

# Firstsite

## Becoming a Firstsite Trustee



# Contents

<b>Introduction to Firstsite</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our spectacular building</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Our award winning artistic programme</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Learning and Education at Firstsite</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Firstsite team</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Colchester, Essex and East Anglia</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>What you can expect as a Firstsite Trustee</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Application process</b>	<b>28</b>



Artist EVEWRIGHT views his artwork  
*Mother's Touch*, Art for Life exhibition,  
Firstsite, 2020. Photography by Aura Films



# Introduction to Firstsite

**Founded in 1993, Firstsite is an art gallery in Colchester, Essex. We are the largest public gallery in the region. 2021 is the 10th anniversary of our award winning building designed by Rafael Vinoly.**

We are interested in working with people from all walks of life. This pack provides details on how you could join us as a trustee and help shape our future with us.

# Introduction to Firstsite

Our vision is a world where ‘everyone recognises and harnesses the power of creativity to change lives for the better’.

Our mission is to share art and culture for enjoyment, empowerment and education. Our focus is reducing inequality.

We create exemplary exhibitions, commissions and events happening in the gallery, East Anglia, nationally and online. We invite participants from the community to help us curate our Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme, alongside artists such as Grayson Perry, Raqs Media Collective, Sir Antony Gormley, Lubaina Himid and Gillian Wearing. In 2018, with the Mayor of London, we commissioned the statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament Square.

In response to Covid, Firstsite has had an exceptional year. We re-opened in July 2020 with our radical and transformative Holiday Fun programme with funds from the regional NHS Integrated Care System (ICS). Firstsite’s Director Sally Shaw was awarded an MBE for services to the arts recognising her work to promote art and support families in the pandemic. Our ‘Art is Where the Home is’ activity packs have been downloaded by 90,000 families.

And in early 2021 Firstsite led The Great Big Art Exhibition, encouraging thousands of people to make art in their homes, inspired by world-class artists and National collections.

Since opening its spectacular crescent-shaped building in 2011, Firstsite has welcomed over one million visitors and has established its reputation for being an art gallery of regional and national importance, presenting ambitious work in a fun and inclusive environment to new audiences in the East of England and beyond. Working with its partners and local community groups, Firstsite’s artistic programme brings together many different voices, to create exhibitions that speak to the whole of society.

Firstsite is a leader in commissioning new work in collaboration with communities. This in turn, provides innovative learning opportunities whilst supporting the professional development of local and regional artists. Firstsite is a partner of Plus Tate, which uses Tate’s resources to contribute to a network of arts organisations across the country, and to increase public access to the national collection of British and international modern and contemporary art.



Firstsite

# Our spectacular building

**Within our famous curved, gold walls Firstsite houses extensive exhibition space, the longest exhibition wall in the UK, a cinema, café, shop and meeting spaces.**

On 25 September 2011, Firstsite, previously housed at the 18th century Minories building in Colchester, opened a new award winning gallery.

The innovative architecture of the building is sensitive to its historic context, engineered to rest on top of a Roman Scheduled Monument with no foundation. The design marks the building out as a truly radical example of contemporary architecture.

Bringing East Anglia's ancient past together with the region's contemporary aspirational nature our extra-ordinary building is the only contemporary art gallery with an original mosaic embedded in the floor.



Zhang Enli, *Gesture and Form*, 2017 Installation view, exhibition at Firstsite Supported by Hauser & Wirth Photograph by Douglas Atfield

# **Our award winning artistic programme**

**We present a changing and diverse  
range of exhibitions all year round.  
There is always something to see.**



Michael Landy, *Essex Idol*, 2021. Installation view, Michael Landy's *Welcome to Essex*, Firstsite, 2021. Copyright Michael Landy. Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery. Photograph by Richard Ivey.

# Our award winning artistic programme

Since opening we have worked with many artists in both group exhibitions and solo presentations, notably first UK commissioned solo shows for Steve Claydon, Anthea Hamilton, Richard Hughes and Sophie von Hellerman. In 2014, we showed the first ever-major survey of the work of Bruce McLean. In 2017, we showed the works made by Grayson Perry for the interior of his famous 'House for Essex', which for one occasion only were made available to visitors to Firstsite during the busiest exhibition in our history to date. We have also presented major exhibitions of work by Andy Warhol, Gee Vaucher, Cory Arcangel, Elsa James and Hetain Patel.

In 2019/20 we presented Sir Antony Gormley's Field for the British Isles a signature work comprising of 40,000 small human shaped clay figures. This exhibition celebrating community, difference and

'togetherness' closed on the eve of the first lockdown – just before our collective sense of community has been changed and tested to the limits. We partnered with Modern Art Oxford, Spike Island and Nottingham Contemporary to tour Lubaina Himid's work in the year she rose to prominence for being the first black female artist to win the Turner Prize. In 2018, Firstsite co-commissioned the first and only statue of a woman, Millicent Fawcett by Gillian Wearing, for Parliament Square London.

We conduct new research into aspects of the modern history of art in the East of England. This has produced exhibitions of the work of Humphrey Jennings, Humphrey Spender and Edward Bawden, as well as larger projects on Hammer Prints Ltd, the Essex based collaboration between Eduardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson, which was accompanied by a substantial hard-back publication.

In March 2019, Firstsite was awarded National Partner status with the Arts Council England's renowned collection.

To date we have co-curated exhibitions from the Collection, with members of Essex's black community, The Radical Women of Colchester, refugees and asylum seekers living in Colchester and members of NHS frontline staff working through the pandemic in East Anglia.

This programme, along with our Holiday Fun programme has entirely transformed our creative practices as an institution and transformed the audiences coming to Firstsite.

# Learning and Education at Firstsite

**For the last two years, Firstsite has received investment from the regional NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for our ground-breaking ‘Holiday Fun’ programme which provides free meals during school holidays for children and families facing financial challenges and social isolation.**



Holiday Fun, Firstsite, 2019  
Photo by Aura Films

# Learning and Education at Firstsite

The Firstsite Holiday Fun programme creates the perfect day out for families during school holidays. It combines, art, physical activity and nutritious food to help children stay happy, healthy and creative – fueling bodies and imaginations in equal measure.

Since 2017, we have provided over 8,600 meals to 800 families in Colchester and Harwich – representing almost 10% of the families currently living in poverty in the two areas. More than 50% of the meals we have provided were delivered during the pandemic to families who require additional support during school holidays.

‘Firstsite Holiday Fun’ has encouraged thousands of new visitors from very diverse backgrounds to visit the gallery for the first time. These children and families are now taking part in creative development activities based around the five ways to wellbeing.

Activities involve collaborating with artists on the making of artworks and co-curating exhibitions alongside Firstsite gallery staff exploring and presenting works from the Arts Council England Collection.

This programme is transforming the way we engage with people who would not normally consider themselves as being artistic.

We are now being recognised as an innovative model of integrated care in a community setting.

This extra-ordinary programme is being recognised nationally as model of excellence for how the gallery of the future will develop with closer ties to hyper-local audiences, generating new insights into national and global issues such as food poverty and inequality.



YAK workshop with Mark Titchner,  
Firstsite, 2019. Photography by Maddie Pierce,

# The Firstsite team

**As a trustee you will be part of a Board that guides and supports the dynamic team of people at Firstsite. The senior management team, led by Sally, is built on a wealth of expertise covering artistic programming, finance, health and safety, operations, human resources, commercial, retail, marketing and communications.**

# The Firstsite team

In April 2016, Sally Shaw MBE was appointed as Director. She was previously Head of Programme at Modern Art Oxford and Deputy Head of Culture for the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Under Sally's leadership Firstsite has experienced a dramatic and highly successful re-visioning of its purpose and direction. This has led to ground breaking new steps in artistic programming, audience development and income generation.

In February 2019, Rosie Millard OBE, Chair of BBC Children in Need and Vice Chair of Opera North, was appointed as Chair of Firstsite's Board of Trustees. Formerly the BBC's Arts Correspondent, a role she held for a decade, Rosie also served as the Chair of Hull City of Culture 2017 from June 2014 to March 2018. This appointment was praised as a testament to Firstsite's growing impact in Colchester and the wider region by Arts Council England. The varied roles within Firstsite include the front of house team, the programming and learning teams, café and bar staff and our volunteers.

Our team is committed to our mission, to share art and culture for enjoyment, empowerment and education. It is this commitment that has driven our team to adapt in a very uncertain year and continue to be of benefit to those communities who need us. This can be seen in our successful digital offering including "Art is where the home is" activity packs and The Great Big Art Exhibition, our continued Holiday Fun programme and, when lockdown rules were temporarily eased, our gallery exhibitions and winter ice rink event.

We provide our team with best practice HR procedures, enhanced statutory benefits, regular team surveys, performance management reviews, training opportunities and a supportive culture. Our team is ready to adapt yet again, to ensure our reopening allows us to continue to share art and culture for enjoyment, empowerment and education.



Opening celebration, Antony Gormley,  
*Field for the British Isles*, Firstsite, 2019  
Photograph by Jayne Lloyd

# **Colchester, Essex and East Anglia**

**Firstsite is very proudly located in Colchester, Essex – serving the region of East Anglia.**

# Colchester, Essex and East Anglia

The Essex and East Anglia landscape – physical, economic, historical and cultural – is of major significance for our audiences.

Historically, East Anglia has been a region that has endured and enjoyed much political unrest – Colchester in particular, as the oldest recorded town in the UK, is littered with the architectural evidence of one invasion after the next. Boudicca burned the town down in AD 60/61, John Ball who led the Peasant’s Revolt in 1381 preached on the site of the gallery and more recently the town voted to remain in the European Union in amongst a sea of leave voting wards across Essex.

Our programme is seeded with many ideas, themes and subjects that enable our audiences to further connect with their immediate environment and promote our cultural heritage past and present much further afield. For example, we know that our audiences are particularly passionate about the three ‘p’s’ – politics, place and personality.

As a nationally significant art gallery we are working towards reflecting the national population demographics in our audiences, staff, Board and supporters and the artists we choose to support and present through our artistic and learning programmes.

Tapping into these themes has borne major fruit for Firstsite, proven in our rapidly increasing audience attendance figures. In 2017/18 we achieved our highest ever footfall of 156,000 visitors since opening in 2011. Our relevance and value is also reflected in what our visitors are saying about us – 90% of our visitors say Firstsite is a welcoming place where many different cultures can come together and be explored.

John Ball Day, Firstsite, 2017  
Photo by Firstsite



KEEP  
FREE  
SCHOOL  
MEALS

WAR

HELP  
LIVE  
HAPPY  
MORE  
PENS

Keep  
calm  
+  
Live

SHARE LIFE'S  
GL  
PR  
A

Stencils

# What you can expect as a Firstsite Trustee

**Being a trustee requires a commitment to providing time, experiences, and professional skills. The reward is a brilliant opportunity to support the continuing development of one of the UK's most radical and entrepreneurial art galleries.**

# What you can expect as a Firstsite Trustee

In addition, as a trustee of Firstsite you will have the opportunity to influence the economic regeneration of Colchester and wider region.

The roles are not remunerated, although reasonable travel expenses will be provided in advance. The role will require a time commitment to attend 4 board meetings and an annual strategy away day per year as a minimum and participation on at least one Committee or Working Group.

## The major duties and responsibilities of Trustees

- With the Director, set the overall strategic direction and policy.
- Act as financial stewards, ensuring financial stability and mitigating risks.
- Approve the Business Plan including approval of the annual budget and deciding on major resource matters.
- With the Director, define objectives, agree targets and evaluate performance and outcomes.
- Ensure that Firstsite promotes Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, whilst encouraging community participation.
- Be very hands-on and pro-active in encouraging development and fundraising initiatives which have significant impact.
- Provide constructive challenge and support to the Director and Senior Management.
- Act as Ambassadors for Firstsite.
- Observe the Articles of Association, charity and company law and other regulatory requirements.



Installation view, *My name is not Refugee*, Firstsite 2020  
Photograph by Jayne Lloyd

# What you can expect as a Firstsite Trustee

In order to make an effective contribution to Firstsite you will be expected to:

- Demonstrate a capacity for strategic vision, creative thinking, and good independent judgement.
- Become familiar with Firstsite's purpose, vision, values and objectives as well as its organisation structures and resources.
- Keep up to date with developments in the contemporary visual art field within which Firstsite operates.
- Prepare for, and attend, a minimum of four board meetings and a minimum of six out of eight exhibition openings. You will also be required to take part in at least one sub-committee with similar levels of time commitment.
- Be willing to contribute your skills and expertise fully to Firstsite's collective decision-making.
- Understand and accept the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
- Support the Firstsite staff – the Director and the senior staff will look to the Board for support in their dealings with stakeholders and partners, and also external parties such as the media and the public.
- Be willing to devote the necessary time and effort to the trusteeship of the organisation.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.

# What you can expect as a Firstsite Trustee

For more details about the legal obligations of trustees visit the Charity Commission website at [www.charitycommission.co.uk](http://www.charitycommission.co.uk) to read its publication CC3, The Essential Trustee.

It is essential that trustees attend Board meetings and other events when required and before making an application you should think carefully about your availability now and in the future.

Taking into consideration the frequency of Board meetings and associated activity, the time commitment is estimated at the equivalent of 12 days per year.

Normally trustees are asked to commit to a 3-year term on the Board and serve for a maximum of 2 terms.

## Application process

We are interested in working with people from all walks of life.

## Eligibility

If you are in any doubt about your eligibility, visit the Charity Commission website.



Opening celebration, Susan Pui San Lok,  
*A COVEN A GROVE A STAND*, Firstsite, 2019  
Photograph by Maddie Pierce

# Application process

If you would like to join the Firstsite Board of Trustees, please write to Rosie Millard OBE with your full contact details.

Your letter must cover the following points and should enable us to understand how we will be different and better as a result of collaborating with you.

Please send your letter to Rosie Millard OBE to: [hr@firstsite.uk](mailto:hr@firstsite.uk)

Closing date for applications:  
Sunday 5 September 2021

## Things to tell us

- Who you are and what you do with the majority of your time.
- Describe in what ways you contribute to society.
- Describe any interests outside of your main occupation, or work that are relevant to Firstsite. Describe your connection to culture, or art more specifically, if that is relevant.
- Outline your understanding of Firstsite, what we do and how we do it, and how you think you can help us do that even better.
- Tell us one single thing you would like to help us achieve in the next 5 years and how you would help us to achieve that.
- Details of qualifications and experience which meet the requirements listed on page 29.

# Application process

## We are looking for people who are:

- Great at communicating their thoughts and ideas and influencing others who may not share the same perspective
- Great at getting ideas off the page and into real life – making good things happen
- Passionate about culture and preferably (but not exclusively) contemporary art. We are excited about people who have a very broad interpretation of what culture and art are and can be
- Able to see ‘the bigger picture’ of the world around us, as well as grasp the finer details that make a difference
- Able to represent Firstsite and tell our story with conviction and passion to a broad range of people to persuade them to help
- Fantastic at raising money, encouraging more visitors and/or bringing other valuable connections to Firstsite to help us build the organisation and our profile

# Application process

## Specific experience or qualifications we are looking for, you may have one or more of the following:

- Making and/or showing art or culture in a professional situation at an emerging or established level
- Innovative digital communications or creations expertise
- Knowledge of equity and human rights or first hand life-experience of inequity or human rights infringements
- Direct involvement in Colchester, or Essex, or East Anglia life and community
- Knowledge of critical environmental issues and how to implement change at a tangible, local level
- A track record of developing innovative and disruptive commercial initiatives that have significant and sustainable financial impact
- Senior level health and wellbeing programming
- Agile and entrepreneurial business planning and development within a social impact environment

Super Black Curators Visit to Arts  
Council Collection Stores, 2019  
Photograph by Rob Hill



Firstsite, Rafael Vinoly Architects,  
Hayes davidson CGI, 2006

