

Assistant Curator (12 Months Fixed Term Contract)

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 Zarina Bhimji, Sophie Calle, Peter Doig and William Kentridge.

With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, restaurant 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.

Exhibitions Programme

This is an Assistant Curator opportunity in the Exhibitions Team to cover a Sabbatical Leave for 12 months.

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 and limited edition works.

Exhibitions Department

The Exhibitions Department realises an ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions and commissions including the production of catalogues and limited editions to accompany these events.

Job description

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The Department consists of:

Chief Curator, 2 x Curators, 4 x Assistant Curators, Curatorial Assistant, Archive Curator and Head of MA Curatorial Studies, Archivist, Head of Exhibition Design & Production and Gallery Technical Manager.

Role

The Assistant Curator will work with a small and busy team on the realisation of projects with artists, lenders and arts institutions. The post includes responsibility for the organisation of transport and insurance and for the production of catalogues, limited editions and commissioned works of art where considered appropriate. The Assistant Curator will also work on other external projects when required.

As a member of the exhibitions team, the Assistant Curator contributes ideas to the Gallery's programme, liaises with other internal departments and with the professional art world.

Accountability

The Assistant Curator is responsible to the Curator

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Duties & responsibilities:

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, Operations/Visitor Services, Administration/Finance and Ventures to secure a smooth flow of information
- Monitor and maintain budgets for specific exhibitions, exhibition catalogues and limited editions. 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 interns and other freelance employees

Registrar:

- Research loans and liaise with the Curator and Gallery Manager to prepare loan documentation, administer loan requests and ensure loan conditions are fulfilled
- Compile condition and packing reports, 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, liaising with shippers and exhibition Curator and monitoring customs documentation
- 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

- Source suppliers and subcontractors for production and installations, in consultation with the Gallery Manager
- Collate and copy editing texts; researching, requesting, storing and returning images and obtaining copyright permissions for use in publications and communication materials, including website
- Assist the production of catalogues and limited editions
- Compile information for labels and text panels, writing interpretative material for the season guide, website and exhibition where applicable
- Arrange accommodation, travel and per diems for visiting artists, couriers etc.
- Compile and send invitation for 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, Artlogic 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 Whitechapel Gallery at public events, meetings and networking on behalf of the organisation
- Any other duties as requested by the Curator or Chief Curator
- Keep up to date with professional best-practice

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Whitechapel Gallery is undertaking a major policy review to address systemic discrimination; and considering what part we can play in reforming the arts sector overall. We are auditing our programmes, our staff and our audiences to assess successes and failures and bring about reform and innovation. Our Action Plan is guided by staff, but also draws on the experience of external organisations dedicated to combating racial injustice and social inequality. We want our workforce to represent all sections of the community and expect all our workers to have a strong commitment to work with the Gallery in creating an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace. Our ambition is to reflect society and to create a diverse, inclusive and welcoming environment for all to experience art.

Person Specification

Essential

- A relevant degree or post-graduate degree in Art History or Curating
- Minimum of three years' experience of arts administration in a public gallery or museum, especially loan administration, international shipping, insurance and customs
- A good knowledge of contemporary artistic practices and debates
- Experience of working with artists
- Excellent organisation skills and impeccable attention to detail
- Good computer skills with experience of Word, Excel and Artlogic
- Experience of maintaining and managing budgets
- Ability to work as part of a team and independently, remaining calm under pressure
- Flexibility and ability to multi-task
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Good negotiation skills and the ability to handle sensitive situations with diplomacy

Desirable

- Experience of editing and print production
- Experience with the care, handling and installation of art works, including condition reporting and packing procedures

Conditions of Work

- Contract: 12 Months Fixed Term (Sabbatical Leave Cover)
- 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.
- Salary Scale: £23,500-£25,000 per annum depending on experience
- The period of notice is 1 months in writing on either side
- Probation period: 3 months

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% of your gross basic salary provided as employers' pension contribution (3 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 Townsend Restaurant (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
- Access to Employee Assistance Programme