



# Teachers' Notes

## Whitechapel Gallery

### **Hannah Höch Teachers' Notes**

Also including: Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair; Artists in Residence: Heather & Ivan Morison: Smile All the While; Contemporary Art Society: Damn Braces: Bless Relaxes; Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living

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

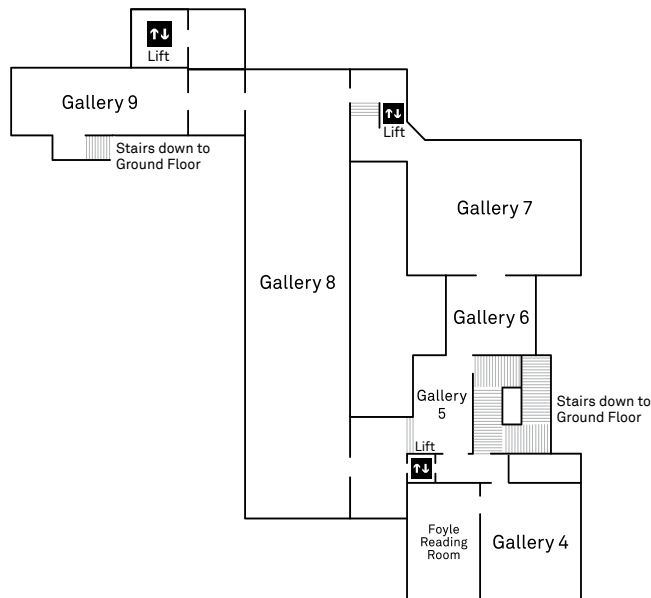
## Introduction: Teachers' Notes

This resource has been put together by the Whitechapel Gallery's Education Department to introduce teachers to the current season of exhibitions and new commissions at the Gallery. It explores key themes within the main exhibition to support self-directed visits.

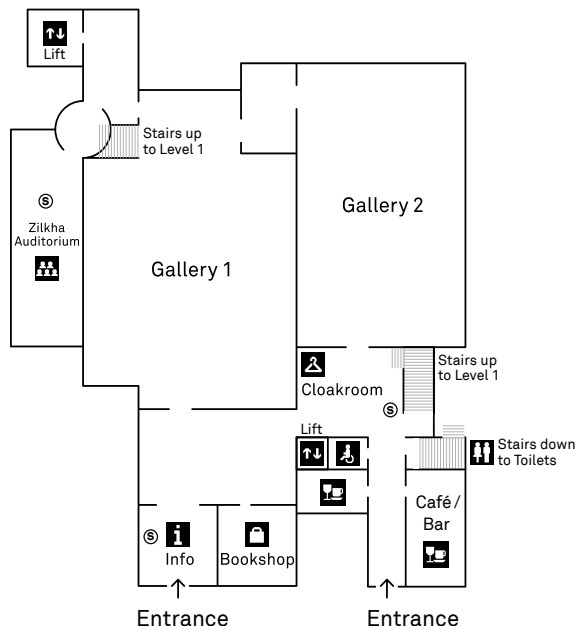
We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday – Thursday during term time, and to make use of our Education Studios for free.


## Whitechapel Gallery Map

### Level 1



### Ground Floor



 Photography is not permitted in any of the Gallery spaces

## Winter 2013 at the Whitechapel Gallery

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### Hannah Höch

Galleries 1, 8 & 9  
Until 23 March 2014

**Hannah Höch** was an artistic and cultural pioneer. A member of Berlin's Dada movement in the 1920s, she was a driving force in the development of 20th century collage. Splicing together images taken from fashion magazines and illustrated journals, she created a humorous and moving commentary on society during a time of tremendous social change. Höch was admired by contemporaries such as George Grosz, Theo van Doesburg and Kurt Schwitters, yet was often overlooked by traditional art history. As the first major exhibition of her work in Britain, the show puts this inspiring figure in the spotlight.

Bringing together over 100 works from major international collections, the exhibition examines Höch's extraordinary career from the 1910s to the 1970s. Starting with early works influenced by her time working in the fashion industry, it includes key photomontages such as *High Finance* (1923) which critiques the relationship between bankers and the army at the height of the economic crisis in Europe.

A determined believer in artistic freedom, Höch questioned conventional concepts of relationships, beauty and the making of art. Höch's collages explore the concept of the 'New Woman' in Germany following World War I and capture the style of the 1920s avant-garde theatre. The important series 'From an Ethnographic Museum' combines images of female bodies with traditional masks and objects, questioning traditional gender and racial stereotypes.

Astute and funny, this exhibition reveals how Höch established collage as a key medium for satire whilst being a master of its poetic beauty.

### Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair

Gallery 2  
Until November 2014

French Algerian artist **Kader Attia's** (b.1970) immersive, multi media installation gives us a glimpse of infinity. He revisits the story of Jacob's ladder – describing the prophet's vision of angels ascending from earth to heaven. A towering floor to ceiling structure fills the lofty spaces of the Gallery as a cabinet of curiosities, artefacts and books.

This new work is the result of Kader Attia's engagement with a space steeped in history as the reading room of a former library. It looks at the idea of books and objects as receptacles of history, continuously carrying memories with them. The installation also maps the evolution of knowledge through the study of science, anthropology, politics and physics.

The installation is the latest chapter in Kader Attia's research into the concept of repair, which he sees as an underlying principle of development and evolution in both culture and nature. As Attia says 'the biggest illusion of the Human Mind is probably the one on which Man has built himself: the idea that he invents something, when all he does is repair.'



## Artist in Residence: Heather & Ivan Morison: Smile All the While

Galleries 5 & 6

Until 9 March 2014

What is the relation between making art, learning and play? Where does a story begin and end? Can a character become real? Artists **Heather and Ivan Morison** (b.1973/1974) fill the galleries with the voices of two characters which take us on a choreographed journey through the space, in a humorous exploration of how fiction and everyday life can be woven together. Inspired by the experience of a year-long residency at Thomas Buxton Primary School (Tower Hamlets), this new work uses improvisation, games and rules to trigger unexpected and playful situations. Through one-off happenings, puppetry, travel, writing, storytelling or large scale sculptural installations, the Morisons consider how places and communities can be transformed through collective action.

## Contemporary Art Society: Damn Braces: Bless Relaxes

Gallery 7

Until 9 March 2014

With works ranging from **John Constable** to **Grayson Perry**, this exhibition represents scenes of the English east coast from the last 200 years. Artworks consider the influence of technology and local art schools and are drawn from the collections of Contemporary Art Society member museums and galleries in the region.

## Supporting Artists: Acmes First Decade 1972 – 1982

Gallery 4

Until 23 February 2014

This exhibition explores the first decade of **Acme Studios**, the pioneering artists' initiative, which since 1972 has been pivotal in supporting the arts community. The organisation ran the legendary Acme Gallery from 1976 to 1981.

The archive material in this exhibition examines two areas of Acme's activity: the provision of houses and studios and The Acme Gallery.

## Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living

Gallery 4

4 March – 14 September 2014

English conceptual artist **Stephen Willats** (b.1943) pioneered socially interactive and community engaged art in the 1960s and 70s. This archive display focuses on his exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1979 and includes *Sorting Out Other People's Lives* (1978), a work made with residents of the Ocean housing estate in Tower Hamlets in which Willats explores the intersection between community and home life through recordings and photographs.

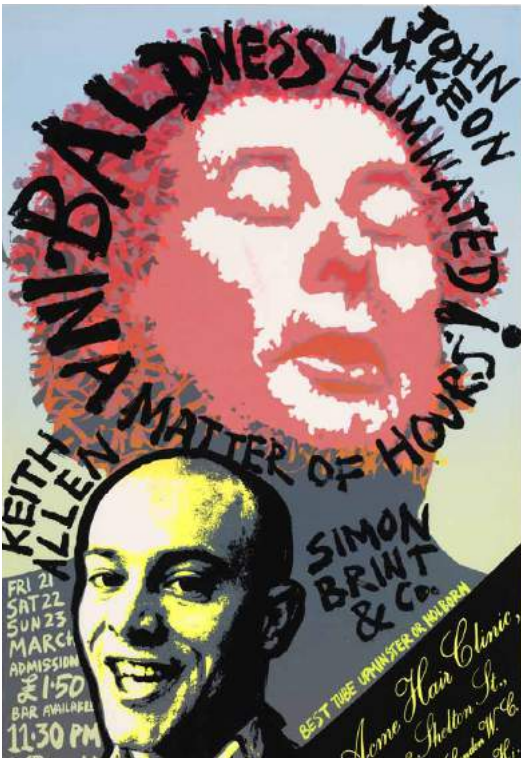
The exhibition is the first to revisit Willats' socially engaged projects and includes material from the artist's own archive and documents from the Whitechapel Gallery, alongside works from Tate, The Museum of London and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art.



**Hannah Höch**  
Until 23 March 2014



**Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair**  
Until November 2014



**Supporting Artists: Acmes First Decade**  
1972 – 1982  
Until 23 February 2014



**Artist in Residence: Heather & Ivan Morison: Smile All the While**  
Until 9 March 2014



**Contemporary Art Society: Damn Braces: Bless Relaxes**  
Until 9 March 2014



**Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living**  
4 March – 14 September 2014



## Hannah Höch

Gallery 1

Until 28th March 2014

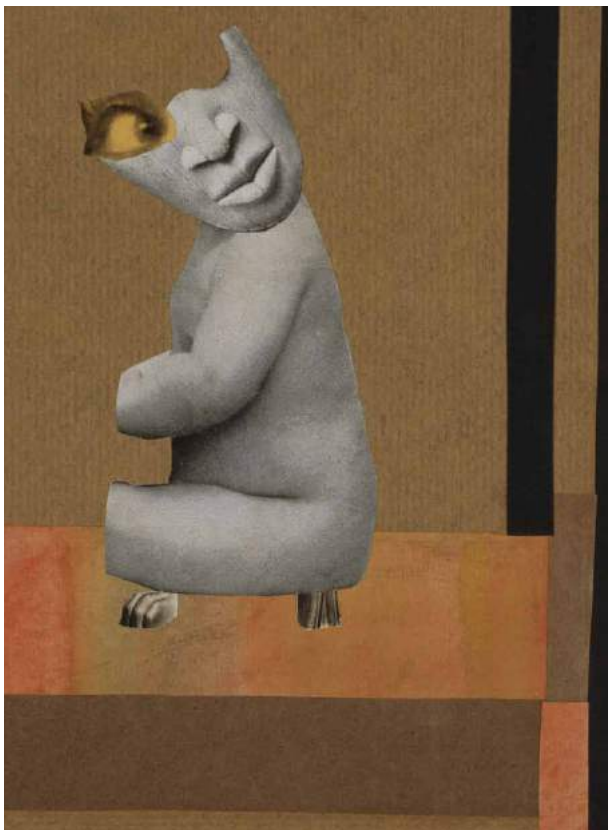
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**Hannah Höch** (1889-1978) was a driving force in the development of 20th century collage. From an involvement in the Berlin Dada art movement after World War I to experiments with abstraction and 'Fantastic Art' after World War II, her rebellious works challenged conventional concepts of beauty as well as traditional notions of art.

A pioneer of photomontage, Höch spliced together material taken from fashion magazines and illustrated journals to create humorous and moving images, offering commentaries on society during a time of tremendous social and political change.

Bringing together over 100 works from international collections, this first major exhibition of Höch's works in the UK focuses on her works on paper.

Starting with early works influenced by her time working in the fashion industry, Gallery 1 includes key works from the tumultuous Berlin Dada period, as well as collages from the famous '*Ethnographic Museum Series*', questioning traditional gender construction and racial stereotypes.



Aus der Sammlung: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum (From the Collection: From an Ethnographic Museum) (1929), Fugue (Flight) (1931)

In the first part of the exhibition, Höch's early work shows the breadth and scope of her practice. She was very interested in life drawing and Arts & Crafts, and experimented with fragmentation taking her work from figurative to abstracted pieces.

Hannah Höch left home in 1912 for cosmopolitan Berlin, studying at the School of Applied Arts and the Royal School of the Applied Arts Museum.

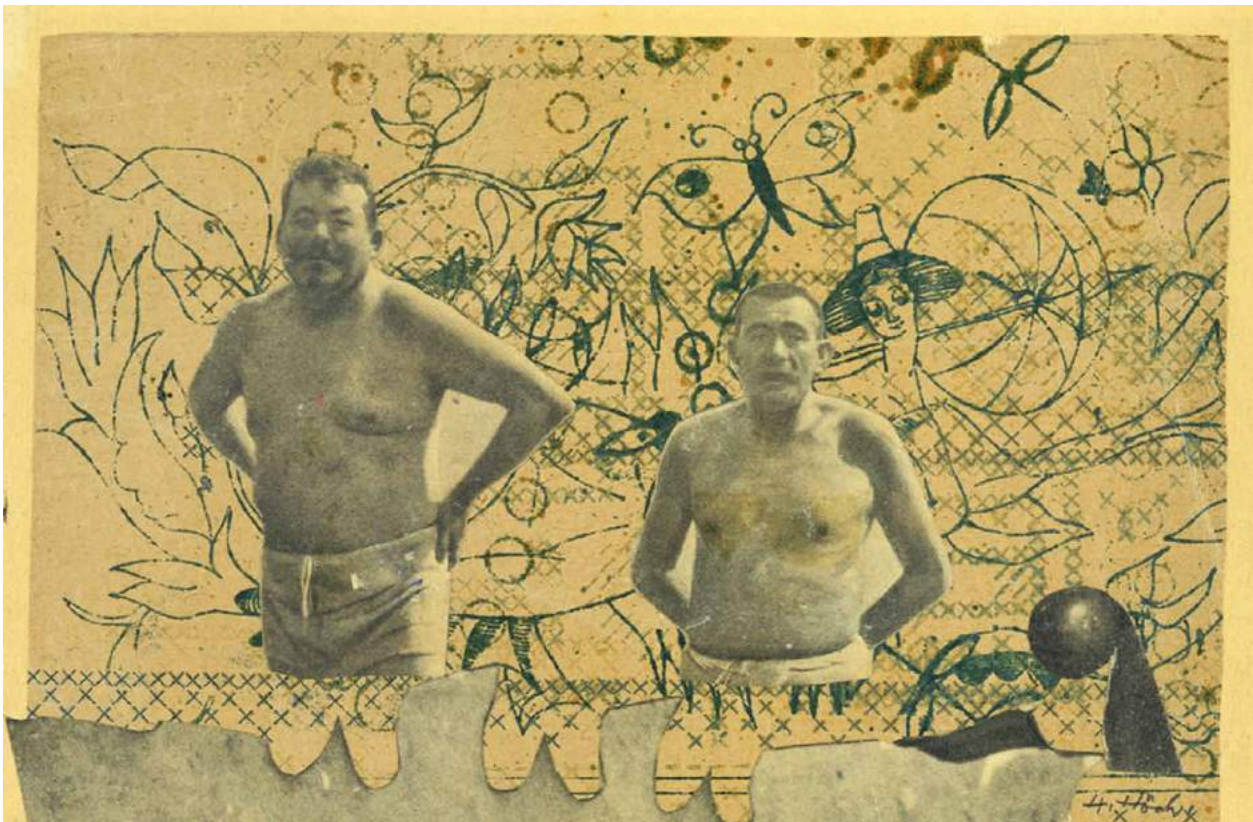
From 1916 to 1926, Höch worked for the famous Ullstein publishing house and its popular women's magazines. Höch's early figurative studies and designs, like *Gegensätze (Opposites)* (1916), or *Zerbrochene Sterne (Broken Stars)* (1917), took ornamental pattern as a basis for investigating abstraction, soon moving on to incorporate mass-media photography into these arrangements.

In 1918, Höch's work at Ullstein and her artistic interests came together in a manifesto of embroidery: the artist proclaimed that the purpose of art was not to 'decorate' or to replicate reality, but to act on behalf of the "spirit" and the changing values of a generation.

Be it embroidery or collage, for Höch, art was essentially rebellious.

Hannah Höch used techniques such as linocut printing to create abstractions of ornamental pattern.

Find examples of patterns from an everyday context on ceramics, clothing or buildings. Use different methods (photography, printmaking, collage, drawing) to abstract, rearrange, recreate or reconfigure the patterns to form new images.



Staatshäupter (Heads of State) (1918-20)



## Anti-Revue

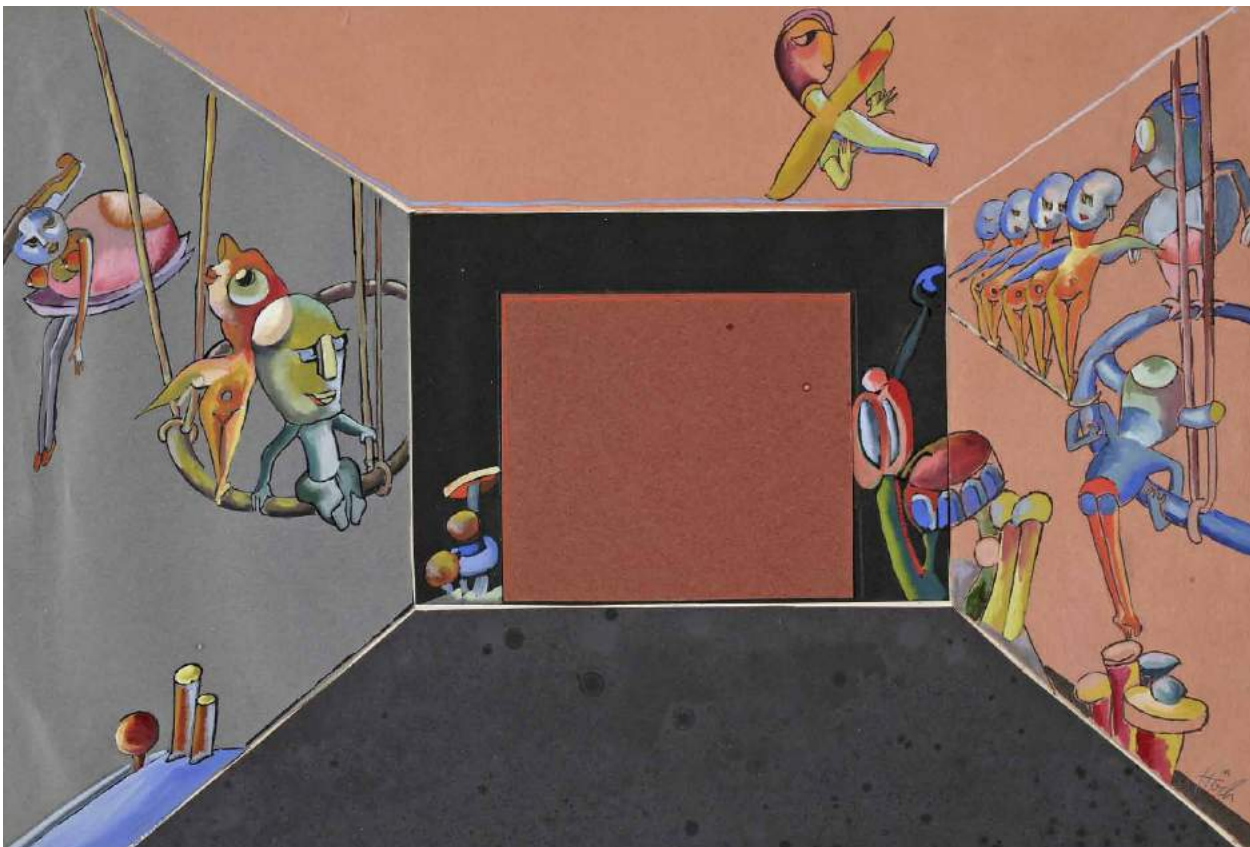
In the cultural battles of the European avant-gardes, images and texts were the most familiar weapons used by artists. But for the Dadaists and their contemporaries, live performances were of equal importance.

Performance allows direct interaction, often intentionally and immediately shocking or provoking audiences expecting traditional forms of art. It was in cabarets that the Dadaists read their phonetic poems, wearing masks and performing wild dances to contemporary music and jazz.

Höch drew up costume and stage plans with Kurt Schwitters for a performance that was never realised. This was designed as an Anti-Revue to the Girl troupes of Berlin in the 1920's.

Research Dada performances that took place as well as those by Girl troupes in Germany in the 1920's.

Discuss the differences between the two.





'From an Ethnographic Museum' includes some of Höch's most beautiful, intriguing and complex collages. Never conceived as a cohesive group, it consists of several individual works made between 1924 and 1930. Höch is often reported to have been influenced for the series by a visit to an Ethnographic Museum with her then partner, the female poet Til Brugman.

The collages juxtapose body parts, mainly of women, with ethnographic objects. They often make use of an iconography of display, incorporating plinths or elements reminiscent of showcases and presentation devices. At once beautiful and monstrous, the compositions allow for a complex discussion about the presentation of the female body, of notions of exoticism and of the legacy of colonial aesthetics and politics.

Höch never publicly challenged contemporary racism or colonialist ideas. However, her choice of collage and photomontage makes use of a criticism implicit in the medium. By emphasising the fragmentation of her constructed bodies, the collages become an important early example for allowing difference, rather than striving for concepts of uniformity - a difficult and unpopular stance in a society geared towards the brutally repressive and totalising ideologies of National Socialism.

At the time this work was produced, the totalitarian regime was developing in Germany. Government sponsored art depicted the white western male figure, with an idealised notion of the body. Höch creates a different notion of beauty.

How did Hannah Höch's 'From an Ethnographic Museum' series clash or contrast with prevailing ideas about race and gender that were promoted during the rise of the totalitarian regime in Germany pre WWII?

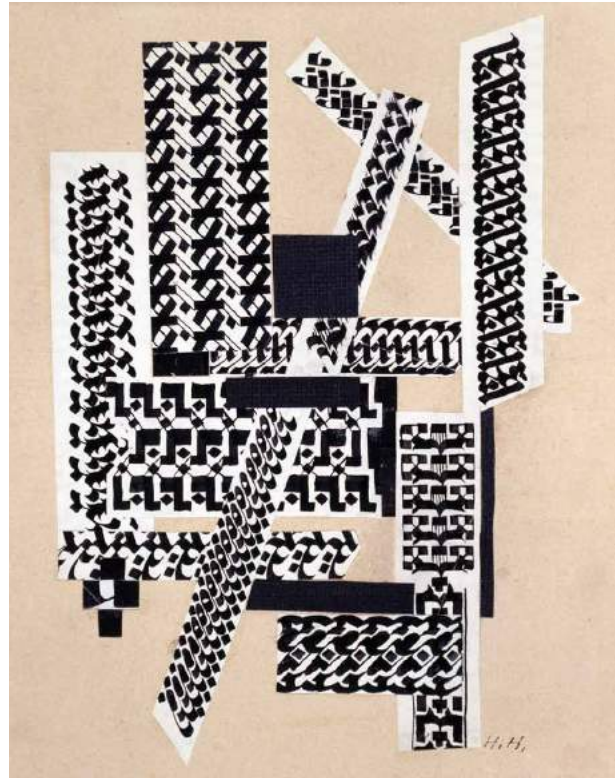
Through these images do you think that Höch was deliberately opposing this ideology? Why?



## Galleries 8 & 9

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Galleries 8 & 9 upstairs display the Album, an unusual scrapbook illustrating Höch's interest in mass-media images. They also present her substantial post-World War II work, using the medium of collage for means of abstraction as well as for the reconsideration of previous themes and interests as seen in her earlier work.



With the beginning of a new dawn in post-war western Europe, Hannah Höch's work underwent a stylistic shift. Previous years saw a preference for the creation of discernible figures and their placement in narrative settings. After 1945, many of her collages took a different approach. By cutting out, rotating or inverting elements of images, she obscured any originally representational function. Instead of legible narratives, she created an ambiguity of forms and meaning. Although Höch initially related these new works to the category of the 'fantastic', they differ from a surrealist or otherwise figurative tradition. Rather, they serve as a re-investigation of abstraction.

Höch's turn from figurative storytelling can be seen as a joyful exploration of new possibilities after a time of hardship. Given the experiences of the war, artists from all over the world questioned the function and form of art, its tradition as well as its previous moral claims. Abstraction, long suppressed by totalitarian regimes during and after the war, became of renewed interest.



Hannah Höch carried on working for over thirty years after the Second World War. Yet, whilst her collages remained varied in form and content until her death in 1978, they took a noticeable shift towards representing abstract forms.

On the one hand, these collages experimented with the abstract quality of the composition as a whole, with the subject of the primary source material becoming of secondary importance. On the other hand, they became retrospective in their outlook by re-examining the strategies and visual patterns of her earlier career, at times even reusing the same materials.

From the 1960s onward, Höch's work displays a renewed interest in figuration and representations of the body. In *Homage to Riza Abasi* (1963), an ironic commentary on the transience of female beauty and of the consuming post-war 'New Woman' is captured in 'miniature'. *The Lebensbild (Life Portrait)* (1972–73), one of Höch's last works, becomes a collage of collages, portraying an artist revisiting her own artistic achievements.

What aspects of Höch's earlier work can you identify in Gallery 8? What are the similarities and differences between the work on display here compared to Gallery 1? Think about colour, form and composition.

Despite being a pioneer in 20th century collage, Hannah Höch was marginalised from an art historical perspective. Why do you think might have been?

The exhibition finishes with *The Lebensbild (Life Portrait)* (1972–73), in which Höch collages elements of her life. Explore ways of representing aspects of yourself and/or things that have happened in your life through collage.



**Kader Attia: Continuum of Repair**  
**Gallery 2**  
**Until November 2014**

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For this annual sculptural commission, French-Algerian artist **Kader Attia** (b.1970) has created an intriguing cabinet of curiosities that revisits the biblical story of Jacob's Ladder.

Kader Attia's multi-media installations reflect on anthropology, politics and science and are rooted in history and archival research. His works explore ideas around identity in an age of globalisation and are informed by the experience of growing up between Algeria and the Parisian suburbs, and later living in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela.

At the centre of the work is a cabinet of curiosities. Above it, a beam of light shines up to a mirrored ceiling, creating an infinity reflection which evokes the biblical tale prophet Jacob's vision of angels ascending from earth to heaven.

Surrounding the cabinet is a towering floor to ceiling structure of books, exploring subjects such as history, art, architecture, science, physics and astronomy.

The commission is the result of an in-depth engagement with the space as the reading room of the former Whitechapel library. It looks at the idea of books and objects as receptacles of history, continuously carrying memories with them. Attia links the trajectory of religious and scientific knowledge to the concept of repair, which he sees as an underlying principle of development and evolution.



As Attia says 'the biggest illusion of the Human Mind is probably the one on which Man has built himself: the idea that he invents something, when all he does is repair.'

This concept began with Attia's presentation at the international art survey DOCUMENTA (13), Kassel in 2012, where he juxtaposed images of wounded soldiers from World War I with re-appropriated African masks suggesting a connection between physical healing and cultural reconstruction, both of which are processes of repair.

He extended this examination in relation to both nature and culture at a solo exhibition at KunstWerke, Berlin in 2013, and for this commission he takes science and religion as its central focus.

Heather and Ivan Morison: *Smile All the While*  
10 December 2013 - 9 March 2014  
Outset Project Gallery (Gallery 5)  
176 / Zabłudowicz Collection Project Gallery (Gallery 6)

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Where does a story begin and end? Can a character become real? Artists **Heather and Ivan Morison** take us on a humorous exploration of how fiction and everyday life can be woven together.

*Smile All the While* uses games and improvisation to trigger unexpected and playful situations. Presented on three monitors and structured as a play in six acts, this new commission for the Whitechapel Gallery draws on the Morisons' interest in performance, storytelling, object theatre and comedy.

A man, a woman and a young girl are telling a story. They talk about love and friendship. They are playing games that involve objects, words, jokes, waiting and watching. The conversation follows certain rhythms, patterns and rules. The space turns into a set, and dialogues evolve as a kind of story-making-machine. Within the character's immersive and strange world, one becomes aware that 'each rule has a consequence'.

Heather and Ivan Morison were inspired by a year-long residency in a local school, where they explored with students ways of learning and making through play - using objects, trees, puppets, shelters and writing to test out possibilities of how to be creative within the school environment.

Known for their large scale sculptural installations, one-off happenings, a nomadic theatre company and fictional writings, the Morison's challenge the boundaries of different art forms and consider how places and communities can be transformed through collective action.

Contemporary Art Society: Damn Braces: Bless Relaxes  
Until 9 March 2014  
Gallery 7

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With works ranging from **John Constable** to **Grayson Perry**, this exhibition represents scenes of the English east coast from the past 200 years. Artworks consider the influence of technology and local art schools and are drawn from the collections of Contemporary Art Society member museums and galleries in the region.

The display's title is taken from **William Blake's** *The Proverbs of Hell*, from his illustrated poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c 1789) and a copy of Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job* owned by poet Lord Alfred Tennyson is on show here, complemented by a recording of Tennyson's written descriptions of the Lincolnshire countryside.

From the early Norwich Society of Artists (1803–1833) to the progressive Time-Based Art course in Hull during the 1990s, artists and students have looked to the local landscape to express their ideas. **John Sell Cotman** and **Peter De Wint** see it divided by landowners and industry in the 19th century, while **Fran Cottell** and **Simon Poulter** look at the privatisation of land during the Thatcher era. Their responses make a case for freedom of movement through use of medieval common land law and more recently an open source 'creative commons' culture online.

This display is part of the Gallery's programme to open up public and private collections and is made in collaboration with the Contemporary Art Society and Curatorial Fellow Helen Kaplinsky who is hosted by the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull. This year-long series of displays is supported by a major grant from Arts Council England. The Contemporary Art Society supports museums and galleries across the UK, through advice, advocacy and gifts for purchasing works of art.



Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living  
4 March - 14 September 2014  
Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)

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English conceptual artist **Stephen Willats** (b.1943) pioneered socially interactive and community engaged art in the 1960s and 70s. This archive display focuses on his exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1979 and includes *Sorting Out Other People's Lives* (1978), a work made with residents of the Ocean housing estate in Tower Hamlets in which Willats explores the intersection between community and home life through recordings and photographs.

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Supporting Artists: Acmes First Decade 1972 -1982  
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This exhibition explores the first decade of **Acme Studios**, the pioneering artists' initiative, which since 1972 has been pivotal in supporting the arts community. The organisation ran the legendary Acme Gallery from 1976 to 1981.

East London changed significantly in the 1970s. The national recession played a large role, but specifically the closure of the docks had a devastating impact on the local economy. Disused industrial spaces and boarded-up houses appeared and artists started moving to the area.

The use of redundant and therefore cheap buildings was driven by necessity and was the only way that artists could afford an appropriate studio space to sustain their practice.

Jonathan Harvey and David Panton, founders of Acme Studios, realised that this seemingly grim landscape presented an exceptional opportunity for artists. Negotiating with local government, they temporarily secured derelict buildings and provided artists with spaces to live and work.

The archive material in this exhibition examines two areas of Acme's activity: the provision of houses and studios and The Acme Gallery.

The Acme Gallery presented a wide range of art practice including installation and performance work such as *An Eight Day Passage* (1977), where the artist Kerry Trengove tunnelled through the ground floor of the Gallery, emerging eight days later in the adjoining basement 20 feet away. This exhibition highlights the fascinating relationship between the spaces where art is created and where it is presented; derelict buildings are transformed into perfectly useable studios and when required, a white cube gallery is torn apart for the sake of an installation.

**We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday – Thursday during term time, and make use of our Clore Creative Studios for free. All visits must be booked in advance with the Education team.**

**For details of school workshops, CPD for teachers and education events please visit [whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)**

**To find out more or to book a visit please contact:**

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