

Exhibition:

Soft Power: lives told through textile art 1790 to now

16 May – 10 August 2025

This exhibition celebrates the skill and craftsmanship of textile artists with a series of spectacular and intimate works that tell stories about our lives and connect people across time and place. The exhibition is curated by internationally-renowned textile art pioneer, Professor Alice Kettle, with textile expert and art historian Professor Lesley Millar MBE.

A rarely seen and recently conserved 1790s 'needle painting', or embroidery, by RWA founder, Ellen Sharples, one of the country's first professional artists, will be on loan from Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. Works on loan from other national galleries will include a sculptural dress from Susie McMurray, 'Widow', made from 100,000 dressmaker pins (pictured), loaned from Manchester Art Gallery, and a selection of Chilean 'arpillera' quilted portraits from Tate. From the Diana Springall Collection, the RWA will display works by renowned embroiderers and textile artists Audrey Walker and Paula Reason.

An exciting highlight will be a new large-scale work which Alice Kettle is creating specifically for the exhibition, incorporating hundreds of locally crowd-sourced portraits into a spectacular 10m-wide mural.



Susie McMurray, 'Widow' (collection of the Whitworth)

Cost of Exclusive Sponsorship:

£6,500 (plus VAT)

Cost of Non-Exclusive Sponsorship

£4,500 (plus VAT)

For more information about sponsoring an exhibition please contact:

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