

PRESS RELEASE: AUGUST 2025

SUZANNE ROLT APPOINTED PERMANENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT ARNOLFINI



Suzanne Rolt, CEO at Arnolfini, Bristol.

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Suzanne Rolt has been confirmed as the new Chief Executive Officer at Arnolfini, Bristol's internationally renowned contemporary arts centre. The appointment comes following a period as Interim Director and as the organisation gears up to mark 50 years at its prominent harbourside home this October.

She brings with her a wealth of experience gained across the cultural and charity sectors. As former CEO of St George's concert hall in Bristol, she led a multi-million-pound capital transformation project which firmly established the music venue as one of the UK's most celebrated.

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Rolt then went on to run the West of England's largest grant making charity, Quartet Community Foundation, working to strengthen local communities through the power of philanthropy.

In 2019, she was named UK Concert Hall Manager of the Year and spent several months as an arts columnist in 2020, tracing her experience of running a cultural venue during the difficult years of the pandemic. As Artistic Director, she's curated multiple festivals and series, working in partnership with BBC Radio 3 and 4 and she still reviews classical music releases for BBC Music Magazine.

Rolt is currently Chair of the up-and-coming contemporary dance company, IMPERMANENCE and was until 2024 Chair and longstanding Board Director of Bristol Ideas, the city's acclaimed cultural development partnership. She's previously been a Trustee of RWA (Royal West of England Academy) and the national body Orchestras Live, giving her deep knowledge of, and connections across, the visual and performing arts.

Commenting on her appointment, Rolt said: "It's been a total joy to renew my ties with Bristol's cultural scene, stepping into this leadership role at one of the country's most pioneering and acclaimed contemporary visual arts spaces. Arnolfini has a long and prestigious history and I feel privileged to be charged with steering it as it maps out a new and bold future. We have a fantastic team here and I'm genuinely excited about what we can achieve together."

Rolt's appointment has drawn an enthusiastic response from civic and cultural leaders around the country, not least from Neil Sachdev, Chair of Arnolfini's board of trustees who said; "Following the Board's decision and with strong support from our key stakeholders, including Arts Council England and the

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Ashley Clinton Barker-Mill Trust, we are thrilled to confirm the appointment of Suzanne as Arnolfini's permanent Chief Executive Officer."

"Suzanne has already made a tremendous impact, bringing stability and momentum to our work, reconnecting us with our vision and delivering meaningful progress. Under her leadership, we've not only stabilised operations but also begun to reimagine our future."

"This is an exciting moment for Arnolfini. I'm confident that, under Suzanne's leadership, continue to make Arnolfini a place where creativity, culture and community thrive," he added.

The timing around Rolt's permanent appointment feels significant. This October marks 50 years since Arnolfini moved into its converted Victorian warehouse on Bristol's harbourside, bringing about a major rejuvenation of the area. The anniversary coincides with the opening of a major new exhibition by Emma Talbot, which includes two co-commissions with Copenhagen Contemporary.

"We're using this milestone as a chance to look both back and forwards," Rolt explained. "Arnolfini has always been about pushing boundaries and taking risks – all the while holding to the philosophy of our Founder, Jeremy Rees, who wanted everyone entering the space to 'Enjoy Yourselves'! As we plan for the next 50 years, that spirit of adventure and enjoyment feels more important than ever."

Since opening in 1961, Arnolfini has built a reputation as one of the UK's most ambitious contemporary arts venues, consistently championing experimental

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work across visual arts, performance, film and music, as well as working with a wide range of community partners and educators.

For details of the full programme and keep up with the latest news visit arnolfini.org.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Arnolfini

Woven into the fabric of Bristol since 1961, Arnolfini is an international centre of interdisciplinary contemporary arts, presenting an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of visual art, performance, dance, film, and music.

Housed in Bush House, a prominent 19th century former warehouse on the city's harbourside, Arnolfini is a pioneering, inspiring public space for arts and learning, offering an innovative, inclusive and engaging experience for all.

Arnolfini has welcomed artists from around world throughout its history – sharing works by Paula Rego, Jannis Kounellis, John Akomfrah, Grayson Perry, Rachel Whiteread, Peter Doig, Richard Long, Veronica Ryan, Chantal Joffe, Sonia Boyce, Alice Kettle and Frank Bowling, to name just a few - as well as supporting talent from in and around Bristol.

Alongside its main programme, Arnolfini is a centre of everyday creativity and learning, working with a wide range of community and artistic partners, while continuing to explore and develop new collaborations across the city and beyond. Spaces are used regularly by families, schools and colleges, health and wellbeing groups.

Through sharing a 64+ year archive of exhibition slides, publications and an extensive artist book collection, Arnolfini celebrates its heritage and the wide-reaching impact the organisation has had since its foundation.

The team at Arnolfini strive to honour founder Jeremy Rees' principle to 'Enjoy Yourself', welcoming everyone into the accessible space, and inviting engagement, in any number of ways.

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Arnolfini has a close strategic partnership with the University of the West of England and is part of its City Campus.

An independent charity (CIO), Arnolfini is supported by Arts Council England and the Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust.

www.arnolfini.org.uk.