

# Pre-Raphaelites: Dreaming of a Medieval World

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery  
16 May – 27 September 2020

## Audio commission brief

### Background

This exhibition includes work by high profile Pre-Raphaelite artists and associates of the group – Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, William Morris, Ford Madox Brown and Frank Dicksee, as well as by less well-known names. Seven of the paintings are from Bristol Museum & Art Gallery’s own collection, and the rest are loans from Tate, the Guildhall Art Gallery, Manchester Art Gallery, the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Ashmolean Museum.

It explores how and why this group of Victorian and Edwardian artists chose to escape into a fictionalised version of a medieval England, touching upon parallels with today. The artists’ medievalism spanned both their choice of historic, religious and legendary subject matter and antiquarian detail as well as their (selective) aesthetic engagement with the medieval world (choice of colours, ornaments etc.) For them the medieval provided ideal models for national identity, social cohesion, and femininity. As well as exploring this idea, the show will encourage visitors to spend time with the paintings and think about what transports them to another time or place and why, engaging different senses (sight, sound, smell and touch). We are actively inviting visitors to relax and daydream in the gallery. Separately from this brief, we will be recording readings of relevant literature and working with the University of Bristol to select music that people can listen to in the main part of the gallery.

Linking with our wellbeing and family work, a multisensory room at the end of the exhibition will ‘take visitors into’ one of the paintings – Edward Burne-Jones’ Briar Rose series: *The Garden Court* - which is inspired by the Sleeping Beauty story. It is here that the commissioned audio will be used. Most of the time this ‘sensory space’ will be available for general exhibition visitors to explore, but there will also be guided sessions for arts and mental health groups, people living with dementia and their carers, and children with Special Educational Needs and their families. Research and practice has demonstrated sensory spaces to be effective ways of engaging people with SEN and dementia, encouraging interaction and communication, honing motor skills and memory, and building resilience to sensory overstimulation. You can see examples of standard sensory rooms at: <https://www.rompa.com/interactive-sensory-room> Ours will be bespoke and built around the painting.

**For more information on exhibition themes and audiences, see Design and Interpretation brief.**

### **Audio commission: what we want to do and why**

We want the exhibition to be a more immersive experience than a standard exhibition of paintings. Audio enables visitors to listen whilst looking. It can also transport them beyond the gallery space and create an emotional and perceptual environment.

We invite an artist (or group) to create a soundscape in response to Burne-Jones' *The Garden Court*. This will be used in the sensory space at the end of the exhibition, alongside specially designed seating, lighting, projection, tactile elements and scent. The soundscape may consist of spoken word, music, other sounds, or a combination. It is not yet decided whether it will play continuously or be triggered by visitors – this is one of the things to be discussed with the Exhibition Designer, AV Content Developer and Participation team.

The audio needs to:

- Respond to the painting and in some way draw visitors into it
- Be developed in line with design and AV plans for the space to integrate the experience
- Be conducive to relaxation / daydreaming and lingering in the space
- Avoid specialist or academic language unless it is clearly explained
- Be provided as exhibition-ready MP3 files

You may come from any creative background (e.g. music, performance, sound design, theatre, writing) as long as you can demonstrate the skills and experience to deliver the brief. You do not need to have expertise in SEN, sensory rooms or related practices.

### **Schedule:**

Application deadline: 7/1/20 midnight  
Interviews: 16/1/20 – 17/1/20  
By 31/1/20: meet with the exhibition designer and AV content developer and share a plan for the audio with the exhibition team  
By 28/2/20: share a draft of the audio with the exhibition team for comment  
By 31/3/20: make any changes by negotiation with the team and provide final files

### **Fee:**

£1,000 flat rate fee. Unless otherwise agreed, this includes the costs of travel for research, any collaborators' fees and hire or purchase of any materials, equipment or facilities.

### **How to apply:**

Application is by expression of interest. Email your CV to [karen.macdonald@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:karen.macdonald@bristol.gov.uk) along with a short statement of up to 300 words outlining the reason for your interest and an indication of how you would approach the commission. Please include links to 2 or 3 relevant examples of your recent work.

Closing date for expressions of interest: 7/1/20 midnight

Late applications will not be considered.

## About the painting



The Garden Court (from the Briar Rose series)

Edward Coley Burne-Jones

1894

Oil on canvas

Burne-Jones painted four scenes from the story of Sleeping Beauty (Dornröschen, or Briar Rose, in German) to be paired with verses by his friend William Morris. This is the third scene of the series, and the painting above is one of several versions that Burne-Jones made over the course of a number of years. There is only one complete set, which hangs in Buscot Park, Berkshire; ours is from the third set, which was sold and dispersed to different collections. It was off display for many years because the canvas was degrading and the weight of the paint layers threatened to pull it off the stretcher, but in 2012 funding was secured to re-line and conserve the work.

Morris' verse for this scene of the story goes:

The maiden pleasance of the land  
Knoweth no stir of voice or hand  
No cup the sleeping waters fill  
The restless shuttle lieth still

The scene shows part of the palace court after the spell has been cast and all the inhabitants have fallen asleep. Nature is reclaiming the garden. One woman has fallen asleep at the loom; on the ground her friend is still holding spherical loom weights or balls of thread. The other women lean against the loom frame or on architectural details.