

# EST. 1761

## Who's That Girl?

**So much of the heritage of the Bridgewater Canal is about men.  
It makes you wonder where the women were?**

For this commission Sally has worked closely with historian, Mark Charnley and has carried out research into various archives and collections across Greater Manchester to uncover stories of the hidden women on the Bridgewater Canal.

Collaboration with fellow Salford Makers Cheryl O'Meara, Vicky Clarke, Jessie Stringer-Fewtrill, Julia Roy-Williams, Natalie Linney and Eva Elliot, who have created work in response to Sally's research, has resulted in an exclusive range of bespoke products featuring hand screen printed and digitally printed fabrics, and silver and porcelain jewellery.

The designs reflect themes as detailed below:

### **Flower Parties**

In the early 1900s women would organise gatherings on the canal, which were referred to as "flower parties". These occasions were in fact a cover for women to come together and drink alcohol. The public consumption of alcohol by women was considered socially unacceptable and laws were even passed in court to try and prevent women from drinking in public houses. Sally collaborated with Natalie Linney to create textile pieces in response to this by taking plants used in the alcohol making process such as hops, barley and sorgum to create designs using natural dye, gelatin printing and screen printing. Together they have produced a range of silk scarves with screen printed detail.

### **Jennifer Reid & <Thread{ } Collective**

Jennifer Reid, pre-eminent broadside balladess of the Manchester region, has composed a ballad in response to Sally's research as part of this commission. Her vocals have been captured and translated into print designs using code and generative code with <Thread{ } collective of which Sally is one third and who also form part of Salford Makers.

The collective have processed Jennifer's vocals with software called Ableton Live, then have visualised them by exploring video synthesis and data visualisation through changes in frequency, attack and timbre. These visuals were then re-created using hand screen printed processes and turned into digital print designs.

### **Pit Brow Lasses**

Pit brow Lasses were women that worked in the mines until 1842 when they were forbidden by law to go underground, but could be employed in equally heavy industry on the pit face such as loading wagons, sorting coal on conveyor belts and hauling heavy tubs up from the mine.

These women were considered the first women to wear trousers, which was the source of huge controversy. In addition to trousers they also wore harness-style belts with chains so they were able to pull coal carts. These belts wore holes into their clothing and the women were often demonised for their appearance.

Sally has collaborated with Julia Roy-Williams to create a range of silver jewellery to explore the symbolism of the belt fastenings – something which illustrates the expectation of how women are expected behave and look versus how in reality they needed to possess strength and resilience. The materials and processes they have used to create the jewellery also reflect the industrial making on the canal. Their work also features hidden messages and acid-etched surface pattern taken from Sally's screen prints of Jennifer Reid's vocals.

### **Sanctions on Women**

Although there are few detailed accounts, there is one specific moment that Sally wanted to highlight as she felt it is representative of the unrealistic sanctions and expectations placed onto women.

There was an occasion of a female worker passing by the Duke of Bridgewater on the bridge in the Delph at Worsley. Some of the fluff from her dress transferred onto the Duke's clothing as they passed (she must have been working with cotton on the industrial yard) from which he then banned all women from using the bridge.

Collaborating with Eva Elliot, they have created a collection of porcelain jewellery which references this moment - the infliction of power - over gender and class - for something so menial. Sally has created surface print designs from fluff and screen printed designs which have been transferred onto porcelain and fabric. Some of the porcelain also has fluff imprinted into the surface to create textures and pattern. This detailing along with the shapes of the pieces reflects the movement and

fluidity of the canal and waterways. The fabric has been made into a selection of products for this commission.

### **Cartes des Vistes**

The pit brow lasses were photographed and their portraits were turned into “Cartes des Vistes” which were sold and mostly purchased by middle and upper class men.

Sally’s concept for this theme references the objectification of the women through the production and sale of these postcards - the pleasure that men gained from looking and the Victorian ideologies of feminism and moral supremacy. This work was also inspired by “The power to fix the gaze: Gender and class in Victorian photographs of pit-brow women” written by Sarah Edge.

Linking to her existing collaborative work with scientists from the Wellcome Centre for Cell Matrix Research, Sally has created a print design which originates from a microscopic cellular image of a retina. She has turned this microscopic image of the eye into a large scale print to emphasise the weight of the male gaze.

### **Women’s Craft on the Canal**

There is a strong tradition of women crafting on the canals, specifically crochet. These intricate designs adorned the interior of boat cabins. Spaces inside the cabins were cramped therefore there were limitations of what interior décor could be used so an easy and affordable way for women to personalise spaces and create their own individual sense of style would be to create crochet curtains, porthole covers, table cloths, event bonnets and clothing – anything! The action of crochet is that of a stark contrast in comparison to the hard, laborious work that the women had to endure working on the canals so perhaps this was a welcome therapeutic antidote.

Sally created an original motif by making gelatin prints from actual crochet lace pieces. These original prints were then transformed into digital print designs by Cheryl O’Meara.

Along with fellow Salford Makers, Sally Gilford is also delivering an accompanying series of workshops inspired by the different processes used in the making: printing with nature, knotting techniques for jewellery, textile screen printing and cushion making. These community workshops will give local people the opportunity to learn new skills and continue the making tradition of Salford as they create something truly unique and bespoke inspired by the heritage of the Bridgewater Canal.

## **Salford Makers**

Salford Makers are a collective of artists, designers, educators and makers based at Islington Mill and beyond. They work individually and collaboratively on a variety of commissions, design projects, product development and social enterprise, and offer a diverse participatory programme including workshops which are suitable for beginners through to established artists and makers. Their workshop studio is based at Islington Mill and their pop-up shop on Chapel Street, Salford.

[salfordmakers.com](http://salfordmakers.com) / [@salford\\_makers](https://www.instagram.com/salford_makers)

## **Sally Gilford**

Sally Gilford is an artist, educator and creative producer specialising in screen printed textiles.

She works with collections and exhibitions of internationally recognised galleries and museums and through her work as a creative practitioner and producer, she facilitates the exploration of multi disciplinary art forms to encourage self-expression; creative experimentation and process led artistic collaboration.

Currently working with researchers from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Cell Matrix Research, she is interested in exploring the connections between art and science, creating distinctive responses to original images of scientific research. Sally's printed fabrics are handmade into a range of custom designed products and commissioned works.

Sally is also a member of >thread{ } collective who create generative artwork that subverts and connects textile heritage using analogue and digital processes. Working with code and human bio data, they produce digital imagery which is interpreted through print and surface pattern.

Sally is based at Islington Mill Studios in Salford where she also co-founded screen print specialists One69A in 2009 and most recently, Salford Makers CiC.

[sallygilford.com](http://sallygilford.com) / [@sally\\_gilford](https://www.instagram.com/sally_gilford)

## **Cheryl O'Meara**

Cheryl is an established surface print designer who works with select designers, brands and couture houses, creating exciting & inspiring collections.

Highly successful as a commercial print designer, her ambition is to push the paradigms and boundaries of what fashion and print are and reinvent a new future for fashion, print and self-expression.

Cheryl is also the owner of The Archive, which is an extensive archive of over 50,000 antique wallpapers and fabrics dating from 1700-1980 based at Islington Mill.

For this commission, Cheryl has created the range of bespoke print designs using original hand printed motifs and samples which have been digitally printed onto the range of fabrics.

[printpatternarchive.com](http://printpatternarchive.com) / [@vintage\\_print\\_design](https://www.instagram.com/vintage_print_design)

### **Eva Elliot**

Eva is a qualified art & design teacher and designer of minimalist, graphic porcelain jewellery.

Her jewellery line 'margo' allows her to explore surface pattern such as terrazzo, oxide resists and marbling on her creations.

She runs a wide range of workshops for both adults and children in ceramics, from decorative wall hangings, ancient style pinch pottery, to nerikomi porcelain jewellery.

She is a member of 7 Spot Pottery, an open access ceramics studio based within Islington Mill.

For this commission, Eva worked with Sally to create a range of porcelain Jewellery.

[@\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_margo\\_](https://www.instagram.com/margo_jewellery)

### **Jessie Stringer-Fewtrill**

Jessie is a freelance seamstress and her specialisms are pattern cutting, dressmaking, garment and product design. She creates bespoke pieces on a commission basis, working with a variety of artists, makers and designers; she is interested in combining traditional textile processes with contemporary design.

She is also the founder of Jessie-May Lingerie where she designs and makes by hand, one of kind opulent underwear for women. Jessie also teaches a range of workshops and courses from beginner to advanced sewing, pattern cutting and dress making.

For this commission, Jessie manufactured all of the textile products.

[needlewoman-jessie.format.com](http://needlewoman-jessie.format.com) / [@needlewomanjess](https://www.instagram.com/needlewomanjess)

### **>Thread { }**

>Thread { } collective are artists Vicky Clarke, Cheryl O'Meara and Sally Gilford.

They are a Salford-based collective who create generative artwork that subverts and connects textile heritage using analogue and digital processes. Working with code and human bio data, they produce digital imagery, which is interpreted through print and surface pattern.

They are interested in how the self can be represented and documented by exploring the relationship and interactions of the digital and human realm.

For this commission, the collective worked with Jennifer Reid to produce a textile design using her vocal data.

[threadcollective.co.uk](http://threadcollective.co.uk) / [@thread\\_mcr](https://www.instagram.com/thread_mcr)

### **Natalie Linney**

Natalie Linney is a textile artist, natural dye specialists and creative practitioner.

In 2012 she studied natural dyeing practice during a residency with textile artist Kate Fletcher in Tasmania, Australia, and has since worked with natural dyeing processes to create unique pieces.

In her practice, Natalie utilises these ancient dyeing techniques with natural and man-made objects found in the contemporary urban environment to produce entirely unique textile pieces. Working with traditional methods, she creates striking and delicate patterns, which emerge in unpredictable ways to reflect the materials used and the place in which it was produced.

[talielinseed.co.uk](http://talielinseed.co.uk) / [@talielinseed](https://www.instagram.com/talielinseed)

## **Julia Roy-Williams**

Julia Roy-Williams is a Manchester based artist, jewellery designer and facilitator. She is based in the Salford Maker studio at Islington Mill and co-runs studio 9 at Manchester Craft and Design Centre.

Julia has a multi disciplinary approach, utilising digital design, laser cutting and contemporary craft skills in her practice. She has worked as a creative practitioner in Manchester for over 10 years, creating participatory events, workshops, and running creative studio and retail spaces. Her art jewellery brand WONDERHAUS is sold in shops and galleries worldwide.

Julia also works as a lecturer and specialist technician at The Manchester College, enabling learning using digital design as a tool for creativity.

wonderhaus.co.uk / @wonderhaus\_uk