

AN ART INSTALLATION is made as much from conversation as it is from materials, time, and space. Its sounds and motions carry the many contributions of willing collaborators as well as total strangers who join the process. *We Will Sing* began when I first opened Salts Mill's large wooden door and entered inside to the smell of lilies, the sound of opera, the surround of books and the day-dreaming they each invited—sensory testament to beauty's transformative powers. That same day I walked the length of the Mill's spinning room, the longest uninterrupted space in the world at the time it was built. With each of my two hundred steps to cross its length, the spaciousness of its light, air and sound seeped in as possibility. Walking gathers space into the body. Walking is a form of listening. The interval between a foot lifting off and touching ground is to think at the pace of the body. Walking and thinking, I began to sense how the ongoing transformation of this 19th-century mill is an act of faith in the possibility of a future. This seeded one of my project's central questions: what, then, does the future need to know and remember? Such an unanswerable question is what grows a project, and all art making is an act of finding. *We Will Sing* grew from the luck of my discovery of the architecture, the place, and the generosity of the people in Bradford.

*We Will Sing* may have begun with the opening of a door and a solitary walk down the long floorspace of Salts Mill, but its main body is social and larger than any singular gesture or effort. There are too many people to name individually, yet I am grateful to all the conversations and hands that together helped make this artwork, for in the end, a project is made of people. I want to thank curators June Hill and Jen Hallam whose invitation began our several-year journey with this project. Their belief in my work and trust in my process provided the conditions for the productive wanderings that eventually gave *We Will Sing* its form. We've been elbow-to-elbow in every detail, and I am tremendously grateful for their keen attention, their generous hearts, and the gallons of wheat paste they stirred and cooked! Emily Eagen is the song, the humming, and the whistling heard in the spinning room. She led community workshops and joined the project's "what if's" with graceful lightness and vocal offerings. If my own first hand is a textile hand, Emily's first hand is song, each of them modes of touching here, twined together in the weaving that is *We Will Sing*.

Making entails working from what you know to what you can't yet know—like being out on a limb with good company, knowing the branch will hold. I'm lucky to have such company in my studio in Ohio, and to be supported there by artists Kara Gut and Nalani Stolz who traveled to Bradford to work with me here. Working alongside and ahead of me, they are always "all in" and this project is also theirs. Hannah Lamb and her students at Bradford College cut and sewed the felts and wheat-pasted the images of the fèves (tiny porcelain figures of luck) I found at the Mill's antique mall. I gained luck in turn with the "all-in" dedication and company of Hannah's students. David Crickmore recorded our exper-



iments in song under challenging acoustic conditions and then seamlessly stitched the parts Kara Gut skillfully sequenced together. Their ears tuned mine. The Linking Network's Linda Cowie and Meg Henry's intuitive understandings helped connect us to the project's school collaborators, Matthew Parrish at Titus Salt, and Diane Smith at Heaton St Barnabas and their intergenerational collaboration with the Armchair Aerobics group. The tremendous energy and enthusiasm of those students propelled the project's song, *We Will Sing*. The student's "letters to the future" can be read on the project's tumblr site [wewillsing-letterstothefuture.tumblr.com](http://wewillsing-letterstothefuture.tumblr.com) and their "songs to the future" are heard in the canal-side space, collaged through a mixed recording and additional collaboration with Madiha Ansari and the Song Geet choir members, who transformed our prompts into something deeper and more meaningful. This recording is rounded out with lullabies sung by Maya Metheven and Behla Hutchinson during our visit to Jessica Criddle's See and Know Toddler Group.

The cadence of threads crossing and of stitches passing through cloth was my first understanding of making's transformative power—two pieces of sewn cloth becoming a coat to keep someone warm—a simple act achieved by complex means. Wool's literacy runs thick in the DNA of Bradford and through processing innovations, continues to thrive as a sustainable contemporary fiber. Touring SIL Group industries to watch their processing of "raw" mohair, wool, and cashmere into finished goods inspired much of my early thinking about this project. David Gallimore and Chris Barker at William Halstead's said "yes" at our every meeting and to my every request for still more of their beautiful woolens. Their custom-dyed blue wool-mohair cloth drapes the far side of the spinning room. Sewn with the help of Natalie Thompson at J&C Joel, the yardage is now tensioned with stones reminiscent of a warp-weighted loom. Siân Thomas designed and organized a team to tailor the "Dorothy" inspired capes with vibrant linings donated by Jessgrove.

Through the vision of Jo Dawson, Alison Atkins, Kaye Yeomans, and Sam Edwards at H. Dawson, I've devel-

oped a worldview with sheep holding the center of a sustainable future and an appreciation for how the unique qualities of fleece fibers from individual breeds can replace non-sustainable materials in our everyday lives. Dawson's felts back the féve images in the project's middle room, their body of wool thicknesses absorbing the sound from the records in the canal-side and the turning horns in the former spinning room to the south.

The design and fabrication of hardware for the project was accomplished through the long hours of work put in by the team at Raven Staging, including Stew, Matty, Eddie, Jed, and Ace. They also reanimated the Mill's three old public-address horns now turning round and round in the former spinning room. That room, once filled with the deafening sound of machinery, is now filled with melodies rooted in folksong, thanks to "a good bit of mischief" by Owen Lewis.

Even in this age of digital extension, a needle gliding across a turning vinyl disc to produce music remains a magical bit of technology. I'm grateful for the expertise of Alan and Chris Black at Sound Leisure whose digital/analogue expertise bridges a love of the past with a view of the future. The six turntables in the canal-side space inherit their years of dedicated engineering. Everything in this project comes from what I found here, and this is true of the records themselves, cut locally by Gavin Barndon.

A printed newspaper is still hand delivered. When arriving to one's doorstep, it crosses a threshold to bring the outside world inside. The commonplace newspaper for this project was shepherded through production by David Frankland, printed by the Telegraph & Argus and at the suggestion of Steve Lowe, the T&A will publish one "letter to the future" each week throughout the exhibition's run.

The curricular development, writing workshops, and teacher collaborations enthusiastically led by Cat Stiles and the Bradford 2025 Engagement Team have filled the project's mailbox with letters of memory and hope. In addition to their enthusiastic help in the schools, Meg Henry and the team at The Linking Network are continuing to connect *We Will Sing* to additional communi-

ties and correspondents both young and old.

The take-away newspaper pages reproduce images of selected "letters to the future" alongside writing related to the artwork's primary elements: reading and writing, spinning and weaving, singing and whistling, stone and wool. The reproduced images of colored cloth samples come from the collections at the Bradford College Textile Archive shared by curator Helen Farrar, and from the Society of Dyers and Colourists Archive made available by Shelley Hollingdrake. Additional contributions to the newspaper were made with the help of Ann Dinsdale at Bronte Parsonage Museum, Charlotte Hall and Aine McKenny at the Peace Museum and Elizabeth Llabres at the Industrial Museum.

Like master weavers, the tremendous team at Bradford 2025, led by Senior Producer Jodie Noble and Producer Jessica Sweet alongside production manager Helen Muirgridge ensured the project's many makings were realized and coordinated. I am grateful to them and to the larger Bradford 2025 team headed by Creative Director Shanaz Gulzar and Director of Production Ben Pugh, for supporting the process and taking the journey with me.

Every project has many stages as ideas move from abstraction into tangibility. In the end, each person who visits *We Will Sing* will have their own unique experience and memory of what is here at Salts Mill. Filmmaker Ali Lycett and cinematographer Tom Diffenthal have documented the trajectory of this project from my initial visits through to its opening, capturing in beautiful footage the many threads that reveal this work as a weaving of manifold relationships.

What I found here in Bradford is unique and I'm deeply grateful to the many people who joined the process. It has been an honor to work with the community, to find openness and generosity, and, like all touch, to be touched in return. In some sense, the project's opening to the public is only its beginning—writings will be read to the forest of images, bells will ring, a song to the future will play again and again, the light will pass through the space, people will come and go....these crossings are the song that is the work, *We Will Sing*. Claire Wellesley-Smith and Izzy Smith—both artists—will be looking after the readers and singers who might come to join and animate its daily life—an act of intimacy and sharing.

I have been in residence for more than a month; working together, making decisions in conversation, and the daily rhythm of the Mill have been the project's pleasure. Finally, I want to thank Salts Mill's security guards who accommodated with good humor our many comings and goings, and to Mark Thompson, who manages the building's massive complex, for his positive welcome to every query. It is the vision of the Silver's, Jonathan and Maggie, Zoe, Davina, who have made the 19th-century mill a place of welcome. This is a place of Yes—where what can be imagined can be made possible. A work can only be made because a condition is made for it to happen. Their generous dedication to beauty and, yes, to the possibility of a future, is palpable and ongoing.

ANN HAMILTON

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