

## WHITECHAPEL GALLERY

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 2024

The world is facing a series of linked environmental crises. In October 2022, the UN warned that the world's governments are not yet on track to keep global heating below 1.5 degrees, and the window for action is rapidly closing. We are already seeing the impacts of existing warming with devastating droughts, storms and floods across the world. Related crises include collapsing biodiversity, dangerous levels of air pollution, and plastic contamination in our rivers and oceans. Without urgent action from across society, these problems will rapidly escalate.

The art world has an important role to play. Arts organisations – particularly in the Global North – have a disproportionately large impact on the environment, mainly due to a great deal of international travel, arts shipping, energy and materials. We need to act urgently to reduce these impacts in line with what the science is telling us. As arts organisations, we also have an opportunity to use our public platform and cultural influence to set a positive example, encouraging and supporting others to act and helping shift the public debate.

At Whitechapel Gallery, our values and mission are to occupy a distinctive and radical position in the social and cultural landscape. We are building on our pioneering history as a place for contemporary art and ideas, translating and animating it for our time. To be true to these values and fulfil this mission, we need to take urgent environmental action, as art and culture are directly threatened by the climate crisis and we know that those from marginalised communities and cultures are most at risk. As an organisation, we know that our main direct environmental impacts include flights to art fairs and exhibitions, air freight of artworks for exhibitions, and energy use in our buildings. We have committed to tackling these impacts by:

- Joining the Gallery Climate Coalition, and pledging to at least halve our carbon emissions by 2030, from a 2019 baseline.
- Regularly calculating the carbon footprint of our operations, to track progress towards this target.
- Setting specific targets for the major parts of our footprint, including:
  - Reducing staff flights to 50% of pre-COVID levels by 2025, and 25% by 2030.
  - Ensuring the majority of our international shipping is carried out by sea, rail or road rather than air by 2028.
- We're aiming to reduce our building energy use by 30%, looking into alternative appropriate technologies.

- Ensuring all of our packing materials are reusable or curbside recyclable by 2026, as a step towards zero-waste operations by 2030.
- Using only low or zero emissions vehicles for local deliveries by 2025.
- The actions we are taking to meet these targets include:
- Speaking to our shippers about alternatives to air freight. Planning our exhibitions and events with care to minimise the need for air freight.
- Reviewing our staff travel policies and practices, and planning our attendance at international events to reduce the need for air travel.
- Carrying out an energy audit of our buildings to find opportunities for energy reduction and renewable generation.
- Working with other GCC members on projects to help develop more sustainable packaging, transport and energy saving solutions for the whole sector.
- Speaking to our suppliers and service providers about their carbon footprint, and looking for opportunities to encourage them to take action, or to switch to alternative suppliers who will do so.
- Maintaining a Green Team with representatives from different parts of the organisation, that meets to track progress on all of these targets and actions at least once a month.

We aim to act in line with the principles of climate justice, recognising the connections between the climate crisis and other global injustices. We want our environmental actions to support – rather than undermine or ignore – the needs of people on the frontlines of marginalisation and injustice. We are committed to work in partnership with other organisations, including the Gallery Climate Coalition, to collectively tackle these issues.

We have set these targets and are taking actions in the knowledge that we are not yet doing everything right. We still have a great deal to do and much to learn. We welcome feedback from our artists, audiences and stakeholders on this environmental statement, our targets, and on our plans for action.

14 March 2024



Gilane Tawadros

**Director**

Whitechapel Gallery