OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS

Miniatures

A micro commission for artists with a strong connection to Blackburn with Darwen

TWO COMMISSIONS	ARTIST FEE	APPLICATION DEADLINE
2 artists selected	**£1,000 per artist**	**5 pm, 30 November 2026**

The opportunity

The Second Act / Uncultured Creatives is inviting applications from artists with a meaningful connection to Blackburn with Darwen for a micro commission exploring the theme of Miniatures. Two artists will be selected. Each will receive a fee of £1,000 to develop a new body of work in dialogue with the curator and the other commissioned artist.

The commission is offered through the Creative Alliance scheme for the Place Based Partnership, with funded by Arts Council England.

www.secondactgallery.co.uk
www.unculturedcreatives.co.uk

The theme

The remit is deliberately broad. We welcome imaginative responses to miniature scale, detail, intimacy, storytelling, collecting, place or any other direction prompted by the theme. Work may be two-dimensional or three-dimensional and may use any suitable medium, including painting, drawing, print, textiles, photography, mixed media or sculpture.

The minatures theme was established to:

- Acknowledge the' 'micro-scale' of the commission
- Generate an exhibit with the potential to create a small and very simply tourable show that can be posted or packed in a suitcase. Avoiding issues and costs of transport that are a barrier to many artists.

- Avoids the storage challenges and costs created for many artists after commissioning.
- Connects with Blackburn with Darwen's rich South Asian community and culture and with a nod towards the traditions associated with miniature painting. Artists are welcome to engage with these histories, but this is not a requirement.
- Creates a loose framework for artists to responsd to whilst remaning broadly accessible for different artists practices.We want the commission to remain open to a wide range of artists and perspectives.

Who can apply

We are looking for artists with a strong connection to Blackburn with Darwen. You may apply if one or more of the following describes you:

- you are from Blackburn with Darwen or currently live there;
- you have worked or maintained a creative practice in Blackburn with Darwen;
- you have studied at higher education level in Blackburn with Darwen; or
- you have another clear and meaningful connection to the town through your artistic or creative work.

Artists at any career stage are welcome, including people who have not applied for a commission before.

What the commission involves

Each selected artist will be expected to create a small group of approximately three to five miniature artworks. The final number, scale and format will be agreed with the curator in response to the artist's chosen medium and proposal.

The two artists will work with the curator to agree a coherent and appropriate way to present the works. Display options will be developed around the artworks themselves and the Blackburn with Darwen exhibition venue once confirmed.

The compact nature of the commission means the finished works may also be stored as a set and considered for future touring or display in other locations. Artists will have the opportunity for their work to be presented for sale through the Second Act Collector database collector mail out.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

How to apply

We have deliberately kept the application simple and accessible. Please send the following:

- a short explanation of your connection to Blackburn with Darwen; (Max 100 words)
- a simple outline of the ideas this theme sparks for you, the concept you may explore, and how you might develop the work; (Max 600 words)
- an indication of the materials, processes and likely outputs you are considering; and why exploring this as a miniature makes sense. (Max 600 words)
- a link to an accessible website or online portfolio, or a clearly presented portfolio document.

You do not need to have every detail resolved at application stage. We are interested in the strength of your initial idea, your practice and the potential for the work to develop through conversation with the curator.

Please check that every link works and that all files can be opened without requesting access.

Send your application

Email your application as a PDF to alex@unculturecreatives.co.uk by 5 pm on Monday 30 November 2026.
If you have any access requirements, please email us so we can discuss how best to support you and make the application process accessible and appropriate for your needs.

Selection process

Applications will be reviewed by an internal Uncultured Creatives and The Second Act panel comprising:

- Jamie Holman, artist;
- Alex Zawadzki, curator and creative producer; and
- Matty Hall, creative technologist and Sairo co-founder

Artists will be shortlisted against the following criteria:

- the strength and authenticity of their connection to Blackburn with Darwen;
- the quality of their existing work and practice; and
- the quality and potential of their early-stage concept for this commission.

Following the panel's shortlist, the curator will identify the final two artists by considering how their practices and proposals might work alongside one another. The final decision is therefore not only about each application in isolation, but also about the potential for the two artists' work to create a coherent, engaging and conceptually connected exhibition. This is an opportunity to develop a new body of work and to take part in a curated dialogue with another artist, shaping a shared presentation while retaining the distinct character of each practice.

Timetable

30 NOVEMBER 2026	Applications close at 5 pm
FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER	Panel shortlisting, final pairing and applicant notification
DECEMBER 2026 TO EARLY 2027	Development conversations and making period
MARCH / APRIL 2027	Provisional exhibition in Blackburn with Darwen, subject to venue confirmation