



# Echoes in Blue

A Dialogue Across Generations

Curator: Jianan Lu



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# Core Concept

“Echoes in Blue” will explore new expressions of blue print fabric as a cultural symbol in contemporary art and life, combining traditional craftsmanship and modern design to promote cross-cultural and inter-generational dialogue, focusing on identity, heritage and innovation. It is dedicated to revealing blue print fabric as a cultural symbol at the intersection of tradition and modernity, East and West, nature and technology. The use of natural blue prints has gained renewed attention globally at a time when global environmental and human health issues are receiving increasing attention. Studies have shown that natural blue prints show more respect for ecological and cultural heritage than synthetic dyes (Li et al., 2019). Furthermore, blue prints are often seen as a symbol of independence and individual expression in different cultures (Błyskal, 2016).

Drawing on the Asian Art Museum's Mood Indigo: Textiles From Around the World exhibition, which showcased the use of indigo dyes in textile art across the globe, and emphasised the universality of indigo across cultures, highlighting its commonality in global art forms and expressions (Asian Art Museum, 2016 ). By integrating historical and contemporary interpretations of the use of indigo from different regions, this exhibition aims to enhance the viewer's global understanding and empathy with the exhibition's theme. Meanwhile, the exhibition Àdìrẹ - 'tied and dyed' indigo textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum explores the Yoruba indigo resist-dyeing technique, demonstrating the legacy of the technique and its cultural depth. This demonstration of traditional craftsmanship provides a benchmark for exhibitions combining physical and digital platforms to showcase complex craftsmanship, reinforcing the curatorial concept of engaging audiences through the display of complex craftsmanship. (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2022).

The exhibition therefore employs a variety of curatorial approaches, including participatory curation, digital curation and critical curation. The audience will be part of the content of the exhibition (Schwartz, 2016). The exhibition will combine physical and digital exhibition platforms to provide an immersive exhibition experience that allows for the historical and technical processes of blue print fabric to be demonstrated through a multi-sensory experience (Harding, Liggett, & Lochrie, 2019). The methodology of critical curation helps to explore how to keep traditional crafts alive and relevant in the face of globalisation and technological advances, i.e. how blue prints can serve as a medium for cultural identity and transmission, enriching cross-cultural dialogue (Brasó, 2021). The audience is led to appreciate the aesthetic value of blue print as an art form while feeling its significance as a bridge of cultural exchange. In addition, through artist interviews, public art projects and interactive experiences, as well as in-depth social media interventions, this exhibition demonstrates the traditional process of blue print production and its innovative application in contemporary art, thus promoting the modern transformation of this technique.



# Core Concept

In the context of modern transformation and cultural expression in the context of globalisation and technological advancement, I am particularly interested in how blue print fabric art can blossom with its unique cultural and ecological awareness while maintaining the vitality of its traditional craftsmanship. Demonstrating the indispensable role of art in understanding and connecting the lives of people in different cultural contexts (Letts, 2015). In addition, McMahon (2019) has shown the age-old controversy between art and philosophy, especially in how artworks can provoke thoughts on the understanding of art while not overtly influencing us. This curatorial approach not only challenges traditional ways of perceiving audiences, but also reinforces the importance of engaging audiences in critical thinking through the creative presentation of art, while Spasova's (2018) account further emphasises the importance of visual culture, exploring the realities and myths of the 'visual turn' in contemporary culture, highlighting the role of visual elements in expressing and influencing culture. It emphasises the role of visual elements in expressing and influencing cultural identity.

Finally, Echoes in Blue focuses on blue print fabric as an eco-friendly art form. The exhibition demonstrates the responsibility of art in ecological conservation and cultural sustainability by showing how blue-printed fabric conveys a message of sustainability by minimising environmental impact. This not only demonstrates the aesthetic value of blue print fabric art, but also highlights its role in cultural, social and environmental dialogue, exploring the multi-layered interaction between art and social reality.



# Participating Artists and Guests

I have taken a holistic approach to the selection of artists and guests, with the aim of showcasing the diversity of expression of the blue print technique as a cultural icon. The group of artists in this exhibition includes established blue print artists of international repute, with a particular focus on emerging local Scottish artists who have the potential to present new perspectives in the field of traditional blue print techniques. Our exhibitions not only add practicality, but also bring fresh perspectives and creativity. This strategy echoes the views of David Carrier, who in his exploration of the contemporary art scene mentions that 'local artists can offer a unique cultural perspective that is lacking in the international art scene' (Carrier, 2008).



We place particular emphasis on inclusivity and diversity. The exhibition deliberately highlights artists from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds as a way of demonstrating the unique position and expression of blue print techniques in different cultures around the globe. This inclusion of global perspectives reflects the universality of the blue print technique and its exchange and influence in the global art scene. Artists' participation methods include offline participation and virtual participation. I consider working with art colleges and communities to invite their students to participate in exhibitions to reduce costs while increasing the diversity and educational component of the exhibition, as Henry Giroux emphasises, 'Educational collaborations can stimulate innovation and social engagement' (Giroux, 2001). For high-profile artists, we used virtual participation, such as video interviews and online seminars. as this type of participation usually requires less time and effort (Beiguelman, 2010). Finally, in order to deepen the educational and cultural dimension of the exhibition, this curatorial project will also encompass textile historians, cultural scholars and craftspeople who will provide insights into the technical and cultural significance of the exhibition. This not only enriches the exhibition, but also provides the audience with the opportunity to learn from experts, making Echoes in Blue an exhibition experience that is both educational and cultural (Fraser & Rothman, 2017). Through this multi-dimensional artist selection strategy, we hope that Echoes in Blue will not only serve as a platform for viewers to appreciate the beauty of blue print art, but also as a bridge for them to understand the cross-cultural significance of blue prints and explore the dialogue between tradition and modernity.



# Artworks

## Artist: Wu Yuanxin (China)

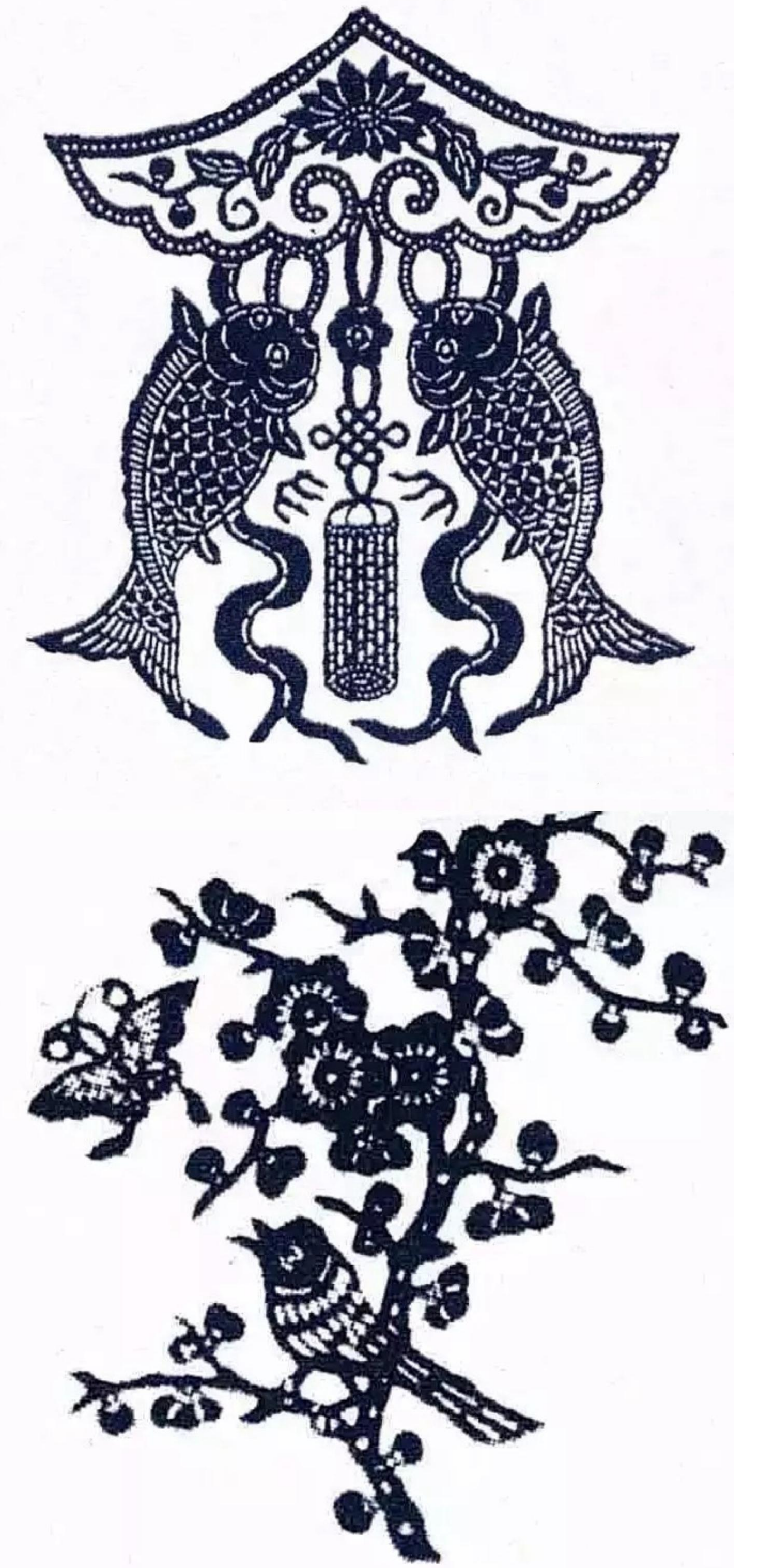
Description: Selected from Wu Yuanxin's thirty years of collecting, organising and researching, this series of works embodies the unique artistic and cultural values of traditional Chinese blue print fabric. By displaying different patterns, Wu Yuanxin not only preserves the historical memory of this traditional craft, but also emphasises the inheritance and development of handicrafts in modern society. These works not only demonstrate the virtuosity of the craft, but also explore the evolution of cultural identity and tradition in the context of globalisation.

Medium: Tattoo Display



Wu, Yuanxin. (2016). Complete Collection of Chinese Blue Calico Patterns (《中国蓝印花布纹样大全》). Nanjing: Jiangsu Arts and Crafts Publishing House. ISBN: 9787534472145.

Title: The Complete Collection of Chinese Blue Printed Fabric Patterns

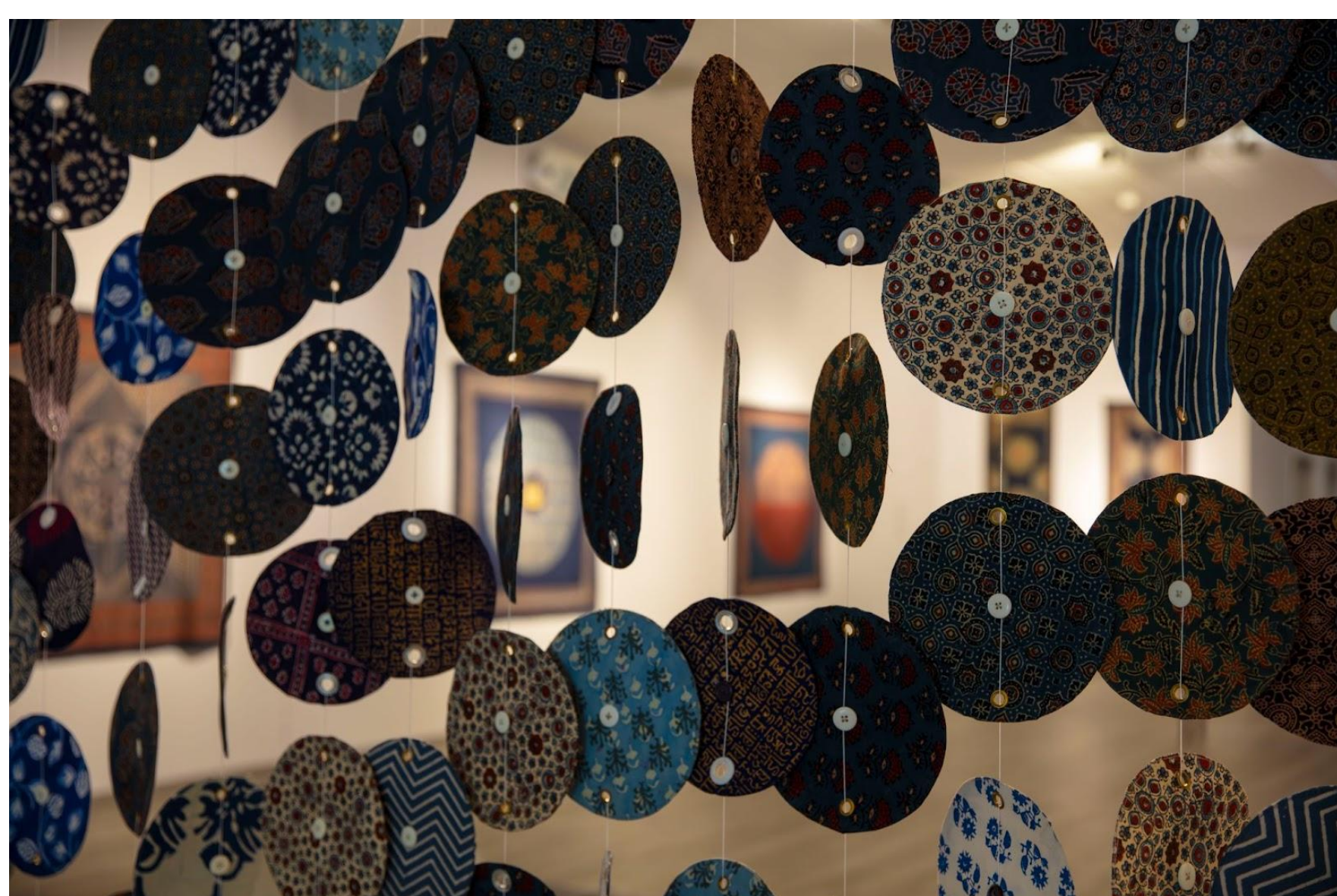
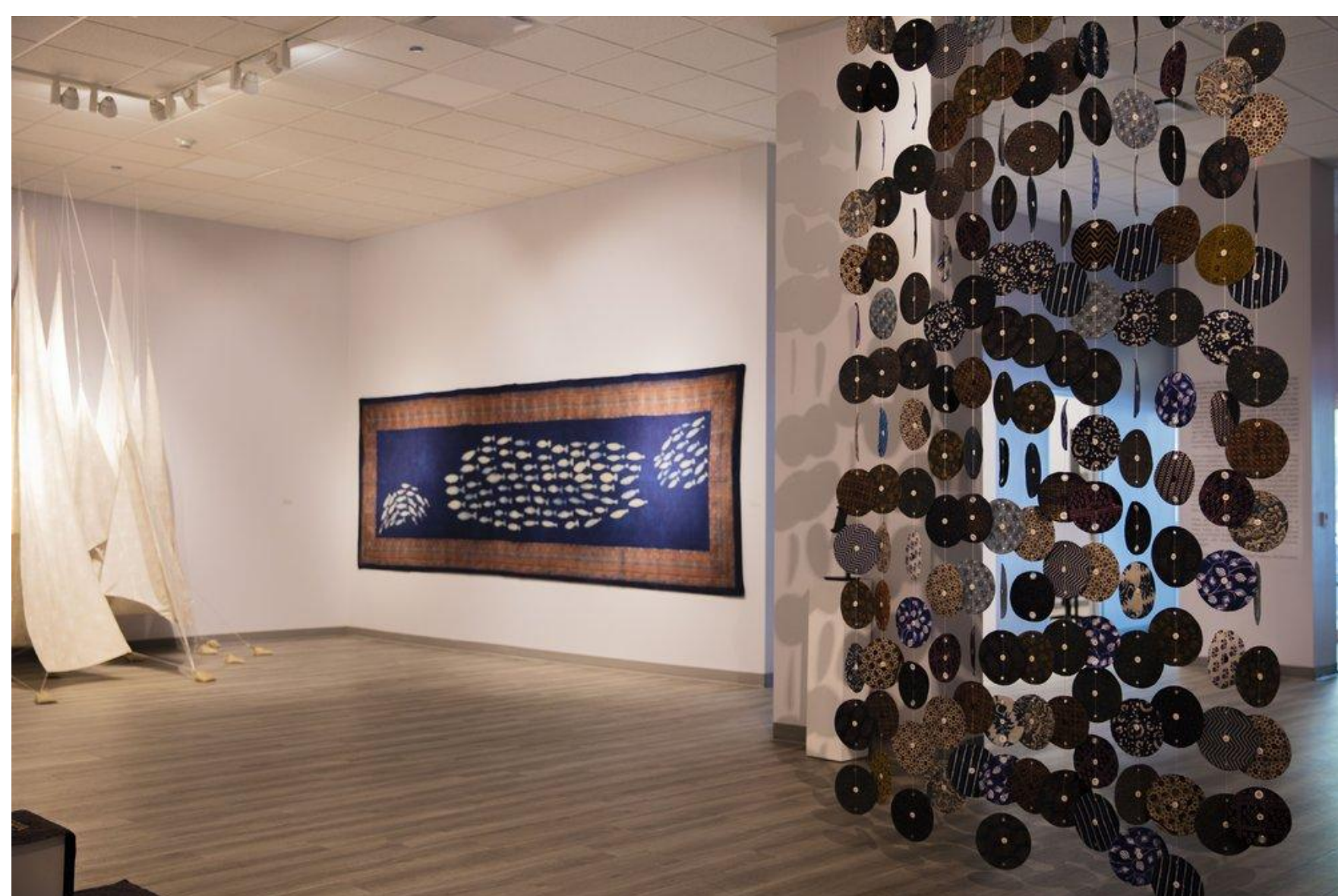


Ricketts, R. (2023). Fields of Indigo installation by Rowland Ricketts with sound by Norbert Herber [Image]. Krannert Art Museum. Available at: <https://kam.illinois.edu/exhibition/fields-indigo-installation-rowland-ricketts-sound-norbert-herber>

Title: Fields of Indigo (2012)

Description: Created by Rowland Ricketts, the work utilises traditional Japanese indigo dyeing techniques exclusively, demonstrating the complete process from cultivation to dyeing. Highlighting the sustainable availability and use of indigo dye in the natural environment and its place in the global cultural heritage, Ricketts explores the relationship between colour, time and space through this work, while allowing the viewer to experience how colour plays a cultural and historical role in our lives.

Medium: Dyed Textile, Installation



South Asia Institute (2023) Title of the image if available. Available at: <https://www.saichicago.org/exhibition/shelly-jyoti-indigo-the-blue-gold>

## Artist: Rowland Ricketts (USA)



Ricketts, R. (2019) Ai-no-Keshiki - Indigo Views. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv4WYNvXmbU&t=420s>

Title: Ai-no-Keshiki - Indigo Views (2019)

DESCRIPTION: This work showcases the aesthetics and philosophy of the entire process of indigo dyeing, from planting, to harvesting, to the final dyeing. Using sound installations and indigo dyed textiles, Ricketts creates an immersive environment that explores the visual and aural expression of indigo. The installation is not only a demonstration of the history and craftsmanship of indigo dye, but also an exploration of its use as a medium of communication in different cultures. In this way, Ricketts seeks to convey the deep connection between time, craft and nature.

Medium: Video Installation

## Artist: Shelly Jyoti (India)

Title : Indigo: The Blue Gold (2023)

Description: This exhibition is a mid-career review of Shelly Jyoti's investigations into natural indigo dyes from the 18th-19th century colonial trade in the Indian subcontinent. The exhibition focuses specifically on the long history of indigo, touching on multiple perspectives of global trade, forced labour, slavery, migration and colonisation. Jyoti's work uses repetitive symbols, such as Gandhi's spinning wheel, fish and boats, to tell the story of indigo. She has been creating contemporary hand-woven khadi textiles since 2009, utilising traditional indigo dyeing and ajrak (blue) reverse printing techniques that date back to the ancient Indus Valley civilisation.

Medium: Textile Installation



# Guests

**Name: Molly Kent**

**Role:** Leader of the Blue Print Craft Experience Workshop and Blue Print Crossover Public Art Programme

**Personal:** Edinburgh College of Art graduate, digitised embroidery and textile designer

**Contribution:** Molly will use her expertise in digitised embroidery techniques to lead workshop participants in the production of works that transform blue prints into contemporary textile artworks, demonstrating their versatility and adaptability in contemporary art.

**Name: Julie Louise Bacon**

**Role:** Interactive forum presenter

**Personal:** presenter, curator, artist, teacher at Edinburgh College of Art

**Contribution:** Discussing the place of blue prints in global culture and their ability to connect different cultures and generations.

**Name: James Clegg**

**Role:** Art exhibition guide

**Personal:** Talbot Rice Gallery curator

**Contribution:** talk about how exhibitions are developed, designed and realised





# MEDIUM

The unique power of digital media (video and sound art) as well as installation art is primarily used in the Echoes in Blue exhibition to promote a dynamic dialogue between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary expression. This multimedia approach not only broadens accessibility, but also deepens the sensory engagement of the viewer, enabling them to make a profound connection to themes of cultural heritage and environmental awareness.

## **Activating audience participation and interaction**

Digital media and installations play a key role in broadening audience participation. By stimulating the audience's audiovisual senses, these media transform the viewer into an active participant in the art narrative. This immersive experience challenges traditional ways of viewing art and prompts the viewer to become a co-creator of the interpretation of the work, thus seamlessly aligning with the goal of our exhibition, which is to explore the presentation of the blue print technique as an intersection of culture and innovation ( Bishop, 2012). Furthermore, this participatory art practice is in line with Nicholas Brio's theory, which emphasises that art should move beyond passive reception to active engagement and critical thinking.

## **Multidimensional Perspectives on Cultural Exchange**

Interactive digital media is a conduit for exploring the interplay between natural and synthetic processes in textile production. Video installations provide visual insights into the blue-printed fabric process, while sound art wraps the viewer in a sensory-rich environment that fosters an inclusive appreciation of often marginalised perspectives. The spatially expansive nature of the installation further enhances the immersive experience for the viewer, providing a platform for dynamic interaction and effective intervention. Through these multi-dimensional displays, the commonality and uniqueness of blue impressions across global cultures is vividly portrayed, encouraging new perspectives and reflections (Paul, 2008). This reflects Terry Smith's view that contemporary art is a global dialogue that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

## **Artistic expression in response to globalisation**

The adaptability of digital media and installation art reflects the dynamic intersection of art, technology, culture and society. As Roshi Deutch's theories have emphasised, contemporary art curation should demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to changing social and cultural contexts. These mediums are adept at dealing with the challenges of globalised cultural expression and technological advancement, and therefore resonate deeply with the theme of our exhibition, 'Echoes in Blue'.

Thus, by integrating these mediums, Echoes in Blue not only showcases the aesthetic and historical significance of blue prints, but also highlights their role as a catalyst for cultural exchange and ecological awareness. This strategic use of digital and installation art thus strengthens the exhibition's narrative, making it an engaging educational and cultural experience that bridges the past and present, the local and the global.



# Format

**Group exhibitions** showcasing the work of artists from around the world who use the blue print technique to explore cultural identity and innovation

include:

**Blue Print (Artist's Book, Digital Art) Exhibition:** digitising traditional blue print patterns as vector graphics pasted onto virtual clothing via Ipad, demonstrating the basic components and visual impact of blue print, emphasising its aesthetic simplicity and symbolic meaning, combining education, technology and art .

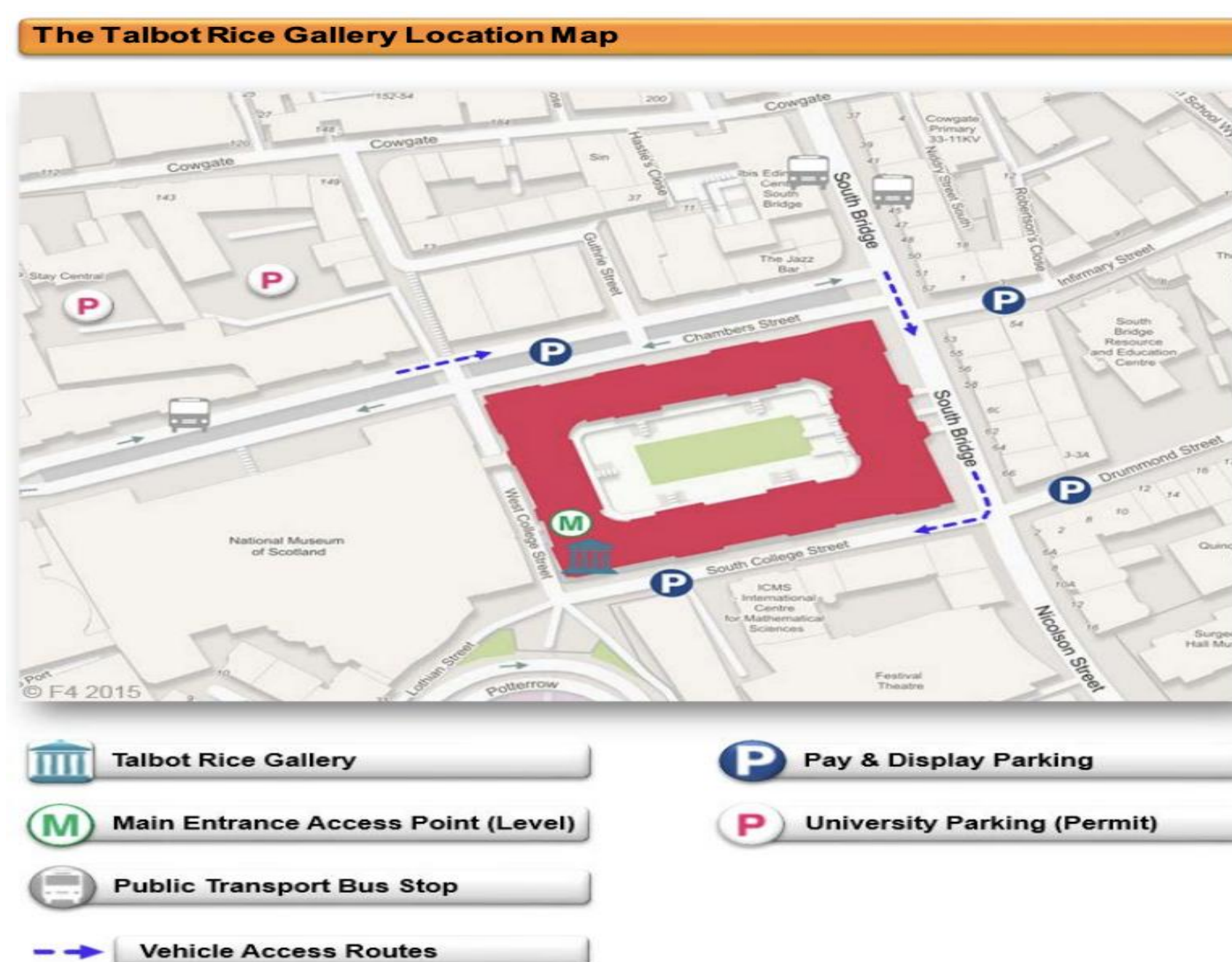
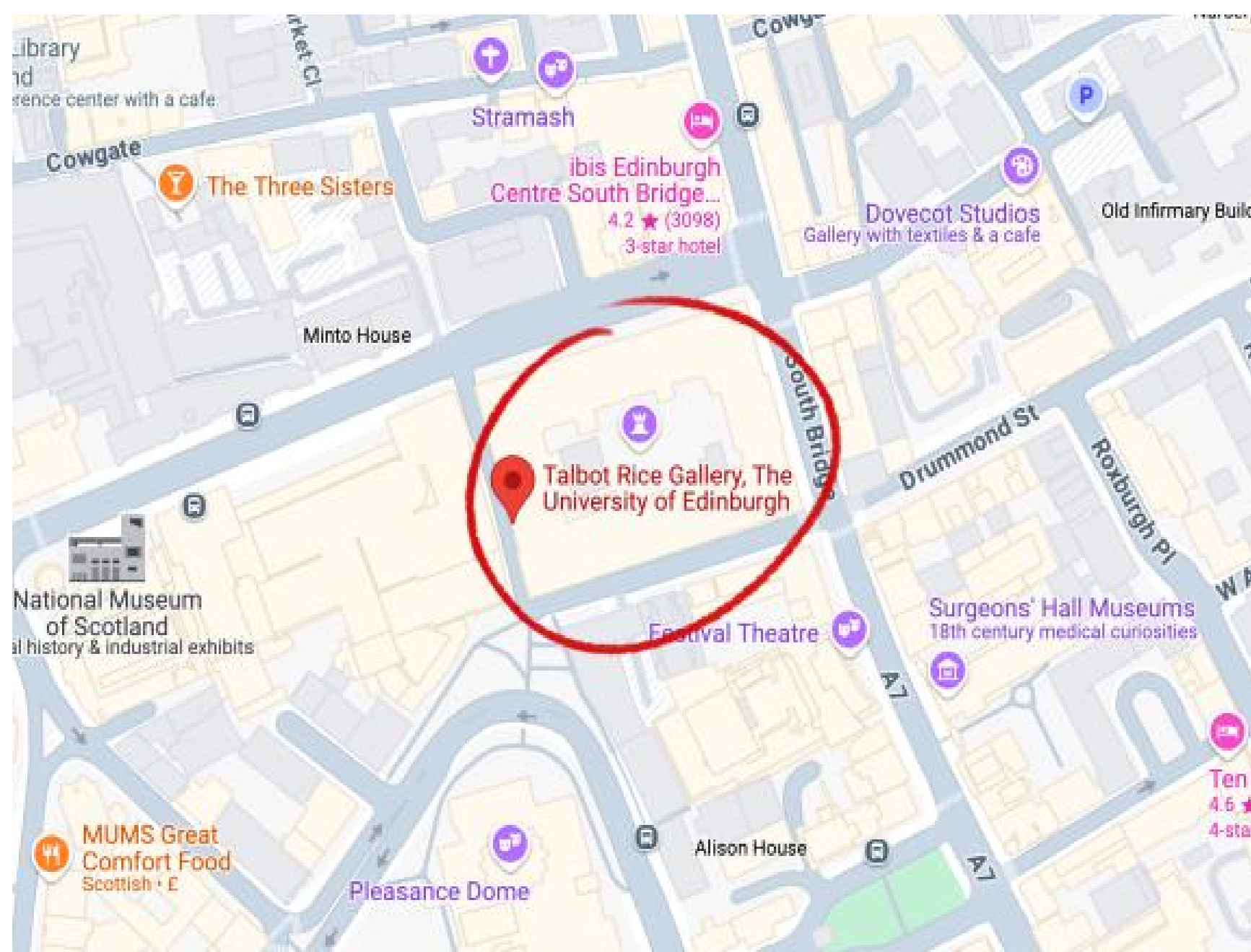
**Artist Interviews and Documentary Screenings:** A combination of interviews and documentaries, allowing the audience to experience the artist's creative process in a near-real way, and to learn about the cultural stories behind the blue .

**Public Art Project Workshop:** Through the creation of a large-scale Blue Seal artwork by participants of all nationalities, the project demonstrates the fusion of diversity and creativity, and enhances cultural understanding and respect.

**Social media activity:** utilising online interactive projects and live streams created by local Scottish artists to increase the online visibility and audience engagement of the project.

# Venue

## Talbot Rice Gallery



### Historical and Cultural Context:

The historical context of the Talbot Rice Gallery fits perfectly with the dialogue of my personal exhibition theme. As a former natural history museum, the venue itself is a historical witness to the interaction between humans and the natural world. It provides a unique narrative space that allows the viewer to explore the art of blue print technique while experiencing the depth and complexity of this history.

### Integration of artistic and academic resources:

The gallery's location at the University of Edinburgh means direct access to academic resources and artistic networks. In contrast to other stand-alone exhibition venues, this set-up provides strong academic support and creative resources for exhibitions, making it easy to contact for bookings and exploration of venues.

### Central location with high accessibility:

The Talbot Rice Gallery is conveniently located in the centre of the city, making it easy to attract a wider audience base than other more remote or lesser-known art venues. Its central location allows exhibitions to reach a diverse audience, including international visitors.



### Inclusivity:

The gallery's accessible design (lift, guide dogs, accessible toilets, deaf and hard of hearing friendly, etc.) ensures that everyone can participate in the exhibition. This is particularly important for curators who want their exhibitions to reach all types of groups. The inclusive design of the gallery is in line with the ethical standards of contemporary exhibitions and reinforces the public engagement and social responsibility of the exhibition.

### Professional Facilities and Technical Support:

In contrast to other venues that may lack the necessary technical facilities and professional maintenance, the Talbot Rice Gallery provides the necessary exhibition infrastructure and technical support to ensure that works of art are properly displayed and maintained.



# EDI

The exhibition emphasises cross-cultural communication and the social interaction of art, echoing Bourriaud's (2002) theory of relational aesthetics in *Relational Aesthetics*, which stresses the social interaction between the artwork and the viewer.

**Respect and equality in cross-cultural displays:**

Exhibition design takes into account respect for each cultural expression, avoiding cultural appropriation and ensuring that all cultural and artistic works on display have been approved by the original artist or cultural representative (Marstine, 2011).

Collaborating with local and international artists to ensure that their voices and perspectives are equally represented demonstrates respect and inclusiveness for individual artists and their cultural backgrounds.

**Accessibility and Participation:**

Interaction through social media and digital platforms enabled a global audience to participate, regardless of their geographical location.

For hearing-impaired visitors, all sound works in the exhibition are closed-captioned.

For blind and partially sighted visitors, the exhibition has a large printed guide. Guide dogs, hearing dogs and registered assistance dogs are welcome.

For the disabled, portable wheelchairs will be available at reception and the exhibition hall is equipped with several accessible lifts and toilets.

## preserving cultural heritage

Emphasis is placed on the preservation and transmission of traditional crafts, while exploring their innovative application in contemporary art. This involves a sensitive issue: how to balance the protection of tradition with encouraging innovation (Zhang & Sun, 2014).

The exhibition planning and implementation process needs to work closely with the cultural inheritors to ensure that their skills and cultural knowledge are presented correctly and respectfully (Smith, 2006).

## Rethinking cultural centrism

The tendency towards cultural centrism needs to be critically reflected upon and avoided in exhibition planning to ensure that multicultural perspectives are presented equally. This means that exhibitions are not just about presenting 'other' cultures, but about genuine intercultural dialogue and exchange (Kurin, 2007).

## Fair and transparent partnerships

When working with artists and craftspeople, ensure that the partnership is fair and transparent, especially in terms of financial and intellectual property sharing. Partners should feel that their contributions are treated fairly and rewarded appropriately, which is also in line with artistic ethics (Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013).

## Cultural adaptability and flexibility

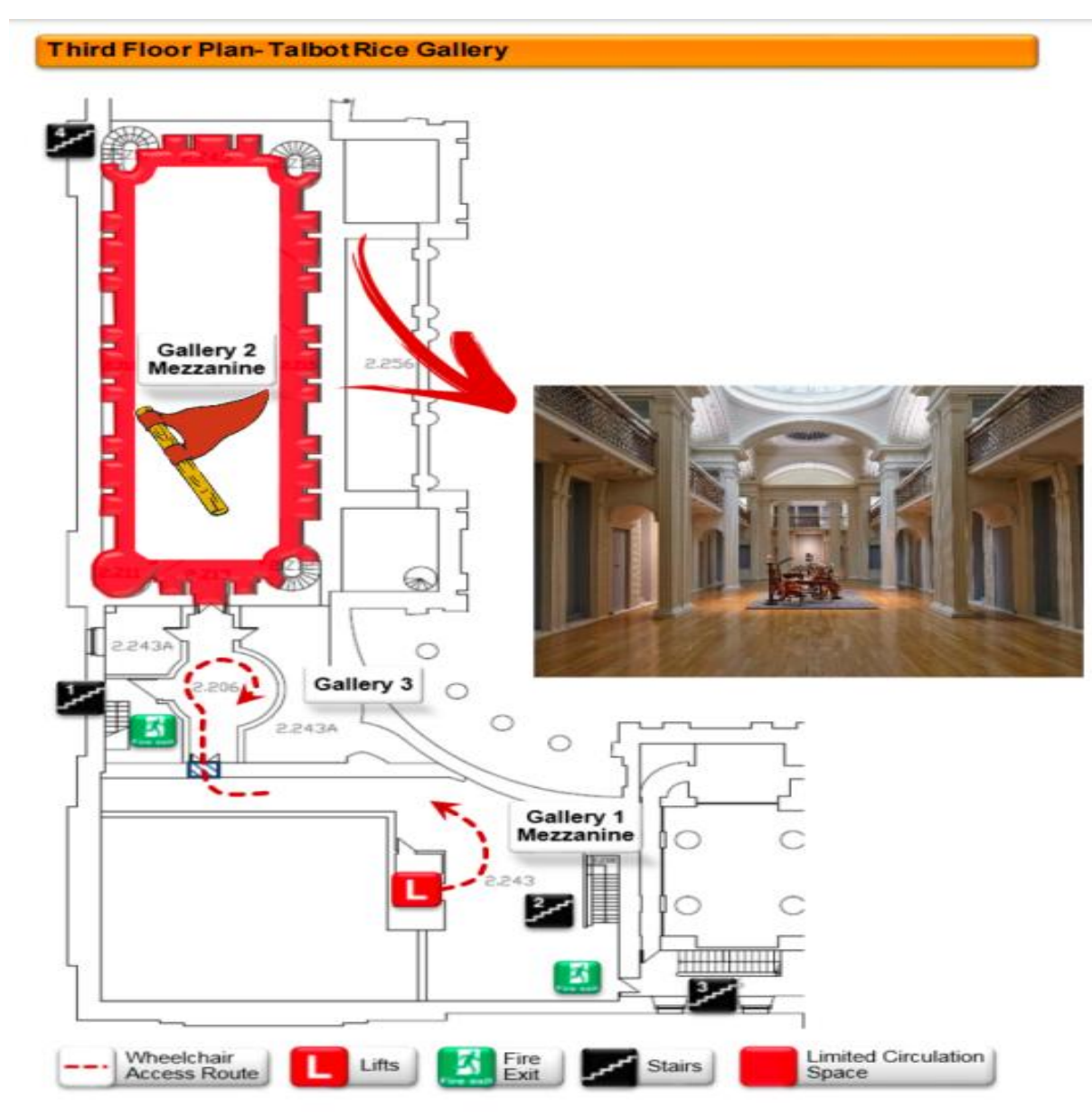
Considering the rapid changes in cultural and social environments, exhibition design should be adaptable and flexible, able to respond to and reflect these changes. This may include temporary exhibition updates, new artist interventions, or immediate interpretations of exhibition themes (Smith, 2006).



# Programme

Interviews with exhibiting artists and question-and-answer session (online)

Saturday 14 September 2024  
14:00 - 15:00



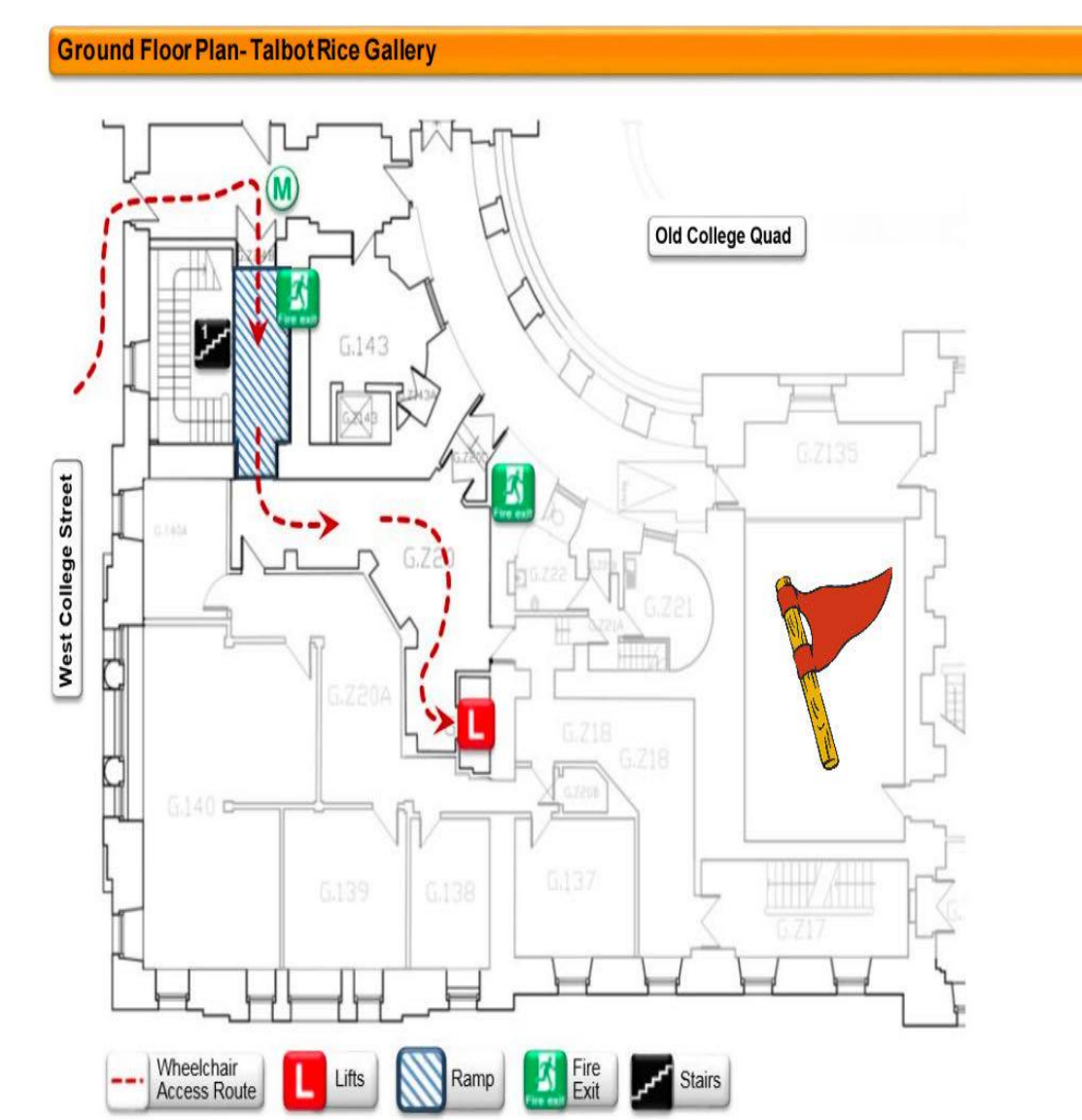
## Gallery1, Talbot Rice Gallery

Guests: Wu Yuanxin (with simultaneous interpretation), Rowland Ricketts, Shelly Jyoti

Content: An exploration of the application of blue print techniques across cultures and eras and their impact on contemporary art.  
Audience: Online and offline people interested in artists' biographies and the historical traceability of blue prints.

Blue Print Craft Experience Workshop  
Time: Every Tuesday

(for six weeks starting 17 September)  
15:30-17:30



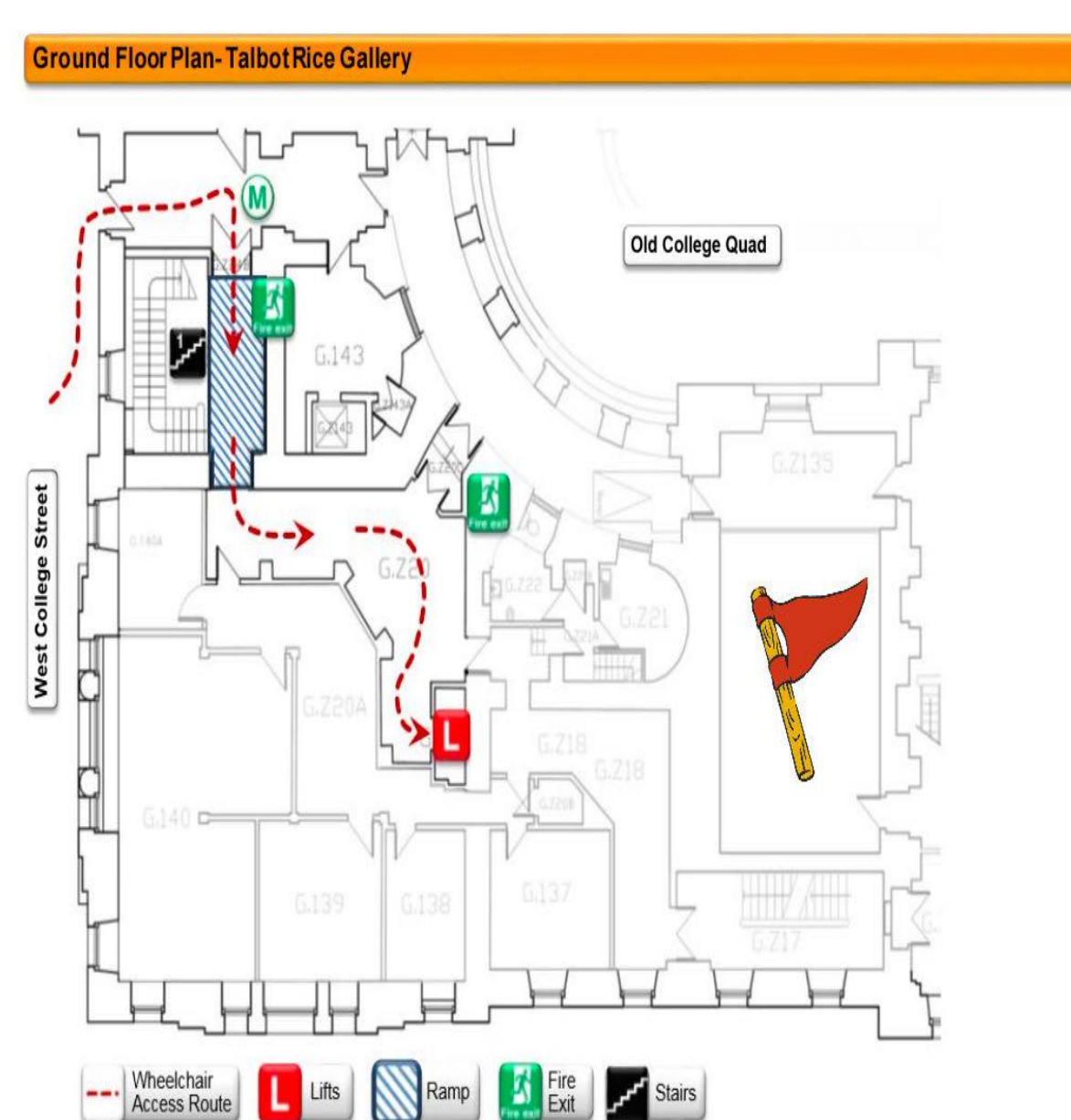
## Talbot Rice Gallery Ground floor

Guest: Molly Kent (artist)

Content: Participants will have the opportunity to experience making blue print fabric and learn about the process and cultural significance.  
Audience: Craft enthusiasts and cultural experiencers

## Blue Print Cross-Border Public Art Project

21 September (Saturday)  
15:00-17:00



## Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Ground floor

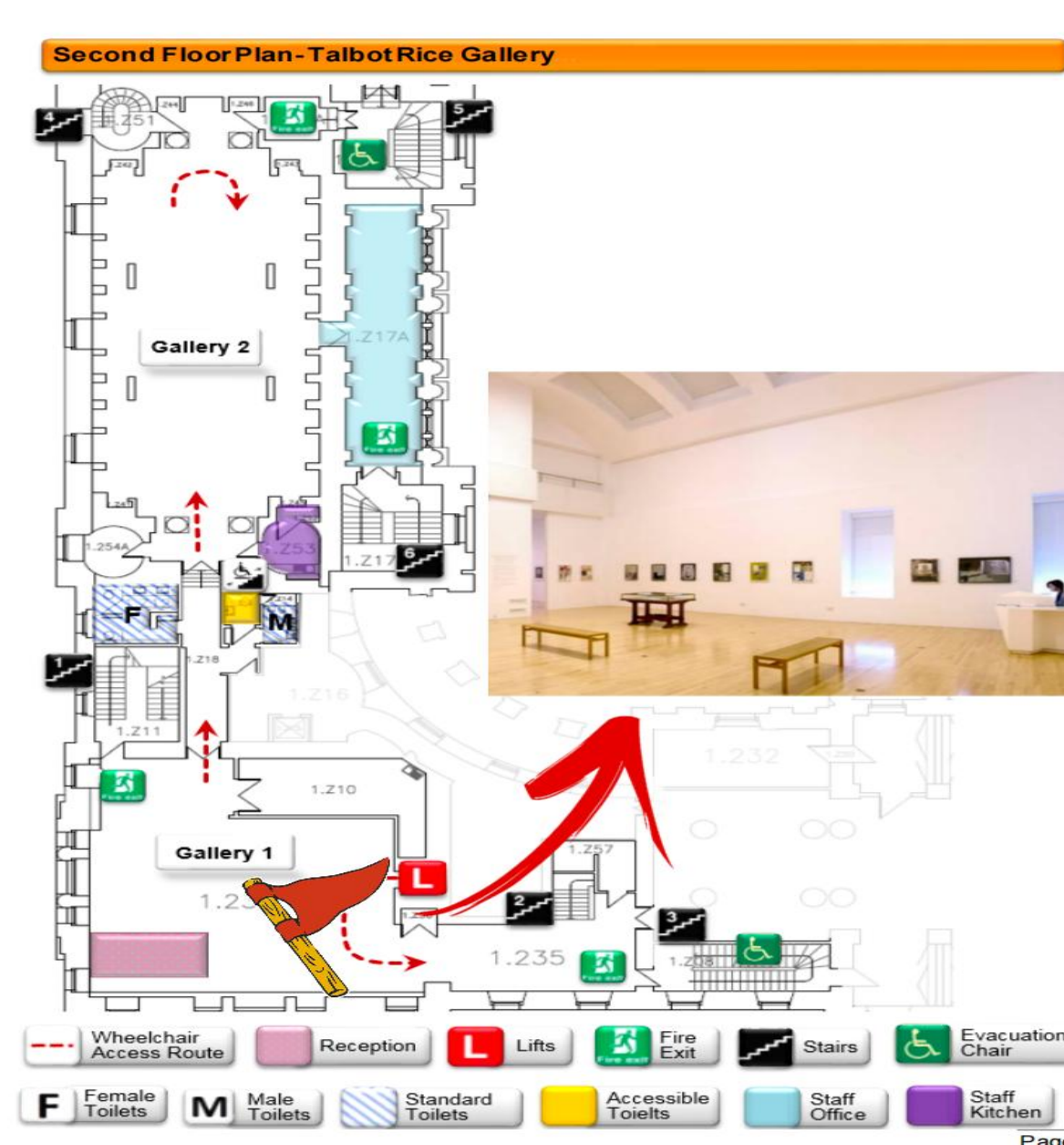
Guest: Molly Kent (artist)

Content: Organise the public to work together to create a large scale blue print artwork (5m\*5m). Each person's personal style This diversity reflects the fusion of different cultures and personal perspectives. With proper organisation and guidance, this diversity can be transformed into a harmonious whole. Reflecting the cross-cultural dimension. Through co-creation, participants learn different artistic skills, enhancing the experience while learning about each other's cultural backgrounds and perspectives, thus promoting cultural understanding and respect.

Audience: craft enthusiasts and cultural experiencers, Edinburgh University students, random visitors to the exhibition

## Guided tour of the art exhibition

5 October (Saturday)  
16:00 - 17:00



## Venue: Gallery1, Talbot Rice Gallery

Tour guide: James Clegg

Content: Interpretation of the main works in the exhibition and the way they are displayed, and talk about the creative intentions of the artists from different countries.

Audience: Art lovers and the general public

## Interactive Forum

25 October 2024 (Saturday)  
13:30 - 17:00



## Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Seminar Room

Guests: Julie Louise Bacon, Molly Kent, James Clegg

Content: An exploration of the place of the Blue Seal in global culture and how it connects different cultures and generations.

Audience: Students, educators, cultural researchers



# Audience

## **Professionals in the field of art and culture:**

- Artists, art historians, textile designers and other art practitioners with a strong professional interest in the history and technical processes of blue print fabric art.
- Explorers of the combination of modern art and traditional craftsmanship, interested in the combination of blue print fabric art and modern design presented in the exhibition.

## **Wide range of educational groups and students:**

- Students, educators at Edinboro University and community colleges with an interest in interdisciplinary learning, especially the integration of the fields of art, environmental science, and anthropology.
- Young audiences and innovators seeking to explore the intersection of culture and technology in the arts.

## **Environmental protection and cultural heritage advocate:**

- Environmentalists and cultural heritage advocates concerned with ecological sustainability and the preservation of traditional crafts, especially those interested in natural dyes and sustainable art practices.

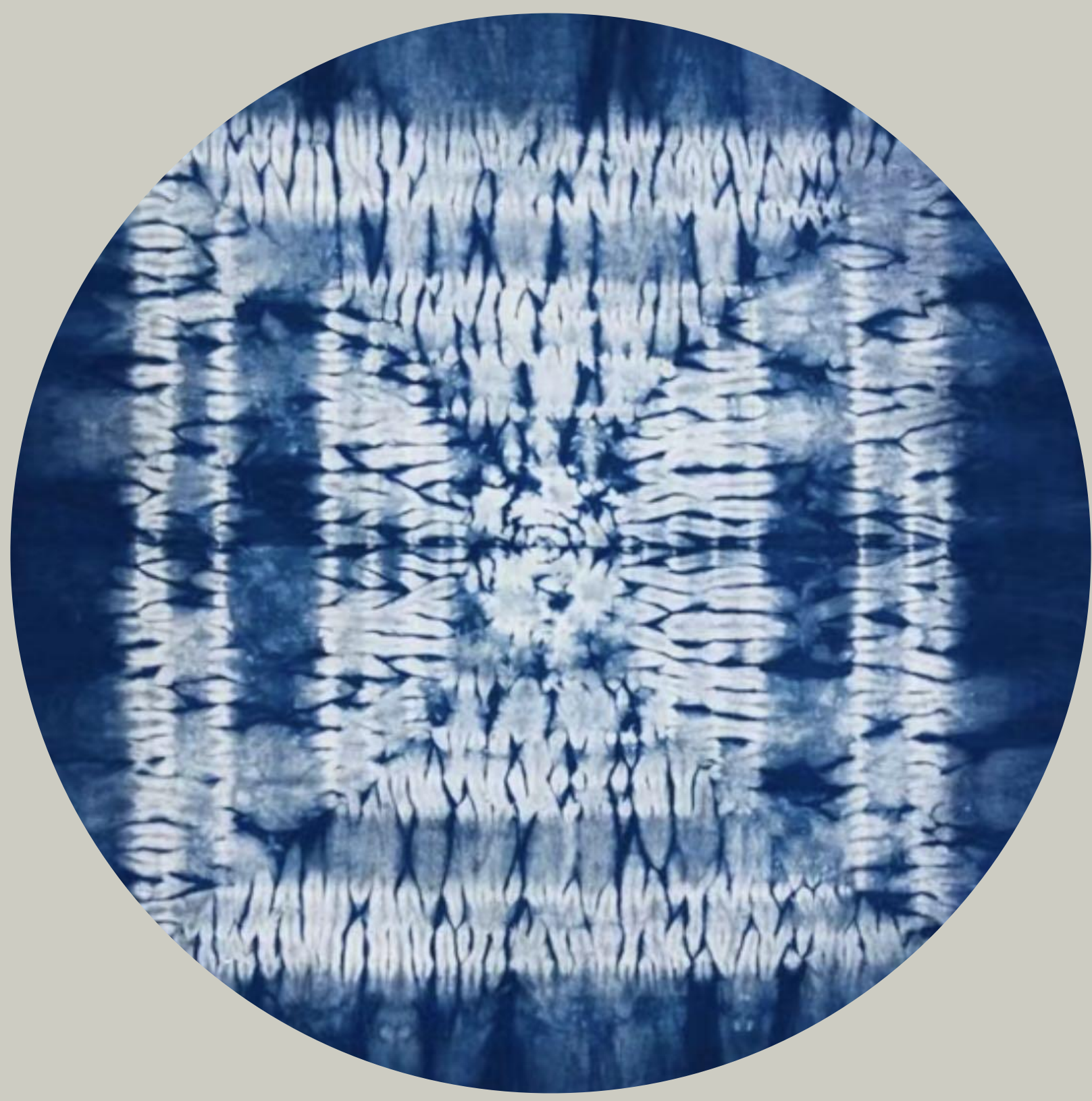
## **General public and cultural tourists:**

- Local residents and international tourists interested in exotic cultures and global artistic expressions.
- Cultural enthusiasts looking for unique visual and sensory experiences who are interested in exploring the commonalities and differences of different cultures through art forms.

## **Digital media and new technology enthusiasts:**

- Viewers interested in the fusion of art and technology, particularly the use of digital and interactive media in artistic expression.
- Young audiences seeking cultural experiences through online platforms and social media, who tend to engage with arts and culture through digital interaction.





## Exhibition preparation timeline: 19 May - 30 August 2024

### Venue and Artist Coordination

Venue search and confirmation: 1 May - 15 May  
Confirmation of payment methods and deposits: 15 May - 1 June  
Artist and Artwork Selection: 2 May - 23 May  
Artist Expansion & Confirmation: 16th May - 23rd May  
First draft of space layout: 1 June  
Finalisation of space layout and communication with artists: 25 June

### Logistics and Equipment Arrangement

Transportation of artwork: 15 July - 23 July  
Equipment list and rental confirmation: 15 July - 25 July

### Risk assessment and insurance procurement

Risk Assessment: 15 July  
Insurance procurement: 10 July

### Funding Coordination

Negotiation and arrival of first tranche of funds: 1 July  
Second tranche of funds received: 1 August  
Third tranche of funding arrives: 1 September

### Materials and Promotion

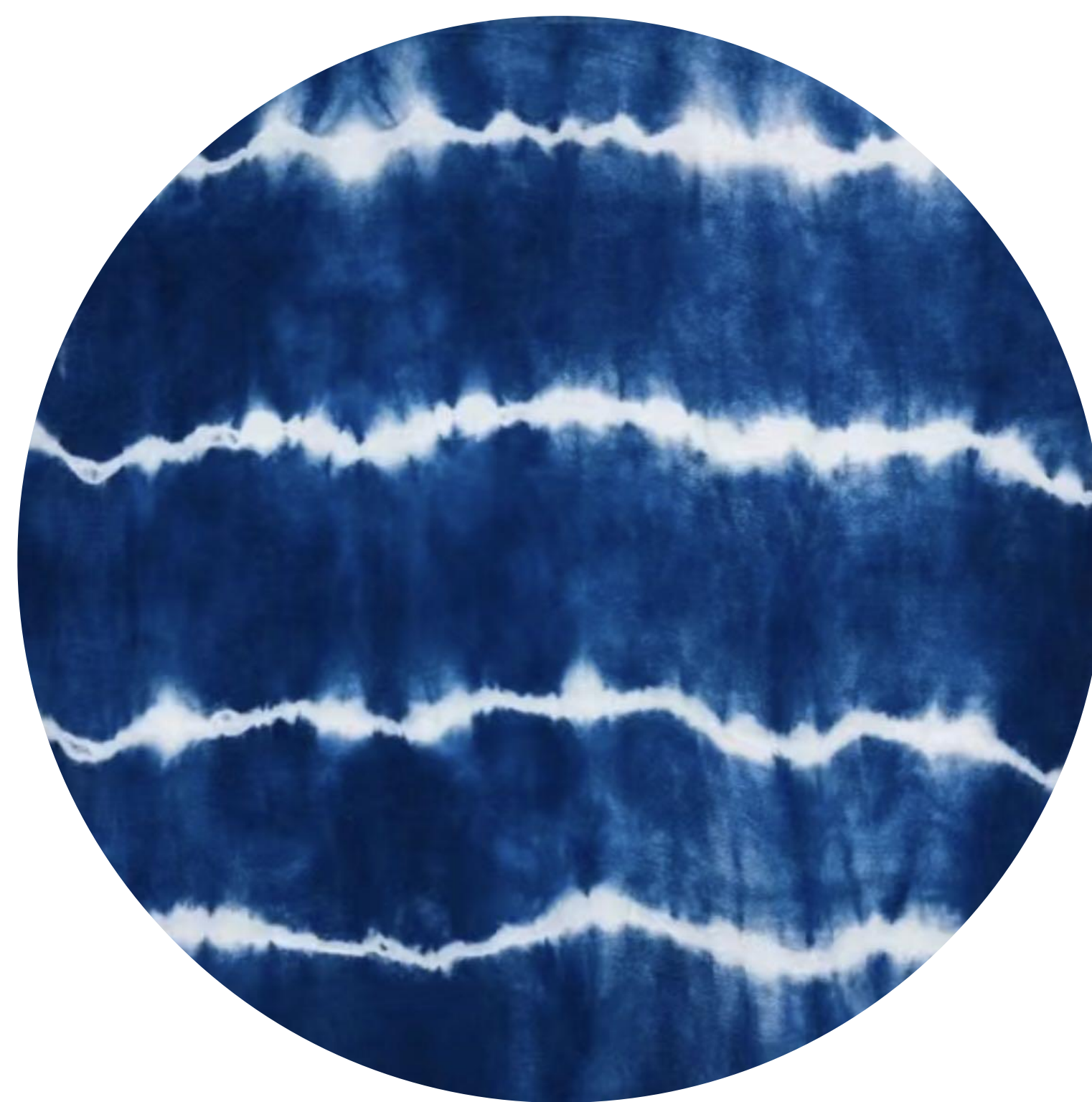
Text writing for promotional materials: 20 June - 25 June  
Promotional material design: 25 June - 10 July  
Publicity material printing and promotion: 12 July - 5 August

### Public programme proposal and booking

Event proposal drafting: 12 May  
Expert contact and finalisation: 17 July - 18 July  
Booking confirmation: 20 July

### Installation and exhibition preparation

Space renovation: 20 July - 27 July  
Volunteer Recruitment: 10th - 20th July  
Artwork Installation: 28 July - 31 July  
Exhibition Preparation: 2 August - 30 August



## Exhibition timeline: 14 September - 30 October 2024

### Online Artist Interviews and Q&A Sessions

Date: 14 September, 14:00 - 15:00  
Venue: Gallery1, Talbot Rice Gallery; Online Live Streaming Platform

### Blue Print Craft Experience Workshop

Date: Tuesdays from 17 September, 15:30 - 17:30 (six consecutive weeks)  
Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Ground floor

### Blue Print Cross-Border Public Art Project

Date: 21 September, 15:30-17:30  
Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Ground floor

### Guided tour of the art exhibition

Date: 5 October, 14:00 - 17:00  
Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Gallery1

### Interactive Forum

Date: 25 October, 13:30 - 17:00  
Venue: Talbot Rice Gallery Seminar Room



# Budget and Funding

Category	Details	Amount (GBP)	Category	Details	Amount ( (GBP)
Preparation Costs			Income		
	Research Fee	50		Creative Scotland Funding	1000
	Staff Salaries	300		Edinburgh Art College Support	500
Execution Costs				Curatorial Course Project Fund	16
	Artist Travel	250		Kickstarter Crowdfunding	1000
	Transportation and Logistics	200	Total Income		2516
	Installation and Dismantling	150			
	Design and Layout	100			
	Artwork Rental Fee	200			
	Materials for Workshops	100			
	Technical Support and Equipment	100			
	Audience Interaction and Activities	100			
Marketing Costs					
	Promotion and Advertising	150			
	Photographer	100			
Contingency Costs					
	Insurance	100			
Total Expenses		1900			

The later stages of project implementation will be checked for any additional hidden costs, such as taxes or additional service charges.

Efforts are made to try and reduce costs by working with the local community. These figures may need to be adjusted depending on the circumstances and market prices.

If venue costs can be covered by Edinburgh College of Art, with labour seeking volunteers from the University of Edinburgh or other communities wherever possible, then there will be more room in the budget for unforeseen expenses.

The above budget allocations will need to be adjusted to ensure the smooth delivery of activities.





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