

**Press Release**  
**12 December 2012**

**The Whitechapel Gallery Announces Winner of the Demergon Curatorial Exchange and Award**

Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery is pleased to announce Niekolaas Lekkerkerk as the winner of the first Demergon Curatorial Award.

The Demergon Curatorial Exchange and Award was set up in partnership between the Demergon Daskalopoulos Foundation for Culture and Development in Greece and the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Through building links between young curators in London, Athens and Thessalonica, curatorial practice is shared and new ideas developed around the presentation of contemporary art, with the aim of championing curatorial excellence. The young curators who take part in the exchange have the opportunity to draw from the D. Daskalopoulos Collection, Greece which is made up of over 500 works by 170 international and Greek artists.

Niekolaas Lekkerkerk, a second year student from London Metropolitan University whose project titled *News from Spetsopoula Island* has taken the award, is one of 11 students who participated in the scheme. Lekkerkerk is part of a group of MA students invited to devise a curatorial proposal based on selected works from the D. Daskalopoulos Collection, Greece.

Lekkerkerk's project explores the fundamental aims of curating, using philosophical, artistic and nature-based theories to thoroughly examine the hybridisation of both institutional and curatorial forms. Speaking about the many proposals received, Chair and selection panellist Daniel F. Herrmann, Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies, Whitechapel Gallery said 'It is difficult to select just one award recipient among so many excellent proposals but in the end we selected Niekolaas Lekkerkerk for his entry *News from Spetsopoula Island*. The proposed exhibition posits artists as explorers, treating their artworks as field-reports from a semi-fictitious island. Inventive, poetic and with much critical acumen, the proposal not only reflects the depth and quality of the Daskalopoulos Collection, it also takes into account the collection's specific heritage. Using the process of curating as a medium, Niekolaas' proposal demonstrates the relevance of contemporary art as analytical commentary in everyday life.'

Daniel F. Herrmann is one of three selection committee members which also includes Lucy Askew, Senior Curator, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Nico de Oliveira, Course Leader of Curating the Contemporary, London Metropolitan University.

Of the Demergon Curatorial Exchange and Award, Iwona Blazwick said 'It is a privilege to be in dialogue with this group of dynamic curators who look set to transforming the Greek art scene. Inspired by the Daskalopoulos Collection they will be setting a rich new cultural agenda at a time when creativity and innovation has never been so vital.'

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**[whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)**

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Collector Dimitris Daskalopoulos says 'It is exciting to see these young students interact with a Collection that I have developed over the past twenty years and approach the works with such enthusiasm and vision. I strongly believe that art should be shared with the public and it's comforting to see the challenging and intellectually stimulating plans that this group of Demergon Curatorial Award students have for the works.'

Elina Kountouri, Director of Demergon Foundation says 'This curatorial exchange is an opportunity to encourage a constructive dialogue between young curators in three significant cultural cities, whilst exploring the works from one of the foremost contemporary art collections in the world.'

### Notes to Editors

- In 2012, the **Demergon Curatorial Exchange and Award** was open to second year students on the MA Curating the Contemporary which is delivered by the Whitechapel Gallery in partnership with London Metropolitan University. Students on the Demergon Curatorial Exchange benefit from a four-day study trip to Athens, where they take part in a guided tour of the Athenian art scene, designed to open up networking and professional development opportunities for young curators. MA students are invited to devise a curatorial proposal based on selected works from the D. Daskalopoulos Collection, with the best submission being awarded the Demergon Curatorial Award. The programme is organised by the Whitechapel Gallery and coordinated by Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery and Project Manager of the Demergon Curatorial Exchange and Award.
- Beginning in 2013, the programme will welcome candidates the Courtauld Institute of Art, Goldsmiths and the Royal College of Art. Applications for next year's award will open in Spring 2013.
- For over a century the **Whitechapel Gallery** has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Frida Kahlo, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Walid Raad. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, art courses, dining room and bookshop there is always something free to see. The Gallery is a touchstone for modern and contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.
- **Demergon Daskalopoulos Foundation for Culture and Development** is a public benefit organisation committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding and creation of contemporary art. It aims to offer increased access and innovative interaction with contemporary forms of art while examining practices in contemporary curatorial activities. The Demergon Foundation is a creative partner that, beyond mere financial support, facilitates the stimulation of ideas, promotes the development and preservation of artistic production, providing long-term value for both present and future generations.

**Visitor Information**

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays 11am – 9pm. Admission free.  
Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Nearest London Underground Station: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR.  
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**Press Information**

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For further information on the Demergon Foundation and the D. Daskalopoulos Collection, please contact **Meredith Nichols** at Sutton PR on 020 7283 3577 or email [Meredith@suttonpr.com](mailto:Meredith@suttonpr.com)