



# THE FABRIC OF PROTEST

**JULY 2020**



A monthly textile workshop by People's History Museum (PHM). Learn new techniques and discuss the issues that matter to you.

This resource is designed to provide inspiration and ideas for creativity online and at home.

Recommended for 11+

[#fabricofprotest](https://twitter.com/fabricofprotest)

[phm.org.uk](https://phm.org.uk)

This month we are taking inspiration from the painting Woman Looking Through a Microscope (1966) by Cliff Rowe.



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Cliff Rowe (1904-1989) was an artist who spent much of his professional life visiting factories and painting what he saw. He also painted the working class in their homes. You can explore the range of Rowe's work in PHM's collection by visiting [artuk.org](http://artuk.org) the online home for every public art collection in the UK.

Workplaces have changed a lot recently, from working at home to new equipment and procedures. Some changes have brought benefits but others have presented challenges and some people have found themselves without a place to work. Now is a time for reflection, for looking at how we work and what we want from work in the future.



This resource shows you how to make a textile piece to communicate how you feel about recent changes and your hopes for the future.



We will be using appliqué techniques to illustrate our current workspaces (or lack of), mirroring the flat geometric planes of colour from Cliff Rowe's paintings. In and around this image, we will stitch our hopes and ideas for the future.



# MATERIALS

Gather some materials from around your home.  
Here are some suggestions:



- **Fabrics**: a piece of fabric a bit bigger than A4 size, and some smaller scraps of fabric in block colours
- **Paper**: newspaper or magazine and coloured paper
- **Threads**: embroidery and sewing threads
- **Sewing needle & pins**
- **Scissors**: fabric scissors and paper scissors
- **Pencil or pen, and some A4 paper**: for drawing



# METHOD

## 1 Choose a piece of fabric

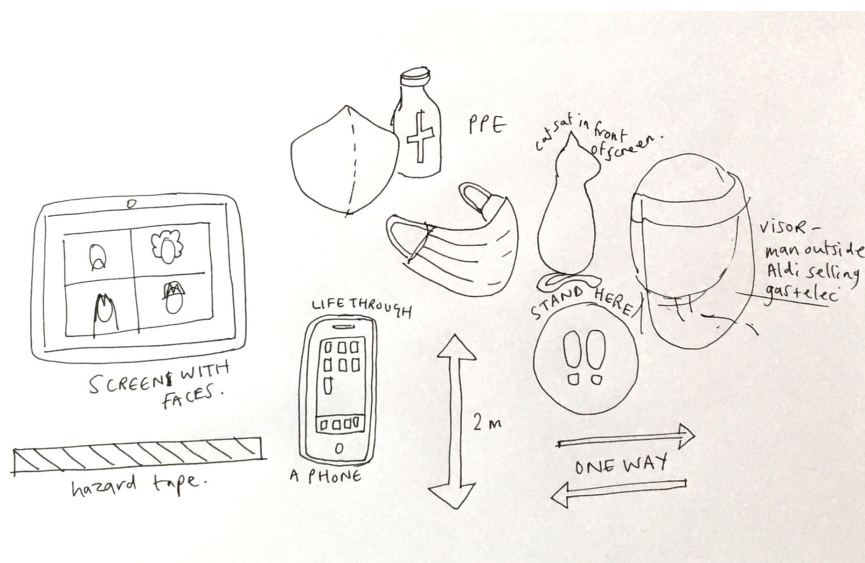
This will be your fabric background. Choose any colour you wish and cut your fabric so that it is a little bigger than A4 paper.

## 2 Draw some ideas for your design

The design for your piece will be based on your current experience of work or the services that you access. We would like you to document the changes you have experienced or witnessed.

You may be in your usual place of work but it looks different; you may be working from home; you may be out of work or unable to work.

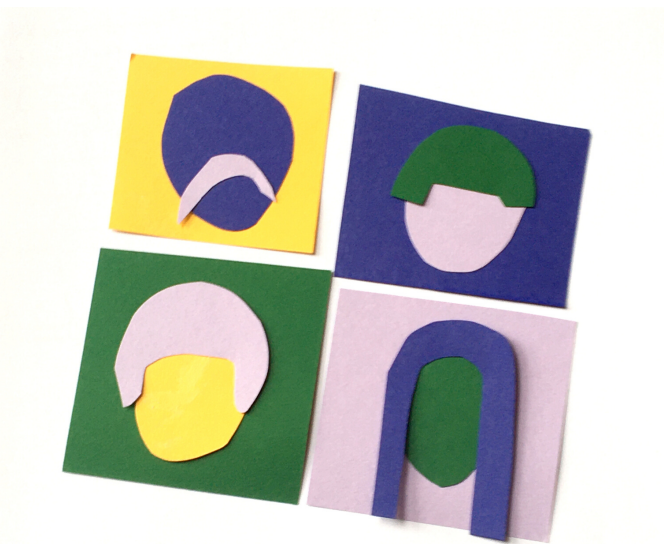
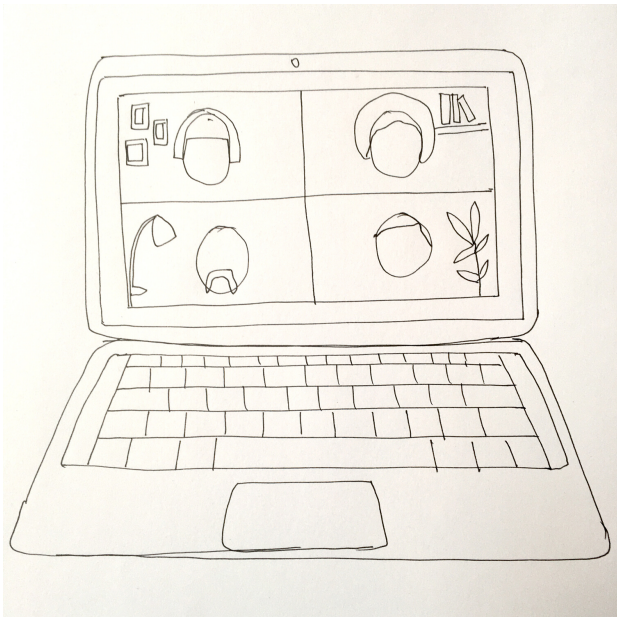
Start with some sketches of a place. Draw the things that are new or different for you - like faces on a computer screen or the hazard tape for social distancing. It may be the juggle of personal and public life all in one room, symbolised by different objects.



### 3 Geometric design

When you are happy with your drawing, think about how you might simplify it into geometric shapes. Looking at the Cliff Rowe painting again, you can see how he uses flat shapes of colour to make up his images.

In your image, this means forgetting the details and using triangles, squares, circles, rectangles to create the picture. You might find it easier to cut out some shapes in coloured paper to collage an image together.

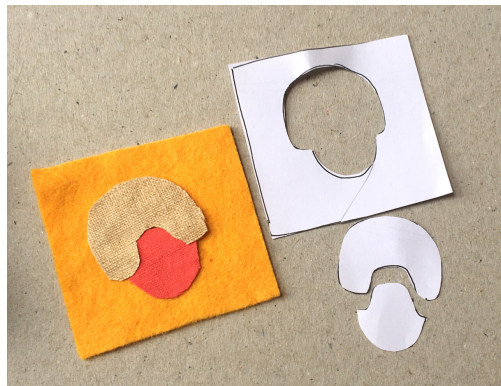
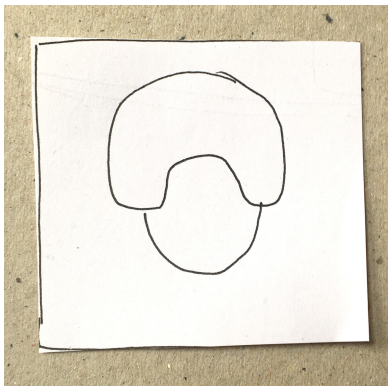




## 4 Cut out fabric using templates



Cut the shapes out from your final design. These will be your templates for cutting out the fabric pieces. Use the big shapes to cut your fabric first, followed by the smaller templates. If you collaged your design out of paper shapes, these can be used directly as your templates instead.



## 5 What do you want to say?

We want to hear your hopes and ideas, however ambitious, of how we might benefit from positive change at this time of uncertainty.

You may have experienced more flexibility at work or access to services, which you would like to keep; your industry may be threatened and you have hopes and ideas for how it may be saved; you may be thinking about global change: environmentally, politically, socially.

Think about what you would like to say and how you would like to add this to your textile piece. You can use embroidery or appliqué, using fabric or paper.

## 6 Appliqué

Place all your fabric pieces on your background fabric and pin into place. You can use running stitch to attach your pieces, stitching close to the edge of the piece. If you like, you can make a solid embroidered line around the main shapes after they have been secured. This could be with backstitch, chain stitch, or blanket stitch.



## 7 Stitch your message

Using embroidery, appliqué or paper letters, add your message to the textile piece.





## 8 Share what you have created!

If you use social media, share photos of your work using **#fabricofprotest**

Tag People's History Museum in your photos so we can see what you have created.



@PHMMcr



@phmmcr



@PHMMcr



# THE FABRIC OF PROTEST

Once a month join artist Helen Mather as she takes over PHM's Instagram LIVE @phmmcr for an hour of stitching, chatting and sharing inspired by the ideas in this resource.

This month we'll be online on  
**Saturday 18 July,**  
**2.00pm - 3.00pm.**

