

The Bloomberg Commission: Josiah McElheny:

The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind

7 September 2011 – 20 July 2012, Gallery 2

New York-based artist Josiah McElheny is a sculptor, performance artist, writer and filmmaker, best known for his use of glass with other materials. For his Bloomberg Commission he uses light and mirrors to transform the Whitechapel Gallery into a hall of mirrors.

Josiah McElheny is the latest artist invited to create a new work of art for The Bloomberg Commission sited in the former Whitechapel library (now part of the Gallery), built in 1892 as a 'lantern for learning'.

Seven large-scale, mirrored sculptures will be arranged as multiple reflective screens for the artist's interpretation of groundbreaking experimental abstract films, programmed to change throughout the year. The sculptures will reflect and refract the projected film selection, saturating the whole gallery and visitors in images and light. Refracted, distorted and multiplied, the moving images explore how abstraction is used to depict an image of visual enlightenment.

The Bloomberg Commission: Josiah McElheny is displayed in Gallery 2, a dedicated space for site-specific works of art that was previously the reading room of the former Whitechapel Library. Inspired by the history of the Library as a creative haven for early modernist thinkers such as Isaac Rosenberg and Mark Gertler, McElheny's new work explores the history of abstraction in film and video, reinterpreting them by presenting fractured, constantly morphing versions.

Drawing on the history of the former library as a centre for social reform and modernist ideals in Britain, this major installation is accompanied by a series of film presentations, lectures and events exploring the notion of abstraction in the moving image.

Josiah McElheny (b. 1966) lives and works in New York. His work combines a conceptually rigorous examination of history with an ability to create deeply engaging sensory experiences.

The Bloomberg Commission invites an international artist to create an annual site-specific artwork inspired by the rich history of the former library. Previous commissions were created by artists Goshka Macuga (2009) and Claire Barclay (2010). Bloomberg's support reflects its commitment to innovation, and its ongoing efforts to expand access to art, science and the humanities.

Notes for Editors

- Josiah McElheny was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2006 and is a former Senior Critic in Sculpture at the Yale University School of Art. McElheny has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions, such as *Young Americans Part II* (Saatchi Gallery, London, 1997), *The Whitney Biennial* (Whitney Museum of Art, New York 2000) and *Part Object, Part Sculpture*, (Wexner Center for the Arts 2005). Performance projects include *The Infinite Repetition of Revolt* with Andrea Geyer (Tate Modern, London 2011) and *The Metal Party* (The Public Art

Press Release

.....

Whitechapel Gallery
77–82 Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

T +44 (0)20 7522 7888
F +44 (0)20 7522 7887

whitechapelgallery.org

Whitechapel Gallery Trustee Limited is a private limited company, registered in England and Wales, registered company no. 4093862 and the corporate trustee of Whitechapel Gallery, registered charity no. 312162. VAT no. 863586582.

Fund, New York 2001). Commissioned projects include *Projects 84: Josiah McElheny* (Museum of Modern Art, New York 2007) and *Josiah McElheny – A Space for An Island Universe* (Museo de Art Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2009). In 2010, the University of Chicago Press published *The Light Club*, his critical commentary on the work of historic German artist and writer Paul Scheerbart. On view until mid-December 2011 is his curatorial collaboration with Lynne Cooke and Tom Eccles, *If you lived here, you'd be home by now*, at the acclaimed Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in upstate New York.

- *The Bloomberg Commission: Josiah McElheny* is curated by Daniel F. Herrmann, Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.
- The Commission will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication.
- Supported by Bloomberg. As a leading global financial information services company that has made its mark by championing innovation, Bloomberg is deeply committed to education and creativity, and to expanding access to art, science and the humanities. Through support of educational and cultural institutions worldwide, Bloomberg fosters a broad range of creative initiatives - from exhibitions and audio tour programmes to student fellowships and public art installations - that promote public awareness and appreciation of the arts.
- Additional support provided by the Wingate Scholarships.

Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays, 11am – 9pm.

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Nearest London Underground Station: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR. T + 44 (0) 20 7522 7888 info@whitechapelgallery.org whitechapelgallery.org

Press Information

For further press information or images please contact:

Rachel Mapplebeck on 020 7522 7880; 07811 456 806 or Email

RachelMapplebeck@whitechapelgallery.org

Daisy Mallabar on 020 7522 7871 or email DaisyMallabar@whitechapelgallery.org