



August —————
— September —————
————— October 2023

Linen Biennale

A celebration of linen,
past, present, and future

linenbiennalenorthernireland.com



Revive — — and — — Renew

Linen and flax production is inextricably linked to the social, agricultural, and industrial heritage of Northern Ireland. The themes of 2023 consciously overlap and interweave.

The intention to **Revive**: return to life and consciousness; the Linen Biennale itself after a five-year hiatus; and also linen's place in Northern Ireland's story.

Through this process, as well as by building networks and collaborative partnerships, we aim to **Renew** our collective understanding of and appreciation for linen's legacy – its current value and its enormous potential as a sustainable material of the future.

ABOUT & THEMES	2
WELCOME	3
ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND	4
TALKS & TOURS	6
LISBURN	7
LINEN BIENNALE COMMUNITY	8
ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS	10
LINEN ALIVE NI	12
AUGUST CRAFT MONTH	14
PARTNERSHIPS	15



Primary Funder

R-Space Gallery was awarded a grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to produce the Linen Biennale 2023, creating employment, projects, and new chapters in Northern Ireland's linen story.



Welcome from Anthea & Robert

The Linen Biennale stimulates new thinking about Ireland's oldest textile, linen. Rooted in heritage and reaching out to the last of a generation who worked in the heyday of Ulster's linen production, the Linen Biennale forms a bridge to connect our internationally renowned linen heritage with contemporary uses.

What sets this project apart is our forward-thinking vision that celebrates the past and at the same time opens up new opportunities regarding the future use of linen and flax, its economic potential, and contribution to environmental sustainability.

We wish to extend our thanks to the funders and partners for their support to make this vibrant programme possible, and to the many artists, makers, organisations, and venues who bring the Linen Biennale 2023 to life.

Anthea & Robert
Linen Biennale Founders

PICTURED
Anthea and Robert at the Linen Biennale 2018 launch

Image credit Arts Council NI

Across Northern Ireland

This is a three-month festival of heritage, arts, craft and design. It includes exhibitions and installations, discussions, masterclasses, and performances which take place across Northern Ireland.

These are just a few of the many exciting events taking place in this year's Linen Biennale. Visit our website for the full programme and to find out what's happening in your area.

Plan your journey with translink.co.uk/journeyplanner



Visit

linenbiennialenorthernireland.com/2023

for our full programme of events

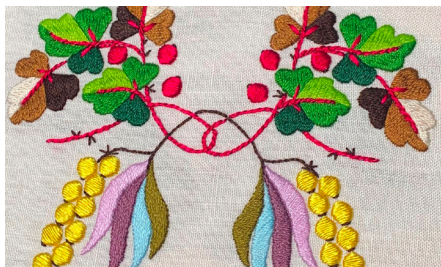


Field to Fabric

Mallon Linen,
Cookstown
26–27 August | Free

Join the **Ulster Guild of Weavers, Spinners, and Dyers** at **Mallon Linen** in Cookstown for their *Field to Fabric* weekend.

See the linen life cycle from flax through to cloth, woven by the skilled hands of the province's guild members – they will even let you have a go!



Royal School of Needlework

Hillsborough Castle,
Hillsborough
25–26 August | From £160

Hillsborough Castle hosts the **Royal School of Needlework's** two very special masterclasses inspired by historic royal outfits – an amazing opportunity for embroidery lovers to learn from some of the most accomplished tutors in the UK.



Rural Communities

Down in the beautiful **Mourne** area look out for events which draw on rural linen heritage, harvest traditions, and highlight local makers and artists.

The **Hilltown Community Association** have the folk festival *Back from the Boley* in late August while **Moneydarragh Hub** are hosting their *Flax and Fibres Celebration*, commemorating the area's role in processing fibres and flowering linens.

Image credits

Mallon Linen; Royal School of Needlework; Moneydarragh Hub

Back from the Boley Festival

Across Hilltown
24–28 August |
Many Events Free

Flax and Fibres Celebration

Moneydarragh Hub,
Annalong
1 September | Free

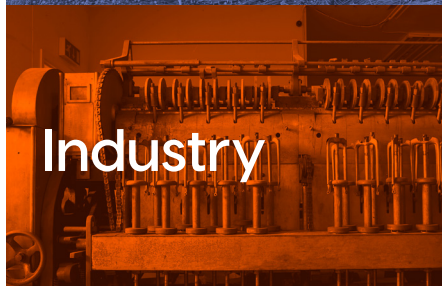
Talks & Tours



Material



Environment



Industry



Narrative

In lieu of a conference, the Linen Biennale 2023 will include a range of short lectures and half-day seminars from August through to October.

These online and in-person talks will be curated around the following sub-themes: **Material**, **Environment**, **Industry**, and **Narrative**.

Already confirmed are lunchtime lectures in the **Linen Hall Library** and short seminars at **Ulster Museum**, with details of more to follow.

Many of our event partners have also organised *Meet the Maker* talks and tours to accompany their exhibitions and displays.

Free Talks & Tours

Belfast Print Workshop
9 & 16 & 23 August

Linen Hall Library
11 & 15 August,
16 & 27 September

Ulster Museum
20 September,
4 October

PRONI (online)
17 October

To find out more visit:
linenbiennialnorthernireland.com/2023

Image credits

From top: Mallon Linen; Mourne Textiles; Helen O'Hare & Wilma Kirkpatrick (detail)

Lisburn

The Biennale launches on **28 July** with the joint opening of two exhibitions in Lisburn:

Common Threads a group exhibition at the **Island Arts Centre**, and *Connected Emotions*, a solo exhibition by **Jill Phillips** at **R-Space Gallery**.

Lisburn sits at the heart of the historic Ulster Linen Triangle.

Today, it is the home of **The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum**. At its heart is the **Lagan Valley Island**, location of the Island Arts Centre, which was built on the site of the Island Mill Spinning Company. And of course R-Space Gallery at the Linen Rooms, headquarters of the Linen Biennale.

The founders of the Biennale believe that linen and flax should be central in the cultural regeneration of Lisburn. It is an authentic story with many facets, awaiting interpretation in new and innovative ways. Other cities who have embraced their own industrial and material heritage as cultural assets, have seen a growth in tourism, an increase in civic pride, and an impact on economic growth.

Common Threads

Island Arts Centre, Lisburn

31 July–26 August | Free

Connected Emotions

R-Space Gallery, Lisburn

1–26 August | Free



PICTURED
Lisburn's historic Hilden Mill, considered one of the largest linen-thread manufacturers in the world

Image credit Ruairí Jordan



Linen Biennale Community

Social inclusion and network building is a key part of our work at the Linen Biennale.

To connect with the widest range of people we are supporting and delivering programmes across Northern Ireland for this Biennale and beyond.

Toile de Jouy Print

Artist **Robert Peters** is working with nine different community groups across Northern Ireland exploring the technique of Toile de Jouy print on linen – highlighting the innovative use of intaglio printmaking in 18th Century Ireland for fabric printing.

These workshops are free to participate in and their work will be presented towards the end of the project. Visit our website for more details.

Image credits

Textile workshop, Rspace Gallery;
participant work in Toile de Jouy style



Participating Groups

Belfast

Upper Springfield
Development Trust

Action Mental
Health

Belvoir Community
Hub

Bangor

Wise the BAP

Downpatrick

Downpatrick
Men's Shed

Lisburn

Action Mental Health

Armagh

Armagh Men's Shed

Craigavon

Action Mental Health

Antrim

Antrim Men's Shed

Lurgan

Mourneview Ladies
Arts and Crafts Group



Woven Hug

Flowerfield, Portstewart
6 July–26 August | Free

We were delighted to build international connections for 2023 through supporting the *Woven Hug* project at **Flowerfield Arts Centre** in Portstewart with artists **Tere Chad** and **Cordelia Rizzo**.

Although not linen – this project is a testament to the engaging power of textiles when applied to collaborative and community projects.

Image credits

Woven Hug on display at Flowerfield Arts Centre;
linen tablecloth detail, photo by Ruairí Jordan



Longest Linen Tablecloth

R-Space Gallery, Lisburn
9 September | Free

We're on a mission to make the *Longest Linen Tablecloth* and have commissioned textile artist **Emma Whitehead** to begin the design process in 2023.

This will be a co-designed and co-produced project with lots of opportunity to be involved, and eventually an invitation to the big picnic when it's completed!

Start the journey with us during the **European Heritage Open Days** upstairs in **The Linen Rooms at R-Space**.

Other venues and 'making days' to be announced throughout the programme.

Become a Flax Friend

If you or a group you are associated with are interested in a flax or linen related creative project get in touch with: linenbiennale@gmail.com

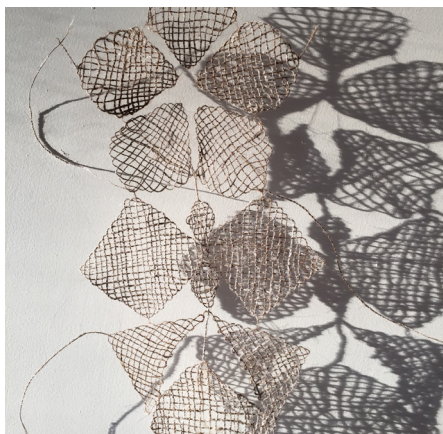
We can help you make it happen!



Artistic Interpretations

Showing creative interpretations and responses to flax, linen and its impact is central to the Linen Biennale's ambition.

We proudly support artists to present and produce inspiring and thought-provoking work.



Plant Communitas

R-Space Gallery, Lisburn
2–29 September | Free

R-Space Gallery will be hosting an international contingent of artists in September with an intriguing exhibition *Plant Communitas: Linum*, curated by **Patricia Brien**.

This exhibition will consider the plant cycle and connections with cultural traditions, inherited knowledge, local practices and intuitive relations within this framework.

Image credits

Ilka White; Lynne Hocking (Photo: Jeni Reid)

Ancestral Interconnections

PRONI, Belfast
29 September–
30 October | Free

Scottish artist **Lynne Hocking** will be bringing her fascinating body of work *Ancestral Interconnections: Matrilineal Threads* to the exhibition space at **PRONI** for the month of October.

Lynne, formerly an academic scientist in the field of human genetics, now develops handwoven textile objects that promote conversations about heritage, connection to place, and identity.



Print & Linen

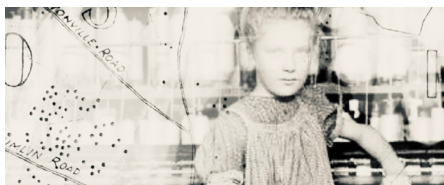
Belfast Print Workshop,
Belfast
5–30 August | Free

Belfast Print Workshop is presenting a group show *Print & Linen* which runs for the month of August, and is accompanied by a fabulous programme of talks and workshops.

The Alchemy of Print

R-Space Gallery, Lisburn
7–31 October | Free

Another not to be missed event for print lovers is *The Alchemy of Print*, a research and exhibition project by academic and textile artist Patricia Belford at R-Space Gallery in October.



Palimpsest

Conway Mill, Belfast
5–30 September | Free

We love seeing former mill buildings become hubs for community and creativity. **Artists at the Mill** are presenting *Palimpsest*, a new exhibition of work in print, ceramics, painting and textiles in the atmospheric location of **The Drying Room at Conway Mill**, West Belfast.



Flax for Paper

Artist **Regine Neumann** is visiting from Canada over July and August. She will be building networks for her *FlaxPaperLab* project which aims to develop new strategies for working with flax pulp and integrate collaboration into papermaking.



New Commissions

A number of significant Northern Irish artists are also being supported to produce new work in response to the themes underpinning this year's Biennale.

This work will be presented towards its close in October in another evocative venue, soon to be announced.

To find out more visit:
[linenbiennialenorthernireland.com/2023](https://www.linenbiennialenorthernireland.com/2023)

Image credits
Belfast Print Workshop; Regine Neumann; Karen Daye-Hutchinson; Anushiya Sundaralingam

Linen Alive NI

We want to celebrate Northern Ireland's linen story, connecting various pockets of specialist knowledge that remain with us, and build partnerships to safeguard the skills and experience in danger of being lost for good.

We are gathering resources and contacts for artisanal knowledge, archives and collections, alongside sites of particular significance for the linen industry. These will remain accessible on our website after the public programming is finished. Existing key resources include:

NI Screen's Digital Film Archive

A special online collection of footage showcasing the linen industry in its prime. The collection gives a glimpse into the changing fate of the local linen industry, from the fields full of flax just a few decades ago, to the abandoned mills found in so many of our towns, cities and surrounding countryside.



Watch Free
[digitalfilmarchive.net/
collection/the-linen-
industry-18](https://digitalfilmarchive.net/collection/the-linen-industry-18)

Image credits

NI Screen Digital Film Archive; Ruairi Jordan;

Opposite: Ulster Folk Museum; Centre Stage Drama



If you have a resource, significant place or archive that should be included to our listings please get in touch or visit: linenbiennialnorthernireland.com/linenalive

Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI)

Holds archives and business records of the linen industry that made Northern Ireland a world-renowned exporter, synonymous with quality. PRONI is accessible to the public by appointment and is the main venue for researching family and local history, and for discovering the economic, social and political history of Northern Ireland.

National Museums NI

National Museums will bring a tangible presence to **Banana Block** in East Belfast through a plywood facsimile of the *Dressmaker's House in Cluan Place*. The new exhibit which is scheduled to launch in August will explore the Dressmaker's story, the linen history of the mill and the effect of industry on how communities lived.

Ulster Folk Museum

The **Ulster Folk Museum** puts the past in dialogue with the present in order to inspire and shape the future. It holds the *Living Linen Archive* (accessible by appointment), plus a collection of over 300 oral interviews with people who worked in the linen industry in the last century.

During the Biennale a number of special events will run at the Ulster Folk Museum in addition to its permanent displays of heritage sites and skills, including:

Gintlíocht Exhibition

Ulster Folk Museum,
Holywood
1–31 August | From £9

Natural Dye Workshop

Ulster Folk Museum,
Holywood
12 August | £20

Bags of Style

Ulster Folk Museum,
Holywood
26 August | £25



Reviving a Story

Half-Timers & Centre Stage Drama

Banana Block, Belfast
12 August | Free

In a special collaboration with the Linen Biennale 2023 **Centre Stage Theatre Company** will once again showcase *Half-Timers* for their summer drama production. Written by renowned Northern Ireland actor **Roma Tomelty**, it tells the story of young people who worked half-time in the Linen Mills and the other half at school.

Rehearsals and performance will take place in **Portview Trade Centre**, a former spinning mill, this August.

For more details visit centrestageni.org/summer-drama/

"We are excited to be reviving a significant piece of work from a local playwright that relates to our linen heritage, performing it in a venue sharing that heritage and finally, renewing life to that story with young performers and new audiences. A very special project for 2023 indeed!"

Meadhbh McIlgorm
Linen Biennale Programme
Manager 2023

August Craft Month

We begin our programming in August to coincide with August Craft Month – an island-wide celebration of the craft sector, providing opportunities for all to make, see, learn about, and buy craft.

Some of the linen highlights include:

Exhibitions

See *She Stitches Pieces of Material*, a retrospective of textile work by **Caroline Moore** and work by the **Clanrye Lace Group** in **Newry City Library**.

Mille Moore will be exhibiting new work *Times, Traces & Threads* in the **Old Town Hall** in Banbridge.

She Stitches Pieces of Material

Newry City Library, Newry
19 August–2 September
| Free

Times, Traces & Threads

Old Town Hall,
Banbridge
15–18 August | Free

Workshops & Experiences

There are also plenty of textile workshops and experiences taking place in venues across Northern Ireland which will suit everyone's taste and skill level.

The Linen Thread, which takes place in the stunning **Echlinville Distillery** and other events are also part of Ards and North Down's **Creative Peninsula** programme.

Hand Stenciling

Island Arts Centre,
Lisburn
29 July | £20

Crafting Shirts

Artists Studio,
Donaghadee
1 August | £70

The Linen Thread

Echlinville Distillery,
Newtownards
12 August | £35

Drawn Threads

Top Floor Art, Saintfield
19 August | £45

PICTURED
She Stitches Pieces of Material (Detail)
Image credit Caroline Moore

Check out augustcraftmonth.org
for the full programme of events.

Partnerships

Linen Biennale is a project led by R-Space Gallery



Everything we achieve at the Linen Biennale is about and built on partnership working. We want to thank everyone involved with our programme. Our community is growing everyday but key partners for 2023 include;



Get involved

#LinenAliveNI

#LinenBiennale23

@linenaliveni



Check out our website for full
programme details and updates
linenbiennialnorthernireland.com

Get in contact

Phone 028 9266 3179

Email linenbiennale@gmail.com