

Work underway on the National Railway Museum's ground-breaking new interactive experience

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The National Railway Museum's ground-breaking new interactive experience, Wonderlab: The Bramall Gallery, is on track to welcome visitors from May 2023 as building work begins and the gallery's second artist is appointed.

Elmwood Projects have been appointed as main contractors for the base building of Wonderlab. They are a specialist fit-out contractor operating predominantly in the museum, heritage, and commercial sectors and have delivered high profile projects at venues such as the British Museum, the V&A London and Dundee and National Museums Scotland.

Construction work has now begun on the 1,500m² Wonderlab in the museum, with works to create the new gallery expected to take just under a year.

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The gallery will be packed with 18 interactive exhibits with an engineering theme and two specially commissioned art installations, one of which will be designed by Pippa Hale, in a partnership announced in November 2021.

County Durham-based artist Steve Messam can now be unveiled as the creator of the second artwork. He is well-known for his ephemeral, site-specific, and 'bigger than a house' installations that have appeared at cultural and historic sites around the world.

His piece, *Portico*, was shortlisted for a 2022 Aesthetica Art Prize and is now on display at the York Art Gallery as part of that exhibition.

The new installation will feature at the heart of the new Wonderlab gallery. Visitors will be able to get up close with the piece and think about the engineering behind the artwork.

Steve Messam said: "I'm thrilled that the National Railway Museum has commissioned me to create a new installation in their Wonderlab gallery. My piece will aid the museum's vision of inspiring the next generation of engineers by allowing visitors to walk through and see first-hand how the work is able to stand tall at the heart of Wonderlab."

Rose Mockford, Lead Interactive Gallery Curator at the National Railway Museum, said: "We're delighted that building work has begun, marking an exciting milestone in the development of *Wonderlab: The Bramall Gallery*. This has been a long time in the planning and now our ground-breaking new Wonderlab is starting to feel like a reality. By this time next year, we'll be seeing visitors in the new space and hope that they'll be inspired by what they experience.

"It's also great to be able to unveil Steve as our second specially commissioned artist for the gallery. Steve's work is held in high regard and to have our own individual Messam installation in our Wonderlab is a real privilege."

The design for Wonderlab has been shortlisted for a World Architecture Festival award. The engaging and open plan design, drawn up by architects De Matos Ryan, has been shortlisted in the Future Projects - Culture category, with a winner being announced at the WAF Gala in December 2022.

The gallery's major funding partner is the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation who pledged £2.5m towards the creation in March 2022. Wonderlab has also received funding from Friends of the National Railway Museum, Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, and The Holbeck Charitable Trust. The National Railway Museum is seeking additional funding to further Wonderlab and its wider [Vision 2025 projects](#).

To find out more about Wonderlab: The Bramall Gallery and other Vision 2025 projects, visit the museum's website at www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/2025.

Photo credit: National Railway Museum