

# SURREAL TTOHITOS

## ARTIST BRIEF

'Surreal Solihull' Commission  
Solihull Borough Council

### Public Art Project Summary

Solihull Council, in collaboration with public art consultant/curator Ruth Millington, wish to commission contemporary artists living or working in the West Midlands to create new artworks on the theme of 'Surreal'. These will be displayed in a free exhibition to take place in Solihull town centre from March to May, before moving to a second location in the borough, during June– August 2025. This project is part of Solihull's ongoing work to support local artists and develop the public realm through creative interventions, feeding into the wider cultural strategy to ensure public art is recognised as a key delivery strand. It has been funded by WMCA.

Artworks will be photographed and displayed as reproductions on units similar to these:



### Solihull's Heritage: A Surrealist History

With an aim of developing Solihull's identity as a creative location with its own unique heritage, the exhibition will celebrate Solihull's history of Surrealism, a 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural movement that challenged reality by exploring the unconscious mind and dreams.

Solihull was once home to one of Surrealism's leading members, Emmy Bridgwater (1906 – 1999). During her successful career, she drew, painted and collaged strange, dreamlike landscapes of her mind. Birds, butterflies, mythological women, and wide eyes populate her symbolic pictures in which irrational images are juxtaposed. This same imagery can be found in her poetry, which she published in Surrealist magazines during her lifetime. She was also a proponent of automatic drawing – working freely with ink, she allowed images to appear directly from her subconscious.

*The Emmy Bridgwater Estate has endorsed the project and exhibition.*

## Theme and Commission Methodology

Solihull Council is seeking to commission up to 30 artists to develop a new artwork or series of new artworks to be exhibited as part of the 'Surreal Solihull' exhibition.

Contemporary artists are invited to create new work in response to **the theme of 'Surreal'**. They may wish to take inspiration from Emmy Bridgwater, Solihull and the wider Surrealists who worked with diverse media to release the creative potential of their minds. Artists are free to use their imagination and interpret the theme as they see fit. There is no set medium of form the work needs to take.

The commissioners are open to creative solutions that prompt community engagement with culture and positive interaction with spaces, whilst discouraging graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

The commission offers an opportunity for amateur or professional artists to design, develop and deliver a finished artwork that will be shown in the public realm. The artworks should provide focal and discussion points increasing dwell time in Solihull, enhancing the public realm and increasing civic pride.

The work will be photographed, and the commissioners will arrange this. The artist should, therefore, consider the fact that their work will be reproduced in 2D form in their design planning.

**This opportunity is open to all visual artists who are living and/or working in Solihull or the West Midlands, and who are aged 18 or over.**

This is an exciting opportunity for artists to creatively interpret the brief.

## Application Process

To be considered for the commission, artists must apply here <https://forms.gle/A5HGvQqSc3YqNcrv8>

In the application you will be asked:

- Brief biography
- Selected examples of previous work, which could include a link to relevant website/social media channels
- An idea and concept for a **new** artwork on the theme of 'Surreal' in any reasonable format; sketches, photos, narrative, and in physical or digital media. A full work-up is not required; Solihull Council are looking for just enough to get the concept across for the judging panel. Please include a proposed title, medium and approximate dimensions, plus a short rationale for the artwork in relation to the theme.

*Please note, if AI has or will be used for this commission, this must be stated in the submission.*

**Deadline for submission: Midnight on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November.** No submissions after that deadline will be considered. The successful artists will be contacted shortly after that and have several months to complete the final artwork before the exhibition.

## Commissioning Process

Stage 1 – Proposals submitted

Stage 2 – Proposals reviewed by judging panel

Stage 3 – The successful artists will be contracted to realise the artwork

Stage 4 – Artworks photographed for panels

Stage 5 – Exhibition to open March 2025

Stage 6 – Exhibition to relocate to second site in July 2025

### **The fee for the full artwork commission is £500**

All costs for realising the work (including materials and any associated realisation costs) must be budgeted for within the £500. The budget for printing and realising the panels in the final exhibit is held in a separate budget. The £500 fee is solely for realising your work. A further £50 will be made available for artwork shipping and transport costs.

### **Payment**

Payment will be made by BACS upon completion of the artwork and an invoice submitted to Solihull Council

### **Artist Selection Panel**

The artist selection panel will include:

- Solihull Council staff
- Local businesses, including a gallery
- Curator and public art consultant Ruth Millington

### **Selection Criteria**

Artists will be selected on the basis of their past work and on the response to the brief.

Proposals are encouraged from artists from Solihull and across the West Midlands area, who are aged 18 or over.

The opportunity is open to artists at all stages of their career including new and emerging artists.

### **Artist's Role**

The artist will seek to understand the context of the commission and generate a new piece of exceptional artistic quality

- To develop a concept/idea and proposal for the artwork
- To ensure the work can be realised within budget and timescale
- On completion, agree for it to be exhibited publicly in Solihull
- Support with promotion of the exhibition

### **Timeline and Schedule**

Stage 1 – Proposals submitted

**17th November, 2024**

Stage 2 – Judging by panel

**w/c 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

Stage 3 – The successful artists will be contracted to realise the artwork

**w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024**

Stage 4 – Completed artwork submitted for photographing

**w/c 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

Stage 5 – Exhibition opens in Solihull

**March 2025**

Stage 6 – Exhibition relocates to second site in Solihull

**Summer 2025**

### **Intellectual Property, Ownership and Copyright**

The artist shall retain ownership and copyright of the artwork. However, photographs of the artwork produced during this commission shall belong to commissioner including reproduction rights.

### **Practicalities**

Permissions - all work will be subject to relevant permissions prior to implementation

Equal opportunities – Solihull Borough Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy will be applied to this Commission.

### **Maintenance**

The maintenance of artwork and removal of any graffiti will be the responsibility of the commissioner.

### **Decommissioning**

The work will be shown in Solihull town centre during March – May and in a second location June – August.

There is no plan for further exhibition sites however the panels will be retained by the commissioner and artists will be notified if the panels are planned to be exhibited again.

If after two years the panels have not been reused the commissioner may have the panels recycled.

### **Contact**

Lisa Cleaver, Cultural Development Officer [lisa.cleaver@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.cleaver@solihull.gov.uk)

Ruth Millington, Curator and Public Art Consultant [Millington.rka@gmail.com](mailto:Millington.rka@gmail.com)

### **Further Information**

#### **A Surreal Solihull Information Session**

Ruth Millington will be available to share details about the exhibition and answer questions by Zoom on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 6 – 6.40pm

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76026974819?pwd=XFI77HQQAPzuJx7rajkapwy9weaA6.1>

Meeting ID: 760 2697 4819

Passcode: 9RCGU8

A Resource Park with further reading about Surrealism and its links to Solihull is available [here](#)