

Media release
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The Bowes Museum invites families to enjoy a free open day, showcasing highlights of its exciting 2025 programme.

On Saturday, 15 February, The Bowes Museum is opening its doors for free between 10:00 and 5:00. Activities handpicked from the inspiring programme planned for 2025 will take place throughout the day. With insightful tours, object handling and storytelling, it promises a memorable day out for families.

Visitors to the County Durham museum that sign up for a membership on the day will receive a 'bring a friend for free' voucher, enabling them to enjoy a free day out with a friend or family member until 31st March 2026.

Activities for families with younger children:

Artist Jane Young will be leading **Artist Makers: Spring into Nature** between 10:00 – 4:00, a workshop suited for ages 8+. Inspired by the natural world, participants will learn about symbolism from Floriography, the language of flowers and will create their own Tussie Mussie, a small floral bouquet. Artist Maker Workshops are held weekly on Saturdays, 1:00 until 3:00 and Wednesdays during the school holidays.

For those with pre-school children, **Stay and Play** offers a moment for self-led sensory play in the Conversation Gallery between 10:00 – 4:30.

Contemporary Dance Workshops for families with children aged 8+ will take place in the Jubilee Room on the second floor at 11:00, 1:00 and 3:00. Participants will be guided through the session with a professional dancer from regional dance school, Eliot Smith Dance. This energetic and fun experience is centred around Pitmen Painters through the lens of contemporary dance, storytelling and art. Please contact ESD at info@eliotsmithdance.com in advance of the workshop if you have any access requirements.

The ever-popular **Family Story Tour** will take place at 10:30, 12:30 and 2:30, centred around the *Deadly Beauty from the Medicine Box* display and museum-wide trail. Learning Producer, Connor Lagus will take families on a journey through the galleries to highlight the unexpected and fascinating facts behind art and objects.

Embark on an art adventure with Learning Manager, Alia Cruz in **Recycled Garden**, an interactive workshop based in the Blue Picture Gallery at 11:00 and 1:00. Designed to spark creativity and curiosity using eco-friendly materials, participants will be encouraged to use their senses to explore the collection. This workshop can be adapted for all ages and SEN.

Activities for young people and adults:

The **Young Curators** programme returns in 2025, enabling young people aged 16 – 21 to be involved in behind-the-scenes action at The Bowes Museum. In this drop-in taster day 10:00 – 4:30, staff and last year's cohort of Young Curators will be on hand to share more about their experiences, whilst leading object handling and curatorial planning activities to participate in. Applications forms for the 2025 cohort are available on the day for those passionate about art, history and curation.

Co-Production Curator, Eleanor Thirlway will discuss the making of the co-produced 'Bringing the outside in' display at 10:45 and 1:45 in a **HIVE Tour**. Learn how the museum worked with young people and a ceramicist to select objects and prepare them for display.

Volunteers will be allowing visitors to get hands-on access to a range of interesting items from the collections at a **Handling Table**, based in the Decoration & Ornament Gallery from 10:00 – 4:00.

30-minute **Spotlight Tours** will run at 11:00 and 2:30, led by members of the Welcome Team covering their unique areas of interest and expertise.

For anyone interested in learning more about symbolism and hidden references behind objects in the collection, the captivating **LGBTQIA+ Tour** at 12:45 and 2:45 highlights a selection of items spanning from Ancient Greece to the 20th century.

Fashion enthusiasts can enjoy an insightful **Framing Fashion Curator Talk** in a 30-minute tour led by Curator, Rachael Whitworth at 11:00, 12:00, 13:30 and 14:30.

Curator of Fine Art and Design, Howard Coutts will be introducing the history of Chinese porcelain in a specialist **Ceramics Tour** at 11:00 and 1:00. Discover the influence of blue and white on European ceramics through examples in the collection.

Exclusive exhibitions, only to be seen at The Bowes Museum:

Visitors can explore the new exhibition, ***From Joséphine Bowes: Trendsetters and Trailblazers*** which celebrates the 200th year of artist, collector, patron of the arts, and museum co-founder Joséphine Bowes. The exhibition showcases a contemporary continuation of the collection, giving a flavour of where Joséphine's considerable knowledge of artistic trends might have taken The Bowes Museum next. See an expansive collection of historical, modern and contemporary artwork, consisting of items from the Bowes' collection and loans from across the UK, Europe and United States. Paintings are exhibited alongside sculptures, photography, furniture, textiles and ceramics from world-renowned artists including Pablo Picasso, Sir Grayson Perry CBE, Gillian Wearing CBE and contemporaries including Joy Labinjo, Lucy Waters, and a special commission piece by Phoebe Cummings.

There's only two weeks left to see ***Framing Fashion: Art and Inspiration From a Private Collection of Vivienne Westwood*** in the Fashion & Textiles Gallery before it closes 2 March. Presenting a new selection of ensembles by the late designer from the private collection of Peter Smithson, the special display examines the inspiration she took from paintings, sitters in portraits and the materials and techniques used by artists. Outfits, accessories and ephemera from the period are shown alongside paintings and historic fashion from the museum's collection.

Experience the magical performance of the **Silver Swan** at 11:45 and 2:00.

For those feeling peckish after a busy day exploring the museum, Café Bowes, the award-winning table service restaurant will be serving up delicious cakes and scones, tempting lunch dishes and drinks throughout the day. Walk-ins welcome.

To plan your day and book activities, visit the Family Open Day event [webpage](#).

The Bowes Museum is open daily 10:00 – 5:00, offering a family-friendly seasonal programme of free activities included with entry, and 22 acres of parkland with a play area to explore. Don't forget, under 18s and full-time students always go free!

Note to editors:

Download high-resolution images showing what visitors can expect from [Family Open Day](#).

About The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited Museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built Museum brings together an extraordinary, Designated collection of European fine and decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. artscouncil.org.uk

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. discoverdurham.co.uk

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £16.00 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £18.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.00 for a day ticket, £20.90 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free.

As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/ for more information.



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