Jonathan Ruffer curatorial grant programme

Guidance for applicants

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1. About

The Jonathan Ruffer curatorial grant programme provides funding for travel and other practical costs to help curators and museum professionals undertake collection and exhibition research projects in the UK or abroad.

This unique programme is made possible by the support of Jonathan Ruffer, who shares our belief in the importance of developing curatorial skills and supporting research. Since 2012 we have helped nearly 800 curators, researchers and arts professionals with hundreds of projects, and we are able to offer grants totalling approximately £80,000 annually.

This guidance will help you consider whether this funding programme is for you and will provide further information regarding eligibility and how to submit a strong application.

2. Before you apply

Aims

Through this programme we aim to help individuals realise their curatorial ambitions, by offering grants for curatorial development opportunities and collections-based research. Art Fund is committed to delivering public benefit across our grant programmes, we therefore want to hear how our grant to you will help further this aim.

However, we also accept that research can and should be exploratory and creative. We welcome ambitious applications, and will not always expect material outcomes (for example in the form of acquisitions, exhibitions or publications) to be an immediate consequence of our support.

While this programme aims to help support curatorial development and collections-based research, it is not intended to replace statutory funding. We hope it will demonstrate the importance and benefits of continued investment in curatorial expertise, and encourage funding from other sources.

What we'll fund

We welcome applications from UK curators, museum professionals and researchers to undertake travel or other activities to extend and develop their curatorial expertise, collections-based knowledge and art historical interests.

Applications may include requests to support:

- Travel and accommodation for research trips and conferences
- Museum and exhibition visits
- Training courses and programmes of study
- Books and subscriptions to add to a museum's research resources or library

We can consider funding other kinds of activity, provided you are able to make a strong case for its contribution to the development of curatorial skill and collections-based research projects.

We will not normally consider funding:

- Purchase or hire of equipment – e.g. computers or related hardware, or cameras
- Photographic or reproduction/copyright costs
- First-class travel
- Research projects being undertaken by undergraduate or postgraduate university students.

Who we will support

The programme is open to curators and other professionals working in museums, galleries and archives that are open to the public.

We recognise the need for new skills, knowledge and research to benefit museum collections for the future, so these grants are also available to researchers, art historians and academics working with museums to improve the use and understanding of their collections. If you are not based in a museum or gallery, we ask that you provide a letter of support from an eligible partner organisation.

Please note that grants are paid to the supporting institution and cannot be paid to individuals.

We can consider applications from more than one applicant, and recognise that activities such as research for exhibition development can benefit greatly from collaborative trips, particularly with colleagues across departments. However we are unlikely to consider applications with more than three joint applicants.

An individual applicant can receive a maximum of one grant per year (small or large). An organisation can receive a maximum of one large grant per year.

Size of grants

We will consider funding requests for a minimum of £250. There are two categories of grant: one up to £2,500; the other above £2,500.

If completion of the research project or other activity proposed is dependent on the success of other funding applications, we will ask you to present your full funding package and indicate when you hope to hear the outcomes of these applications.

Grants of £250 to £2,500

A total of £45,000 is available annually for grant requests at this level. We would anticipate these applications being, in the main, small and discrete grants for travel (e.g. for research projects or visits to galleries/exhibitions/artists' studios/art fairs), professional training courses, the purchase of books and catalogues, or research expenses.

There are no fixed deadlines for applications in this category. We aim to turn applications round within eight weeks of submission, though this may vary depending on volume of applications. If you require a decision within a shorter timeframe please do get in touch to see whether we can accommodate this.

You should allow sufficient time between submitting your application and the time by which you need a decision; please bear this in mind if applying towards travel costs to enable you to book tickets that represent the best value for money.

Grants of £2,501 and above

A total of £35,000 will be available annually in two rounds, and it is only in exceptional circumstances that we will offer a grant of more than £5,000. This will naturally limit the scope of proposals, but we nonetheless hope you will be creative and ambitious in your application, and bold with regard to the amount of funding you request if you feel your ideas are deserving. There are two deadlines per year for applications of £2,501 and above, in spring and autumn. The exact dates are published on the Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants webpage.

3. Your application

Application process

Please do get in touch with the Programmes team at Art Fund to discuss your potential project before submitting an application. We will be able to give advice on eligibility, timescales and deadlines for applications. All applicants should contact Joe Jefford, Programmes Coordinator, on 020 7225 4815 or jjefford@artfund.org.

You can apply for a grant using our online application system. To access the application forms you will need register for a 'My Art Fund' account as a professional user.

If you do not have an account, please register using the following link:

Create an account

If you have a 'My Art Fund' account, but cannot see the online forms, please contact the programmes team on programmes@artfund.org and we will update your account to have professional user status. This will mean you can access our grant applications and other services available to those working or volunteering in museums, galleries or historic houses.

When you log in the link to applications is on the toolbar on the right-hand side.

If you require the application form in an alternative format, please get in touch.

We expect all applicants to make a robust and convincing case as to how the funding requested will help them to meet the aims of the programme. In the application form you will be asked to:

- Provide details of your supporting institution. If you are not based in a museum or gallery we ask that you be supported by an accredited, or provisionally accredited, public collection
- Detail what activities or research you hope to undertake with the grant and how it will further the development of your curatorial expertise and benefit the collections in your care (if relevant)
- Provide a budget breakdown and draft itinerary. We understand that plans and timings can change, but this helps us understand fully the activities we are being asked to fund.
- Detail which other funding sources you have explored. A contribution from your institution is expected in most circumstances
- Detail where else you are applying for support, and the timescale for decisions on these applications
- If there are multiple participants involved in the project, provide reasoning as to why each person should be involved and how they will benefit
- Provide a one page CV from each applicant
- If your grant request is for £500 or more, provide a letter of support from the Director (or equivalent) of the museum by which you are employed, or within which you wish to undertake the research project
- Provide any additional supporting documents that may have been requested during your initial conversation with us e.g. images of relevant works in your collection

We will also ask you to outline the aims and desired outcomes of the project, and select up to three outcomes from defined categories. This helps us understand and evaluate the impact of our grant giving. If you anticipate there being more than three outcomes, please select the three you consider to be the primary outcomes of your proposed activities. For guidance, please refer to the categories below:

Professional development	Activities or research allowing for curatorial development and development of subject specialist knowledge, including conferences and networking opportunities
Institutional learning and strategy	Strategic research e.g. on curatorial strategy, or how museums are working with particular communities or programming for specific audiences, with a view to implementing change to organisational strategy
Developing interpretation and public engagement	Activities contributing to the creation of tools and materials to aid in audience interpretation of and access to collections e.g. publications, text panels, catalogues, digital interactives, materials for SEN groups, sensory impairment, physical access etc.
Developing new and existing partnerships	e.g. with other museums and galleries, art institutions, artists, educational organisations, local community groups, funding bodies etc.
Developing public programming	e.g. a programme of events to accompany an exhibition, developing new gallery talks or series of lectures, education programmes etc.
Research into existing collections	Research that will provide new and additional contextual information on collections already held e.g. researching artist archives
Temporary exhibition	Activities that will contribute to the development of a temporary exhibition or display
Collections development	Research to inform the development of strategic collecting policies, or trips that will allow for new acquisitions to be identified and made
Research on conservation and care of collections	e.g. study days, courses or workshops on conservation techniques etc.
Developing permanent displays	Activities to contribute to the redevelopment of existing displays, or the creation of new galleries

4. What happens next

Decision making

All applications are assessed by a committee convened by Art Fund.

Confirmation of outcome and claiming the grant

If your application is successful we will issue our offer paperwork to you. The offer paperwork includes:

- Offer letter
- A schedule of your proposed activities, including key project dates and aims and desired outcomes.

Successful applicants can claim their grant in two instalments.

The first 90% can be claimed upfront following the submission of an invoice your employer/ institution together with a signed copy of the offer letter (keep the other copy for your own records).

The final 10% of the grant can be claimed once the activities have been undertaken and you have completed Art Fund's evaluation form and submitted a report. This report should assess the funded activities with regards to the development of your curatorial expertise, and should reflect on the aims and desired outcomes set forth in your application. As a guideline such reports should not be more than three pages in length – and must include a selection of images. In addition, we require a financial statement and a copy of the receipts for any single expenditure exceeding £500.

Please note that we cannot pay grants to individuals, and funds must be paid to your employer or supporting institution. Grant recipients should reclaim any expenditure in the first instance from their institution.

Acknowledging our support

We ask that Art Fund's logo be used wherever practicable and that our contribution be acknowledged in any publication, exhibitions materials or catalogues produced relating to your grant-supported project. The suggested credit line is 'Supported by Art Fund', or in longer text, 'The development of this exhibition/project was supported in part by a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Research Grant from Art Fund'.

Our logos and guidance on how to acknowledge us on your organisation's labels and in print and digital materials can be downloaded using this link: Comms and marketing toolkit.

Please contact the museum marketing team for sign off on any materials, allowing 3 working days for us to respond.

5. Further information and guidance

Key dates and deadlines

Applications for grant requests over £2,500 are considered at committee meetings which take place two times a year. For details on upcoming deadlines and meeting dates, please contact us.

Contact

For further information and to discuss a potential application please contact Joe Jefford, Programmes Coordinator, on 020 7225 4815 or jjefford@artfund.org.

To discuss how to acknowledge Art Fund support, or for sign off on marketing and exhibition materials, please contact our National Art Pass network team:

Jennie Jiricny, National Art Pass Network Manager
jjiricny@artfund.org 020 7225 4801

5. Terms and Conditions

At the time of submission, we will ask you to confirm that these have been read and understood. At the time of claiming a grant if successful, you will need to sign an agreement saying that you accept our terms and conditions.

- Art Fund will accept a maximum of one application per individual per year for any size of grant.
- Applications over £500 must be accompanied by a letter of support from the Director (or equivalent) of the museum by which the applicant is employed or within which they wish to undertake the research project. Applications cannot be considered without this letter.
- Applications for £500 or less do not need to be accompanied by a letter; however the application must be submitted with a statement to confirm the Director (or equivalent, as above) endorses the application.
- Applications are administered by Art Fund. Decisions on applications are made by members of a committee convened by Art Fund. Its decisions are final.
- The committee may choose to award a smaller grant than requested, towards specific elements of the application only.
- Grants will be paid to the bank account of the supporting museum, gallery or institution with charitable status. Grant recipients must therefore reclaim any expenditure in the first instance from their institution. We cannot refund grants to individuals. Art Fund must be satisfied that the recipient body is eligible to take receipt of a grant in line with our due diligence procedures.
- Grant recipients must be able to prove expenditure to Art Fund through submitting a financial statement.
- 90% of the grant can be paid up front following the submission of an invoice by the recipient's employer/institution. 10% of the agreed grant will be withheld until the grant recipient submits a financial statement and report on their project.
- In the event of any under spend Art Fund reserves the right to reclaim all or any part of the unspent funds. Art Fund also reserves the right to require you to submit receipts for any expenditure claimed.
- Recipients will be expected to submit a report with their financial statement that assesses the funded activities with regards to the development of the individual's curatorial expertise and the actual or potential benefit to museum collections. As a guideline such reports should not be more than three pages in length – and must include a selection of images.
- Applications that have not been discussed in advance with the Programmes office will not be accepted.