



Graves Gallery: Collection Conversations

Open Call Request for Expressions of Interest: Visual Artists

Closing Date: Monday 1 June 2026

Sheffield's Visual Art Collection includes artworks from the 15th century to the present day and explores a huge variety of themes and ideas. The Graves Gallery is home to the Collection and is located on the top floor of Sheffield's landmark Central Library building. The building opened in 1934 as a state-of-the-art cultural centre for literacy and art supported by J G Graves, one of the city's most generous philanthropists.

The current displays show artworks from the Collection on the themes of Abstraction, colour and form; identity and place; portraiture and the human figure, and perspectives on overlooked histories. They include works by Gwen John, Naum Gabo, Claudette Johson, Edna Manley, Bridget Riley, John Hoyland, John Singer Sargent and Mark Wallinger.

Sheffield Museums believe that the city's Collection prompts many wide-ranging conversations and we are interested in how artists can use these conversations to explore ideas and develop their practice. Many consider the Graves Gallery to be an 'oasis' in the city centre, and we would like to continue to build on this reputation through nurturing dialogues between Sheffield's Collection and artists.

This is an opportunity for an artist/s to create new work in dialogue with an artwork from Sheffield's collection, bringing different perspectives to the fore.

Visitor feedback tells us that juxtaposing contemporary and historic artworks can facilitate more opportunities for people to reflect and enable them to consider the themes and ideas explored in more depth.

The Opportunity

Sheffield Museums will commission a maximum of **two artists to create** new artworks in response to Sheffield's Visual Art Collection on display at Graves Gallery. These new works will open up new ways for visitors to engage with and consider their Collection and enhance the visitor experience. The commissioned work will not enter Sheffield's Collection, it will be the property of the artist.

We would like to encourage visitors (and people who don't currently visit) to feel an ownership of, and connection with, their Visual Art Collection. This opportunity is open to all visual artists including those from underrepresented communities and those with valuable lived experience that can offer new perspectives on the Visual Art Collection and individual works within it.

Commission Brief

The new artwork should engage with Sheffield's Visual Art Collection. It can consider a single artwork or a series of artworks from the Collection that resonate with you and your creative practice. Alternatively, it might consider the Collection more broadly or provide an alternative narrative or take the form of deeper interpretation.

The artwork will be displayed in the Graves Gallery. It can use any medium and cover any subject so long as it is rooted in Sheffield's Visual Art Collection.

Our team will be on hand to answer any questions you might have as you develop your thinking, research the artworks that interest you and produce your work. You can see a range of artworks from Sheffield's Collection at

https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/search/2026--keyword:museums-sheffield--referrer:global-search/sort_by/date_earliest/order/desc/page/1/view_as/grid

Budget and time frame

The maximum fee available is £3,000. This includes research, development and all realisation costs. The work should be completed and ready to install by January 2027.

Expressions of Interest

Please submit an expression of interest by noon on Monday 1 June 2026 to exhibitions@sheffieldmuseums.org.uk. Include a CV (maximum of 2 pages), information on your practice including images (maximum 8 pages), and tell us about the artworks or themes within the collection that interest you with details of any relevant experience you want to mention.

This expression of interest should outline in 1,000 words or less

- the concept for the new work
- the artwork/s it connects with
- a brief outline of how the work will be created including timescale, medium etc
- An outline budget identifying any sources of additional funding and whether they have been secured

The expression of interest can be submitted in written format or as a video (no more than five minutes long). We are here to support you through this process, and we will make any reasonable adjustments to give you the best opportunity to share your ideas.

Our team are available to have informal conversations and to answer questions about the project via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 14 May, 2- 4pm and Tuesday 26 May, 10-12noon. If this is something you'd be interested in, please get in touch to receive a link to join.

If you have any queries, contact exhibitions@sheffieldmuseums.org.uk

About Sheffield Museums

Sheffield Museums is the independent charity that operates six of the city's museums and heritage sites: Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, Graves Gallery, Kelham Island Museum, Millennium Gallery, Shepherd Wheel and Weston Park Museum. We care for the city's collections of art, human history, and natural science, alongside the Guild of St George's John Ruskin collection and provide a home for the Ken Hawley Collection Trust's Hawley Tool Collection.

Sheffield's museum collections are owned by the people of Sheffield. They help us to tell the remarkable story of this city and its people. They celebrate Sheffield's reputation for excellence in craft, making and innovation and they inspire creativity and curiosity about the world we live in.