

**East Anglia Art Fund**A Brief History

In 2021 the East Anglia Art Fund celebrates 30 years of supporting exhibitions and art education at the Norwich Castle.

The East Anglia Art Fund evolved out of the Tate in the East Project – a proposal from Tate led by Nicholas Serota to open a gallery in Norwich, building on its regional policy and following the development of Tate St Ives and Tate Liverpool. This idea was first discussed in 1989 at a meeting at the Maid’s Head Hotel, convened by Sir Timothy Colman, currently President of Trustees of EAAF, and attended by Nicholas Serota. The initiative met with an enthusiastic response across the city and the county of Norfolk, galvanising a committed group around the ambition to establish a high-quality exhibition venue. Various empty buildings and brown field sites were considered for the location of a stand-alone Tate in Norwich.

This project attracted to its cause a group who in 1990 became known as Tate in the East. The following year the Tate in East Anglia Foundation was formally registered as a charity. Ultimately, for a variety of reasons, not least a major economic downturn, a stand-alone gallery was never built. Instead, the determination to provide exhibition space and exhibitions of national and international significance found its focus in Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery and a long-term partnership with Tate was established; Tate sent regular exhibitions to Norwich Castle, or lent on a large-scale to exhibitions generated from within the Castle. This partnership is still active today. In the last thirty years the East Anglia Art Fund has supported over 70 exhibitions at the Castle and across Norfolk and Suffolk. Recent projects have highlighted the international significance of art works in our region and these include *The Paston Treasure: Riches and Rarities of the Known World* 2018, *Lines of Sight: W.G. Sebald’s East Anglia* 2019 and *A Passion for Landscape: Rediscovering John Crome* 2021.

In 1993 EAAF was the recipient of a bequest of sixteen marvellous modern and contemporary paintings and sculptures from the collection of Jane, Lady Adeane. These works are displayed and stored at Norwich Castle. In 1998 Tate in East Anglia changed its name to the East Anglia Art Foundation, evolving by 2005 in to the East Anglia Art Fund (EAAF).

EAAF is now staffed by a Director and Administrator and is governed by a Board of Trustees and guided by an Executive Committee who meet twice a year. Since 2006 a Board of Patrons have provided most valuable support and they enjoy a bespoke event each year. From the start EAAF pledged to back exhibitions through raising sponsorship money from local businesses and the annual subscriptions of its members: membership began in 1998 and from modest beginnings has grown to over 600 members. Our members and sponsors are invited to the Private Views for the opening of Norwich Castle art exhibitions and those parties have become highlights of the Norfolk social scene. For our members we also arrange a variety of talks, exhibition and studio visits with artist and curators, placing them at the heart of the visual arts in the region.

Whilst EAAF energies have traditionally been focussed on exhibitions at Norwich Castle, it increasingly grants small sums to exhibitions across Norfolk and Suffolk, especially those featuring the work of local, living artists. EAAF has in the past helped Norwich Castle to buy a couple of important paintings, and in 2001 gave £405,000 for a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund bid to refurbished Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery. Key to the ambitious project was the creation of two top-quality, spacious exhibition galleries, all part of the £11 million grant which transformed Norwich Castle for the new millennium. In 2004 EAAF supported, with the Friends of Norwich Museums and the Costumes and Textiles Association, the renovation and refurbishment of the Benefactors’ Room at the Norwich Castle. More recently EAAF members contributed in 2012 over £18,000 to the refurbishment of the Colman Watercolour Galleries at Norwich Castle.

Major benefactors to the East Anglia Art Fund have included the John Jarrold Trust, the Norwich Town Close Estate Charity, and the Fund has received consistent support from a number of corporate sponsors including Brown & Co, Birketts, City College Norwich, Country & Eastern, Grant Thornton, Jarrolds & Sons, John Lewis, Kettle Foods, Lovewell Blake and Mills & Reeve. Archant have given significant encouragement through the work of Ian Collins and his excellent coverage of EAAF’s activities and the exhibitions which have been staged with its support.

EAAFs support for local artists includes a series of Open Art Shows at Norwich Castle which have attracted over 1,000 submissions and are selected by an invited panel of artists and curators. The sale of works from these exhibitions helps to support further exhibitions. Survey exhibitions of living artists have also generated funds from the sale of works for the wider exhibition programme.

The key link between these projects is EAAF’s educational programmes. These range from Master Classes Master Classes for A-Level students which have run since 2003 to the most recent initiative, ST\*ART Saturday art courses for 8 to 12 year olds to. All these activities aim to bring young people, artist and art works together, ensuring students have access to the best in art and exhibitions right here, where they live. Our support for these opportunities extends beyond the commission of artist tutors to the provision of transport to and from school and the cost of a supply teacher to make sure that the students’ art teacher can be released! From autumn 2016 a generous bequest from artists Fred Dubery and Joanne Brogden has provided for a programme of scholarships for students of Fine Art and Fashion at the Norwich University for the Arts.

Today, the East Anglia Art Fund continues with a growing dedication to enriching cultural life in our region by supporting the best in exhibitions and art education. Our commitment to projects at Norwich Castle is key, representing a thriving partnership that was core to the creation of EAAF. Alongside our work to support the Castle we seek to fund exhibitions and education opportunities elsewhere in Norfolk and Suffolk, ensuring that we play a central role in providing great art for our region.

[www.eastangliaartfund.org](http://www.eastangliaartfund.org)