

Bobbins!

Mixed Media at Fred Aldous, Manchester Art Gallery, Piccadilly 111 & Sackville Gardens

Artist Sally Gilford with

Suzanne Atkinson, Grecia Balassone, Emma Lea Bennett,
India Buxton, Jemma Calvert, Magdalena Kij, Lucy Claire,
Danielle Wilton

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Technology at University of Salford.

Appearing at various sites across the city, Bobbins! hopes to raise awareness about women's issues that are hidden, taboo or ignored and not taught as part of any curriculum in both a historical and contemporary context.

The location of the bobbins in the window of Fred Aldous are by no means incidental. Prior to becoming the most loved supplier to the city's makers and creatives, Fred's was originally a producer of baskets used to carry bobbins which were intrinsic to textile production, also a feminine, domesticated action which we aim to subvert.

We also chose this location as it is a place outside of art school where a strong creative community exists. People can access creative resources and anyone with an interest in the arts is encouraged to share, collaborate and connect.



Historically, Stevenson Square was also a place where people gathered to protest and get on their soap box which is also relevant in its use today for street art and for this commission.

The text featured on the top of the bobbins pays homage to the suffragette banner, First in the Fight which was unfurled in Stevenson Square on 20th June 1908, *Bobbins!* also nods to the northern slang of the term meaning nothing or rubbish which is often how women's issues are portrayed or dismissed.



The textile design on the bobbin thread was created using original hand screen printed elements which were designed and printed by the group and feature motifs that reference the issues that are at the heart of this work including period poverty and the menopause, gender pay gap, sexual harassment and exploitation, womens rights, human trafficking, young carers and workplace discrimination.



ONLINE ABUSE OF WOMEN HAS OFFLINE CONSEQUENCES
WITH 55% SAYING THEY EXPERIENCE ANXIETY, STRESS AND
PANIC ATTACKS AS A RESULT

THE MENOPAUSE REMAINS A TABOO SUBJECT IN THE UK
AND REMAINS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T ALWAYS FEEL
COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT

THERE ARE HUGE GENDER INEQUALITIES IN HEALTHCARE
PROVISION, THE MENOPAUSE IS A LIFE EVENT AND AFFECTS
MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION

THE AVERAGE UK GENDER WAGE GAP IS CURRENTLY 15.4 %
WHICH EQUATES TO WOMEN WORKING 56 DAYS FOR FREE
OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR 137, 700 CHILDREN IN THE UK
MISS SCHOOL BECAUSE OF PERIOD POVERTY

A SURVEY FOR UN WOMEN UK FOUND THAT MORE THAN
SEVEN IN TEN WOMEN HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY HARRASSED IN
PUBLIC, A FIGURE RISING TO 86% FOR WOMEN AGED 18 AND 24
71% OF ALL HUMAN TRAFFICKING INVOLVES WOMEN AND
GIRLS - MAINLY FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

1 IN 10 GIRLS AGED 14 - 21 CAN'T AFFORD MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

800,000 YOUNG CARERS AGED 5-17 CARE FOR A FAMILY
MEMBER OR ADULT IN ENGLAND

52% OF YOUNG WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE ABUSE
THE GENDER PAY GAP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SHAPE OUR

FUTURE BECAUSE 78% OF AI PROFESSIONALS ARE MEN

UP UNTIL JANUARY 2021, THE UK GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED
SANITARY PRODUCTS A LUXURY ITEM & TAXED THEM AS SUCH

ACTIVE FEMALE-LED COMPANIES MAKE UP 16% OF ALL UK
COMPANIES. THIS IS THREE AND A HALF TIMES SMALLER
THAN THE 2.7 MILLION MALE LED COMPANIES

NEARLY 82 MILLION WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD DON'T
HAVE ANY LEGAL PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN
THE WORKPLACE

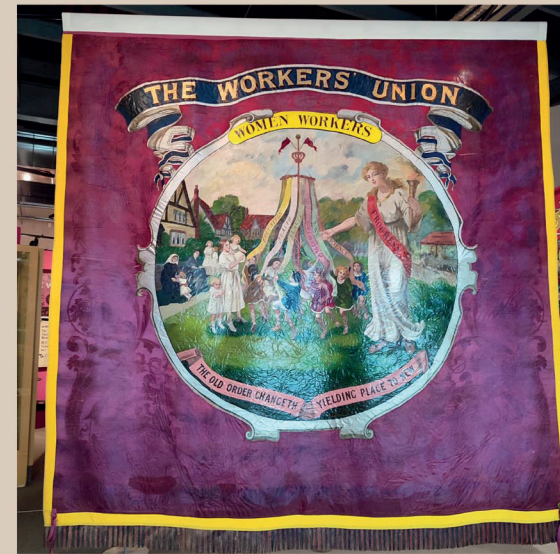
42% OF WOMEN EXPERIENCE GENDER DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

87% OF CARERS DON'T RECEIVE THE TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

WHICH IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT AND HELPS THEM TO THINK
ABOUT LIFE AFTER CARING

Collaborating with Oakenhoof, the commission also features participatory maypole dancing and songs taking place in Sackville Gardens inspired by late 19th century protest & womens rights banners and mid 18th century folk ballads.

Oakenhoof is a community folk arts group based in Littleborough, Greater Manchester. Their members researched songs and music which would have been contemporary to the illustration: A Garland For May Day (Walter Crane, 1895).



This collaboration has led to the development of two pieces for *Bobbins!*

Ladies Case.

It is assumed that this song was written by Miss Raftor (aka Miss Kitty Clive) in 1732. It was printed in 1734; assumed to have been written by a man.

Over time, this song has travelled from the Music Halls of the UK to America where it was converted into a Ballad. It returned to our shores sung by the likes of Joan Baez and Peggy Seeger in the 1960s.

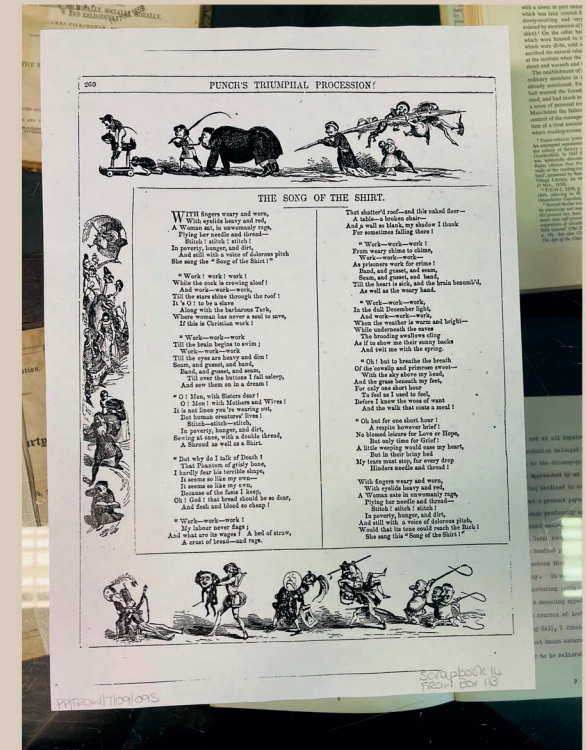
Oakenhoof have been able to take the tune back to how it probably would have sounded in the music halls and have added a more contemporary american jig called Rampant Tolerance to facilitate maypole dancing.

Song of the Shirt.

This poem found in the Working Class Movement Library, was written about one Mrs Biddell - a widow and seamstress who was working in wretched conditions in 1843. Oakenhoof matched this poem to a tune which would have been commonly played in and around Manchester in the mid 1800s: a "planxty" (Irish lament tune) called Fanny Power.

Final verses have been added to each of the songs based on the textile designs featured on the maypole ribbons and bobbin threads.

The designs for our badge making workshop have also been taken from these textile designs.



The Ladies Case

How hard is the fortune of all womankind,
Forever subjected, forever confined,
The parent controls us until we are wives,
The husband enslaves us the rest of our lives.
If fondly we love, yet we dare not reveal,
But secretly languish, compelled to conceal,
Deny'd every freedom of Life to enjoy,
We're sham'd if we're kind, we're blamed if we're coy.
[If fortune we have Oh! then we must be joyn'd,
To the Man that is by our Parents Design'd,
Compel'd for to have the Man we never see,
No matter if Ugly or Handsome he be.

So many lasses abused on a screen
Made to feel like they don't want to be seen
Sex-ul harrassment in public's a norm
Despised and abused and still treated with scorn

Song of the Shirt (Thomas Hood)

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work—work—work,
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O, men, with sisters dear!
O, men, with mothers and wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages?
A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shattered roof—this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

One hundred and seventy nine years on
A time of more equality?
Yet 82 million women don't have
The legal protection they need
Period poverty; poorer health;
Pay gaps by methods covert
Expected to work and earn, care and be glad
Still living the song of the shirt.

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