

# Progress

6 June - 7 September 2014



Four contemporary artists respond to Hogarth's masterpiece.

To mark the 250th anniversary of Hogarth's death, Progress brings together for the first time three great contemporary responses to his eternally modern moral tale, *A Rake's Progress*. David Hockney's *A Rake's Progress*, 1961-3, Yinka Shonibare MBE's *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*, 1998 and Grayson Perry's *The Vanity of Small Differences*, 2012 are shown alongside Hogarth's original 1735 prints and joined by a newly commissioned work by Jessie Brennan.

Hogarth's popularity with both artists and the public has endured for over two hundred years, and his work has provided inspiration to successive generations. Hockney, Shonibare and Perry not only update Hogarth's searing social commentary, they also add their own personal concerns to the creative dialogue. Commissioning an emerging female artist to respond to Hogarth's work, the Foundling Museum further develops the conversation.

Hogarth, an active Governor of the Foundling Hospital, burst onto London's artistic scene in the first half of the eighteenth century, creating a new form of narrative painting with his modern moral tales. Published as a set of engravings in 1735 in order to reach a wide audience, *A Rake's Progress* follows the rise and fall of young heir and spendthrift, Tom Rakewell.

Image: William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress*, Plate 3, 1735  
© The Gerald Coke Handel Library, The Foundling Museum

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On inheriting his miserly father's fortune, Tom embraces a world of foppery and pretention, descending into a spiral of debauchery and debt, which leads him to prison and eventually, the madhouse. The series is an unflinching portrayal of the corruption, hypocrisy, vice and occasional virtue of eighteenth-century London, presented with Hogarth's typical wit and eye for detail.

Hockney's semi-autobiographical *A Rake's Progress*, 1961-3, charts the adventures of a young, provincial gay artist in New York. His sixteen etchings were produced as a direct response to his first trip to America and were initially intended to mirror the titles of Hogarth's eight etchings. However, on return to London, Hockney soon added a further eight plates. His series explores themes of youth and the city, freedom and moral corruption. Like Hogarth, Hockney's story ends in 'Bedlam'.

Shonibare's *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*, 1998, plays with notions of culture, identity and history, by transplanting the tale to the heyday of the British Empire and making the protagonist black. Originally commissioned by Iniva for the London Underground, Shonibare's series follows the Rake over a 24 hour period. Like Hogarth, Shonibare's depiction of youthful hedonism, lust and wealth is alive with detail, while also highlighting the relationship between the luxury goods trade and slavery.

Perry's hugely popular tapestry series *The Vanity of Small Differences*, 2012, explores the complexities of the British class system, as played out through ideas of taste. Like Hogarth, Perry's protagonist Tim Rakewell journeys through the classes, his progress highlighting the obsessions, traits and hypocrisies of each. Perry surrounds Rakewell with the 'taste signifying' objects he discovered on his journey through Britain for the Channel 4 television documentary, 'All in the Best Possible Taste with Grayson Perry'.

Brennan's work will form the fourth response to Hogarth's Progress. The Museum is delighted to have the opportunity to commission a new work from an exciting young female artist, and bring *A Rake's Progress* bang up to date. Brennan's sense of humour, her intensely-observed and detailed graphic works, and her use of London as both subject matter and barometer for social 'progress', speaks to Hogarth's much loved series.

*“Rake’s Progress continues to be relevant today. It should adorn the walls of every bank in the country as a precautionary tale.”*

Yinka Shonibare MBE, 2014

*“I think of Hogarth’s A Rake’s Progress as the most English of English artworks, sharp, social, humane and above all, funny. The subject, one man’s journey through the strata of English society, is as relevant now as it was in Hogarth’s day. Hogarth, I feel, set the tone for so much of our culture and his series of paintings hangs in our collective imagination reminding us what kind of ingredients make up the national character. The details of an Englishman’s daily life might be very different but the rich mix of love, avarice, brutality and debauchery still thrive in modern forms.”*

Grayson Perry, 2014

*“The commissioned work takes the form of a series of pencil drawings responding to the social housing estate Robin Hood Gardens, designed by Peter and Alison Smithson in the late 1960’s and completed in 1972, due to be demolished in 2015. The new drawings visualise the progression of the buildings’ imminent demise, symbolising the fall of social ideals of progress affected by circumstances beyond the fate of the individual. For me, Robin Hood Gardens are what remain of an apparently failed utopian ideal of community housing that have been absorbed into an ideological system of growth driven by capital and profit, part of a perpetual cycle of shifting ideals across time. A Rake’s Progress had (and still has) the ability to confront what peoples’ ideals of progress are, and I’m really interested in exploring this in the new work.”*

Jessie Brennan, 2014

Exhibition curator, Stephanie Chapman says: “Whilst William Hogarth’s *A Rake’s Progress* is firmly set in eighteenth-century London, the work has transcended the specifics of time and place, inspiring generation after generation of artist and audience. His timeless themes of vice, temptation and the dangerous coupling of youth and freedom - presented within the deeply ironic format of a ‘progress’ - have attracted some of the greatest artists of the past 50 years.”

Foundling Museum Director, Caro Howell says: “In the Foundling Museum’s 10th birthday year, this exhibition celebrates Hogarth’s pivotal role in the story of the Foundling Hospital, where he helped create England’s first public art gallery. It also shows Hogarth’s continuing ability to engage artists in the creative conversation he began over 250 years ago.”

Hogarth was a Governor of the Foundling Hospital, he designed the Hospital’s coat of arms, and it is thought he designed the children’s uniforms and the decorative scheme in the Court Room. Most importantly, he donated the first artwork to the Hospital - his magnificent portrait of Thomas Coram - and encouraged all the leading artists of the day to do the same, thereby creating England’s first public art gallery. His involvement in the Hospital was a catalyst for encouraging artists of all disciplines to become ‘socially engaged’. It also enabled him to promote the work of emerging artists like Thomas Gainsborough, and to establish a community of British artists that led to the founding of the Royal Academy.

Progress is accompanied by a series of related events, including two days of free entry and fun activities over our birthday weekend - 14 & 15 June.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

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Open: Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 – 17:00 and Sunday 11:00 – 17:00,  
closed on Mondays

Admission: £7.50, concessions £5, National Trust members half price,  
children free

Tube and train: Russell Square, King's Cross St Pancras and Euston

**The Foundling Museum** explores the history of the Foundling Hospital, the UK's first children's charity and first public art gallery. Through a dynamic programme of exhibitions and events we celebrate the ways in which artists of all disciplines have been inspired to improve children's lives since 1740.

The Foundling Hospital, which continues today as the children's charity Coram, was established in 1739 by the philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram, as 'a hospital for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children'. Instrumental in helping Coram realise his vision were the artist William Hogarth who encouraged all the leading artists of the day to donate work, and the composer George Frideric Handel who gave annual benefit concerts of the Messiah. In doing so, they created London's first public art gallery and set the template for the way that the arts could support philanthropy. The Foundling Museum celebrates their vision and continues their work, by enabling today's artists, musicians and writers to work alongside vulnerable young people and to cast new light on the histories we tell.

**David Hockney** (b. 1937, Bradford, England) attended Bradford School of Art before studying at the Royal College of Art from 1959 to 1962.

Hockney's stellar reputation was established while he was still a student; his work was featured in several of the annual Young Contemporaries exhibitions, one of which heralded the birth of British Pop Art. He visited Los Angeles in 1964 and settled there soon after. He is closely associated

with southern California and has produced a large body of work there over many decades. David Hockney was elected a Royal Academician in 1991. David Hockney has recently been appointed a member of the Order of Merit by the Queen.

**Yinka Shonibare MBE** (RA) was born in London and moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. He returned to London to study Fine Art first at Byam Shaw College of Art (now Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design) and then at Goldsmiths College, where he received his MFA, graduating as part of the ‘Young British Artists’ generation. He currently lives and works in the East End of London.

Over the past decade, Shonibare has become well known for his exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalisation. Shonibare’s work explores these issues, alongside those of race and class, through the media of painting, sculpture, photography and, more recently, film and performance. Using this wide range of media, Shonibare examines in particular the construction of identity and tangled interrelationship between Africa and Europe and their respective economic and political histories. Mixing Western art history and literature, he asks what constitutes our collective contemporary identity today. Having described himself as a ‘post-colonial’ hybrid, Shonibare questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions.

Shonibare was a Turner prize nominee in 2004 and awarded the decoration of Member of the ‘Most Excellent Order of the British Empire’. He has added this title to his professional name. In 2013 he was elected Royal Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts. He was notably commissioned by Okwui Enwezor At Documenta 10 in 2002 to create his most recognised work ‘Gallantry and Criminal Conversation’ that launched him on an international stage. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennial and internationally at leading museums worldwide. In 2010, ‘Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle’ became his first public art commission on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square.

**Grayson Perry** (b. 1960, Chelmsford, England), won the 2003 Turner prize and is one of Britain’s best-known contemporary artists. He works with traditional media; ceramics, cast iron, bronze, printmaking and tapestry and is interested in how each historic category of object accrues over time intellectual and emotional baggage.

Perry is a great chronicler of contemporary life, drawing us in with beauty, wit, affecting sentiment and nostalgia as well as fear and anger. His

hard-hitting and exquisitely crafted works reference his own childhood and life as a transvestite while also engaging with wider social issues from class and politics to sex and religion.

Grayson Perry has had major solo exhibitions nationally and internationally including the critically acclaimed Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman at the British Museum. His monumental suite of tapestries *The Vanity of Small Differences*, which were inspired by his BAFTA winning Channel 4 series: *In the Best Possible Taste*, are currently on a national and international tour led by the Arts Council Collection and British Council.

In 2006 Perry published an autobiographical account of his formative years entitled *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. He has been the subject of ITV'S *The Southbank Show* and BBC'S *Imagine*. Perry was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List on 14 June 2013. In October 2013 Grayson Perry became the first visual artist to deliver the prestigious BBC Reith Lectures.

**Jessie Brennan** (b. 1982, Plymouth, England) is an artist who lives and works in London. Her practice explores the representation of existing and imagined places through drawing and dialogue, informed by their social histories and changing contexts.

Brennan graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2007 and has since exhibited nationally and internationally, with exhibitions and projects including: *Adrift on Life's Tides*, Rochester Art Gallery, Kent (2013, solo); *Coup de Ville*, Sint-Niklaas, Belgium (2013); *Cities & Eyes*, Marian Cramer Projects, Netherlands (2012, solo); *Everything Meets Here*, Art on the Underground, London (2012); *Celeste Prize 2012*, Centrale Montemartini, Italy (2012); *SPACE Satellite Projects: The Cut*, SPACE, London (2011); *And Then Again*, Lisbon City Museum, Portugal (2010).

In 2012 Brennan was Contemporary Talents Winner (Drawing Category), François Schneider Foundation, France, and she has received many other awards including Artist's International Development Fund, Arts Council England (2013), Second Prize, Jerwood Drawing Prize (2011) and Leverhulme Trust Bursary (2006). She is an educator and visiting lecturer at a number of universities in the UK.

The Curator: Exhibitions post is supported by the Paul Mellon Foundation and The Pilgrim Trust.

6 June 2014: press view of *Progress*

14-15 June 2014: Foundling Museum's 10th Birthday Weekend