

Press Release
3 April 2014

Howard Hodgkin honoured as first Swarovski Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon at a spectacular gala dinner

On 2 April 2014 British artist Howard Hodgkin was the first recipient of the Swarovski Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon at a glittering gala dinner at the Whitechapel Gallery. It honours the lifetime achievement of one of our greatest artists.

The Whitechapel Gallery was filled with Howard Hodgkin's vivid paintings, giving guests the very first glimpse of five of his new works, and a publication specially produced for the occasion with paintings and prints from every decade of his career.

Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery, welcomed the 150 guests to the evening in honour of Howard Hodgkin. Ann Gallagher, Head of Collections (British Art), Tate, representing the panel of experts who chose Howard Hodgkin, read a citation in praise of his presence as a central figure in contemporary art for over half a century. Turner Prize winning artist Martin Creed presented the award, specially made by Swarovski, followed by an acoustic rendition of his own song, 'Feeling Blue', as a fitting tribute to the great colourist.

Guests included: Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery; artists Glenn Brown, Martin Creed, Antony Gormley, Michael Craig Martin, Michael Landy, Mark Wallinger, Gillian Wearing; gallerists Alan Cristea, and Mollie Dent-Brocklehurst; Maryam Eisler, collector and Whitechapel Gallery trustee; Nicoletta Fiorucci, collector; Allan Hollinghurst, writer; Sigrid Kirk, collector and Whitechapel Gallery patron.

The evening sparkled with Swarovski glitterbox lanterns and crystals scattered on the elegant tables, while canapés of Loch Crinan scallop and Gloucester Old Spot scotch eggs and a feasting menu of salmon to share, roasted poussin and a taster menu of puddings from By Word of Mouth ensured everyone had a lively dining experience. Furniture from 'cuts' tables to sofas was by Ligne Roset.

Guests bought tickets for the evening to help raise £145,000 for the Whitechapel Gallery's Education and Community programmes. An auction featured works by young emerging artists inspired by Howard Hodgkin was introduced by artist Antony Gormley and was auctioned by Tom Best of Christie's. Artists included: Caroline Achaintre, Charlie Billingham, Luke Dowd, Adam Faramawy, Andy Harper, Zara Matthews, Christian Newby, Robert Orchardson, Bruno Pacheco, Hannah Perry, Henrijs Preiss, and Lara Viana.

The Swarovski Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon was given to Howard Hodgkin for his presence as a central figure in contemporary art for over half a century. His poetic paintings are studies of form and colour with nature as their theme. He has also been a pioneer of print making, combining hand painting with etching and aquatint to create a remarkable body of works on paper. Hodgkin is an inspiration to and influence on successive generations of artists. The artist was chosen by a panel of art experts chaired by Iwona Blazwick: Stephen Deuchar, Director, The Art Fund; Ann Gallagher, Head of Collections (British Art), Tate; and, Jackie Wullschlager, Chief Art Critic, The Financial Times. This new initiative is generously supported by Swarovski, whose commitment to the arts and to nurturing creative talent in art and design has a long established heritage.

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Whitechapel Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick OBE said, 'We are immensely proud to honour Howard Hodgkin with the very first Swarovski Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon – our art Oscar. From his first solo show at the Whitechapel Gallery to his latest paintings with jewel-like colours he is a powerhouse in British art and a reference point for artists worldwide. He is both admired and loved. The vital funds raised tonight will help the next generation of artists through our education work with 15,000 children and young people each year.'

Nadja Swarovski, Member of the Swarovski Executive Board said, 'Howard Hodgkin is one of the greatest modern painters of our time and Swarovski is proud to partner with the Whitechapel Gallery in honouring his life's work. It is fitting that, three decades after his landmark show here at the Whitechapel Gallery, and his Turner Prize win, we are paying tribute to an artist of sustained greatness whose work becomes more eloquent, and more relevant as the years go by. Like the Whitechapel Gallery, Swarovski is dedicated to supporting emerging creative talent and to the patronage of the arts and education, and I am thrilled that this event will help empower and inspire local young people by providing them with vital access to the arts.'

Notes for Editors

- Born in London in 1932, Hodgkin studied at Camberwell Art School and the Bath Academy of Art in Corsham and began exhibiting internationally in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1984 Hodgkin represented Britain at the Venice Biennale and had his first major solo survey at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1985. He was awarded the Turner Prize in the same year. He has had numerous major retrospectives including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 1995 and Tate Britain, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and the Reina Sofia, Madrid in 2006 and Modern Art Oxford in 2010. Having served as a trustee of the Tate and the National Gallery in London, he was knighted for services to the arts in 1992. Hodgkin lives and works in London.
- For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. The Gallery is a touchstone for 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.
- The Whitechapel Gallery believes that art has the power to transform the lives of children and young people, and pioneered gallery education and community outreach. Working with thousands of children and young people annually, leading artists collaborate with those who have the greatest need for opportunity, with their art celebrated in dedicated public education galleries.
- Swarovski has been the world's leading producer of precision-cut crystal and gemstones since its foundation in 1895. The company now operates nearly 2,000 retail outlets in over 120 countries. The company has a rich history of working with internationally acclaimed designers including Coco Chanel, Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Dior. Since joining the family business in 1995, Nadja Swarovski has built on this heritage by implementing a series of visionary design initiatives which have transformed the company's image, turning crystal into a much desired component in the creative industries. Nadja Swarovski is committed to supporting and celebrating design and the arts by collaborating with both established and emerging designers - including Karl Lagerfeld, Christian Lacroix, Shaun Leane, Tom Dixon, John Pawson, Zaha Hadid, Alexander McQueen, Viktor and Rolf and Mary Katrantzou - challenging them to push the boundaries of crystal use across fashion, jewellery, stage and screen, art, architecture and design. www.swarovskigroup.com
- With thanks to Title Sponsor: Swarovski. With support from Firefly tonics.

Press Information

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