

Lydia Caprani

St Hughs Foundation for the Arts

Artist Respond Grant 2020 update

With a clean slate entering 2021, the project has begun with initial research, material testing and sketches for tile designs.

Research is remote, using photos of tiles, patterns and decorative features I've collected around Hull in the past. Trawling Google Earth to screenshot new locations/inspiration has been less fruitful and unmotivating compared to exploring outdoors.

Despite restrictions, I am confident on developing designs that I am happy with based on my archives. I am working from photos, old undeveloped sketches and playing around with symmetry on grid paper to sketch possible tile designs. I am aiming for something cohesive in nature but which still allows tiles to have individuality. I am yet to decide the amount of tiles the collection will consist of.

I have started material tests using sprays, acrylic, gold leaf and different types of varnish/clear coats to figure out the best order of application. Cold temperatures are proving a nuisance – going outdoors for ventilation is unpleasant and dry times are long. I am working with a mixture of tiles, from white unglazed to completely colour myself, to encaustic or glossy coloured tiles. My main concern is weather proofing and installation as I am working in an ad-hoc way, making do with existing materials. I am now eager and curious to learn how to make my own tiles from scratch, and am considering applying for an Arts Council development grant to learn ceramic skills in the future.

Public reception has been great thanks to BBC Radio Humberside publicising my work with a feature video after I posted about the project on my Facebook page. It is worth noting I spoke at length about the upcoming project and specified the funder very clearly, however the resulting video was edited into a short and snappy insight into my work. This had led to a lot of miscommunication – answering lots of emails and messages explaining that I cannot paint huge murals for free! - which is a bit disheartening.

All is not lost however, as I am sure when I have the tiles created and photographed, I now have an eager audience to promote the project to, with more substance. With the focus directly on the new project I can control the messaging more. It has made me consider using video content in the future to engage with new audiences, as I have often neglected social media.

I have secured addresses from people around Hull for installation locations which is promising as I haven't yet shared the products. I anticipate more interest when I share video/imagery of final tiles. I will then choose addresses which allow an equal distribution.

The project was initially delayed. The planned start in Nov/Dec was postponed after an influx of commissions which were reacting to last-minute cancellations due to lockdown. Financially I was in no position to turn down these opportunities. Huge thanks to the team at the St Hugh's Foundation for the Arts for being accommodating and flexible with my original schedule, it is hugely appreciated.