

The Imagination Museum Co-commission 2026-7 with Ipswich Museum and DanceEast

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Overview

Supported with funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, Ipswich Museum and DanceEast, [The Imagination Museum](#) dance and heritage network is pleased to announce a **£6,000 co-commission** for a dance artist/s based in the East of England to create an original work in response to the collections of **Ipswich Museum**, and particularly the new **Journeys Gallery**, a crucial part of [the museum's current redevelopment](#).

The selected artist will **work collaboratively with a range of community groups local to the museum, who will also perform in the finished work**. Final performances are expected to take place in May 2027, shortly after the museum's official reopening, on-site at Ipswich Museum.

[The following full callout outlines the commission in greater detail, but here are some key points to consider, to help you decide whether this may be of interest to you:](#)

- This callout is open to artists based in the East of England who:
 - work primarily with dance/movement as part of their practice
 - have at least 5 years of professional experience
 - have an up to date Enhanced DBS Check and Public Liability Insurance
 - have a clear understanding of safeguarding and the importance of creating a positive empowering environment that supports participants' mental health and well-being.

We welcome applications from artists working within all forms and genres of dance, who use a range of choreographic processes and are able to create work collaboratively with community participants.

- We recognise the unpaid time artists invest in putting together applications. We are therefore using a two stage process so that only the artists whose skills and experience represent the best match with the project (based on the information they provide at Stage 1) will be invited to spend their time on a Stage 2 application.
- The deadline for Stage 1 applications is **10th July at 5pm**. Artists progressing to the next stage will then need to submit a Stage 2 application by the **4th September at 5pm**. Shortlisted artists will be invited to attend an interview on the **1st or 2nd October** at DanceEast.
- You can submit your responses to the Stage 1 and 2 questions in writing, or as a film or audio recording.
- If invited to interview, shortlisted artists will receive a fee of £100 and travel expenses to prepare for/attend the interview, and will receive the interview questions and other information about the venue and the interview panel in advance.
- We conceived this project as an opportunity for an individual dance artist given the scale of the fee and the scope of what it entails. Small groups/companies/partnerships are welcome to apply, but must consider carefully how this would work in practice, as there are no additional fees available for multiple artists working together.

We encourage you to get in touch (contact Charlotte on manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk) to discuss any access needs and if there is anything further we can do that would make applying easier, such as providing any of the materials in an alternative format.

What is The Imagination Museum?

The Imagination Museum is a national network for dance, community and heritage sector professionals. Through online and in-person events and resources, we share extensive knowledge and experiences and facilitate opportunities for future collaboration across the country, making the case for the benefits of dancing in museums and heritage sites. For more information about the network, please visit <https://imaginationmuseum.co.uk/about/>.

Context for The Imagination Museum Co-commissions

This is a pilot project from The Imagination Museum network exploring how museums and heritage sites can work with dance artists to co-create new work with local communities.

Funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, the project is about testing ideas, learning together, and shaping a model for future collaborations.

Because this is a first step, some parts of the project will evolve as we go. We're looking for artists who are open to experimenting, reflecting on the process, and helping us learn what works.

For our pilot project, we are offering two co-commission opportunities in the East of England (with funding from Ipswich Museum and DanceEast), and in London (with funding from the Horniman Museum and Gardens and Trinity Laban).

We invite you to sign up to The Imagination Museum mailing list via the **Join In** page here: <https://imaginationmuseum.co.uk/join-in/> or follow the network on socials (Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/imaginationmuseum/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheImaginationMuseum>) to receive up to date information.

Ipswich Museum and DanceEast co-commission: more information

Ipswich Museum and DanceEast have an extensive track record of bringing together dance, heritage and communities, working collaboratively and with other local organisations e.g. through supporting professional dance/heritage performances; facilitating opportunities for local students to study site-responsive practice; unearthing new stories and perspectives, and drawing in new audiences for heritage through multi-faceted partnership/community projects such as the '[Unlocked](#)' project in 2015, '[Lowestoft Dance Map](#)' from 2017-19 (with Glass House Dance) and the '[Power of Stories](#)' exhibition from 2021-2023.

Theme/starting point

The Imagination Museum co-commission for Ipswich Museum will respond to its **new Journeys Gallery**, one of eight new gallery spaces for the **museum redevelopment** expected to be completed in 2027.

This redevelopment presents a huge opportunity to make Ipswich Museum a more relevant, exciting, and welcoming place to visit, as well as restoring the beautiful Victorian building the museum is housed in. Ipswich Museum will reinterpret their rich and diverse collections, working with visitors and local communities to tell new stories to inspire and engage the next generation of the museum's visitors.

You can read more about the redevelopment here
<https://www.ipswichmuseum.co.uk/redevelopment/>.

We are inviting the commissioned dance artist to create a piece that actively connects with the theme of 'journeys', taking inspiration from local and global stories at the heart of Ipswich Museum's permanent collection, as well as people's more personal connection with journeys into and out of Ipswich.

Celebration event/s

The final shape of the performance work created in response to this co-commission will be developed collaboratively by the selected artist working with community groups and partners. However, we expect final performances to take place shortly after the reopening of the museum, expected Spring 2027. At this stage we plan to offer two final opportunities to share the work, as part of a weekend family day and an evening 'Late' event but this will be open to discussion.

Final performances will happen in Ipswich Museum once it is re-opened, but we are also open to other outcomes that may accompany these performances, such as workshops and work on film.

Working collaboratively with local people

The selected artist will collaborate with up to 4 local community groups including young people attending supplementary schools and members of groups supporting migrant and refugee communities. It may be the case that not all of the groups participating in the creative process perform in the final co-commissioned work, but we expect the commission to involve an intergenerational cast of performers from at least 2 of those groups.

The main devising and rehearsal period will take place from February- May 2027 over the course of approximately 12 weekly sessions as indicated in the schedule below. Please note that due to the timing of the redevelopment of Ipswich Museum, the rehearsals will take place primarily off-site, but there will be opportunities for the selected artist/s to have guided museum visits as part of their planning and development for the final project.

The successful applicant will receive:

- **A fee of £6,000.**

Any travel, access, materials/props, and costs of sourcing/creating music need to be included in this fee. No additional costs can be claimed.

- **Production support** from co-commission partners and The Imagination Museum team e.g. links with groups, support accessing space for rehearsal.
- **3 online artist coaching sessions** (with creative movement practitioner/researcher and dance/museums specialist Sara Wookey)
- **Film/photographic documentation** of the work-in-progress and final celebration performances, to be arranged and paid for by The Imagination Museum.

Supplementary information about Ipswich Museum and the Journeys Gallery

You can discover some more information about the planned re-design of the Journeys Exhibition and some example objects in [the recorded presentation from 2025 by Melanie Hollis available here.](#)

Please note this talk was given in 2025, and plans for the Journeys Gallery are constantly changing, so some elements of the design will now have shifted. The talk is intended to give a broad introduction to the themes and ideas explored in the gallery, even though some of the details will have changed.

Please contact The Imagination Museum at manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk if you require this information in another format.

This recording indicates some of the many possible ways to interpret this brief, e.g. drawing on

- the history of Ipswich as a 'gateway town', exploring migration into and out of the town over tens of thousands of years
- different types of journeys through Ipswich's history
- the role of water in Ipswich's story, showcasing the museum's model boat collection
- expedition and exploration, and stories of Master Navigators from across the world
- Empire and colonisation
- trade and engineering
- climate change and the impact this will have and is having on the movement of people around the globe.

Although there would be much more to discover and plan once the commissioned artist was in place, we are interested to hear from artists:

- **at Stage 1** - about what draws them to this opportunity, and how their experience meets the brief
- **at Stage 2** - about what their first thoughts would be in responding to the brief.

Applicants are not expected to do any additional research beyond what can be found in this callout and the supplementary information when applying for this opportunity.

Project timeline

Please note that the schedule for the project may be subject to change.

3rd June 2026	Announcement of artist callout
22 June 2026 12-1pm <i>(with 30 minutes time for additional questions at the end, for anyone who would like to stay)</i>	<u>Online lunchtime Q&A with The Imagination Museum, Ipswich Museum and DanceEast, via Zoom</u> An opportunity for interested artists to hear more about the co-commission and ask any questions. Please <u>book your place here</u> to receive the Zoom link when it is available.

	The online sessions will also be recorded and made available via the Imagination Museum website. Make sure you join The Imagination Museum here and follow the network on socials (Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TheImaginationMuseum and Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/imaginationmuseum/) if you want to be notified when the recordings are available.
10th July 2026 at 5pm	Stage 1 deadline for submitting Expression of Interest
By 31st July 2026	Selected artists will be invited to make a Stage 2 application Further information will be provided about the questions being asked at that stage, and what the panel are looking for in artists' responses.
4th September 2026	Stage 2 application deadline
1st or 2nd October 2026, tbc	Interviews for shortlisted artists , in person at DanceEast. Further information about scheduling will follow. <i>Fees (£100 to attend an interview lasting up to 1 hour) and travel expenses will be covered for shortlisted artists.</i>
By 5th October 2026	Deadline for informing selected artist/s
October 2026 - January 2027	Commissioned artist meeting with partners and finding out more about the museum redevelopment and Journeys Gallery; initial exploratory workshop/s with community groups, or representatives of those groups
w/c 22nd February - w/c 22nd March 2027 and w/c 12th April – w/c 10th May tbc	12 weeks or equivalent main creation/rehearsal period Participating community groups would meet weekly on a week day but we also expect to add in some weekend/school holiday additional extended rehearsals (e.g. in the February half term and Easter holiday tbc).
Dates tbc	Final rehearsal on-site
14/15 May tbc (final dates tbc with commissioned artist)	Celebration performances

End of September 2027	Documentary films and final evaluation completed
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Essential skills/experience

Co-commissioned artists will:

- Be based in the East of England and work primarily with dance / movement as part of their practice. We welcome applications from artists working within all forms and genres of dance, who use a range of choreographic processes.
- Have an established choreographic practise of at least 5 years, currently creating dance work within the professional and/or community sector, with experience working site-responsively.
- Have experience working with the kinds of community groups who will be involved in the project and a solid understanding of best practice, supporting participants to contribute to development of a project and ensuring their thoughts are heard and reflected in the project content.
- Have an up to date Enhanced DBS Check and Public Liability Insurance already in place.
- Have a clear understanding of safeguarding and the importance of creating a positive empowering environment that supports participants' mental health and well-being.
- Be over 21 and able to work in the UK, registered as self-employed with a UTR (Unique Tax Reference) number.
- Be professional, friendly, and organised.
- Be willing to feed into overall project evaluation to ensure learning from the project can be shared more broadly.

Desirable skills/experience

- Experience managing relationships with multiple kinds of partners and responding to a range of sites.
- Experience working with communities in Ipswich.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

The Imagination Museum, Ipswich Museum and DanceEast are committed to creating a culture in which diversity and equality of opportunity are promoted actively and in which discrimination is not tolerated. We welcome applications from dance artists of global majority heritage**, who identify as LGBTQIA+, D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and groups of people who have been traditionally under-represented in the arts.

You can [watch a video to see some of the work supported by DanceEast here](#). They are committed to creating a diverse, inclusive workforce that is reflective and representative of the diversity of their communities. DanceEast recognise that difference is a strength, and their working environment is one where every individual's unique contribution is valued and respected.

You can also [watch a video of recent project HOME, a collaboration between The Hive Ipswich, DanceEast and Cathy Waller Company here.](#)

[Read more about Colchester and Ipswich Museum's policies on Inclusion, Access and Equality here](#) and [their Power of Stories project from 2021-23](#) as an example of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion in action.

You can also [read more about our process of putting the Imagination Museum co-commission callouts together here.](#)

***By global majority heritage we mean: People who identify as having full, partial or mixed heritage/s from indigenous peoples of the global south, the African Diaspora, SWANA (South West Asian - sometimes referred to as 'Middle Eastern' - and North African) region and/or who may describe themselves as dual or mixed heritage, Black, Brown, South Asian, Latinae, East and South East Asian (ESEA).*

We understand that not everyone uses the same terminology in this sphere and in our communications we aim to embrace the verbal or written language dancers prefer to use to describe themselves and their identities.

How to apply

You can submit your **Stage 1 Expression of Interest for this opportunity using the following online form:** <https://forms.gle/Z6JrtY7L1uun136t5>

In this form you will be prompted to provide:

1. Contact information
2. Information about your availability for the proposed project timeline (*whilst acknowledging that the timeline is subject to change*)
3. An initial response about why you think you would be a good fit for this opportunity, bearing in mind the themes of the co-commission, proposed participant group and context for the final performance (250 words, or 2 minutes of video, or 2 minutes of audio)

We understand that you can't tell us everything about how you would respond at this stage, especially in 250 words or 2 minutes of video/audio, so please don't worry about pitching your idea at Stage 1. Instead use this as an opportunity to tell us a little about what drew you to or excited you about this project, and how you feel your experience matches the brief.

4. Details of your previous experience working with young people and in community settings, including with people who may not have danced before (150 words, or 1.5 minutes of video, or 1.5 minutes of audio)
5. Up to 2 examples of individual works, and/or one link to your website or alternative online profile that you feel are relevant to this brief

You will not be able to save and return to your form responses, so we recommend you prepare your answers in advance, and then submit all of the information in one go. You can use a Dropbox, Google Drive, WeTransfer or alternative online link to share any video or audio files, but please make sure that if it is password protected you also provide details of the password. If you encounter any technical issues with the form, please let us know at manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk and we will do our best to resolve them.

Your responses should be submitted online via the form link here:
<https://forms.gle/Z6JrtY7L1uun136t5> by the **10th July 2026 at 5pm.**

- Please note that you won't receive an email confirming receipt of your application until after the deadline has passed. If you don't hear from us in the week after the deadline, please contact us on manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk to check we've received your application safely.
- Selected artists will then be invited (notified by the **31st July 2026**) to make a **Stage 2 Application** to provide some more information about their initial ideas, which will supplement their initial Expression of Interest.
- The deadline for Stage 2 applications will be the **4th September 2026 at 5pm**
- **Shortlisted artists will be invited to attend interviews on the 1st or 2nd October at DanceEast.** If this is the case, we will aim to give at least 1 week's notice.

Assessing applications

Stage 1 Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by a panel including representatives from The Imagination Museum and co-commission partners, and scored against the following criteria:

- Availability for the project timeline - yes/no
- Relevance of artist's practice, portfolio and initial response to the commission brief and audience (70%)
- Relevant experience of working with communities and partners (30%)

It is very important to us that the application process should not form a barrier to you applying for this co-commission, so please contact us (manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk) if you need any of the callout information provided in a different format, or if you want to provide the information requested in our application form in another format.

Remember, please submit your Stage 1 Expression of Interest online via this link:
<https://forms.gle/Z6JrtY7L1uun136t5> by 5pm on the 10th July 2026.

Contact details and links

Please contact us at manager@imaginationmuseum.co.uk with questions regarding the application process, but note that we cannot answer questions about the content of specific

proposals. If you encounter any technical issues accessing this email address, please contact Strategic Lead for The Imagination Museum, Katie Green, on katie@madebykatiegreen.co.uk as an alternative.

We will endeavour to provide feedback to any artists who progress to interview, and will offer reflections on the overall commissioning process on The Imagination Museum website after artists have been selected, but unfortunately, due to the capacity of our team, we will not be able to provide feedback at other stages of the application process.

Remember, you can sign up to join our online Q&A session on the 22nd June, 12-1pm (with an optional additional 30 minutes), to find out more about the project:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/zoom-ga-for-artist-commission-with-danceeast-and-ipswich-museum-tickets-1989088403961>

Useful links

For more information about the co-commission partners, please visit their websites:

Ipswich Museum - <https://www.ipswichmuseum.co.uk/>

DanceEast - <https://www.danceeast.co.uk/>

[Click here for more information about The Imagination Museum.](#)

You may be interested to look through some of the [dance/heritage Case Studies](#) on The Imagination Museum website for ideas and inspiration, and we have [an Essential Read available here](#) with some guidance for getting started working with dance and movement in museums.

The Imagination Museum Co-commissions 2026-7 are being supported financially using public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, the Horniman Museum and Gardens, Trinity Laban, Ipswich Museum, DanceEast and also by Made By Katie Green, current managing organisation for The Imagination Museum dance/heritage network.