

Two Temple Place announces The Weight of Being: Vulnerability, Resilience and Mental Health in Art

Flagship 2025–26 exhibition dives deep into mental health and the human condition

Free exhibition from 24 January to 19 April 2026



John Wilson McCracken, *Man in the Pub*, undated, Oil on board. (c)
Estate of the artist Image courtesy of Hartlepool Borough Council

"The works here remind us that we are not alone in carrying weight, even when we feel most isolated. There is validation in seeing your own experience reflected – in a brushstroke that captures exhaustion, a figure that embodies endurance, or colours that say what words cannot. In that recognition lies something profound: the understanding that what we carry is real, shared, and worthy of attention."

– The Weight of Being exhibition text

Two Temple Place announces **The Weight of Being: Vulnerability, Resilience and Mental Health in Art**

Flagship 2025–26 exhibition dives deep into mental health and the human condition

Life carries weight – some burdens are private and individual, while others are shaped by and connected to the world around us. Two Temple Place's 2026 exhibition *The Weight of Being* considers the relationship between the personal pressures on the individual and the universal challenges faced by humanity as whole.

Following the success of *Lives Less Ordinary*, Two Temple Place's 2025 exploration of working class life in British art, the London venue is engaging with mental health for its 2026 cultural and community programme and exhibition.

The Weight of Being is a focal point in a year-round programme of cultural and community events, including partnerships with mental health charities, community groups, state-funded schools and regional collections and museums. The programme builds on curator Angela Thomas' work at Hartlepool Art Gallery and their ongoing collaboration with suicide-prevention charity [Andy's Man Club](#) on the connection between art and mental health.

Running from 24 January to 19 April 2026, *The Weight of Being* considers mental health as a connecting thread that links all humanity, rather than an othering experience. Drawing on a diverse selection of contemporary and 20th-century British artists, the show explores the profound ways in which mental health can shape artistic expression, navigating the intersection of resilience, vulnerability, creativity, identity and societal change. Through a range of work across media, the exhibition will examine how individuals and communities navigate oppression, economic hardship, war and displacement, as well as everyday challenges to our mental wellbeing.

Through depictions of deeply personal expressions and collective experiences, the exhibition showcases the various ways in which different artists capture vulnerability, resilience, and the search for solace. Whether reflecting on the weight of everyday life, the struggles shared by whole communities, the threats faced by the natural world, or the fragile nature of the human condition, the works displayed invite viewers to consider how art helps us process, endure and find refuge from trauma, and connection in community.

A journey in five stages

The exhibition is divided into five thematic parts, divided across Two Temple Place's gallery spaces, inviting visitors to journey through the challenges of self and society to the solace of art.

1. **The Weight of Everyday** centres on the impact of personal struggles on individual mental health and creative expression, probing the inner conflicts sparked by these pressures, and the creative expression that can emerge in response.
2. **Collective Struggles** demonstrates the strength and resilience of communities as they navigate the effects of significant societal and political events, such as deindustrialisation, migration crises and social movements, on everyday life. This section frames art as an act of representation and resistance in the face of hardship.
3. **Environment** gathers works that reveal how place shapes the psyche. Whether through the comfort of home, the hardship of poverty, or the tension of cultural complexity, they show how environments can nurture or constrain, and how people respond to the places they inhabit.
4. **Human Vulnerability** explores the portrayal of physical and mental illness through self-portraits and representations of the human form, addressing themes of love, obsession and loss, and the strength to be found in empathy and compassion.
5. **Sanctuary and Solitude** examines how landscapes – both real and imagined – serve as spaces for reflection, offering solace from urban and societal stressors. Whether facing post-war upheavals or dealing with contemporary crises such as COVID-19 and climate change, artists have turned to the outdoor world as a means of processing both collective anxieties and personal struggles.

Shining a spotlight on John Wilson McCracken

Alongside dozens of artworks drawn from galleries and collections across the UK, the portraits, landscapes, and figurative studies of the lesser-known artist John Wilson McCracken (1936–1982) are woven throughout, providing a starting point for the exhibition and a connecting thread for its themes.

Denied the opportunity to return to the Slade School of Art following a period of hospitalisation for mental health reasons, McCracken spent much of his career in Hartlepool, producing work that reflects a profound sensitivity to the emotional and social pressures of his time. Shaped by personal and collective struggles, his art offers a deeply human perspective on the exhibition's themes, revealing how external forces imprint themselves on the mind, body, and creative spirit.

By placing McCracken's work in dialogue with that of his contemporaries, *The Weight of Being* explores the ways in which artists depict and process trauma, identity, and resilience, offering an intimate reflection on the intersection of mental health and artistic expression.

Intended to spark thought and conversation about resilience and emotional well-being, Two Temple Place's 2026 season offers a timely and profound reflection on the relationship between art and mental health, and the strength found in shared experiences.

"The Weight of Being does not offer solutions. It does not pretend that art can cure, fix, or neatly resolve. Instead, it invites us to sit with vulnerability and hope, and to see how they coexist."

– Angela Thomas, curator

London's hidden gallery

Originally built to house the Embankment offices of real-estate heir William Waldorf Astor, Two Temple Place lends an imposing neo-Tudor grandeur to the atmosphere of all exhibitions and events within its walls. Owned and operated today by registered charity the Bulldog Trust, it provides a spectacular stage and setting for the trust's ambitious annual programme of community and cultural outreach, as well as a peerless Central London venue for private events, weddings, filming, and photoshoots.

The Weight of Being exhibition will play a key part in delivering Two Temple Place's ongoing mission to showcase the UK's public art collections, to platform emerging curators, and to offer fresh perspectives on contemporary social issues and underexplored narratives through the lens of art.



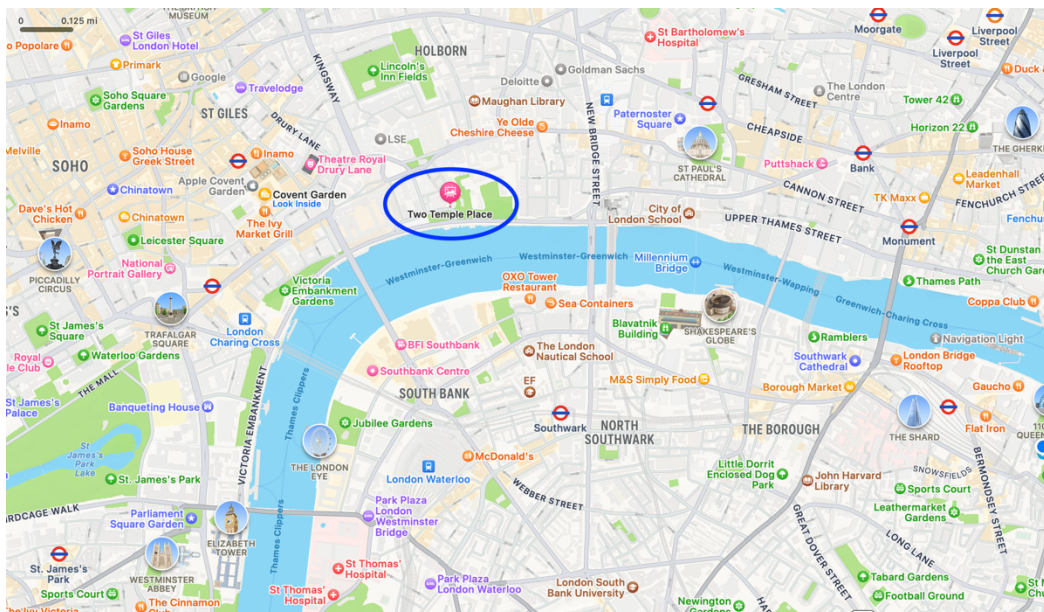
The Staircase, 2024, Photograph by Weldon Flooring

Notes for editors

The Weight of Being: Vulnerability, Resilience and Mental Health in Art will be on show at Two Temple Place from 24 January to 19 April 2026.

For more information about the exhibition and related programming, Two Temple Place or the Bulldog Trust, please contact twotempleplace@zetteler.co.uk.

The artists and works involved in the exhibition will be shared in early winter 2025.



Two Temple Place and The Bulldog Trust

Two Temple Place is a magnificent and eccentric neo-Tudor mansion in central London, owned and run by registered charity the Bulldog Trust. Since 2011, the major free annual exhibition programme showcasing regional public collections has invited more than 460,000 people to exhibitions that tell new stories which offer curating and employment opportunities for early-career cultural talent.

In keeping with the trust's goal of creating opportunities for those without them, Two Temple Place's flagship exhibition forms the heart of a busy year-round programme of community and cultural activity that offers opportunities to a wide range of people and shares the building with partners as a tool for conversation, education and advocacy. As a charity, the building generates income through fundraising and commercial hire. As a building, Two Temple Place inspires, provokes and welcomes creative re-imaginings of its spaces, new retellings of its stories, and new artistic responses to its history and craftwork.

twotempleplace.org Instagram: [@twotempleplace](https://www.instagram.com/twotempleplace)

Angela Thomas, The Weight of Being curator

Angela Thomas is a passionate believer in the power of art to inspire connection, spark conversation and transform lives. She works at the forefront of the cultural sector, devising and delivering boundary-pushing exhibitions that engage diverse audiences and amplify underrepresented voices. Angela has been curator at Hartlepool Art Gallery for four years, where she leads a varied exhibition programme featuring contemporary art, photography, and the historic collection of Hartlepool Borough Council. Before this, she worked across several of the Auckland Project's museums and galleries, curating a range of exhibitions and public programmes.

Rebecca Hone, Head of Culture & Community

Two Temple Place's Head of Culture & Community, Rebecca Hone has been with the organisation for over nine years, taking a leading role in working with curators to develop their exhibitions. Building on a degree in History of Art, Rebecca has spent her professional life embedded in the arts and cultural sector, with experience at a variety of galleries and arts organisations, including the De La Warr Pavilion, Jerwood Gallery, the Public Catalogue Foundation (now ArtUK) and Culture24 – as well as running Mascalls Gallery in Paddock Wood, Kent, before she joined Two Temple Place in 2016.

An advocate for the power of art and creativity to positively shape both individual wellbeing and wider society, Rebecca is proud to work with Two Temple Place to improve access to arts and arts education, while supporting diverse artists, creatives and curators. (Instagram: [@remhone](#))

Paddy Altern, Director

The Director of Two Temple Place and the Bulldog Trust since February 2024, Paddy Altern brings 30 years of commercial, cultural, charitable and academic research experience to the charity. With MAs in both History and Archaeology, and a professional background in international finance, Paddy has led a diverse career that has seen him advising on large-scale infrastructure projects all over the world, nurturing a wide-ranging knowledge base, a powerful sense of curiosity, and an open mind.

Before taking his post as Director, Paddy led a research project exploring the histories behind the art of Two Temple Place and the Astor fortune that built it, through a social justice lens. In this context, he is determined to ensure that Two Temple Place fulfils its ambition to make the UK cultural sector more accessible and inclusive with sincerity, independence of mind, and intellectual rigour.