

The Yard: Mural Commission

Deadline 4th Dec, Budget £11,500

Background & Context

Wakefield Exchange (WX) is a former market hall in the heart of Wakefield city centre that has been transformed into a vibrant events, exhibitions and community space. Bringing together culture, creativity, food and drink, WX provides a flexible home for performances, exhibitions, workshops, events and activities for people across the district. Find out more via our website: wxwakefield.co.uk.

As part of the continued development of Wakefield Exchange, we are creating The Yard, a new outdoor area designed to extend the activity of WX beyond the building itself. The space will provide a welcoming setting for outdoor events and activities, particularly during the summer months.

We are seeking an artist or creative practitioner to produce a bold new mural across two shipping containers and three shutters within The Yard. The commission should help establish a distinct visual identity for this emerging outdoor space while responding to themes of nature.

The commission is supported through West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Seasons of Culture: **Nature** www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/resources/seasons-of-culture / an initiative celebrating and encouraging people's connection with nature across West Yorkshire. The work should therefore have a clear relationship with the natural world, while responding to the urban setting of Wakefield Exchange.



Size and scope

The commission comprises artwork across **two shipping containers and three external shutters**, with an overall paintable area of approximately 1,046 sq ft / 97.1 sq m.

Shipping container 1: 40ft container

A new, one-trip standard shipping container:

- Length: 40ft / 12.192m
- Width: 8ft / 2.438m
- Height: 8ft 6in / 2.591m

One long side and one short side to be painted, providing an approximate artwork area of **408 sq ft**.

Shipping container 2: 20ft container

A new, one-trip shipping container:

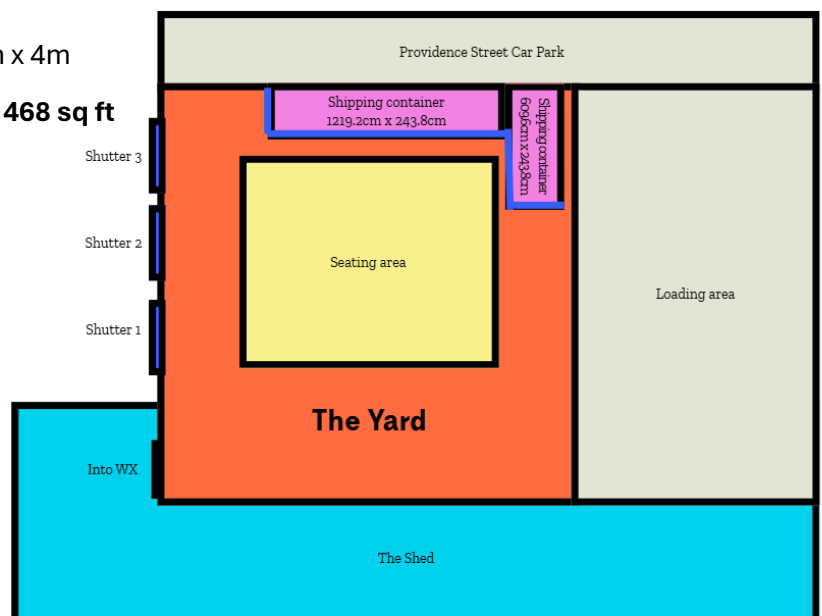
- Length: 20ft / 6.06m
- Width: 8ft / 2.44m
- Height: 8ft 6in / 2.59m

Half of one long side (until meeting the larger one in the L shape) and one short side are to be painted, providing an approximate artwork area of **170 sq ft**.

Shutters

There are three shutters, each approximately:

- 12ft x 13ft / approximately 3m x 4m
- Approximate combined area: **468 sq ft**



The Creative Brief

We are looking for an artwork that brings colour and character to The Yard and creates a strong visual connection between its different structures.

The commission should take inspiration from nature, interpreted through a bold, geometric and abstract visual language.

We are deliberately not looking for a literal representation of a landscape, plants or wildlife. Instead, we are interested in how the colours, forms, patterns and rhythms found within nature might inspire a contemporary abstract artwork.

The finished design should:

- be bold, colourful and visually engaging;
- use a geometric and abstract approach;
- take inspiration from nature and the natural environment;
- work successfully at a large scale and when viewed from different positions around The Yard;
- create a coherent relationship between the two containers and three shutters;
- complement the wider visual identity of Wakefield Exchange;
- primarily draw from the Wakefield Exchange brand colour palette, with additional nature-inspired colours introduced where appropriate; see appendix for brand palette
- be appropriate for an outdoor public space and consider how the artwork will sit alongside events and activities taking place in The Yard.
- The treatment of the shutters should be considerably simpler than the main container artwork. We envisage these as simplified response pieces which make a visual connection to the principal design rather than three additional highly detailed murals.
- The shutters must also incorporate the words 'The Yard WX' as part of the design, so applicants should be confident in typography and hand-painted lettering, as well as mural painting.

Working with the WX team

There is no requirement for community engagement or participatory workshops as part of this commission.

However, we want the finished work to feel rooted in its location. The commissioned artist will therefore take part in a site visit and informal creative discussion with the Wakefield Exchange team during the design-development stage. This will provide an opportunity to understand how The Yard will operate, explore the space and discuss the practical and creative ambitions for the commission.

The artist will then develop their initial proposal in response to this conversation. There will be one formal round of amends before progressing to final design.

At application stage, we do not expect artists to create finished or bespoke artwork for the commission. Please see *How to apply* below.

Practicalities

The mural will be installed outdoors during early spring, and applicants should consider weather and working conditions when planning their approach.

The commissioned artist will be responsible for determining the appropriate preparation and painting process for the surfaces. This should include:

- appropriate preparation and priming of the metal surfaces;
- durable, exterior-quality paints and materials suitable for painted metal and the outdoor environment;
- appropriate finishing or protective coatings where required;
- masking and protecting surrounding surfaces throughout installation;
- protecting the ground, walls and surrounding areas from paint and overspray;
- back-papering or tarping and carefully masking the shutters to prevent paint or drips passing through them.

We anticipate allowing approximately 2 days per shutter (including prep time) and approximately an additional 7 days for container painting, though this timeline can be flexible and will be agreed between the artist and the WX team.

Access and working at height

Please note the site is live and operational and the successful artist will work with the WX team to coordinate appropriate times for the painting of the shutters. Final measurements and site conditions will be discussed with the appointed artist during the site visit.

A boom and/or scissor lift will be provided where required. The artist, or relevant member of the team operating the equipment, must hold a valid IPAF qualification. If you do not have this, please include the cost of obtaining this within your budget.

Ladders can also be made available if required.

Wakefield Exchange will provide

- boom/scissor lift;
- pedestrian barriers to secure working areas;
- access to staff welfare facilities;
- access to water;
- ladders, if required.

The appointed artist will be required to provide

- appropriate Public Liability Insurance;
- risk assessment and method statement prior to installation;
- evidence of relevant IPAF certification;
- all paints, primers, consumables, PPE and specialist equipment not expressly provided by WX;
- appropriate protection and masking materials;
- a final record of the paints and materials used, including a colour chart/reference for the completed artwork.

If the artist intends to work with an assistant or additional artist, their costs must be included within the overall project budget.

Documentation and publicity

The artist should be comfortable with the development and installation process being photographed and filmed. Images and footage may be used by Wakefield Exchange, Wakefield Council and project partners for communications, publicity, documentation and evaluation relating to the commission.

Artwork maintenance

The commission fee includes a guarantee of one remedial visit during the first 12 months following completion where repair is required as a result of an issue with the original materials or application of the artwork.

This does not include repair resulting from accidental damage, vandalism, structural damage, deterioration or alteration of the underlying surfaces, or circumstances outside the artist's reasonable control.

Ownership and reproduction

The physical completed artwork will be owned by Wakefield Exchange/Wakefield Council.

The appointed artist will retain appropriate recognition as the creator of the work and may photograph and share the completed commission within their portfolio, website, social media and professional promotion.

Detailed arrangements concerning copyright, reproduction and any future recreation or adaptation of the design will be confirmed within the artist's contract.

Budget

The total budget available for this commission is:

£11,500 (+VAT if applicable)

This is the total project budget and applicants should demonstrate how they would deliver the commission within this amount.

Applications must include an indicative budget breakdown covering costs such as:

- artist fee;
- design and development time;
- installation/delivery time;
- materials, including primers, paints and protective coatings;
- specialist equipment or access requirements not provided by WX;
- assistants/additional artist fees, if applicable;
- travel and expenses;
- other relevant project costs.

Applicants should note that £11,500 + VAT is available - if you are not VAT registered then the fee is £11,500.

Payment schedule

Payments will be phased as follows:

- **Design development: £1,000**
Payable on appointment to support development of the design proposal.
- **Materials advance**
An advance payment will be made for agreed materials, based on the materials costs identified within the successful applicant's budget.
- **Final balance**
The remaining project fee will be paid following satisfactory completion and delivery of the artwork.

The total of all payments will not exceed the agreed commission value of **£11,500 (+VAT if applicable)**.

Timescale

Applicants must be available to undertake the work within the following timetable:

Stage	Date
Submission deadline	Midnight Fri 4th Dec 2026
Appointment by	Fri 18th Dec (latest)
Artist meeting and site visit	Wednesday 6 January 2027
Initial design submitted	Friday 22 January 2027
WX feedback provided by	Friday 29 January 2027
Final design submitted for sign-off	Friday 12 February 2027
Preparation and installation	15 March to 28 March 2027

Artist will work in liaison with the WX team for delivery timelines due to the site being live and operational. We anticipate the work to be completed within 3 weeks.

The dates above are intended to give applicants a clear understanding of the project programme. Any unavoidable changes to the installation schedule will be agreed with the successful artist in advance.

How to apply

We want the application process to give us a good understanding of your practice and approach **without asking artists to undertake unpaid speculative design work.**

Please do not create a new mural design for your application.

Instead, please submit:

1. About you

A short artist statement introducing your practice and creative approach.

2. Statement of intent

Tell us how you would approach this commission, including:

- what interests you about the brief;
- how your existing practice relates to the proposed aesthetic and themes;
- how you would approach working across the different surfaces;
- your approach to creating and delivering work sustainably, including your consideration of materials and environmental impact.

3. Mood board (or rough sketched design)

Please provide a mood board communicating the visual direction you would explore if commissioned. You are also welcome to submit a rough design sketch if preferred.

This might reference colours, forms, textures, patterns, previous work or wider visual inspiration.

We are not asking for a new or finished design at this stage.

4. Previous experience

Please provide examples and images of relevant previous work. This might include murals, public art, large-scale painting, outdoor commissions or other projects which demonstrate your ability to deliver this brief.

Please briefly explain your role in each relevant project.

5. Online presence

Please provide links to your website, portfolio and/or relevant professional social media channels.

6. Budget

Please provide an indicative breakdown demonstrating how you would allocate the **£11,500 project budget**, including your artist fee, materials and any assistant costs.

Alternative application formats

We welcome applications in written or video format. The assessment will be based on the content of the application rather than the format in which it is presented.

Please email your application to hello@wxwakefield.co.uk

What we will be looking for

Applications will be considered with particular attention to:

- the quality and relevance of the artist's existing practice;
- evidence that their visual style can respond successfully to the abstract, geometric and nature-inspired brief;
- experience relevant to delivering work at this scale;
- a thoughtful and appropriate response to the location and commission;
- a realistic approach to budget and delivery;
- consideration of sustainability;
- the overall quality and clarity of the application.

Who can apply

We welcome applications from artists based across West Yorkshire, although preference may be given to artists who live or work within the Wakefield district, reflecting Wakefield Exchange's ambition to support and develop our local creative sector.

Artists from outside West Yorkshire are also welcome to apply. Please note that the £11,500 project budget represents the total funding available for the commission, and any travel, accommodation or other associated expenses must be included within your proposed budget.

We welcome applications from artists at all stages of their careers. However, applicants must be able to demonstrate the relevant skills, experience and practical competency required to safely and successfully deliver a large-scale outdoor mural project.

Deadline

Applications must be received to hello@wxwakefield.co.uk by midnight on Friday 4th December. All applications will be reviewed and the successful artist informed prior to the festive break.

Prior to application, please do feel free to contact us with any questions at hello@wxwakefield.co.uk.

Appendix: WX Branding Palette



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#f8f08b



#00d2ed



#f182e1



#f9b37f



#385df6



#0e2053