

Assistant Curator

Job description

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Background

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, Lucien Freud, Sarah Lucas and Walid Raad.

With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the newly expanded 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.

Exhibitions Department

The Exhibitions Department realises the ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions and commissions, including the production of catalogues to accompany these events. In addition, the Department is closely involved with an MA in Curating Contemporary Art, taught jointly with London Metropolitan University.

The Department consists of the Chief Curator, Curator and Head of MA Curatorial Studies, Curator, 3 x Assistant Curators, Assistant Curator – Special Projects, Archivist and Archive Curator, Head of Exhibition Design and Production, Gallery Manager and Installation Manager.

Role

The Assistant Curator works with a small and busy team on the realisation of projects with artists, lenders and arts institutions; delivering modern and contemporary exhibitions and commissions, including the organisation of transport and insurance; registrarial duties; and the production of catalogues.

As a member of the exhibitions team, the Assistant Curator contributes ideas to the Gallery's programme, is essential to the department's collegiate work environment and liaises with other internal departments and with the professional art world, in one of the most dynamic art environments in Europe.

Accountability

The Assistant Curator is line managed by the Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies.

Duties & responsibilities

Six museum-standard galleries, presented over two floors, feature modern and contemporary art from around the world, in a programme of approximately nine major exhibitions per year. They include temporary exhibitions that celebrate established figures or provide a platform for emerging artists and tendencies; new, site-specific commissions; displays of works from important British and international collections; and material drawn from the Whitechapel's historic archive. The programme is devised by the Director and Chief Curator in discussion with colleagues in the Exhibition, Education and Development departments. Exhibitions are accompanied by publications, a dedicated public programme and limited edition works.

The Assistant Curator will work on the delivery of several projects concurrently, including modern and contemporary exhibitions, commissions and displays from UK and international collections:

General

- Provide support to the Exhibitions Department, from the research and development stage of a project through to its realisation
- Liaise with artists and their representatives, arts institutions and funders
- Liaise with all Whitechapel Gallery departments including Communications, Education, Development and Operations to secure a smooth flow of information
- Monitor and maintain budgets for specific exhibitions and exhibition catalogues meticulously and in timely fashion. This includes obtaining estimates, raising purchase orders, processing invoices, maintaining digital and physical budget files and liaising with the Finance Department and budget holders
- Manage trainees, interns and other freelance employees as well as supervise departmental work placements

Registrar

- Research loans and liaise with the Head of Exhibitions Design and Production to prepare loan documentation, administer loan requests and ensure loan conditions are fulfilled
- Compile condition and packing reports to museum standard, keeping records of movement and conditions of works and liaise with conservators and couriers when necessary
- Organise exhibition related transport, which includes updating shipping lists, obtaining estimates of costs, and monitoring customs documentation, liaising with shippers and the exhibition Curator
- Coordinate the insurance of works of art, either commercially or through the Museums and Galleries Government Indemnity Scheme, and compile and file insurance claims in the event of loss or damage of work

- Oversee the administration and transport arrangements for specific exhibitions on tour and act as courier for touring exhibitions when necessary
- Issue contracts to partner organisations, artists, curators and authors in consultation with the Department
- Maintain files and correspondence as well as archiving past exhibition files

Exhibitions organisation and administration

- Arrange accommodation, travel and per diems for visiting artists, couriers etc.
- Assist the production of catalogues and limited editions
- Collate and copy-edit texts; research, request, store and return images and obtain copyright permissions for use in publications and communication materials, including website
- Compile information for labels and text panels, write interpretative material for the season guide, website and exhibition where applicable
- Compile exhibition guest lists in collaboration with Development and Communications
- Manage exhibition contacts on database and private view/ dinner pro formas
- Deal with routine enquiries, maintain databases (Raiser's Edge, FilemakerPro and Excel) and process responses to exhibition proposals with other members of the exhibitions team
- Assist with private views and other Whitechapel Gallery events including speaking at events where appropriate

Other

- Represent the Whitechapel Gallery at public events, meetings and networking on behalf of the organisation
- Any other duties as requested by the Line Manager

Person Specification

Essential

- Degree in Art History, Theory or Practice, or extensive equivalent experience
- Minimum of three years' experience of arts administration, especially international shipping, insurance and customs
- Experience with the care and handling of art works, including condition reporting and packing procedures
- Excellent organisation skills and impeccable attention to detail
- Good proven computer skills with experience of Microsoft Office, and FileMaker
- Ability to work as part of a team and independently, remaining calm under pressure, and to quickly find your feet in a fast-paced work environment
- Experience of print production
- Experience of publishing in print and/or online
- Excellent communication and accuracy in written communication
- Good negotiation skills and the ability to handle sensitive situations with diplomacy
- Experience of publishing in print and/or online

Desirable

- A good knowledge of contemporary artistic practices and debates
- Experience of working with artists

Conditions of Work

- Permanent position: Full Time
- Hours of work: 9.30am – 5.45pm, Monday to Friday, plus some occasional weekend and evening work, which will be compensated by time off in lieu.
- Starting salary: £25,000 gross per annum
- The period of notice is 2 months in writing on either side

In addition, the benefits you are eligible to receive are, subject to availability:

- 25 days annual holiday (pro rata for part-time staff) Option of 4.5% of your gross salary provided as employers' pension contribution (6 months after start date or when probation has been successfully completed, whichever is latest)
- Discount from the Gallery bookshop (subject to availability)
- Discount from the Whitechapel Café/Bar (subject to availability)
- Discounts on editions (one per edition) and publications (subject to availability)
- Annual research/travel grant of £200 (pro rata equivalent for part time staff)
- Training opportunities