

Mike Nelson selects the first in a series of four displays of the V-A-C collection at the Whitechapel Gallery

9 September – 30 November 2014, Gallery 7
Free Entry

The Whitechapel Gallery launches the first exhibition of works from the V-A-C collection in the UK, selected by renowned British artist **Mike Nelson**, on 9 September 2014.

Mike Nelson (b.1967) is a contemporary artist best known for creating immersive, multi-layered installations. For this display at the Whitechapel Gallery, Nelson imagines returning works from some of the 20th century's greatest sculptors to an environment suggestive of an artist's studio, naturally lit under the gallery's skylight.

Nelson has chosen historic and contemporary figurative works by artists including **Pawel Althamer**, **Louise Bourgeois**, **Constantin Brâncusi**, **Alberto Giacometti**, **Sherrie Levine**, **Henry Moore** and **Willem de Kooning**. They will be displayed on a reclaimed wooden floor filling the space, leaving a metre wide walkway around the edge of the room, and shown as a mass of modelled figures on this common ground rather than on plinths or pedestals. Inspired by a Dieter Roth work, *The Floor (Studio-floor from Mosfellsbaer, Iceland)*, (1973 -1992), Mike Nelson's sculptural installation is what he describes as a 'levelling of sorts, questioning how we look at objects'.

Modern masterpieces such as **Constantin Brâncusi's** *The First Cry* (1917) dissolved the human form into elliptical shapes, and **Alberto Giacometti's** *Femme Debout* (1957) elongates a woman's body into abstraction. These will go on show alongside rarely seen Kota Reliquary Figures, unique wooden and metal African forms.

In the display, Nelson draws links between his own work and that of other artists by displaying works such as **Pawel Althamer's** *Ognisko (Camp-fire)* (2012), which depicts white figures observing a campfire created from plastic, metal and resin. Nelson identified the campfire as a recurring motif found in his own work at various stages in his career for example, *Gang of Seven* (2013), an installation made up of debris found on Vancouver beaches. Nelson also refers back to his own work *More things (To the memory of Honoré de Balzac)* (2013) a sculptural environment that hovered between the figurative and the abstract.

This display highlights the V-A-C collection, Moscow, as part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme of opening up rarely seen collections from around the world. Following this first presentation, three further exhibitions of works drawn from the collection will be selected in partnership with three internationally acclaimed artists, Fiona Banner, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye and James Richards, over the course of a year. These displays will be on show

Press Release

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from 9 December 2014 – 8 March 2015; 17 March – 14 June 2015 with the fourth and final display launching on 23 June until 30 August 2015. Each presentation will be accompanied by a unique publication devised by the guest selector.

The V-A-C collection brings together a range of important art works including sculptures, paintings and photographs from leading, internationally recognised artists such as Francis Bacon, Liz Deschenes, Natalia Goncharova, Wade Guyton, Wassily Kandinsky, Lucy McKenzie, Amedeo Modigliani, Sigmar Polke to Gerhard Richter, Bridget Riley, Egon Schiele, Dayanita Singh and Christopher Wool.

The collection is owned by the V-A-C Foundation, a not for profit private institution founded in Moscow in 2009. This presentation of the V-A-C collection is part of the Whitechapel Gallery's ongoing programme opening up important public and private collections for everyone.

Notes to editors

- 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. It 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 Gallery does not own a Collection, but has a dedicated gallery for opening up public and private collections, including five displays from the British Council Collection from April 2009 – May 2010; four displays from The D. Daskalopoulos Collection, Greece, from June 2010 – May 2011; five displays from the Government Art Collection, from June 2011 – September 2012; four displays from the Collection Sandretto Re Rebaudengo from September 2012 – September 2013; and four displays drawn from member museums of the Contemporary Art Society from September 2013 – August 2014.
- The first V-A-C collection display will go on show from 9 September - 30 November 2014; the second display selected by Fiona Banner from 9 December 2014 – 8 March 2015; the third display by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye from 17 March – 14 June 2015 and the fourth and final display by James Richards from 23 June - 30 August 2015.
- V-A-C Foundation is a not-for-profit private institution founded in Moscow in 2009 by Leonid Mikhelson (Owner and President) and Teresa Iaricci Mavica (Director). Committed to supporting contemporary art in Russia, the V-A-C Foundation focuses on contemporary art and cultural practice and aims to provide a platform for creativity. The foundation strives to be actively engaged in artistic production, rather than the patronage or sponsorship of ongoing artist processes. V-A-C is deeply committed to the growing importance of art made in Russia as well as the new generations of artists from around the world.
- The V-A-C Foundation displays are co-curated by Omar Kholeif, Curator, Whitechapel Gallery and Magnus af Petersens, Curator at Large, Whitechapel Gallery with Habda Rashid, Assistant Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.
- Over the past twenty years, Mike Nelson's work has centred on the transformation of narrative structure to spatial structure, and on the

objects placed within them, immersing the viewer and agitating their perception of these environments. The narratives employed by the artist are not linear or teleological, but multi-layered, and often fractured to the extent that they could be described as a semblance of 'atmospheres', put together to give a sense of meaning. The more discrete sculptural works are informed by this practice, often relying on their ambiguity to fade in and out of focus, as a sculpture or thing of meaning, and back to the very material itself. By working in this way the more overtly political aspects of the early works have become less didactic, allowing for an ambiguity of meaning, both in the way that they are experienced and understood. This has led to the possibility of the viewer being coerced into an understanding of the varied structures of their existence, both conscious and sub-conscious. Nelson represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and has twice been nominated for the Turner Prize: first in 2001 and again in 2007. Born in Loughborough (UK) in 1967, Mike Nelson lives and works in London. Mike Nelson is represented by 303 Gallery, New York; Galleria Franco Noero, Turin; Matt's Gallery, London; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

- Specialist art insurer Hiscox, a keen contemporary art collector itself, supports the Whitechapel Gallery's programme of collections displays because it gives everyone free access to important collections that would not otherwise be available to the public, and engages a diverse audience with art, particularly the local community. www.hiscox.co.uk.

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. T + 44 (0) 20 7522 7888 info@whitechapelgallery.org
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