

Whitechapel Gallery

Archivist

Recruitment pack

Whitechapel
Gallery



Whitechapel Gallery

Whitechapel Gallery was founded in 1901 by the pioneering educators and philanthropists, Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, with the aim of bringing great artists, art and ideas from around the world to the people of East London. Now, over 120 years later, the Gallery is renewing its commitment to our founding mission. We recognise the importance of our pioneering history as a place for contemporary art and ideas that sits in the heart of the East End, and the opportunities that this offers to collaborate and connect with global, diverse communities, locally and around the world.

Over the years, we have grown exponentially in both ambition, outreach and influence, welcoming some of the world's most significant and visionary artists to our East London home; showcasing thought-provoking art and ideas from across the globe (including China, Brazil and the Islamic world); exploring topical, often challenging, themes and issues; and championing local and emerging talent.

We are hugely proud of our history and believe we have a continuing, and important responsibility to expand on our legacy and remit, ensuring our programme reflects the times we live in, speaks to, and with, diverse artists and audiences and enables an even greater range of voices, cultures and visions to rise to the fore. Above all, we recognise the critical role that art can play in firing up imaginations, reflecting lived experiences and opening up new possibilities for thinking, feeling and dreaming.

Gilane Tawadros, Director



Our Vision and Mission

Our Vision

The Whitechapel Gallery will occupy a distinctive and radically different position in the social and cultural landscape. We will build on our pioneering history as a place for contemporary art and ideas, translating and animating it for our time.

Our Mission

The Whitechapel Gallery is a ground-breaking art institution that has existed for over 100 years. We make contemporary art and ideas accessible to local and global audiences in the East End of London, recognising the critical role that art can play in firing up our imaginations, reflecting our lived experiences and opening up new possibilities for thinking, feeling and dreaming.



Our Values

Public: We are a public, cultural, social and civic space that is open and accessible to everyone. We take our responsibility as a public art institution seriously, believing that we have an accountability and duty of care towards all our stakeholders. We want our building to be a haven for anyone interested and curious about contemporary art.

Permeable: We are a place of reciprocal exchange and connection; an open, permeable institution that spills beyond its walls and learns with and through our many communities.

Bold: We are proud to work with artists and ideas that address the key issues and concerns of our times. We take risks in programming under-represented and under-served artists, focusing on the work of women artists and artists of colour, championing their contribution to contemporary art and society.

Collaborative: We believe that collaboration and collective endeavour fosters creativity, expands capability and increases productivity, and we actively seek equitable partnerships that create opportunities for artists, contributors and audiences to shape what we do.

Caring: We promote and support a culture of care, respect, trust and accountability, and are dedicated to safeguarding the long-term future and sustainability of Whitechapel Gallery, artistically, environmentally and economically.



Archivist

The Role

We're looking for a qualified Archivist to refresh and reinvigorate our approach to the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. You will be passionate about the preservation of the collection, ensuring it is catalogued, cared for and acts as a catalyst for programming and public engagement. Working closely with colleagues in the Participation team, you will help to create and experiment with new ways that artists and audiences can engage with archive materials and use our Reading Room. Your work will underpin how staff, artists and visitors understand the history of Whitechapel Gallery, how it connects with wider artistic and social developments, and how it might shape the institution's future programme and practices.

This is a unique opportunity to contribute to one of London's most dynamic cultural institutions, supporting its mission to make art accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. The role demands a dedicated, detail-oriented professional with a passion for archives, strong technical expertise, and a commitment to inclusion and collaboration.

Accountability

The Archivist is line managed by the Director of Participation.





The Archive

The Whitechapel Gallery Archive Collection is of significant historic value, featuring materials over 130 years' old, offering insights into the Gallery's history and changing approaches to artistic practices and cultural programming. It includes letters, photographs, rare catalogues and records of over 800 exhibitions. The archive also provides insights into political and social developments in East London – from materials relating to Suffragette actions and anti-fascist movements of the 1930s to celebrations of Bengali culture in the 1970s. The archive's current public service was established in 2009, when Whitechapel Gallery expanded to take over the former Whitechapel Public Library (1892-2005), which had been a crucial civic service in East London. Over recent months, Whitechapel Gallery staff, alongside external Archivists, artists and researchers, have been sharing exciting ideas, insights and case studies to help shape the future direction of this historic resource.

Participation at Whitechapel Gallery

Guided by a new strategy finalised in 2024, the Participation Programme is a testing ground for art and ideas. We hold space for participants of all ages through a brave, exploratory and experimental programme, developed in collaboration with artists, audiences and creative partners.

Our intergenerational programme spans early years activities, work with local schools, social, creative and professional development opportunities for young people, and life-long adult learning opportunities. Projects are artist-led and multi-disciplinary, offering participatory experiences beyond formal education.

We aim to build upon a radical history of pioneering educational practices at Whitechapel Gallery and are grounded in our distinctive urban location on Whitechapel High Street within Tower Hamlets – the youngest, fastest-growing and most densely populated borough in England.

We embed community engagement across our programme, prioritising local audiences and collaborations with East London partners, informed by long-term relationships and mutual exchange.

With confidence and integrity, we platform artists and ideas that explore the social and political issues facing us today. We advocate for creative learning and socially engaged practices as they are needed more than ever before.

The current Participation Department comprises:

Director of Participation
Curator: Families Programme
Curator: Schools and Teachers
Curator: Youth Programmes
Curator: Public Programmes
Archivist

Key Responsibilities

Institutional Archive

- To oversee a consistent and integrated process for archiving internal Gallery materials, ensuring records with long-term historical value are successful captured for the Gallery's archive, and providing clear guidance on record care, retention and disposal for internal teams.
- To align the process for the preservation of digital materials with broader IT processes, working with colleagues in the Operations team.
- To work with colleagues across all departments to ensure best practice is communicated and embedded.

Care for the Collection

- To be responsible for conserving the archive as a recognised historic collection – managing the storage of items, including considerations of environmental conditions, maintenance, security and risk management, in accordance with relevant best practice and standards, including BS EN 16893: 2018 and BS4791: 2017.
- To review policies, procedures and standards for the archive in line with best practice and relevant legislation, such as Data Protection, Copyright, and Designs and Patents Acts.
- To be responsible for the ongoing cataloguing of archive material to current archival standards, including particularly ISAD(G) using AtoM (Access to Memory) Collection Management System software.
- To assess the preservation needs of physical and digital archival items and, where required, arrange specialist conservation work.
- To further develop the digitisation programme for the collection, supported by the display of content online.

Public Engagement

- To work with the Director of Participation and other colleagues to develop an ambitious engagement strategy for the archive, utilising insights from the Gallery's recent research and consultation into this resource.
- To manage public access for all users of the archive – hosting and supporting in-person researchers, answering telephone and email enquiries, and invigilating the Foyle Reading Room.
- To work closely with colleagues in the Participation team to develop a broad range of ways in which public audiences can engage with archive materials, with a particular focus on creating local partnerships, archive-related programming, and engaging East London communities.

Public Engagement (continued)

- To work with colleagues across all departments to develop new ways in which the Foyle Reading Room can be used by artists, audiences and programme partners, ensuring the space is integrated within the public spaces of the Gallery.
- To work with colleagues across all departments to help develop and deliver plans for Whitechapel Gallery's 125th anniversary programme in 2026-27.
- To undertake relevant research into the history of materials within the archive to support programming, public engagement and researchers' enquiries.
- To represent and promote the archive through talks, tours, participation in relevant networks, and membership of appropriate professional bodies.
- To manage any loans of archive material that are requested internally or by other national and international institutions with relevant agreements. Occasionally, to act as a courier supervising the transport and installation of archive materials at other institutions and venues.
- To respond to external requests for image reproduction, issuing relevant copyright agreements and finalising payments.

Other

- To work with the Gallery's Development team to identify and develop applications for appropriate funding opportunities linked to the archive.
- To oversee the archive's budget.
- Any other duties as directed by the Director of Participation.

These are a guide to the contents of the job and the skills and experience required. Job content may change over time and are not part of the contract of employment.





Person Specification

Essential

- A post-graduate qualification in Archives and Records Management or equivalent from an Archives and Records Association (ARA) accredited course.
- Experience in management of mixed archive collections, with applied knowledge of packaging requirements, climatic considerations, emergency response procedures and handling.
- Experience in storing, cataloguing and exhibiting archival materials supported by awareness of relevant standards.
- Proficiency in using AtoM (Access to Memory) Collection Management System or an equivalent system.
- Good understanding of relevant legislation affecting archives.
- Excellent administrative and organisational abilities.
- Good communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Proven IT skills, including Microsoft Office and cataloguing databases.
- Ability to work both independently and collaboratively, working closely with colleagues across multiple departments.
- Commitment to advancing issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in the arts and culture sector.
- An enthusiasm for the Vision, Mission, Values of Whitechapel Gallery, and the ethos of the Participation team.
- Right to Work in the UK.

Desirable

- Experience working in an archive-related role in a gallery, museum or heritage organisation, with direct responsibility for records management.
- Knowledge of diverse communities in East London.
- An interest in modern and contemporary art.
- Experience developing archive-related programming engaging diverse audiences.

Conditions of Work

- Contract: Permanent
- Hours of work: Full-time (36.25 hours)
Monday to Friday, 9:30am – 5:45pm (with one hour unpaid lunch). Hybrid working available based on the requirements of the role.
- Salary: £33,000 gross per annum
- Probationary period: 6 months
- The period of notice is 3 months in writing on either side. During the probationary period this will be reduced to one week notice from both parties.
- Due to the nature of the job, some evening and weekend work will be required, as well as occasional travel. This will be compensated by time off in lieu.
- An enhanced DBS check is required for this post.

Benefits

Annual Leave

Staff are entitled to 25 days' paid holiday, plus statutory bank holidays. Annual leave entitlement is increased every 3 years by an additional day, capped at 5 days.

Pension Scheme

All staff are eligible to participate in the group personal pension scheme, with the Gallery contributing 5% of your gross annual salary.

Employee Assistance Programme

All staff have access to our Employee Assistance Programme, which includes a 24/7 compassionate helpline, expert advice and up to six free counselling sessions.

Training Opportunities and Travel Grant

We offer a range of training opportunities and learning programmes, including apprenticeships. To support your development and encourage exchange with peers, all permanent staff are eligible for a £200 annual travel grant (pro-rata).



Discounts

Staff receive discounts from the Gallery bookshop and from the café, both subject to availability. Staff receive discounts on editions (one per edition) and publications (subject to availability). Staff are entitled to a 75% discount on Gallery 2 hire (the hire fee element only) and 50% on all other spaces, both subject to availability.

Cycle to Work Scheme

For the benefit of both you and the environment, you can loan a bike through a Cycle to Work scheme.

Exhibitions

For each exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, staff are invited to a guided tour by a curator. Most major museums and galleries in London, and some beyond, grant free entry to exhibitions on presentation of your staff card.

Events

Staff can request one complimentary ticket for their own use for each public event at the Gallery, subject to availability.

Flexible Working Policy

Employees can discuss the Flexible Working Policy with the organisation following appointment.





How to apply

Please return the application form in PDF format to recruitment@whitechapelgallery.org

In the email's subject line, type your full name followed by the job title. We would be grateful if you would fill in and return the Diversity Monitoring form with your application. When the application is received, the Diversity Monitoring form is removed and does not form part of your application. The information from these forms helps us monitor our recruitment campaign's effectiveness.

Unfortunately, due to the volume of applicants for advertised positions, we cannot contact unsuccessful candidates or give feedback on application forms. If you are still waiting for a response from us by the advertised interview date, please assume that your application has been unsuccessful.

Access for people with disabilities

Please contact the Recruitment Team at 020 7539 3320 or via recruitment@whitechapelgallery.org if you cannot complete this form electronically or would like further access information. We accept video applications and audio applications. We are committed to offering an interview to disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria for the job. By 'minimum criteria' we mean that the individual must provide us with evidence in their application form, which demonstrates that they meet the qualifications, skills or experience defined as desirable in the Person Specification.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We want our workforce to represent all sections of the community and expect all our workers to firmly commit to working with the Gallery to create 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.

