

New Curator announced for the Whitechapel Gallery

The Whitechapel Gallery announced today that Omar Kholeif is appointed Curator.

Omar Kholeif joins the Whitechapel Gallery in this key role as the century-old Gallery strengthens its global reach and outlook to new territories, while expanding its digital platforms and welcoming half a million visitors a year. Working closely with Chief Curator Magnus af Petersens, he will help deliver and curate a broad programme of modern and contemporary art exhibitions, new artist commissions, presentations of rarely seen public and private collections, focused displays from the Whitechapel Gallery's historic archive, and an extensive programme of publications.

Omar Kholeif was visiting curator at Cornerhouse, Manchester (2010 - present) and HOME, a new arts venue opening in 2015, as well as curator and director of The White Building, London's centre for art and technology. He is Senior Editor of Ibraaz Publishing. In these roles, he commissioned new artworks by artists including Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Sophia Al-Maria, Jon Rafman and Jamie Shovlin. Kholeif was previously curator at FACT in Liverpool (2009- 13), where he curated and commissioned projects with artists such as Anja Kirschner, David Panos, Pedro Reyes and Akram Zaatari. Kholeif has also been Artistic Director at the Arab British Centre, London, and founding Director of the UK's Arab Film Festival. In 2012 he was a co-curator of the Liverpool Biennial. His latest publication is *You Are Here: Looking at Art after the Internet* (Cornerhouse Books, 2014).

From January 2014 he joins the exhibitions team at the Whitechapel Gallery including Daniel F. Herrmann, Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies; Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator Archive Gallery; and Assistant Curators Poppy Bowers, Emily Butler, Habda Rashid and Candy Stobbs. He takes over the role from Kirsty Ogg, who joined the Gallery in 2009, curating major exhibitions including *Where Three Dreams Cross* (2010), *Bethan Huws* (2011), *The London Open* (2012), *Gerard Byrne* (2013), *Karl Blossfeldt* (2013), and the current displays from the Contemporary Art Society and the ongoing Artists Film International programme. She will shortly be taking up the position as Director of Bloomberg New Contemporaries.

Forthcoming highlights for 2014 at the Whitechapel Gallery include: an important new exhibition dedicated to German Dadaist Hannah Höch (opening 15 January 2014); a retrospective of visionary French filmmaker Chris Marker (opening 16 April); the first UK show of Italian artist Giulio Paulini (opening 9 July); and a major collaborative project with Tate presenting US artist Richard Tuttle (opening 14 October); changing displays opening up private and public collections, with the Contemporary Art Society, as well as the Whitechapel Gallery's archives, and major site-specific commissions.

Omar Kholeif, said: 'I feel incredibly excited to be joining the Whitechapel Gallery which I see as a critical reference for contemporary art internationally, working with leading international artists and playing a central role in the UK's cultural landscape. I look forward to contributing to the Gallery's global view and reaching new audiences through engaging exhibitions and innovative digital initiatives.'

Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery, said: 'We are delighted that Omar Kholeif is joining the Gallery. He is a bright new star in bringing the very best art from around the world to everyone. I look forward to his truly international outlook and embracing of opportunities offered by the new digital landscape in bringing the next generation of modern masters to the Whitechapel Gallery'.

Press Release

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Notes for Editors

- Omar Kholeif was curator at Cornerhouse, Manchester, as well as HOME, a new arts centre opening in 2015. He also curated and directed The White Building, SPACE's London-based art and technology centre. In both roles, he commissioned new artworks by artists including Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Sophia Al-Maria, Jon Rafman and Jamie Shovlin. Kholeif was previously curator at FACT in Liverpool, where he curated and commissioned projects with artists such as Anja Kirschner, David Panos, Pedro Reyes and Akram Zaatari. Kholeif has also been Artistic Director at the Arab British Centre, London, and founding Director of the UK's Arab Film Festival. In 2012, he was a curator for the Liverpool Biennial. Kholeif has developed curatorial projects at Tate Modern, London; ICA, London; The International Film Festival Rotterdam, Netherlands; 'Beirut', Cairo; Rhizome at the New Museum, New York, and Arnolfini, Bristol. He contributes regularly to numerous publications and media including *Art Monthly*, *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *Frieze*, *Artforum International* and *Wired* and was a founding editor of *Portal 9* in Beirut. He is Senior Editor of Ibraaz Publishing, the leading critical forum for visual culture in North Africa and the Middle East. Kholeif's recent edited books include *Vision, Memory and Media* (Liverpool University Press 2010), *Far and Wide: Nam June Paik* (Leonardo 2013) and *You Are Here: Looking at Art after the Internet* (Cornerhouse Books 2014). Omar sits on the board of no.w.here, London and is a member of AICA UK (International Association of Art Critics). He is a Churchill Fellow and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Press Information

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