

YSP

## Press Release

# Claye Bowler: Dig Me a Grave

4 October – 2 November 2025

Chapel and Outdoors

This autumn, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) presents an ambitious new body of work by Claye Bowler and unveils the artist's largest outdoor sculpture to date, commissioned by YSP.

*Dig Me a Grave* is a solo exhibition by Claye Bowler, which explores graves and burial chambers as sites for introspection. Drawing from his own lived experiences of transness, queerness and disability, Bowler's practice examines how these bodies navigate the world, often existing in spaces of waiting, whether for recognition, medical access, or societal acceptance. By reclaiming the imagery of graves as sites of rest rather than erasure, the artist considers universal themes of resilience, care, transformation, and mortality.

Shown in the meditative setting of YSP's 18th century Chapel, *Dig Me a Grave* offers space for personal reflection, solace, and empathy. The exhibition includes sculptural works made in plaster, latex, stone and metal, some of which visitors are invited to physically interact with. Bowler hopes this will lead to a deeper sensory and personal engagement, and encourage allyship and reflection on shared human experiences.

**Bowler says:** "Yorkshire Sculpture Park has always meant a lot to me. I first moved to Yorkshire because of its strong ties to sculpture, and I kept coming back to YSP, through volunteering, working, and later for residencies and to exhibit.

*YSP and its land is a place that feels like home, which is a key theme to my exhibition Dig Me A Grave. The Chapel's calm and still atmosphere really connects with the exhibition's encouragement for visitors to pause, reflect, and contemplate land, loss, and rest. This show also coincides with my return to live in Yorkshire, so it's especially meaningful to restart this chapter in a place that has shaped and supported my practice over the years."*



Claye Bowler, *Dig Me a Grave*, installation view. Photo © Henri T.

*My Breath Smells Earthly Strong* is a platform that visitors can lie on to rest, covering themselves with its shroud-like blanket made from latex and soil that creates a feeling of being held within the earth. Bowler's work is inherently connected to land, taking inspiration from performance artists Rose English and Ana Mendieta, amongst others, who have explored their physicality through materials in the natural environment.

Running along the Chapel walls, *Hole in the Ground Radiates Trans Joy* is a horizontal line of plaster plaques cast from earth and retaining soil and pebbles within them. Each of over 30 soil samples was collected by trans people from a piece of land imbued with a happy memory for them. With this work, Bowler questions who land belongs to and how marginalised people can reclaim their relationship to it, gathering, embedding and archiving memories made in the landscape.

The artist has a deep connection to sound and music, increasingly integrating these elements into his practice. The exhibition title – *Dig Me a Grave* – takes its name from traditional British folk songs that draw on the themes of love, loss, death, and grief. He is interested in how oral history is passed on through time and the connection between queer history and folk music, both of which historically have little documentation. Accompanying the work is a newly developed soundscape created in collaboration with musician The Silver Field. The interplay between sound and sculpture brings the exhibition to life.

Extending the project into YSP's landscape, during the course of the exhibition, Bowler will create a new stone work which will be his largest outdoor sculpture to date. The impression of his body lying in foetal position will be carved into the surface of the stone, intended to weather over time as it is joined by the presence of visitors who can lie within it. An evolving legacy of *Dig Me a Grave*, this sculpture will remain permanently at the Park.

Bowler's association with YSP began when his powerful video work *Not Much Further* (2020) was featured in the group exhibition *On Queer Ground* in 2022. Then in 2024 he returned as the recipient of an Arts Rights Truth residency in association with the University of York. He has exhibited at the Henry Moore Institute, The Museum of Transology and Winter Sculpture Park, and his work is held in public collections including Arts Council Collection, Wellcome Collection, Otherness Archive, and Leeds Art Gallery. Bowler has also established platforms for the showcasing and support of other queer and trans artists, founding and directing Yonder Gallery (2019-22) and Yorkshire Trans Choir (2018-22).

*Dig Me a Grave* is a touring exhibition, shown at WIP's Steamworks Gallery, London; Auction House, Cornwall, and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield.



Supported using public funding by  
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Supported by the Jerwood New Work Fund, Arts Council England and the Henry Moore Foundation.

- ENDS -



Claye Bowler, *Dig Me a Grave*, installation view. Photo © Henri T.

## Notes for Editors

### Press enquiries

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Download images at [yvsp.org.uk/press](https://yvsp.org.uk/press)

### Listings information

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG

Near Wakefield and Barnsley – M1 Junction 38

+44 (0)1924 832631 | [yvsp.org.uk](https://yvsp.org.uk) | @YSPsculpture

Check online for opening hours

Book tickets at [yvsp.org.uk](https://yvsp.org.uk)

### Social media

Instagram: @YSPsculpture

Facebook: @YorkshireSculpturePark

LinkedIn: Yorkshire Sculpture Park

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### About Claye Bowler

Claye Bowler is an artist based in the UK. His practice centres on collection and documentation of experience, memory and the remnants of humanity. Bowler uses sculptural practices to highlight stories that are not historically collected through institutional means, often working with narratives of queerness and disability. Whilst also working in museum registration, Bowler often incorporates, yet questions, the ethics, administration and aesthetics of museum collecting in his work. Field recordings and traditional folk songs inform and often feature in his practice.

Selected recent work includes solo exhibitions at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2022), touring solo at Auction House, Cornwall; Steamworks Gallery, London; and Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2025. His performance work has been presented at Tate (2023) and Yorkshire Sculpture International (2021). Group exhibitions include Harlem Artspace and Winter Sculpture Park (2025), as well as Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Attenborough Arts Centre, and Ugly Duck in 2022. He has undertaken residencies at Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Porthmeor Studios in 2024, and with Jerwood Arts at Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange in 2023. He was awarded an Arts Council England (ACE) Developing Your Creative Practice grant and the Jerwood New Work Fund in 2023, followed by an ACE project grant in 2024. His work is held in several public collections, including the Arts Council Collection, Wellcome Collection, Otherness Archive, and Leeds Art Gallery.

### About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Awarded VisitEngland's gold accolade in 2023-24 for an outstanding visitor attraction, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Welcoming around 380,000 visitors each year, YSP is a registered charity and accredited museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West and South Yorkshire.

YSP is the largest sculpture park in Europe. Founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray CBE it is currently led by Interim Director Kevin Rodd. It is the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety, alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, important pieces by Hemali Bhuta, Roger Hiorns, Damien Hirst, Suhasini Kejriwal, Kimsooja, Marc Quinn, Hank Willis Thomas and Erwin Wurm, and site-specific works by Katrina Palmer, Andy Goldsworthy, Alfredo Jaar, David Nash, Sean Scully and James Turrell.

YSP mounts a year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across three indoor galleries and the outdoors. Highlights include exhibitions by Fiona Banner, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Robert Indiana, Amar Kanwar, KAWS, William Kentridge, Bharti Kher, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Lindsey Mendick, Annie Morris, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Chiharu Shiota, David Smith, Joana Vasconcelos, Bill Viola and Erwin Wurm.

Across its 48-year history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries, on varied projects from short-term residencies to major surveys. YSP supports artists at vital stages in their careers and is rare in having the accommodation, workshops and expertise to enable open-ended and risk-taking practice, giving artists space, time and support to think and to develop new ideas.

Over this time, YSP has sought to ignite, nurture and sustain interest in and debate around contemporary art and sculpture, especially with those for whom art participation is not habitual or familiar. It enables open access to art, situations and ideas, and continues to re-evaluate and expand the approach to considering art's role and relevance in society. Supporting 40,000 people each year through YSP's learning programme, this innovative work develops ability, confidence and life aspiration in participants.

YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, Roger Evans, the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation and the Dunard Fund. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014 and awarded the 2023 Visitor Attraction of the Year and Cultural Award in the Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards.



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