



First Fridays: Empire and the Making of Modern Derby
The Museum of Making at Derby Silk Mill, Derby, DE1 3AF
Fri 5th July 2024

One hundred years ago, Derby Borough Corporation took the town to Wembley.

In June 1924, its political, social, industrial and civic elites combined forces to create an ambitious ten-day display at the British Empire Exhibition to tell the story of an ‘ancient’ town that was also a modern progressive centre of Empire. Using ‘living history’ reenactments of traditional trades, an enormous mural of Derby’s history and artwork by students from the Derby School of Art, the aim was to make ‘the Empire know who we are and what we can do’.

Join Cath Feely, Jo Ray, and students from the University of Derby for a short talks to explore this history and the politics of representing Derby’s industrial history one hundred years on.

Responding to Cath's historical research, Design Masters students from the School of Art at the University of Derby have explored arts practice led research methods and created new artwork to represent the multi-layered past of our city, which will be presented at the event as a pop-up installation.

The group included people who had lived in Derby all their lives as well as new to the city, with different backgrounds and experiences. Despite this, decisions about what to include and exclude were difficult and uncomfortable. We felt a tension between celebrating Derby’s heritage and recognising what – and who - had been left out of the narrative.

Through interactive activities, craft your own contributions to an ongoing conversation: what stories would you like Derby to tell about itself in 2024?

This collaboration and event has been generously supported by the University of Derby Cultural and Creative Industries Theme, the University of Derby College of Arts, Humanities and Education Research Fund, CivicLAB at the University of Derby, and the Social History Society.

Dr Cath Feely is a modern British social and cultural historian and Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Derby. Dr Jo Ray is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Design at the University of Derby. Her research brings art-practice led methodologies to a range of contexts relating to people and the diverse ways in which we make sense of our world(s). Over the past two years, Cath and Jo have been collaborating with students taking the MA Design 'Experiencing the Past' Lab to co-produce work which plays with and unsettles ideas of history, heritage and identity.

The exhibition element will be on site at the Museum of Making until Saturday 6th July.

Suitable for Adults (18+)

Exhibition / Installation : Museum of Making Derby

University of Derby MA Design Students (2024)

Sidony Swan, Heather Duncan, Yuyu Tan, Jayne Brewster, Jorge Rodrigues Estevao, Zuzanna Grebla, Daniel Dada

University of Derby team + Museum of Making colleagues:

Jo Ray, Cath Feely, Charlotte Clewlow, Emma Rowlson, Kath Owens, Katie Smith, Dan Webber and Eilish Clohessy-Dennis



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THE 'POD' (long term display at Museum of Making)

