



**Foundling
Museum**



Trustees at the Foundling Museum



**Appointment Brief
June 2026**

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Brought together by former Museum Trustee and
Foundling Fellow, Lemn Sissay, OBE
Photo Suki Dhanda/The Observer



Welcome from Emma Ridgway Director, Foundling Museum

Thank you for your interest in the role of Trustee at the Foundling Museum.

Our committed and enthusiastic Board of Trustees ([linked here](#)) brings a wealth of skills, experience and perspectives, to serve and support the charity's aims and ambitions. In order to move forward we have identified the need to recruit two new Trustees to join the Board in its shared efforts.

One of the new Trustees will bring expertise in lived experience of children's social care, to help guide us in serving people with care experience and public engagement. We are also seeking a Trustee with experience as a successful museum leader, who will help us strengthen our innovation as an organisation with an award-winning learning programme, a nationally accredited collection, and to help realise our vision by nurturing and building on our loyal supporters, dedicated team, and cherished Museum.

It is a privilege and a joy to be able to be part such a dynamic and creative organisation. I do hope you will consider joining us.

If you already know the Foundling Museum, I hope you will want to find out more. If you haven't come across us before, welcome! Either way, I am delighted that you considering the role of Trustee, and we look forward to hearing from you.

For an overview of our charitable activities and relationships with funders, please view the Foundling Museum Annual Report 2024/2025 ([linked here](#)).



The Foundling Museum explores compelling stories of love, loss and care through art, music and objects.

The Foundling Museum is the only cultural institution in the UK to celebrate people who have been in social care as children and those who care for them.

We are a contemporary museum opened in 2004, with collections of art, music, writing, and emotive objects that stretch back to the 18th century.

Our work grows from our unique foundations, as the only foundling hospital museum in the world that has an art collection donated by artists, and the only one to tell the story of the birth of creative philanthropy.



About us

Opened in 2004, the Museum sits on the site of the Foundling Hospital, the UK's first children's charity and first public art gallery. The Foundling Hospital began as a pioneering project centered on the belief that each one of us has a responsibility to help improve the lives of vulnerable women and children. Specifically, it was for 'foundlings', babies and children whose birth parents could not care for them due to circumstances beyond their control.

The original Foundling Hospital was a children's home located on what is now Coram's Fields, from 1741 to 1954. The ambition of excellence for the foundling children - including grand architecture, quality education, nutritious food and the arts - reflected the integrity of its founder, the campaigner Thomas Coram (1668 - 1751).

From the 1740s, artists made the Foundling Hospital London's most fashionable cause and destination, and the first public art gallery. Artist William Hogarth designed the coat of arms, children's uniforms, and initiated the art collection shown at the Museum. Composer George Frideric Handel conducted benefit concerts of Messiah in the chapel, and later writer Charles Dickens was a supporter too. Their compassion and generosity show that art transforms lives.

At the Foundling Museum and off-site, we work with outstanding contemporary artists, writers, and musicians to ensure that leading artists continue to be part of the story of care. Across the four floors of the 1930s building, formerly the headquarters of the children's home, we invite visitors to explore compelling historic and new stories of love, loss, and care.

Antony Gormley, *Iron Baby*, 1999, shown as part of FOUND by Cornelia Parker, an exhibition featuring over 50 artists and 90 objects and works of art. Photo Dan Weill



Collections

The Museum is responsible for the care and maintenance of two collections – the Foundling Hospital Collection and the Foundling Museum Collection, which includes the Gerald Coke Handel Collection. Together they encompass everyday objects used in the Foundling Hospital, documents, records, musical scores and librettos, photographs and oral history recordings, as well as significant works of art, clocks, furniture and historic interiors, many of which were created for the Hospital and donated by their makers.

Some of the most moving objects are the identifying tokens left by mothers with their babies in the Hospital's earliest years. Deeply touching too is the Foundling Voices oral history collection – testimonies of former pupils of the Foundling Hospital School in the twentieth century, the last generation of children to grow up there.

The Foundling Hospital Collection was donated by artists of all disciplines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to raise awareness and funds for the charity. The Foundling Museum is responsible for the historic collection and building, which are on a 999-year lease from the children's charity Coram. The Museum Collection contains contemporary art and objects donated,

commissioned and acquired, from the 1700s to the present day, including work by Tracey Emin, Michael Craig-Martin, Ingrid Pollard, Wolfgang Tillmans, Cornelia Parker and Yinka Shonibare CBE.

The Gerald Coke Handel Collection is an internationally important library and archive. It comprises over 12,000 items from the eighteenth century to the present, and is a major research resource for the study of Handel and his contemporaries. It includes manuscript and printed music and documents, books, journals, libretti, sound recordings, artworks and artefacts, and an important collection of performance ephemera relating to Handel and his circle. A highlight of the collection is Handel's autograph will; written in 1750, it was later supplemented by four codicils, including one dated 4 August 1757 which includes his bequest to the Foundling Hospital of 'a fair copy of the Score and all Parts of my oratorio called The Messiah'.

You can find out more about our Collections [here](#). To find out more about our Exhibitions and Displays please visit our [website](#).

A visitor in front of William Hogarth's *The March of the Guards to Finchley*, 1750, listening to a historically accurate 3D soundscape by Martyn Ware in the exhibition 'Hogarth and the Art of Noise'. Photo Peter Mallet





Public Engagement

Our exhibitions, commissions and creative projects generate new understandings of art and social history and tackle social issues to highlight the continuing relevance of our historic story.

Collection displays combine historic art and objects from the Founding Hospital Collection and the Gerald Coke Handel Collection, with contemporary work. Temporary exhibitions, collection interventions and projects enable diverse voices to challenge historical narratives, particularly in relation to histories traditionally excluded from the mainstream.

Our curatorial programme generates strong media coverage; a growing profile, nationally and internationally; and a range of academic partners including Central St Martins, Birkbeck College, the Royal College of Art, and Goldsmiths. Past collaborative PhDs include 'Forgotten Foundlings: Black Lives and the 18th-Century Foundling Hospital', with The Centre for Global Histories, University of Warwick.

Exhibitions & Displays

Creating a dialogue between the past and the present, to draw out the contemporary relevance of our historic story, is central to our exhibitions and collection displays. Recent examples include:

A Grand Chorus: Explored the role of the origins and enduring popularity of the 'Hallelujah Chorus', and reflected on the impact of music on the lives of former Foundlings and care-experienced individuals through different forms of art.

The Mother & The Weaver: Art from the Ursula Hauser Collection, featuring artists including Louise Bourgeois, Marlene Dumas and Pipilotti Rist.

Finding Family: Explored the idea of family through visual art from the 17th century to the present day, curated in collaboration with the National Gallery and poetic responses from our trainees.

Tiny Traces: Black & Asian children at London's Foundling Hospital: An exhibition drawing on our collaborative PhD student's research, including artwork by Zarina Bhimji, Hew Locke, Kehinde Wiley.

Radical Empathy: Large-scale photographs by Akytom, inspired by the poetry of Yomi Sode.

Foundling Portraits: Six portraits of seven former pupils of the Foundling Hospital, made by artists Jillian Edelstein; Mahtab Hussain, Eileen Perrier,

David Moore, Ingrid Pollard and Wolfgang Tillmans: the first commissioned portraits of any of the 25,000+ children who went through the Hospital between 1741-1954.

Superheroes, Orphans & Origins: 125 years in Comics: The first exhibition to explore orphaned, adopted, fostered and found characters in comics from around the world.

Fighting Talk: One boy's journey from abandonment to Trafalgar, an exhibition exploring the life of 18th-century foundling, George King, based on his previously unseen memoir.

Quentin Blake: Gifted: An exhibition of 24 large-scale drawings donated by Blake, with commissioned responses from poets Opefoluwa Sarah Adegbite, 4 Brown Girls Who Write, Jackie Kay, Michael Rosen, Yomi Sode, and Ben Westwood.

The Covid Letters: A Vital Update: An exhibition by designer and DJ Sports Banger, curated by Jeremy Deller, featuring over 200 works made by children in lockdown.

Superheroes, Orphans & Origins: 125 Years in Comics
Photo Wilkie Branson



The Foundling Museum's distinctive emphasis on social impact through the arts is rare in the museums sector.

We invest as much in our learning work as we do in our exhibitions. Our dedication to creative excellence with care-experienced people is award-winning.

42,897+ visitors

to the Foundling Museum in the past year

11,250+ young attendees

including early years, children and young people aged 19-25

140+ research visits

by academics studying our collections

2,243+ new followers

on Instagram alone in the past year

50%+ carbon reduction

over past 5 years, 12.5% reduction in 2024-25

510+ events

including 287 public events and learning workshops

£1.97M income

generated by 14% public grants (ACE & NLHF), 44% fundraised income, 31% earned income and 11% other

35+ specialist artists

led the Museum's creative learning events

140+ volunteers

dedicated 5,667 hours to visitor services

These figures count people visiting the Museum and also attendees at our participation events at local libraries, nurseries and primary schools in Camden, Newham, Barking & Dagenham and Stoke-on-Trent.

Foundling Fellows

Leading artists, musicians, writers and activists join the life of the Museum and create a project that animates the relationship between creativity, philanthropy and social action, particularly in relation to young people. Fellows include Jackie Kay, Quentin Blake, Grayson Perry, Cornelia Parker, Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, Sam Lee, Lemn Sissay, Jackie Kay, Lily Cole and Sports Banger.

Our Foundling Fellows are ambassadors for our work, the Foundling Fellowship is given biennially to three creative individuals whose work resonates with the visionary, creative philanthropy of Thomas Coram, William Hogarth and George Frideric Handel. Each of our Fellows creates a project that brings our historic story to life and contributes to the work of the Museum.



Grayson Perry, Foundling Blanket, 2026

Royal Patronage

In 2019, Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales became Patron of the Foundling Museum, having first visited in 2017. The patronage recognises the Museum's unique work to transform the wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young adults, through creative collaboration with artists.

In 2022 and 2023, the Princess visited with The Prince of Wales, to meet sector leaders, foster parents and care-experienced adults and young people, to hear about the challenges facing care-leavers, their mental health, and the high rates of homelessness among young people leaving care.

'I am incredibly proud to be the Patron of the Foundling Museum, an organisation which has delivered pioneering creative programmes and life-changing support to families and young people for twenty years. Their ground-breaking work to support each care-experienced young person to fundamentally change the future direction of their lives is one that means the world to me.'

'Importantly, it shows that it is never too late to make a difference, and that by providing the right support, we can enable those who have faced real difficulties to overcome their challenges and achieve their goals. The Museum's work opens the door to new opportunities for vulnerable children and young people, connecting them with artists and developing skills which they can take into their adult lives. By helping them to undertake this journey, we can create positive, lasting change that benefits our society as a whole.'

HRH The Princess of Wales, Summer 2023.



The Princess of Wales taking part in a creative workshop with young care-leavers from the Tracing Our Tales traineeship. Photos Dan Weill

Sustainability

We have ambitious plans to increase our local, national, and international profile.

As a charity the Museum has a strong and developed network of active supporters amongst individuals, trusts and foundations, an engaged Chair and Board of Trustees and Vice Presidents. You can find out more about our governance and Board [here](#).

We are agile and entrepreneurial in our approach to fundraising and have established a number of successful and innovative strands of income generation. The Museum benefits from the advice and support including an Investment Committee, Commercial Committee and a Trading Company that donates its profits annually to the Museum.



Our New Trustees

Context

Following the appointment of Sue Hoyle OBE as Chair in 2024, the Foundling Museum is now looking for two Trustees to join the Board, to build upon and further develop all that has been achieved so far. The Board are looking to appoint candidates with specific expertise in two key areas; an expert in care experience, and a CEO with demonstrable knowledge of Museum leadership at a national level.

The Opportunity

This is a very exciting opportunity to join the Board of one of the most special and impactful cultural organisations in the UK. A Museum with a rich history and world class programme, the Foundling Museum continues its founding principles of supporting children and young people, especially those who have been touched by the care system.

Trustee with Expertise in Children's Social Care

We are seeking a Trustee with substantial professional expertise in children's social care, alongside lived experience or demonstrable, sustained engagement with care-experienced communities. Candidates should bring senior-level experience in policy, practice, research, or advocacy, with a strong understanding of the statutory care system, safeguarding frameworks, and current sector challenges.

This individual will have a credible public voice in the field, evidenced through advisory roles, published work, or contributions to national or regional discourse. They will demonstrate sound judgement, ethical leadership, and the ability to challenge constructively. The Trustee will advise on programme design, partnerships, and interpretation, ensuring our work is trauma-informed, rights-based, and accountable to care-experienced people, while supporting the Board in assessing impact and reputational risk in this area.

Trustee with Experience as a CEO of a major Museum

We are seeking a Trustee who has served as CEO or COO, leading a major museum with an accredited collection or equivalent, and who has experience of business development and leading successful transformation projects.

They will provide expert advice and constructive challenge to the Board and Museum Director on leadership, masterplanning, risk and delivery, ensuring alignment between ambition, organisational capacity, and long-term financial sustainability.

Role Description

Responsibilities will include:

- Contributing to the effective leadership of the board, ensuring it fulfills its obligations in helping to formulate and regularly review the strategic aims and objectives of the museum;
- Ensuring the financial stability of the Museum and the proper investment of funds in accordance with its stated aims and objectives and relevant legislation;
- Safeguarding the assets of the Charity;
- Ensuring that there is a robust business plan in place and that the financial affairs of the Museum are properly run and maintained;
- Working with fellow trustees to ensure that the organisation functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable organisation and strives to achieve best practice;
- Developing a constructive and supportive relationship with the Museum Director through regular communication and meetings, providing support and advice as appropriate in a non-executive capacity;
- Acting as an Ambassador for the Museum and supporting the Museum Director in representing the Museum to key stakeholders when required; and
- Promoting the organisation to a wider audience of potential donors and beneficiaries.

Person Specification

- A passion for the arts and an appreciation of the transformative nature of culture within society;
- Excellent strategic skills, vision and the ability to contribute to the Board in the fulfillment of their responsibilities;
- Ability to chair meetings effectively and to ensure the contribution of others both individually and collectively to sound decision-making;
- Tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively;
- Experience working within charity law/practice, financial management, governance;
- Strong networking capabilities with excellent communication and relationship building skills;
- Willingness to assist with fundraising with an understanding of the fundraising environment in which the Museum operates;
- Commercial/business skills;
- A strong and visible commitment to, and enthusiasm for the Museum and its strategic objectives;
- Knowledge and understanding of the wider arts sector in the UK, and the current challenges and opportunities the sector faces; and
- Good mentoring abilities, able to provide both support and challenge to the Museum Director and her senior team.

Terms of Appointment

Trustees each serves a three-year term and is eligible for re-appointment for a further three-year term. The role is unremunerated, although reasonable expenses may be claimed.

There are four Board meetings per year, all of which take place at the Foundling Museum in London.

Trustees are also expected to attend openings and other events on a regular basis, have meetings with the Museum Director and spend sufficient time with other staff members and players informally to develop and maintain an understanding of the charity. The Trustee role also involves representing the Museum at various events and meetings with key stakeholders.

The time commitment is expected to be around 2 days a month.

How to apply

Please email directorsoffice@foundlingmuseum.org.uk with your expression of interest in the form of a CV and cover letter. You may also, if you wish, send an Equal Opportunities Form with your application.

The closing date is noon on 31st July.





Foundling
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PATRON

HRH The Princess of Wales

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Back cover image: photo Dan Weill