

Foundation Press

Starting Lines

18 April – 30 August 2026

Audio Description

An interactive installation exploring creativity, collaboration and community, by North-East-based artists and designers Foundation Press.

The exhibition is on the ground floor, and the entrance is opposite the lifts. The outside wall is painted a pale mint green and to the right of the entrance doorway the show title is painted in large black capital letters-

FOUNDATION PRESS

STARTING LINES

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The letters are in a typeface designed for the exhibition with elongated capitals incorporating some broken dashes into the letters.

To the left of the entrance is a screen that relays a video of the artists discussing Foundation Press.

Moving through the entrance doorway the first impression is of a gallery with colourful painted walls with displays of posters and artwork. Straight ahead in the middle of the exhibition is the Press room with four wooden walls, about the size of a shipping container, built from smooth wood sheets. Two of the Press room walls have a large open window space through which a Risograph Printer and work area can be viewed.

Beside the top right-hand corner and the bottom left corner of the gallery are two wide hexagonal columns that extend to the ceiling.

Built especially for the exhibition they are made from the same smooth wood sheets as the Press room.

Turning left, on the wall next to the entrance, are two large white vinyl posters one with introductory notes to the exhibition and the other with the events programme. One paragraph of the introduction explains-

'Starting Lines' is focussed around 8 creative briefs which have been central to Foundation Press' social practice over the past 10 years. The show proposes that the act of creative making is open to all.'

The exhibition leads us around the gallery in an anticlockwise direction following the creative briefs or 'Starting Lines' from 1 to 8. The 'Starting Line' in each area is printed on a panel in colourful letters on a white background. The letters are in the same typeface as the title at the entrance.

The gallery walls are painted a different colour for each of the Starting Line sections.

Moving to the other side of the entrance we find the first Starting Line panel. The wall for this section is painted sky blue.

From the entrance doorway the blue area stretches to the bottom of the wall then around the first corner for 8 feet. The sections are all separated by a strip of white wall.

The colourful capital letters on the Starting Lines panel suggest-

ONE: DESIGN AN ALPHABET AND USE THE LETTERS TO SAY SOMETHING.

To the left of the Starting Line panel is a ceramic alphabet. From A (an olive-green A shape with lines of the letter drawn into the clay) to Z (a dark blue Z made from three strips of clay decorated with round blobs) each letter is shaped and decorated by hand, then fired and glazed in different colours. The letters are large enough to fit comfortably in two hands.

Above and below the ceramic alphabet are posters with different typeface designs. To the left is a small, framed alphabet like a sampler, topped by the

name Agnes. Below this is a poster for the language café. In the corner above are four A3 coloured paper sheets, two black, one green and one orange, printed with different types of leaves and arranged in a checkerboard pattern. The top green sheet is over printed with the words 'this alphabet was made by the comfrey project' and on the lower orange sheet are the printed alphabet letters.

Below this is a small boxed series of slides arranged in lines 8 across and 7 down. These spell out, in colourful letters, 'Lets share the blue of the towering sky.'

Around the corner hangs a large patchwork banner. Sewn onto a background of brown, grey and black material squares, are colourful letters in bright patterned material that spell out the message- 'Get out of your head and into your hands'.

Against the wall underneath the banner is a display table painted in matching blue, with a glass top. Inside are original design drawings. Photographs at an industrial site have inspired digital drawings of letters using the shapes for a new typeface. An orange N from juttred machine parts, a blue N using metal towers and walkways. Next to these on a black and white painted background are a booklet of recipes from the Language Café using a font inspired by cooking implements.

The first hexagonal column is fixed 8 feet out from this corner. It towers 14 feet up to the ceiling.

New posters and artwork produced by visitors during the exhibition will be pasted onto the columns.

This column has one of the six sides painted blue and another is pink. Art pasted here corresponds to that coloured section.

The next section is pink and fills the rest of the wall to the bottom corner being about 36 feet long.

The Starting Line panel reads-

TWO: WORK WITH OTHERS TO CREATE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE SAME THING.

A huge wooden billboard, 7 feet high, stretches 18 feet across the middle of the pink wall with the words 'Morning Edition' emblazoned in the Starting Lines font in long white capitals on a black background.

Each week a printed sheet of drawings from a Wednesday workshop will be posted onto the Billboard. These will build up over time until the words 'Morning Edition' are obscured.

A white canvas banner hangs on the wall next to the billboard. This is filled with many monotone drawings of clouds. Each one is different. Fluffy white clouds drawn with a single black line, an angry black cloud in aggressive scribbles, a floating grey and black cloud with raindrops falling, long white layered clouds.

Along from the canvas banner and at the end of the pink wall are two framed prints.

One is a collection of drawings of the sun and the other of the moon, each on a grid of squares 4 across and 5 down, on 8 by 10 inch paper. Each square contains a different design.

The suns are printed in red on yellow-orange paper with a yellow frame. The moon prints are black, white and grey with a black frame.

The 3rd Starting Line panel is placed on the outside wall of the large Press room in the middle of the gallery, opposite the pink wall.

The Starting Line is hung on the left half of the bare wood wall with the prompt-

THREE: MAKE A CREATIVE TRIBUTE TO SOMEONE.

The right half of the wall is covered with a cheerful Foundation Press wallpaper designed as a tribute to artist Sally Madge.

The wallpaper uses repeat outline shapes of tall ceramic pots that are reminiscent of Sally's work. Each pot is the same height of 15 inches. The pot images are piled one on top of the other in 6 colourful pillars.

There are bulbous vases, a ceramic bottle shape that tapers up to an elegant thin neck, a pile of 5 bowls, a coffee pot, and 6 teacups in a precarious pile with handles sticking out like fragile ears.

Each shape is filled with coloured patterns; vases in green fading up to pale blue, or blue streaks that spiral up through orange and red. There are oranges and purples with rough textures or contrasting dots. The pile of bowls is dark brown with zips of yellow and green stripes.

In a frame at the centre of the wallpaper there's a small photo of a structure made by Sally on Holy Island.

Turning the corner of the Press room and passing the open window space we find a tribute to Joe Woodhouse.

'Higher than the sun (for Joe) 2022

Modular risograph printed wallpaper

As a tribute to cofounder Joe Woodhouse (1971 to 2022) foundation press produced this wallpaper named after a favourite song of Joe's, Primal Screams 'higher than the sun'. The wallpaper was printed from hand-coloured panels aimed to maximise unexpected combinations of colour.'

Strips of colour 6 inches wide and one inch high are layered one on top of the other and side by side. The resulting columns take on almost 3D qualities as the colours play against each other.

Each strip was originally hand-coloured with pens or pastels creating a collage effect. Bright pink and black strips punctuate and contrast with lines of pastel pinks, greens, blues, lemon yellow and white. Stars, like a teacher might award a pupil, are dotted in random patterns across the colour strips.

One of Joe's framed drawings is at the centre of the wall.

Beside the Press room window, there's a shallow shelf that holds books titled 'And I Wonder if Maybe...' written by Foundation Press for Joe.

Opposite Joe's wall is the bottom of the gallery. This has two sections, the first painted a dark blue and the next orange.

The dark blue section Starting Line is-

FOUR: HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE YOU WANT TO TALK TO.

An open wooden bench, painted blue, has been placed in front of a video screen on the wall at the centre of the blue section. The video features the conversations of year 3 and year 6 pupils at West Newcastle Academy exploring their developing understanding of art. It plays on a 26-minute loop.

To the left of the video screen is a blue viewing table that contains publications exploring conversations and Q and A's.

Above the table there are 3 framed Risograph prints and to the right is a small shelf that holds a booklet about Margaret Calvert who designed the typeface for the Tyne and Wear metro system.

The prints are entitled Calvert number one to three 2024. They use the Calvert type face letters S, K and M with augmenting patterns and colours. The risograph prints combine images from the metro's archive with the slab serif shapes of Calvert's font.

A label explains- 'In 2024 foundation press interviewed the celebrated designer

and teacher Margaret Calvert. The interviewed the celebrated designer and teacher Margaret Calvert. The interview was made into four small publications which were distributed for free across the metro network.'

These are the booklets available on the shelf, the cover features the iconic black M, of the Metro, on a yellow background.

The next section on the rest of the wall is painted a rich orange in perfect contrast to the dark blue. The Starting Line suggests-

FIVE: MAKE A COMMUNITY PUBLICATION OR NEWSLETTER.

To the left of the panel are two short shelves that hold pamphlets produced by foundation press. Above each shelf is a large poster that amplifies the design on the pamphlet.

The first pamphlet has a pink cover with printed colour illustrations of fruit and vegetables. The poster is a rich pink with words printed across a large red pomegranate at the centre that say-

'A taste of celebration, language cafe favourites'.

Dotted around the large pomegranate are printed shapes of red tomatoes and berries and watermelon slices with green stalks and leaves. There are green pears and limes cut in half and outlines of blank cherry and carrot shapes.

The second shelf across holds a newsletter in pamphlet form for 'The Roar of Art'. The poster above has the title 'The Roar of Art' in black and white large capital letters decorated with dots and stripes. There are small illustrations such as a sun and two little tigers with black with white stripes.

Above this poster is a smaller poster with 'Byker Phoenix' written in black on a pale-yellow background. Above the text is a nest of red flames with a phoenix about to take flight.

Moving on there is a viewing table in the corner with examples of magazines printed by Foundation Press.

Turning to follow the 4th wall back up towards the entrance we reach the next section on a purple wall.

Here we circle the second hexagonal column that stands 8 feet out from the corner. This column has blue, orange and purple sides and also features two sides with wooden shelves of books and pamphlets.

The purple wall Starting Line is-

SIX: WRITE SOME RULES OR ADVICE TO GUIDE YOU WHEN YOU GET STUCK.

This creative brief is represented by 3 examples of project work.

A blue poster advises

1 Tea- question mark. 2 Walk it off. Or 3 Look at something else.

A canvas banner tells us in capitals, punctuated with coloured shapes, Eat Well * Aim High*Walk*Dance* Travel.

Higher up on the purple wall a larger banner has a pale grey-blue background with patches of pastel colours in pinks, creams and blues that could be clouds in the sky.

10 rules for a creative life are written in solid black capitals decorated with lines or dots with a scattering of lower-case letters that add a quirky interest to the typeface.

They include-

1. Have fun
 2. Create what you want
 3. Don't overthink it.
- Number **10** is- remember that there are no rules in art.

We move onto the next section that is split between the gallery wall and the end wall of the Press room directly opposite. Both sides are painted red. Turning to the right the Starting Line is on the gallery wall.

SEVEN: START AN ARTWORK FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO FINISH.

Foundation Press started a project called

‘Time to Draw; Postcards to Baltic (2026)’.

Patients, staff and visitors of Newcastle Hospitals were given A6 Postcards in 8 different designs. They were encouraged to finish off the postcards with their own designs. The results are displayed next to the Starting Line panel.

The original designs include-

A woman asleep in bed

A cat lying on a window ledge

A pair of wings flapping between two clouds in the sky.

Below the postcards is a red viewing table that contains further examples of drawing workbooks that encourage participation. One called Brief Opportunity- Creative Worksheets for Grownups.

On the opposite red wall are 24 Risograph prints with the title ‘ART IS...’

‘These prints were made by Year 9 Art and design students using a collage kit to answer the question what is art to you?’

On a background of colourful patterns black stencilled letters spell out their thoughts.

On a background of colourful patterns black stencilled letters spell out their thoughts.

Art is a window to your imagination *Art is peace *Art is an illusion.

Moving up we reach a wide doorway on the right that leads into an annexe room where we find the final Starting Line.

On the floor inside the entrance there is a sandwich board with the message 'THE STUDIO– come in and draw'.

Entering the studio, to the right, there's a long table surrounded by seats that fills the middle of the room. On the table are containers full of colouring pencils.

To the left is the top wall with the Starting Line-

EIGHT: WRITE YOUR OWN STARTING LINE SUGGESTING A CREATIVE ACTION.

Beside the panel are 4 long shallow shelves one above the other. To the left of the shelves are two wooden boxes. The shelves, boxes and wall are painted the same rich turquoise colour.

The boxes hold a collection of preprinted postcards with space to create a starting line inside a patterned border.

Visitors finished postcards are placed along the shelves. These include 'Go to a new place and walk around', 'Go write your message on the pavement' and 'Scribble. Turn your scribbles into animals'

From the top turquoise wall, the room runs down to a wall at the bottom that's covered in printed wallpaper.

The side wall on the right is filled with a 7-foot-high wire grid where visitor's

drawings are clipped. A paper sign states that- 'big masterpieces start small'.

The long wall on the other side has a view onto the River Tyne through 4 tall narrow windows. On this wall are a variety of books and pamphlets available to read.

The bottom wall is completely covered in a Risograph printed wallpaper. The bright colours are arranged in triangles and thin rectangles like a design of mosaic tiles. The triangles are reminiscent of a pennant flag or yacht sails and fit together with the rectangles in multifaceted patterns.

A notice describes the wallpaper as- 'printed in HD black, aqua, sunflower, red, bubble gum, light teal, Violet and green.

The colour sampler is typical of foundation presses interest in modular systems and tiling attempting to be both functional and decorative'.

At the centre of the wall hangs a large wooden board entitled **'Sign of the Times'**.

It is the final work in the exhibition. The board is full of colourful card tiles designed to slip in and out of smooth ledges that form 5 lines with 8 cards per line. The cards are either blank or have a black capital letter printed on them so messages can be spelt out to inspire visitors in the studio.

'Sign of the Times' is designed to be changed regularly. The wooden sign has it's starting point in editable signage in cinemas, churches, and music venues. The letters in the sign will be rearranged regularly into different messages. Past messages have included-

An idea lies out there in mist'

'Why not plant a seed or two?'

A Baltic crew member will be present in the gallery, and they can inform you of what the current 'Sign of the Times' message is and answer any other questions you may have.

The exit to the exhibition is back through the entrance doorway. This is the end of the audio description.