



Tees Valley Artist of the Year recipient and Northumbria University PhD candidate Claire Baker

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## Talented Northumbria researcher and practitioner crowned Tees Valley Artist of the Year

**A PhD candidate from Northumbria has been named Tees Valley Artist of the Year. This prestigious recognition highlights the significant contributions and innovative work in the field of textile art and is a testament to the vibrant and diverse artistic talent in the North East.**

Claire A. Baker, from Northumbria's School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries, was one of just five people to receive the [Tees Valley Artist of the](#)

[Year](#) award which is designed to support and elevate local artists. It offers unparalleled opportunities, including a £30,000 investment and a year-long programme of strategic support, enabling the artists to dedicate themselves to their practice fully.

"For the first time in my life I have been able to focus solely on my art and have the financial support to do so," she said. "I am so proud to be part of such a fantastic initiative for local artists and the first of its kind to offer this level of development."

Claire's PhD, funded by the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#), is inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the legacy of traditional embroidery by babushkas in the region. Her resulting artwork preserves these traditions and raises awareness of the impact of the disaster on the environment, and the small number of people who continue to live in the uninhabitable exclusion zone.



Her art is a reflection of intensive research, spending time with the local women, listening to their stories, and seeing their embroidery first-hand.

Claire continued: "Receiving this award is about more than just me; it's about the women from Chernobyl and preserving a legacy. My artwork is centred around human connection, first and foremost.

“It also shows that you can be successful in the creative industries while living and working in Tees Valley. Textiles are often overlooked, but they have a powerful story to tell, and I am thrilled to bring that to a wider audience while showcasing the North East.”

The Tees Valley Artist of the Year program includes workshops, mentorship, and offers an additional £8,000 development budget to help fund any necessary equipment and training to help put plans into action. Artists on the programme are encouraged to collaborate with and learn from other artists across various disciplines, including music, writing, film, and theatre.

It is part of a wider £20.5m programme of investment to grow the region’s creative and cultural industries and visitor economies and is funded through the Government’s [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#).

Dr Heather Robson, Head of Northumbria’s School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries said: “Claire’s recognition as a Tees Valley Artist of the Year underscores her exceptional talent and dedication to her craft. She is a fantastic example of the talent in the region.

“Northumbria is committed to supporting the arts and nurturing creativity and innovation. We congratulate Claire and look forward to seeing more of her work.”

Claire is also part of a network of student and graduate entrepreneurs at Northumbria who benefit from business support through the University’s [Incubator Hub](#) – a dedicated co-working space providing start-ups with the best possible opportunity to establish and grow thriving businesses.

She recently completed a 12-week entrepreneurship course with the Susan Dobson Memorial Fund and plans to leverage the skills and knowledge she has gained to establish herself as a self-employed businesswoman so that she can continue working full-time as an artist.

At the end of the course, Claire and nine other female entrepreneurs were invited to pitch their businesses to the Trust for a share of funding and she was awarded a further £3,500. With this funding, she intends to outsource the manufacturing of her products and take them to trade shows.



Northumbria's School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries offers study programmes in Arts and Environment, Fashion, Product and Heritage, Visual Communication and Digital Cultures which are delivered internationally, with partnerships including the BINUS-Northumbria School of Design in Indonesia and the Academy of Design in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, Arts and Creative programmes are led by world-renowned experts in fine art, creative industries, film, media, performance and visual cultures with opportunities to study abroad and via institutional partners in Singapore, Indonesia, and China.

Central to the learning experience are opportunities for students to work on live projects with a range of cultural and industry partners. Discover more online by visiting <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/>

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