
June	Craftspace contract exhibition designer/s
July	Graphic designer and exhibition designers – meet in Birmingham or online to discuss design requirements, concepts and ideas with Craftspace and Leicester Gallery representatives
August	Initial designs to be presented to exhibition partners and Craftspace's Access Advisory Group
September	Sign off exhibition design concept & any text design
October	Craftspace to send final dimensions of exhibits and confirmed display needs
13-15 January	Exhibition build to be delivered to Leicester Gallery
25 January	Public exhibition opening

## Terms of Contract

This is a freelance consultancy contract with Craftspace. The budget for fees and any other costs outlined in this brief includes VAT. If you have any questions about the nature or terms of this contract, please contact us.

You will be required to hold public & products liability throughout the term of the contract.

## Costs

**The fee and production budget for this commission is £5000** and will be paid in instalments to the designer by Craftspace. The designer will be required to invoice Craftspace in agreed instalments. Payment is likely to be made in 3 instalments – after the final design is agreed, during the making period, and upon receipt of the display structures. The budget includes the design fee.

The fee includes VAT and National Insurance and the designer is responsible for the payment of these.

## Partners/Clients

The exhibition designer will work closely with the exhibition curator **Emma Daker** (Exhibitions and Project Development Manager, Craftspace), in developing the exhibition build design. The design proposal will also be shared with exhibition partners **Leicester Gallery** before being approved.

Craftspace has assembled an **Access Advisory Group** to consult and provide advice on strategies, policies, thinking and methods with an aim of increasing accessibility and inclusion across our programme. The Access Advisory Group will meet with the graphic designer to give feedback on their draft design proposal/s to ensure they meet our access requirements and are fit for purpose.

## How to apply

If you are interested in applying for this commission, please send:

- current CV,
- up to 3 examples of your work that are relevant to our interests, these need to be readable on a PC computer, you can send a We Transfer link for these
- brief outline proposal about how you might approach this commission.

Please send these by **9am Monday 17 June 2024**.

## Selection Process

We will interview from a shortlist of applicants.

Interviews will be held by Zoom on **Wednesday 26 June**.

## Contact details

Send applications to:

Emma Daker  
Exhibitions and Project Development Manager, Craftspace  
e.daker@craftspace.co.uk  
0121 608 6668

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# Reference images

## Craftspace exhibition build for Made in the Middle

The available build is from Made in the Middle 2012 and We are Commoners 2021. These images show a selection of the build available to give an idea of aesthetic and construction. A full list will be provided on the agreement of the commission.

### Made in the Middle 2012

This build is fixed/ready-made furniture designed & built by Pottinger & Cole. There are freestanding wall sections and a few pieces with Perspex lids as well as open plinths, with a powder coated or felt top.









## We are Commoners 2021

This build is Dexion based flexible/customisable system/components with a certain amount of wooden structure to make plinths and upright panels.





## Dorcas Stories 2023

This exhibition was the first time we combined the two display systems, with some additional framework.





