

Open call:
Cite the past, sight the stars
Wigwell Lodge Residency
Feb - March 2027

The Photographers' Gallery invites applications for a new residency in Derbyshire. Based at Wigwell Lodge, this two-month residency is for artists working with expanded photography and digital practices. This is an opportunity to research, experiment and expand thinking around photography, technology and innovative approaches to image making and visual culture.

[The Photographers' Gallery](#) explores how photography connects, captivates and radically changes our world today. Since 2012, the Gallery's extensive work around digital and new technologies has been pioneering in thinking about photography's relationship to computational culture. The Gallery's programme includes artist commissions, exhibitions, [academic research](#), and public events, alongside the online platform [Unthinking Photography](#), which explores photography's increasingly automated and networked life.

Context:

The residency takes place in the context of photography's 200th anniversary, and considers a series of potential starting points for further exploration:

Ø In February 1927, [Aby Warburg](#) embarked in earnest on a project that he never completed, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a series of wooden panels on which he pinned clusters of images into thematic constellations. In doing so, he proposed a novel way of understanding visual culture that would pre-empt the use of search engine.

Ø In 1977, NASA sent the Voyager probe into space. Included on board was the *Golden Record*, a disc [containing](#) sounds and images selected to portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth, intended for any intelligent extraterrestrial life form that may find it.

Ø In 1980, The Photographers' Gallery's founder, Sue Davies, curated the ground-breaking exhibition [In and Out of Space](#) featuring all 116 of the photographs contained on the Golden Record, offering a new context for photography that sits between science, technology and the imagination.

Ø The Wirksworth StarDisk, located in Derbyshire and created in 2011 by local artist, writer and activist Aidan Shingler, is situated on a site notable for stargazing and was designed to inspire [contact with extraterrestrials](#). Whereas Voyager went looking for other lifeforms, StarDisk hopes other life will come to visit Earth.

Ø In her essay '[Seeing Global](#)' Susan Buck-Morss proposed "a different construction of history altogether—to cite the past, as one might sight the stars, bringing elements of it together within constellations of meaning that relate to our own time as the vanishing point."

Ø The Inverted World Labs is a speculative research project that highlights a contemporary 'inversion' of cultural production where digital creators are employed to produce cultural content (such as images, video games and music) specifically for AI systems to interact with, no longer making work for humans but for intelligent

machines. The lab launched in 2026 with [Ghost in the Loop](#), an online exhibition of new commissions in partnership with Goethe-Institut London.

The opportunity

Working in partnership with The Ampersand Foundation, you are encouraged to use the residency as an opportunity to test ideas, explore new methodologies and pursue speculative or research-led projects. Your proposal may respond to one or several of the following themes, or use them simply as a point of departure:

- Image-making, celestial fictions and realities
- Institutional archives: including The Photographers' Gallery and other archives
- Photography's relationship to computational culture
- Collective knowledge: human and nonhuman
- Deep time
- Ideas around civilisations or the universal
- How Earth's knowledge can be distilled into 116 images
- How photography travels and spreads through space, time and networks
- Transmissions, long distance communication, radio satellite imagery
- Cosmic / earthly debris
- Digital twins and AI world models

What the residency offers

- Two months' accommodation and studio space at Wigwell Lodge, Derbyshire
- A £1000 stipend per month
- A £1000 production budget
- Up to £500 towards travel
- Promotion before and throughout the residency
- Curatorial and administrative support from The Photographers' Gallery throughout the residency with the potential to develop into a project or commission for 2027/2028
- A public presentation or showcase at The Photographers' Gallery or a partner venue at the conclusion of the residency

Artist selection and time frame

This opportunity is open to individual artists over 18 with the legal right to work in the UK. We invite proposals via open call from UK-based artists, selected by representatives from The Photographers' Gallery, The Ampersand Foundation, and an invited panel of arts professionals working across photography, media art and digital culture. The selected artist will be confirmed in September 2026.

The selection panel includes: **Sam Mercer**, Curator of Photography and Technology at The Photographers' Gallery; **Michelle Henning**, Professor in Photography and Media in the School of the Arts at the University of Liverpool; **Milia Xin Bi** 毕昕, curator and writer; **Sarah Cook**, curator, writer and Professor of Museum Studies at University of Glasgow; and The Ampersand Foundation.

Frequently asked questions

What is the opportunity?

The Photographers' Gallery invites applications from artists working with expanded photography and digital practices for a new residency. The two-month residency takes place at Wigwell Lodge in Derbyshire.

Through the theme of the residency, artists are invited to research, experiment and expand thinking around photography, technology and innovative approaches to image making and visual culture. We're interested in practices that consider new cosmologies, approaches or relationships between images, celestial fictions and realities, and AI world models. Some contextual information and a list of potential starting points are included in the open call above. You can also read more about our previous work in this area through the website [Unthinking Photography](#).

What is the eligibility criteria?

This opportunity is open to individual artists over 18 with the legal right to work in the UK. Unfortunately, we can't sponsor visas. You may apply with only one application.

I work as part of a duo, group, collaboration or collective. Can we apply jointly?

The residency is only open to individual artists to apply. However, the accommodation has two bedrooms and visitors/partners are welcome.

Where is Wigwell Lodge?

Wigwell Lodge is in Derbyshire, about 1 mile outside from the village of [Wirksworth](#). Wirksworth has shops, a cinema, the [StarDisc](#) and various artistic communities. Also nearby is [Cromford Mill](#), a site of importance to the Industrial Revolution and Matlock Baths. Derby is a 30 minute drive away. Though there is local public transport and taxis, to access and explore the many sites of interest in the vicinity we recommend you have your own form of transport (car/bike).

Is the residency site accessible?

Unfortunately, the site is not currently accessible. The residency is remote, 1 mile outside of Wirksworth village, on a flat site but at the bottom of a steep hill. The historic building has two bedrooms on the first floor as well as a study that are not wheelchair accessible. Though there is public transport and taxis, a form of transport (such as car or bike) is recommended.

What should I expect?

Since 2018, Wigwell Lodge residencies are designed to provide space for artists, writers and researchers for reflection and production. Wigwell Lodge is a fully equipped cottage with two bedrooms, dining, studio, and study spaces, as well as a garden and outdoor studio (former garage). While no member of staff is based on site, the curator will visit at intervals throughout the residency period.

In February and March, it is likely to be cold which could restrict use of the garden and outdoor studio, however the cottage has central heating throughout which should ensure warmth and comfort.

The dates of this residency lead to the spring equinox (the astronomical spring equinox falls on Saturday, 20 March at 20:24), and therefore daylight hours are shorter (dark from around 4-5pm each day). Therefore, when taking into account potential poor weather which can exacerbate this, residents should be prepared for limited daylight during their residency.

Are there expected outputs from the residency?

A showcase at the lodge could take place to coincide with the Spring Equinox on 20 March 2027. Following the residency period, there is potential to further develop the ideas into a project or commission for a presentation at The Photographers' Gallery in 2028.

How do I submit an application and is it free?

Yes, it is free. You can submit your application through the Submittable platform. If you would like to submit in any other form, including through audio or video, please contact us at digital.programme@tpg.org.uk.

Alongside contact details, the application form asks one question: 'Describe your proposal and what the residency would offer for your practice' in around 400 words, alongside supporting material, such as a pdf or website. You must answer this question.

The equal opportunities questions are optional and will not be viewed with your application and will only be used anonymously by The Photographers' Gallery for evaluation, reporting and marketing analysis.

While we understand you may use generative AI in your application, we encourage you to consider how the writing reflects and relates to your practice.

When is the deadline?

The submissions open on Monday 20 July and close on Sunday 6 September, 11.59pm BST. Unfortunately, we won't be able to accept any late entries.

What is the timeline?

The open call closes on Sunday 6 September, 11.59pm BST. Following the jury meeting, we will invite up to 3 people for a short online interview on the 21 September. We aim to inform all applicants of the result by Wednesday 30 September. If you haven't heard from us by then, feel free to get in contact with us.

The residency takes place from 2 February to 31 March 2027. We understand that you may have other commitments taking place throughout this time, but we would expect you to spend a significant proportion of your time at Wigwell Lodge. Following the residency period, there is potential to develop the ideas into a project or commission for a presentation at The Photographers' Gallery in 2028.

Are there any previous residencies?

The Ampersand Foundation have partnered with numerous organisations to offer residencies at Wigwell Lodge. In 2026, The Photographers' Gallery invited artist [Felix Loftus](#) to undertake a residency at Wigwell Lodge under the framework of [Waste as Resource](#), taking an approach based on permacomputing to create new artworks with old smartphones, alongside solar-powered, automated, landscape cameras and nature cams. The residency posits that the distinction between artwork, infrastructure and environmental activism has collapsed. His work also considered the industrial heritage of the nearby area – Cromford Mill was the world's first water-powered cotton spinning mill. An interview with Felix at the site is available to watch [here](#).

A record of other residencies run by The Ampersand Foundation and participating artists [can be found here](#).

What is The Ampersand Foundation?

[The Ampersand Foundation](#) is a UK grant-awarding charity dedicated to supporting the visual arts. Founded in 2011 by businessman, collector and philanthropist Jack Kirkland, the Foundation funds high-quality exhibitions and visual arts activities that are free to the public at least one day per week. It also supports various projects and programmes including new commissions, exhibitions, the expansion of public collections and collection care. Since its founding the Foundation has awarded millions of pounds in grants to art organisations and visual art projects, mainly within the United Kingdom.

I have another question, who do I contact?

For any further questions, please contact digital.programme@tpg.org.uk. Answers will feed back into this document.

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PHOTOGRAPHERS'
GALLERY**



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