

# The Bloomberg Commission

## Goshka Macuga

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Born in Poland, Goshka Macuga studied at Central St Martins and Goldsmiths College in London where she lives and works. Since the late 1990s she has exhibited across Europe – most notably at the A Foundation in Liverpool in 2006 and at the Kunsthalle Basel in 2009. Her research into cultural histories inspires multi-faceted installations that offer narratives around art and society.

Here, Macuga focuses on the presentation of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1939. The painting was originally brought to London's East End as a political backdrop for an anti-Fascist rally during the Spanish Civil War.

Related archival material provides a springboard for further narratives around this iconic image and connections between art, propaganda and war.

The life-size tapestry of *Guernica* at the centre of the room, created by the weaver Jacqueline de la Baume Dürrbach in collaboration with Picasso, was commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller. Loaned to the United Nations in 1985, as a deterrent to war, it has hung outside the Security Council Chamber in New York ever since, providing a backdrop for important press announcements.

Macuga's portrait of Colin Powell, in Picasso's Cubist style, refers to the covering of the tapestry during the US Secretary of State's infamous speech about alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in 2003. The artist is interested in Powell's pivotal role as a political mediator.

Films and a newspaper featuring an interview with the artist elucidate these themes, while visitors are invited to organise their own meetings or discussions around the table.

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A book on this and other works by Goshka Macuga is available from October 2009.

The Bloomberg Commission invites an international artist to create an annual site-specific artwork inspired by the rich history of the former library. Bloomberg's support reflects its commitment to innovation, and its ongoing efforts to expand access to art, science and the humanities.

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Goshka Macuga is the Wingate Artist in Residence at the Whitechapel Gallery.

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