

In Her Steps  
By Mercedes Lucy  
Earthenware tiles, 2026.



In Her Steps is a permanent, public artwork installed on the front steps of my home in Margate, Kent. A project I have been developing for over four years; I have tiled the steps with over 600 handmade, ceramic tiles, featuring over 400 women, all born before 1900, which is roughly the date that my house was built.

The research underpinning *In Her Steps* began locally in Margate, before expanding to Kent, the Southeast, the wider UK, Ireland and Europe, and ultimately further afield. I tried to give particular attention to working-class women and women of colour, whose histories are the most difficult to trace due to systemic exclusion from records. Privileged women were more likely to be documented, while many women of colour were rendered anonymous through enslavement, migration, and deliberate historical erasure.

The project began with a small-scale installation at Liminal Gallery. Located directly opposite the Turner Contemporary, the exhibition was shaped in response to the male-dominated legacy of art history. Titled *Turner's Female Contemporaries*, it comprised close to 100 hand-made portrait tiles depicting talented but overlooked women artists working during the lifetime of J. M. W. Turner. Following the exhibition, I installed the tiles on the front steps of my home, transforming a private threshold into a visible, public site. This act was motivated by a desire to make these women seen and to counter the historical neglect of their lives and contributions.

From this starting point, the project expanded beyond art history to consider women across all areas of life whose labour has been erased, ignored, or left undocumented. These include women who raised children, educated others, provided care, and sustained communities—work that has often gone unrecognised due to gendered social structures.

The development of *In Her Steps* coincided with a period of significant personal upheaval, including divorce and a prolonged legal dispute over the family home. As a mother of three daughters, I spent several years as a stay-at-home parent, a role marked by exhaustion, financial dependence, and loss of autonomy. This experience was compounded by undiagnosed mental health conditions and the death of my mother, whose life and importance felt insufficiently acknowledged beyond the private sphere. These experiences directly informed the project's focus on visibility, value, and remembrance.

Through more than 400 hand-made tiles, *In Her Steps* seeks to honour a small fraction of these women while encouraging reflection on whose lives are remembered, whose labour is valued, and how collective histories might be re-examined and expanded.