

Festival of Thrift - PROCESSIONS report 2018

WOMEN OF STEEL.

Two banners were commissioned by Festival of Thrift for Artichoke's PROCESSIONS 2018 and jointly designed and made by women of the Tees Valley. 'WOMEN OF STEEL' refers to the production of steel at Redcar with iron ore from the Cleveland Hills, but is also about the strength of the women who have lived in this coastal region for many years supporting industry, farming, fishing, and the RNLI. This project has inspired the participants to look at what women went through 100 years ago to gain the vote, and has made them want to do more to ensure that women continue to gain equality in the future.

"Don't women do well when they do it together!"

participant Liz Read



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Background to the project

Festival of Thrift was commissioned by Artichoke to take part in PROCESSIONS 2018 and to create a large banner celebrating the lives of women and the hundred year anniversary of Votes for Women in 1918. Festival of Thrift contracted two artists, Theresa Easton and Pauline Taylor and arranged to work with two groups in the Tees Valley, the Thorntree Roses, and women at Kirkleatham Museum. The work took place at three venues; Thorntree Hub in Middlesbrough, Kirkleatham Museum near Redcar and Navigator North in Middlesbrough. The project was also supported by Tees Valley Arts.

The banner was to be one of one hundred banners commissioned from one hundred organisations around the UK. In the end the enthusiasm of the Teesside group was such that two large banners were made.

The development of the banners

The workshop sessions took place from April 2018 starting with drop-in sessions where women and girls could come along and find out about the project and take part in making small pennants. At the early stage, Theresa Easton was able to introduce printmaking to the participants using woodblocks from Kirkleatham Museum, and gradually a bank of printed work became the basis for the design of the final banners. As the work was developed separately with the two groups, it became apparent that we should make two banners.

The two groups came together for the final few sessions working in Navigator North in Middlesbrough. Here we had facilities for screen printing and for sewing. The ideas began to gel and both banners took shape and the work was completed in early June ready to take part in PROCESSIONS 2018 in Edinburgh. Each banner focuses on “women of steel” as the central statement.



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The trip to Edinburgh

Edinburgh was a great choice of venue in the end, although the original plan had been to go to London. There was such a wonderful turnout in all the venues, but the chosen venue worked well as the journey was not so long and there was no trouble getting to the start of the procession. Everything ran smoothly, with good planning, minimum police presence, and with strategically placed toilets and refreshments.



"I've learnt new skills and met new people. Developed greater awareness of the women's suffrage movement and feel a sense of pride in having taken part in this nationwide event - it was great to be able to pay tribute to all of those women who fought for women's suffrage." participant

"I will wear my Processions badge with pride and tell people about my involvement and experience. I'll think about ways in which I might be able to support women rights and equality in the future." participant

Taking part offered me the chance to find out more about what happened all those years ago - and to recognise how much is still to be done to achieve equality for all.
Pauline Taylor, banner artist