

# **Curating Archives, Archiving Curating**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Fine Art**

**Goldsmiths, University of London**

**October 2009**

The work presented in the thesis is the candidate's own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. ...' with a long, sweeping tail.

30/10/2009

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the concept of archives and their role as a source for curatorial work practice. It starts with an examination of Jacques Derrida's concept of the archive in order to claim that every *reading* of the archive alters the archive. It examines the curating of archive material and compares it to a historiographical operation upon the archive itself. Moreover, it describes curating from the archive as a process concomitant with the three main constituents of Paul Ricoeur's historiography: 'The Documentary Phase', 'Explanation/Understanding' and 'The Historian's Representation', as developed in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004).

From the conceptualisation of this tripartite process the thesis proceeds by arguing that the curatorial practice on archives is an expansive gesture that opens their contents to numerous interpretations. The Whitechapel Gallery Archive is introduced as the case study here. More specifically, the thesis analyses archival material pertaining to Pablo Picasso and the painting *Guernica*, which was exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1939. The series of events to which this archive material refer, have been reactivated through artist Goshka Macuga's 2009 commission *The Nature of the Beast* at the Whitechapel.

The thesis proves that a curator working through archival material permanently alters the constitution of the archive, as well as the subsequent interpretations of its material. Moreover, it is argued that the curator's intervention in the archive should be re-deposited within it as a means for the archive's potential expansion. Through the sustained process of curating archives and the successive re-archivisation of curatorial practices, the thesis presents the case for a powerful, self-reflective instrument of analysis.

## Acknowledgements

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisors Professor Janis Jefferies and Dr. Andrew Renton, who have contributed their knowledge and supported me throughout my thesis. To IKY, State Scholarships Foundation for their financial support in the first three and a half years of the project.

I would like to thank Janeen Haythornthwaite, for trusting me with the Whitechapel Gallery Archive material and for encouraging my initial browsing; Katrina Schwarz, for the careful proofreading of my thesis; Ann Schlachter, for her comments and suggestions on the text and Rena Yiakoumaki, for her unconditional help in all aspects of this endeavour. Finally my heartfelt thanks go to my daughters Isabella and Eva and to my partner Nuno, for countless reasons.

For my parents, and my brother.

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## Introduction

In this thesis I have set out to provide an investigation of archives and the role they play in contemporary curating. I present archives as the main resource field for curators; a situation which provides the curator with a diverse field to work from. Some of the questions I pose are related to the ways a curator uses archival material as a primary resource, especially when this process raises unexpected questions rather than answers. How might a curator construct a coherent narrative from the disparate material contained within the archive?

The thesis is an examination of archives viewed initially from the standpoint of the researcher and subsequently from the standpoint of the curator. It sustains a theoretical unfolding of issues pertinent to archives intertwined with a unique personal account. Simultaneously, it is a record of the transition of an institutional archive attached to an international art gallery; following its curatorial potential from its early stages until its major redevelopment.

I look at how curating archives becomes, throughout this process, an historiographical operation and I examine the positive effect that such practices may have on the enhancement of both the physical and notional body of the archive. In order to do this successfully I initially provide an introduction to archives, which I examine in relation to notions of authorship, ownership and power. I consequently delve into the researcher's experience inside archives.

I take into account the descriptions of the historian Arlette Farge and the sociologists Mary Bosworth and Carolyn Steedman, before embarking upon a parallel personal investigation, firstly at the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room and subsequently at the Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

At the Whitechapel I devised the methodology of browsing, which I consider the most appropriate strategy to gain a general, non-hierarchical and unprejudiced understanding of the archive. Through browsing I discovered material relating to Picasso; to the exhibition of *Guernica* in London and also documents which revealed the existence of two unrealised Picasso exhibitions. The 1937 painting *Guernica* emerged as central to all documented events, and its political significance is explored herein. With the Whitechapel Gallery as my model case study, it became apparent to me that a curatorial project could provide the platform that this significant material required, in order to explore and unfold its full potential.

When I embarked upon my examination, neither the Whitechapel nor its archive had been redeveloped; the archive, therefore, was a raw and open field that I used with complete freedom to ground my understanding of researching in archives. I present Goshka Macuga's 2009 commission for the Whitechapel Gallery, *The Nature of the Beast*, as an ideal prototype for an art project that forges a connection between the curator and artist, and exposes the archive material without limiting its potential. Macuga's final installation is not only drawn from

the archive but opens the Picasso material to interpretation and critique.

Very often in the thesis I employ the first person as an appropriate and authentic voice to depict my unique experience as a curator entering the archive. It is not an easy voice to use but it is a strategic solution which overcomes the difficult problem of writing about fine art practice. The first-person narrative is an integral part of the thesis and, throughout a project as extensive as this, I consider it beneficial to maintain the connection between theory, the events that took place, and my own practice as a curator.

Below is an analytic description of the five chapters that comprise the thesis.

In Chapter One, *Introducing Archives*, I develop a definition of the archive. I introduce the archive in relation to power, authorship, interaction with the researcher and classification through an investigation of two archival models. The two archives I investigate, the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room (an institutional archive) and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive (an institutional archive in transition) are imperative: they are both London-based institutions with a visual arts agenda and an international profile. Both institutions acknowledge the necessity of making their archives accessible but, crucially, they employ completely different systems. I reflect on my personal engagement with the two archives and compare their key differences in order to define the experience of the researcher, as determined by their interaction with the archive. This study leads me to Chapter Two of the thesis, *The Whitechapel Experience*,

which specifically looks at my personal engagement with the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Over the course of this thesis, I worked in Whitechapel Gallery as an independent curator and researcher, and subsequently in the role Archive Curator, employed by the organisation.<sup>1</sup>

I propose that there is a parallel relationship between the flâneur's experience of the city and the researcher's experience of the archive. This association is clearer and is enhanced by the act of browsing in the archive, rather than the consultation of finding aids. I draw out the possibilities that this methodology opens up for a curator, and present common elements to connect the seemingly different acts of wandering and browsing. I also look at this experience as constituting an *archival sensation*, after Johan Huizinga's term *historical sensation*. The last part of this chapter is a consideration of the notion of *discovery* as an important component that formulates a researcher's fantasy and total experience in the archive.

Chapter Three, *The Picasso Material*, focuses on particular material found within the Whitechapel's archive. The material relates to Pablo Picasso and his painting *Guernica*, 1937, which was shown at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1939. The significance of this material is great. It is the nature of the archive to be incomplete – there are inevitably gaps and missing documents and often two

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<sup>1</sup> When I commenced my independent research in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, I could not have foreseen my future employment by the gallery, nor how, as Archive Curator, I would play an instrumental role in opening the archive to critique and interpretation (reinterpretation) through a programme of exhibitions.

related points cannot be directly connected. Frequently one has to use conjunctions to construct the narrative that will join the different elements together. I find that I have had to make these connections myself in order to breathe new life into the Picasso material, forging a platform to instigate questions, observe reactions and invite responses. As a curator engaging with this documentation I am able to assemble and present a story which reveals the political implications of actual events that we see unravel through archival material. This process highlights the significance of the archive.

With this approach in mind, this third chapter explores the link between *Guernica* and the Whitechapel Gallery. It seeks to examine the use of the painting as a political symbol; the painting's trajectory and the audience's reaction to it. This is not an art-historical analysis of the work, but a study of the conditions under which the painting was exhibited at the Whitechapel, and of the way it was used and interpreted in relation to the political situation of the time. In parallel, I examine subsequent attempts by Whitechapel Gallery directors Bryan Robertson and Nicholas Serota to organise a Picasso exhibition. Both Serota and Robertson had the same aspiration to again host *Guernica* at the Whitechapel, and thus to recreate one of the most important events in the gallery's exhibition history. I present the related archival documents and an inventory of transcripts and reproductions to provide the reader with 'objective' information and facts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The presentation of this material is 'objective' because the reader will access the documents almost in the same way that I first experienced them, through the initial act of browsing. In the

Subsequently, I analyse a selection of this material in light of their importance to my curatorial process.<sup>3</sup> Finally, I focus on how enlightening and instrumental the selected material might be for a future curatorial project, which can take into account the material's gaps and inconsistencies, transforming them from destructive to formative. In elaboration, I consider the capacity of the archive to create, sustain or challenge narratives.

In Chapter Four, *The Curatorial Intervention*, I look at archives in light of prospective curatorial projects. Initially I examine the evolving role of the curator, who has become, in the span of two decades, the principal interrogator of the social function of art. David Levi Strauss, for instance, refers in his 2006 essay 'The Bias of the World: Curating after Szeemann & Hopps' to the persistent questions that curators have been called upon to answer.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, I outline a particular curatorial action at the Whitechapel Gallery, which I examine with regard to site-specificity and with the declared intention that the outcome

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inventory of materials, I have only in a very few instances omitted extraneous text, and pertinent documents from the Directors' Files are scanned to approximate the look and feel of the original.<sup>3</sup> The criteria by which some items have been selected for further analysis and comment is related to the significance of this material in shedding light on the political instrumentalisation of *Guernica* during its trip to Europe in 1938–39, as well as parallel political activity taking place in London's East End. My further and related concern is the significance of the pre-war showing of *Guernica* in the Whitechapel's proud exhibition history, regardless of the painting's political content and deployment.

<sup>4</sup> 'Is art a force for change and renewal, or is it a commodity, for advantage or convenience? Is art a radical activity, undermining social conventions or is it a diverting entertainment for the wealthy? Are artists the antenna of human race, or are they spoiled children with delusions of grandeur (in Roman law a *curator* could also be appointed caretaker or guardian of a minor or lunatic)? Are art exhibitions "spiritual undertakings with the power to conjure alternative ways of organising society," or vehicles for cultural tourism and nationalistic propaganda?' See David Levi Strauss, 'The Bias of the World: Curating after Szeemann & Hopps', *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, ed. by Heather Kouris and Steven Rand (New York: Apex Art, 2007), pp. 15–25.

will encourage further exchange between archives and audiences. The paradigm to support my argument is the curator's potential to challenge the archive they work with. As evidence, I draw upon the material related to Picasso and *Guernica* mentioned above.

When a curator undertakes a profound intervention in the archive, attempting to connect what is seemingly disparate and thus reinterpreting and making permanent marks upon it, his or her action becomes historiographical. I view this process in parallel to Paul Ricoeur's concept of historiography and its three main constituents: 'The Documentary Phase', 'Explanation/Understanding' and 'The Historian's Representation' as described in *Memory, History, Forgetting*.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, I examine how the curator devises a particular curatorial methodology from exposure to the archival material. Starting from the fact that the archive lends itself to interpretation, a number of potential scenarios arise: Will the curator be able to produce a coherent story from the Picasso material? Will the curatorial intervention provide a solution to this multilayered account? Or, in the impossibility of a definitive solution, will a new fiction or interpretation arise?

Chapter Five shares its title with the thesis as a whole: *Curating Archives, Archiving Curating*. Here I consider Goshka Macuga's 2009 commission as a model for a curatorial project which emerges from the Whitechapel's archive and, by extension, as a prototype for the way curators can work with archives. I

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004)

specifically refer to this project for its effective use of the material related to Picasso.

I first examine the Whitechapel Project, the major expansion and redevelopment of the gallery, which took place between 2007 and 2009, and which had a tremendous impact on the archive's curatorial activity. This section provides a background to help the reader realise the particular circumstances that have recently affected the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, and I refer only to developments that are relevant to the subject of the thesis, namely the archive's organisation and infrastructure. I discuss the establishment of a new archive repository, the launch of a dedicated space for archival exhibitions (The Pat Matthews Gallery)<sup>6</sup> and the recruitment of a full-time archivist as essential changes to the archive's former condition.<sup>7</sup>

I analyse Ricoeur's 'historiographical process' and the 'third constituent', the phase of representation, which is the outcome of the curator's encounter with the archive that effectively becomes their contribution to the ongoing process of recording history.

Subsequently I discuss Macuga's year-long installation *The Nature of the Beast*, from the early stages of its conception to its realisation and ongoing

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<sup>6</sup> The Pat Matthews Gallery (also known as Gallery 4 on the floor plan) is dedicated to the exhibition of material from the Whitechapel Gallery Archive or to collaborations with other archives. The gallery name recognises the support of the family of Pat Matthews, chairman of Whitechapel Gallery in the 1970s.

<sup>7</sup> It is significant that this is the first time in the gallery's history that an archivist has been employed on a full-time basis.

development.<sup>8</sup> Macuga's project not only originates from the Picasso material I have selected, it also expands it to a level where a new narrative draws and links up its many complex elements. The whole project becomes a vehicle to transmit and explore the political significance of Picasso, considered at three separate and specific moments in the history of Whitechapel Gallery.

In confident expectation that *The Nature of the Beast*, upon completion, will be returned to the archive, I view it as an addendum that will permanently alter the flow of the archive and will create a lasting record of the event. Without Macuga's intervention, these parts of the archive might have been left to oblivion. The curatorial action generates a permanent incision; one that introduces a new narrative to the archive and preserves the modus operandi of the action. This is significant not only for the archive and its future readers, but also because it entails a mapping and documentation of curatorial practices.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Goshka Macuga's project was launched in April 2009 and will be completed in April 2010. The submission of this thesis will take place in October 2009, halfway into the commission's duration.

<sup>9</sup> This is particularly the case with the establishment of a dedicated space for exhibitions drawn from the Whitechapel Gallery Archive; all exhibitions will emerge from and return to the archive.

## **Chapter One: *Introducing Archives***

## What are archives?

Archives are the reservoirs of data and factual information, such as records, documents, photographs, manuscripts, contracts, plans, and other material, considered significant for preservation.<sup>10</sup> Archives undertake the task of preserving memory, and archivists are their keepers, who have to make decisions about what from the past should be saved from perishing, by (mostly) speculating about what will be important to preserve for the future. As the French philosopher Michel Foucault noted, archivists are active in the process of memorisation, transforming documents into monuments.<sup>11</sup> There are multifarious criteria for collecting the respective material and they vary in accordance to the politics of the body that collects and archives it.

Archives are places and sources of inherited knowledge, that is, they are sources of *information* and simultaneously places of *preservation*. These characteristics make them pedagogic by nature, and ascribe to them an element of authority and

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<sup>10</sup> Archivists distinguish between records and other documents: records typically are associated with formal transactions and may include, as examples, certificates, court statements or driving licences. Documents are created for personal rather than official use and may include letters, diaries, notes and memos. See Ian Hodder, 'The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture', ed. by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, *The Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage, 1998), pp. 393–402.

<sup>11</sup> The monument here takes the meaning of a totality, a generally acknowledged and evocative relic. Foucault considers that the traditional role of history – to memorise the monuments of the past and transform them into documents – has somehow now been reversed, and in our time history is what transforms documents into monuments. He explains his argument by stating that history has to deploy a number of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant and placed in relation to one another in order to form totalities. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 6–7.

power.<sup>12</sup> The concentration of information about the past in the single space of the archive manifests relations of power in a similar manner to the emergence of nation-states as centralised hegemonic forms of social control in the formation of modern societies. The conception of society as a totality, which, to some extent, constitutes modernity itself, is reflected in the (modern) idea of the total archive. In the nineteenth century, much thought was directed at the creation of a single source, a 'Single Archive' where all the information about the past would be concentrated. Many historians have attempted to turn this fantasy into reality, either through state-funded public projects or through individual efforts.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The archive's connection with power has been extensively analysed in Foucault's work. Foucault does not take the archive within its usual definition: as a static collection of texts and other records, but looks at it in terms of its construction – as a set of relations and institutions that enable statements to continue to exist (i.e. to become part of an archive). For Foucault the archive is not a set of statements but rather a set of associations: 'The general system of the formation and transformation of statements', making archives part of a system of social control. For extended reading, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

<sup>13</sup> 'History is made of documents'; this is the phrase that, in 1898, fired French historian Charles-Victor Langlois to write *Introduction aux études historiques*. Langlois expressed ideas about the Single Archive, an archive where all documents will be organised in a 'methodical and responsible manner'. He attempted to gather all the archives in France into this single archive, and made serious efforts to centralise government archives, as well as other local and private holdings. As expected, he was not successful in this endeavour. Langlois faced various problems, most importantly, the reluctance of the French government to open their archives to the public. Individual archive proprietors were also unwilling to break up their archives in support of Langlois' megalomaniacal idea. However, while Langlois floundered in France, Hubert Howe Bancroft achieved relative success in the United States of America. Starting as a collector of books, manuscripts and documents, he shortly embarked on a search for documents relevant to the history of the Pacific States. Self-financed and assisted by his daughter, wife and an 'entire army' of copyists and stenographers, Howe Bancroft collected, recorded, and even copied on location, a significant number, if not all, documents related to the 'past' of the Pacific States. In 1881 he housed his collection in a fireproof building in San Francisco. See Jo Tollebeek, 'The Archive: The Panoptic Utopia of the Historian', in *Eco in Fabula: Umberto Eco in the Humanities*, ed. by Franco Mussana, (Leuven and Firenze: Leuven University Press, 2002), pp. 339–355. Another, similar case was the utopian collection of autochromes (a nineteenth-century technique for the production of colour photographs) owned by Albert Kahn, a Jewish banker who lived in the Bois de Boulogne in Paris. Kahn believed that the key to happiness and to world peace resided in encounters with other cultures; an experience that would demonstrate all societies and people as

The interweaving of power and the archive has a long history. Archives and the deployment of archival methods, such as the collection and preservation of records and documents, were used by governments in nineteenth-century Europe and in the United States as a means to influence public perception of what was 'normal' and what was 'abnormal' behaviour and appearance. Photography played a pivotal role in the formation of such archives, depicting and defining the criminal, the poor and the insane as social outcasts.<sup>14</sup> Another similar application of the archive can be traced to the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time when the British Empire was looking to develop systems for the control and dissemination of information throughout the realm; a way of strengthening the unity of an empire in expansion by centralising the network of information: an 'Imperial Archive'.<sup>15</sup> This modern dream of a world unified by information and facts developed steadily in the imperialist era, as, over the years, the British created more and more archives to house information on areas where they diagnosed gaps in knowledge.

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deserving of dignity and respect. He travelled extensively, recording expressions of human existence and encouraging many other photographers to do the same. Kahn's collection of autochromes covers a multiplicity of subjects: plants, haircuts, costumes, urban scenes, animals, human gestures, architecture, political movements, archaeological sites and so on.

<sup>14</sup> For essays investigating photography as a tool of social control see *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1992); John Pultz, *Photography and the Body*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995); Allan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. by Richard Bolton, (Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> See Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993).

From all over the globe the British collected information about the countries they were adding to their map. They surveyed and they mapped. They took censuses, produced statistics. They made vast lists of birds. Then they shoved the data they had collected into a shifting series of classifications.<sup>16</sup>

This almost obsessive collection of information offers the gatherer a fictitious sense of knowledge. However, the gathering of information does not presuppose the acquisition of knowledge. The formation of archives, constructed by the continuous addition of material, can, likewise, be incorrectly taken as the mastering of information; the actual processing and absorption of the information in question is a procedure quite different to the mere collection of data. Foucault considers the accumulative nature of archives and examines them in relation to the passing of time, not in relation to their content. He writes of the archive as the repository of the 'indefinite accumulation of time' and considers archives, libraries and museums as examples of *heterotopias*.<sup>17</sup> Hetero-topias are literally 'other places', from the Greek *ετερο* (*etero*) meaning *other*, and *τοπος* (*topos*) meaning *place*. By naming them heterotopias, Foucault places these institutions somewhere 'in between' and, as with many contemporary places, they are neither absolutely public nor private; they form spaces in which we live,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27. The essay, first published in French as 'Des Espace Autres', in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* (1984), and was based on a lecture delivered by Foucault in March 1967.

as opposed to utopian spaces of dream and possibility.<sup>18</sup> According to Foucault, archives, museums and libraries, by coming under the category of heterotopias, are linked to and dependent upon the passing of time. They are *heterochronies*, and as such they develop and grow in a more independent time.<sup>19</sup> For example, the life of the museum or archive begins when another organisation or individual ceases to exist; as a result objects or documents have to find a home and be reinvented in a new capacity.

There are many different kinds of archives: historical archives, corporate archives, government archives, museum archives, amateur archives, various associations' and societies' archives, family archives, private collectors' archives, artists' archives, and so on. Some archives are *active* and constitute concurrent and unfinished records of an organisation's life, and others are put together when the proprietary body, either an individual or an organisation, has ceased activity. Whether institutional or individual, these non-active archives are the kinds of archive that mark *ends* and *deaths* and are put together as mausoleums of a particular past. For instance, the personal archives of politicians, scientists, actors, writers, poets and philosophers might be made public following the death

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<sup>18</sup> In 'Of Other Spaces' Foucault writes of heterotopias as places that combine qualities of utopia and the public sphere; a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of space. Heterotopias are governed by six principles: Form, Function, Juxtaposition, Time, Access, and Role.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces': 'From a general standpoint, in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronies are structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion. First of all there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums and libraries. Museum and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping up its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, even at the end of the century, museum and libraries were the expression of an individual choice'. p. 26.

of their producer. In this way what was once a private and possibly confidential archive becomes a public entity. The archive follows this passage from the private to the public by adopting specific institutional forms, while maintaining the characteristics of its private origin.<sup>20</sup>

In an attempt to draw a genealogy of the modern archive, Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown discuss the position of archives as a consequence of the emergence of capitalism and the division of the private and public sphere. In capitalist societies the centralisation of power by the nation-state follows the establishment of archives, museums and libraries as the places in which the concept of national identity is reified. In their essay 'The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness', they consider the archive as a crucial political instrument within capitalist societies.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This relationship between public and private is raised in the following quote from Harriet Bradley: 'The original relationship seems inverted: details of private lives are found in what have become public spaces. Yet, in some broader sense, the archive remains a home'. See Harriet Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found', *History of the Human Sciences*, 12. 2, (London: Sage Publications, 1999) 107-122.

<sup>21</sup> 'As capitalism and especially the factory system, removed production from the household, it also separated work from family and production from consumption. Commercial laws to facilitate trade and employment between strangers also helped create legal and legally more equal individuals. Protestantism also encouraged individualism by stressing each person's direct relation with God. Nation-states emerged by taking power from feudal lords and other enclaves of political autonomy, and concentrating it in a central administrative (and not merely *personal*) authority. This new political authority, the state, monopolised not only the making of laws that were to apply to everyone within its now inclusive territory, but also the violence ultimately to enforce such laws. Little by little, the lord of the manor, the king in his castle and the Lord God in Heaven, and the local familistic communities which they protected and exploited, gave way to state and market that governed the activities of economic, legal and psychological individuals. Where formerly almost all of life's activities were conducted in familistic ways by persons with group-oriented selves, now life has divided into public and private spheres. The public included

Ownership of a particular archive does not presuppose authorship of the archive. As with any other form of property, ownership of an archive is vindicated when it is bought and sold between a seller and a buyer – the owner to be. Johnson and Sawchuk, in analysing the particular barriers that archives present to users, raise the issue of copyright and the fact that using an archive does not necessarily grant the researcher permission to reproduce, or even to quote material contained in that specific archive.<sup>22</sup> Once the ownership of an archive has been determined it is firmly maintained in a more settled way than authorship. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the authorship of an archive is systematically challenged and re-invented. We can easily distinguish two layers of authorship: the first layer is the authorship of exact and specific documents contained within the archive, which are presumably the product of a named or anonymous ‘author’. In this case, we can have as many authors as there are individual items – a band of properties belonging to different proprietors and, consequently, their

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the more impersonal, rationalised state and market; the private included the family, which was now much reduced in size and function. Moreover, as identifications with clan and locale weakened, there emerged a more national identity, made up of individuals, to be sure, but individuals who defined themselves increasingly in terms of broadened, national community, however amorphous, abstract and oxymoronic that concept may be. These changes helped give rise to modern archives, libraries and museums as places not of sacred tribal memory, but of secular national memory. Family and clan histories became overshadowed by History. As depositories of national history and memory, modern archives, libraries and museums serve several macro-social functions. First they help to preserve a collective national memory and thence to constitute a collective national identity, thereby contributing to the *conscience collective*, the collective sense of moral solidarity that Emile Durkheim recognised as vital to the smooth functioning of modern societies’. See Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, ‘The Making of Memory: the Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of the National Consciousness’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 11.4 (1998), 17–32

<sup>22</sup> Stacey Johnson and Kim Sawchuk, ‘Editorial/Introduction’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 26.2 (2001) 185–190.

intellectual rights are *piled up in storage*.<sup>23</sup> The second layer is understood as the authorship of the overall archive. This layer refers to a temporal and permeable authorship, marked by an ongoing process of diachronic and synchronic succession, imposed by institutions, archivists, directors and collectors. When someone accesses an archive, he or she enters into a process of *exchange*.

Interpretation is coloured by our current values and knowledge, hence if a researcher could travel diachronically in time, he or she would interpret the same archive in a different way, as current values in one society would be devalued in another, and so forth.

Through this complex process of interaction with the material, one rotationally receives information and deposits thoughts and interpretations back into the archive. The archive is permeable to its users. It is lending itself to the researcher, thus 'offering' a share of authorship through inviting interpretation. For the French historian Arlette Farge, the archive is a participatory field; an open field of activity.<sup>24</sup> In the archive Farge describes, the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal in Paris, one can construct, reconstruct and negotiate the archive's *ebb and flow*, as

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<sup>23</sup> The sociologist Harriet Bradley discusses the problem of the authorship of individual documents in regards to her personal archive. The archive consists of interviews she held with 198 people working for five organisations in Tyne and Wear in North East England. These interviews took place with the sole purpose of personal research. She writes: 'Are these utterances the property of the researcher (who is likely to view them as the embodiment of her own labour, her own capital); or of the funding body; or of those who gave up time to be interviewed? Here power relations enter into the archive more nakedly. Inevitably, as products of the researcher's labour, the utterances of the "subjects" of research become objectified. In consequence the researcher may become possessive about her archive, wary of possible abuse by others who may be well intentioned. Who, indeed, owns the archive?' See Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found'.

<sup>24</sup> Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* (Paris: Seuil 1989).

she did herself during her research there. In *Le goût de l'archive*, Farge explains how the past is reconstructed from 'discontinuous scraps of information' – the archive – and that from this heap of documents and other records the researcher 'invents' or reconstructs the past. The reading of the archive is, to a certain extent, the 'making' of the archive.<sup>25</sup>

Usually, if not always, interaction with archives is strictly regulated. Firstly, one needs permission in order to enter the archive, and secondly, there are specific controls in place, governing access and the reproduction of material. This culminates in the continuous surveillance, mechanical or human, of the researcher's activity inside the archive reading room.<sup>26</sup> As in any other place of public interest each initiate is subject to certain *rites* of passage.<sup>27</sup> The demand for access to the archive shapes the archive, not only as an intellectual space where masses of information are concentrated, but as a concrete space where documents are stored and researchers request to visit. In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida emphasises the fact that archives are both repositories of knowledge as

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<sup>25</sup> On the 'notional reconstruction' of archives see also Mary Bosworth, 'The Past as a Foreign Country? Some Methodological Implications of Doing Historical Criminology', *British Journal of Criminology*, 41 (2001), 431–442 (p. 435).

<sup>26</sup> Archive material is usually consulted in designated areas, often purpose-built reading rooms. Direct access to the repositories is in most cases strictly prohibited. These concealed areas are often accessible to archivists and reading room staff only.

<sup>27</sup> See Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces': 'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or prison, or otherwise the individual has to submit to rites and purifications.'

well as physical spaces.<sup>28</sup> The dual nature of the archive as a conceptual and a physical entity grants it its singular status. In contrast to the generosity of the archive, in admitting researchers and encouraging further interpretation of its material, its physical body imposes a set of controls upon the researcher. In many instances these controls are enforced by the building itself and are comparable to the barriers one encounters when accessing any highly-controlled space.<sup>29</sup> Some of the ways of controlling researchers is through registered membership cards, closed-circuit television in the reading rooms and through the use of passwords, especially for accessing online catalogues.<sup>30</sup> The conditions of accessibility, usability and interactivity vary in every archive, and it is important to emphasise that the degree of control determines the level of disclosure. It directly affects if the archival material will ever be seen, read and used by the public, or if, as a result of tight access, it will be locked away and made exclusively available only to a small and specific audience.

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<sup>28</sup> In *Archive Fever*, Derrida gives an etymological account of the term 'archive' and continues by analysing the archive's primary functions: its nomological (the document of law) and topological (the place of law) operations. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown see the archive as empowered by its edifice, which in some cases seems more impressive than its contents. They depict archives as 'large and impressive buildings, usually with a broad staircase ... which open to an impressive atrium ... You notice epigraphs carved in stone, often inlaid with gold leaf, or written in a classical language ... Whether classical or modern in shape, the building obviously is more than its material substance. It is also a monument. Beyond its functional purpose it reminds you that you are entering a sanctum, a domain of being that is larger than yours.' Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown, 'The Making of Memory', p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> The same control mechanisms apply to virtual archives and other databases, where a username and password allows you to log on.

Archives differ from collections, mainly because a collection has to establish some form of order for its contents, with material collected according to a specific acquisitions policy. The methods used for the organisation of an archive predetermine the ways in which research will be conducted and information accessed. Ideally, archives would be user-friendly and the information would be easily accessible. The initial expectation of a researcher when visiting an archive – that all the information he or she needs will be called up from the repository and arrive at the reading room – is totally challenged by the very processes of research. Archive material is frequently inconsistent, the accession numbers have gaps and missing items, or incomplete records hold up the flow of research. In spite of their internal structure Farge describes archives as places which contain ‘discontinuous scraps of information’. Mary Bosworth has written about her experience of investigating in the Salpêtrière Hospital archives in Paris as part of her study on early modern women’s imprisonment. She writes about the discouragement felt as a consequence of all the intermediate stages that are unavoidable when using archives.<sup>31</sup>

Classification categories and accession numbers determine the methods followed by a researcher to find an item; they influence the shape and, in some

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<sup>31</sup> ‘As a result, after the initial optimism dwindles, the researcher of early modern punishment may find the combined effect of trails running cold, illegible documents, restricted opening hours, cool and even resistant librarians and archivists, incomplete inconsistent catalogues, and the task of sifting the infrequent, useful documents from the mass, discouraging. The researcher may, in other words, wonder why he/she decided to abandon the present, and look to the past: prison visiting and ethnographic research seemed easy by comparison.’ See Bosworth, ‘The Past as Foreign Country?’

cases, the outcome of the research.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to see how systems of classification also affect the physical activity of users in libraries or archives, as they indicate specific routes that one has to follow in order to pursue their investigation. The researcher might be surprised at some point by the fact that they are familiar with and have used only a limited and very specific area in an archive reading room or a library, whilst other nearby areas remain completely unknown and unexplored. Research in archives is carried out by negotiation and through recourse to established categories, accession numbers, and demarcations. What would otherwise have been a pile of documents in an archive becomes material organised into categories that ultimately inform the way researchers access the archive. Accession numbers are a highly condensed form of description; archivists are trained to produce and use classificatory systems and as such are able to classify the contents of an archive without necessarily having specialised knowledge of the subject matter in question.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, researchers need to know their subject, 'what they are looking for' and as a consequence, 'under which category this can be found'. The most

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<sup>32</sup> In some instances, classification directly influences access – as with the Vatican's collection of sexually explicit art, which is considered to be the one of the world's finest. As this collection is included under the category 'Pornography', it remains inaccessible to the public; the category itself is antithetical to the dogma of the Catholic Church and is seen as in direct conflict with the interests of the Vatican. If the pornographic collection would become accessible it would legitimise such a prohibition under the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. See Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown, 'The Making of Memory', p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> This process of classifying and arranging information resembles the brain's memory function; but while many of the brain's processes – and semantic memory in particular – remain obscure, archival classification is a rational and objective organisation that can be clearly outlined. On the relationship between neuroscience and archival processes see Paul W. Glimcher, *Decisions, Uncertainty, and the Brain – The science of Neuroeconomics* (New York City: MIT Press, 2003).

common classification methods used in archives are taxonomic — separating items into groups of similar objects — and/or chronological — separating items in terms of a time hierarchy. These two general divisions include a number of subcategories, which in turn include other subcategories (levels) and so on. The ideal level of description in an archive is to reach the point where every single item is identified, catalogued, and given a unique reference number. This is a meticulous and laborious process known as item-level description. A taxonomic method usually functions hierarchically; for instance by accessing the upper category on the list, the one below is automatically included. Aristotle writes about taxonomy in *Metaphysics*, evoking 'The Great Chain of Being' or 'The Ladder of Creation'. Aristotle was looking for a system that could potentially be applied to group all beings. Initially he grouped animals on the basis of visual similarities and then distinguished the groups according to key differences.<sup>34</sup> He also established a system of categories in relation to the main elements of nature, ascribing to each category some degree of affinity with earth, water, fire and air. In general, taxonomic categories were initially set up in an attempt to order living organisms. These systems of classification were mostly based on the evaluation and division of characters according to morphological, physiological, behavioural, embryological or molecular affinities. In a modern world, where

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<sup>34</sup> Taxonomy is the study of rules by which *taxa* are ordered. Taxa (plural of taxon) are groups or categories of organisms. Etymologically the term taxonomy derives from the Greek words τάξις taxis (order, arrangement) and νομια nomia (distribution). Aristotle, 'Categories', *Metaphysics*, trans by Joe Sachs, (New Mexico: Green Lion Press, 1999).

information is available in overwhelmingly vast quantities and the use of data penetrates all aspects of life, this ancient system seems inadequate to order knowledge. In fact it was initially due to the invention of the microscope, as well as European maritime explorations in Africa, America and Asia, that the very old system of taxonomies was rendered insufficient to organise our expanding knowledge of living species.<sup>35</sup> The general increase of information across all areas of human knowledge together called for new and different systems of classification. Classificatory systems were continually questioned, as they had to be adequate to organise scientific documents and records according to scientific criteria. The system for recording and naming organisms, for instance was tremendously challenged by Darwin's theory of evolution. Selective evolution brought the need for new taxonomic paradigms for zoology and biology.<sup>36</sup> Methods of classification reflect the way we think about and rationalise the living world and, in turn, are shaped by dominant political and ideological structures. Just as classification systems developed from the need to organise living things, it is interesting to consider how archives themselves have an organic structure.<sup>37</sup> Every researcher that encounters the archive seeks to make sense of it. The researcher understands the archive as an organic entity, one where items belong to an organised whole. This sense of organic unity is a necessary condition in

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<sup>35</sup> Martin Gutnik, *The Science of Classification: Finding Order Among Living and Nonliving Objects: A First Book* (New York: F. Watts, 1980), p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> This organic structure is manifest in the way that classificatory categories are interlinked with one another; for instance, major categories contain subcategories and so on.

order to maintain the connecting thread between the researcher and the parts of the whole to be researched. It is the conception of the archive as a whole that enables relatively fluid browsing, and the building of connections and associations to link findings. This experience, which is unique to a researcher in an archive, will be analysed in the second chapter of the thesis, as I look specifically at the archive from the researcher's standpoint and examine how this translates into curatorial practice.

I have explored two different types of archive: the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room, a highly institutionalised archive of prints and drawings; and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, which, when I first encountered it, was still a pre-archive. Basic classification of the Whitechapel's materials had been established but was not applied overall; and the physical location of the repository, moreover, was a temporary storeroom that also housed the gallery's electrical and telecommunication systems.

Researching in institutional archives changed the nature of my encounter with archives. As a researcher, I became a frequent and systematic user of the aforementioned resources. From the complete freedom of browsing in my 'own and found' archives, acquired after trivial financial exchanges in flea markets, I embarked on my research in the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room and in

the Whitechapel Gallery Archive to investigate how archives functioned in the context of the visual art institution.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I have in the past systematically bought small photographic archives from flea markets. These archives were used either as reference material or as material for artworks. See Nayia Yiakoumaki, 'Browsing-Flâneuring-Creating a Hypothesis', *Slash seconds*, ed. by Derek Horton, Peter Lewis and Graham Hibbert, <<http://www.slashseconds.org/issues/002/004/articles/nyiakoumaki/index.php>>, [accessed 30 September 2009]

## **Two types of archives:**

### **Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room**

The Print Room at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington is located on level four of the museum and houses more than a million objects, including a significant part of the National Collection of the Art of Photography. The remainder of the collection is kept in the museum's archives and depot in West London.

I visited the Print Room in 2001, before the recent renovation that transformed its reading rooms, furniture and finding aids. My memories of the room are very vivid, and so are the feelings I had during this first visit. What has inscribed these visits so well in my memory is the repetitive procedure one had to perform each time one accessed the archive. With almost mechanical repetition, the same set of procedures was enacted.

What follows is a recollection of my first visit to the Print Room, which was also my first encounter with an institutional archive.

As I opened the door to the Print Room I was very aware of the sound made by my rushing footsteps on the museum's concrete stairs, for this room, in contrast, was marked by an imposing silence; the atmosphere was one of tacit discipline. Nobody was speaking in this room, or at least nobody could be heard. Then I noticed the room's layout: it was large and square with big wooden tables and

chairs arranged on the left-hand side. There were numerous bookcases and plan chests made of dark wood, and the shelves were crowded with folders, containing detailed lists of all the items in this archive. Because the room was quite open and the furniture tightly arranged, I was able to swiftly scan the space.<sup>39</sup> However, the feeling of hidden, immanent discipline was imposed by the strict procedure one had to follow in order to access the Print Room in the first place.

The entry and welcome procedures were similar each visit: a member of staff, in fact it was always the same member of staff, was seated by the door; he greeted me in a polite but low voice and asked the reason for my visit, prompting me to leave my bag and coat in a demarcated area on his left. He then asked me to wash my hands in the washrooms by the corridor. Already I found myself following instructions, but surprisingly I did not feel the unpleasant sensation of imposed obedience. The rules were immanent, as it were, to the place itself. I did as instructed and returned to the room with clean hands. The staff member gave me a pencil and a piece of paper and pointed to the bookcase where the catalogues were kept. Still in a low whisper, he told me that if I could not find

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<sup>39</sup> Between the years that have passed from my first to the most recent visit, many changes had taken place. When I recently visited the Print Room in May 2009, it had been totally renovated and had an entirely different look. All the furniture had changed. There were no bookcases in the room only large reading tables and few computer monitors. The reader's bags and coats had to be left in the main museum cloakroom. The guard was seated in the same place but now he does not prompt users wash their hands.

what I wanted, the archivists, who were sitting behind a high desk to his right, would be available for any further enquiry.

I was conscious of the fact that I had visited the archive without a specific request – I was there for the experience, but felt I could not tell this to the staff – and what I wanted was to browse through their catalogues and to make notes on how the museum organised and classified their archive material. In other words, all I wanted was to perform a harmless form of espionage.

I started with the photographic collection. The folders that contained the classification documents, lists of subject headings and accession numbers, were not recent. I could ascertain this from the oxidised paper that had turned yellow, and from the typescript. This gave me an initial idea of how the Victoria and Albert organised their material and what categories and classificatory systems they had implemented. Questions emerged already. I soon understood that, in this archive, different systems of classification co-functioned. In the folders that specifically referred to the photographic collection, one could see that they had introduced many different ways of organising material, employing both taxonomic and chronological categories.

The first folder I selected contained photographs that were organised by the photographer's name in *alphabetical* order. The second folder had photographs that were organised according to location in a *topographical* index. The third was divided by subject and was labelled 'Portraits'; the fourth was *chronological* and

was labelled 'Acquisitions after 1988'. The fifth folder was labelled 'Clementina Lady Hawarden' and, as indicated, was solely devoted to the work of the nineteenth-century photographer. Finally, the sixth folder was categorised with the imprecise label 'Anonymous', raising evident questions as to why all the landscapes, portraits and other subjects that this folder contained, were not entered in the respective topographic and portrait indexes instead; and if indeed the topographic and portrait folders contained photographs by known photographers, then why weren't these placed in the respective alphabetical index?

This was my first experience of an archive and I was confronted by complex and in some ways archaic classification systems. As a researcher I was very keen to access it. Nevertheless, I was surrounded by systems of organised data, which instead of offering me a comprehensible navigational aid alienated me and prompted me to realise the vastness and complexity of the project. I was writing down question after question, and I looked forward to talking to the archivists in the hope that they were holding the answers to all my questions, and to the past and present state of this archive. I reached the archivists' desk and asked for a complete catalogue, one that would list all the acquisitions of the archive, hoping that I was going to come across a unified system of classification that would give me a precise idea of the archive contents. The archivists responded to my enquiry but, to my disappointment, they informed me that a comprehensive catalogue

had not yet been created; the only information currently available was the system I had already accessed and which was contained within the overlapping and incomplete series of folders. Such was my introduction to the painstaking and meticulous process of finding and requesting an item within a vast archive, where even the reading of the catalogues was not a straightforward process. In Jo Tollebeek's critique of the nineteenth-century archives of Langlois (France) and Bancroft (United States), there is a detailed account of the idea of a 'Single Archive', which is relevant to my experience in the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room and to my desire for an absolute archive. To describe the 'fantasy of the historian' Tollebeek evokes the idea of the 'single' source of information.<sup>40</sup> The researcher anticipates that he or she will successfully bypass the complications of browsing through vast quantities of material; they hope the archive will appear transparent and unambiguous, and will generously provide satisfactory answers to the questions raised. According to my experience, the impression I formed was that the infiltration of a researcher within the dense structure of the archive, generates more questions than answers. The archive becomes enigmatic and the notion that archives are spaces of structure, control and order becomes an oxymoron since the encounter more often resembles

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<sup>40</sup> 'The fantasy of the historian began to take shape: a Single Archive which would put an end to the free and chaotic circulation of documents. Whether these documents come from government or public individuals, whether they relate to the distant or the recent past, whether they concern political history or the development of the arts is irrelevant, provided at least they can be centralised in one location, where the historian can number, order and classify list and catalogue them and finally store them in cabinets and drawers from which they can be retrieved whenever required by the reconstitution of the past, which has at last become transparent'. See Tollebeek, 'The Archive: The Panoptic Utopia of the Historian', p. 343.

losing direction in a maze. When a researcher finds themselves entangled in the web of classifications, categories and keywords, archivists and researchers become accomplices in experiencing the traps of the archives, their *secret passages* and *hidden rooms*. There is a myth that surrounds the archivist; that he or she has complete knowledge of the archive. In fact this is very rare and only possible if the archive is very small, and this is not often the case with institutional archives. Each archivist has to account for the archive in its current state, as he or she has found it; it is not possible to permeate the thoughts and acts of the previous processes of archiving. The process of archiving and the process of using an archive become complementary; both seek a sense of the wholeness of the archive. It is through the process of *knowing* the archive that a series of deceptions take place. This archival deceit passes on to the archivist and, consequently, from the archivist to the researcher.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of the seemingly convoluted beginning of my search in the Print Room, I was keen to access a representative item from the collection. I selected the folder in which contents were listed alphabetically, and followed the request procedure, which was set very precisely. I filled in a request slip, the small piece of paper I was handed at the entrance, in the beginning, and wrote in pencil the item I wanted to view. This paper was handed to the members of staff at the archivists'

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<sup>41</sup> The archive, by its nature, gives the impression of completeness. The archivist in turn views the archive as an entity that he or she has to master and gain knowledge of. Consequently, the researcher views the archivist as the erudite custodian of the archive, with the potential to answer all possible questions that will shed light upon their research.

desk. Another member of staff showed me to one of the solid wooden tables where I had to sit and await the delivery of my order. While waiting I had time to observe people who were themselves observing others, and waiting for their own items to be called up. A few people were already handling items from the archive and others were engaged in studying. I also noticed that the members of staff were themselves involved in a similar activity; they spend time observing other people (invigilating). Waiting for a requested item is a period of time suspended from action; one cannot do anything but sit in anticipation.

The staff's vigilance ensures that all procedures are followed correctly and that all archived items are handled with care and according to archival preservation guidelines: only pencils are used for note-taking and all inappropriate tools or materials, which might cause damage to the sensitive photographic papers, are swiftly confiscated.

The Print Room was regulated by a set of rules and was staffed by people specifically trained to protect the material and ensure that these regulations were followed. My motive for visiting the Victoria and Albert was to observe the operating system of the Print Room. Whilst waiting I wondered about the background of the other readers. What was the occupation of the people attending the archive? Were some visiting as a leisure activity, simply wishing to spend the day in the Print Room? Did some take pleasure by going to archives, in the same way that Farge did? Were some of these people students who were

writing essays and seeking resources? Perhaps some were academics, lecturers and professors, maybe historians? Was a groundbreaking paper being written at that very moment? Was someone in the room nervously preparing for a conference? Or was another here only to gaze upon their favourite photographs? My requested item arrived inside an acid-free grey preservation box, wrapped with acid-free tissue paper. It was placed on the table before me. I wore my white cotton handling gloves and started upon my research. At this moment, as I was unfolding the tissue paper, I knew that I too was part of this varied group of users; perhaps, someone was observing me while waiting for their item to arrive. The archive opens and closes according to the demand for its contents. When people request material it opens to the public; it is literally activated by its readers, the researchers. Each reading of the archive, by every single researcher, is potentially *making* the archive, and the more the archive is researched and interpreted, the more it expands, and is able to offer material that was formerly unavailable or was simply forgotten, and in this way, it generates further interpretations.

Researching in an archive is a process of discovery. Farge writes about the *poudre* found on documents which are kept in archives; these documents have probably never been consulted before, the thick layer of dust indicating the absence of any recent physical encounter.<sup>42</sup> The dust signifies processes of disclosure and

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<sup>42</sup> Key moments in the archive 'intoxicate' the researcher with a euphoric sense of discovery, but this is illusory. Whenever we turn up an archived item we are aware that someone else has

enclosure in the archive; the importance of oblivion in the mental process of memory. The disclosure reflects the discovery of the researcher, who comes across the material for the first time; at the same time the dusty material is itself reminiscent of the fact that it has once been concealed, and its sudden 'discovery' essentially signals its prolonged concealment.

The archives' temporality is that of remembrance and forgetfulness. The very act of archiving plays into the dialectics of 'forgetting to remember'. As I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the archivist makes decisions that significantly affect the 'life' of archival records. Documents and records are stored in archives for preservation so that they remain untouched by time. This gesture implies that the material has been subject to specific evaluation procedures and a decision was made for this item to be preserved. This material is possibly restored or in need of conservation but, in any case, it has been saved from oblivion. However, by storing records and documents in archives we may be removing them from another field where they could be widely seen, touched, and used. They are withdrawn from everyday temporality and placed within the solemnity of a restricted and regulated area: the archive. This expulsion could also contribute to their slow fading until they become completely forgotten. Archives, being relatively public spaces, presuppose that what is kept in them is, in principle, accessible to the public. Nevertheless, we cannot predict if or when some

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collected and classified this material before us. Perhaps some archivist in the past was the first to 'discover' this material. What can be accessed in the archive is what is stored in it, that is, what has been selected for preservation – and hence has already been 'discovered'.

material will become 'publicly accessible'; unlike documents and records which are kept under statutory closure, with obligatory disclosure after a set period.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, once inside the archive, the hibernation of some material is inevitable and indefinite. Sometimes the disclosure of archival contents depends upon an accidental encounter. The noteworthy opening of the archive happens at the particular moment a researcher comes across *dormant* material. The disclosure starts and finishes at that precise moment, regardless of the nature of the encounter (perhaps it is an accidental encounter, the result of browsing, or even an in-depth consultation with the material).

I end this section with a quote – Carolyn Steedman's meditative thoughts on archives and on reconstructing the past, echo my own contemplative experience in the Victoria and Albert Museum:

But in actual Archives, though the bundles may be mountainous, there isn't in fact, very much there. The Archive is not potentially made up of *everything*, as is human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is the unconscious. The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad

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<sup>43</sup> Certain documents are considered harmful to the public, or are enclosed to protect the interest of an individual, a group of people or an organisation. These documents are kept secure by the British government for a period of thirty years, after which time they are released. The thirty-year span is in line with international agreements. See *The Government's Proposals for a Freedom of Information Act* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1987) online at <[www.hms.o.gov.uk](http://www.hms.o.gov.uk)>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there ... And *nothing happens to this stuff, in the Archive*. It is indexed, and catalogued, and some of it is not indexed and catalogued, and some of it is lost. But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used and narrativised ... And: The Archive is also a place of dreams.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) pp. 66–88.

## Whitechapel Gallery Archive

When I started researching this thesis, I visited the Whitechapel Gallery Archive and discovered a dark and grim room within the Charles Harrison Townsend building that has housed the gallery since 1901.<sup>45</sup> A poorly-lit and narrow staircase swirled all the way to the gallery's front basement, where the air conditioning and heating systems for the whole building were installed. At the bottom of this staircase, there were two doors, one to the left and one to the right. The door to the right was the room where the archive was stored. It was open to one researcher per week (on Wednesdays). Members of the public who wanted to access the archive did not have to follow procedures similar to the ones I described from my visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Here the procedure was decidedly less complicated. Researchers would call or email the volunteer archivist, Janeen Haythornthwaite, to arrange a suitable date. Upon arrival they would meet Haythornthwaite in the gallery's main foyer; proceeding upstairs to the staff offices, they would be seated in the archivist's office, within the Exhibitions department on the second floor of the building. There, amongst members of the curatorial staff, researchers were able to handle and consult the gallery's archival material.

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Harrison Townsend (1851-1928), an English architect of the Arts & Crafts movement, designed the Whitechapel Gallery, and also Bishopsgate Institute and the Horniman Museum in London.

The archive's contents represent approximately 110 years of the gallery's history. Its archival representation is beset by gaps and irregularities, as is usually the case with archives that cover long periods of activity. Apart from the archivist and a few members of staff, not many people accessed the archive. The storeroom was not designed as either a proper repository or a working area, there was barely a flat, clear surface to place books or write and the room's sole computer was used to control the gallery's telecommunications server. Hundreds of unintelligible symbols were displayed on the computer screen, and it was not accessible to researchers or the archivist for word processing or other cataloguing functions.

I was granted permission to enter the archive on my own by Haythornthwaite, who had previously agreed to my proposed research.<sup>46</sup> At the information desk I asked for the keys of the repository and, on receipt of them, I waked down the stairs to the archive.<sup>47</sup> I unlocked the door and with my arm hovering for a few seconds I searched for the light switch. It was not easy to find; a plan chest had been positioned in front of it. I took a couple of hesitant steps into the dark room and stood for a few seconds looking around.

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<sup>46</sup> An archivist handed me the keys to her repository and encouraged me to work inside the archive at my own will. I was aware that this was a rare occurrence, which I would possibly not have the opportunity to experience again.

<sup>47</sup> This staircase has now been demolished. The area which previously housed the archive repository is now part of the gallery's storage and lavatory space.



Figure 1 and 2: The staircase and corridor leading to the Whitechapel's archive storeroom. The storeroom is visible beyond the open door, 2004. Photograph Nayia Yiakoumaki.

I was inside an archive. It was a small room, approximately 20 square metres, its layout determined by the seemingly random positioning of its furniture. There were various kinds of shelving units and these were placed very close to one another, leaving very little room for a person to move between them. These shelves were the main item of furniture in this repository, together with a wooden stool, a folding chair, a wooden plan chest and three old metal filing cabinets.

A proportion of the archival contents was stored inside brown cardboard boxes (known as Ryder boxes), while the rest of the collection was stored within standard office folders and in plain boxes, with or without lids. The three filing cabinets were used to store the archive's photographic collection. Many boxes were placed on shelves or were scattered on the floor. The ones without lids

would reveal the type of contents they carried at a glance. I wandered the room, slowly opening drawers and cabinets, browsing through boxes, pulling items off shelves and later placing them back. I was mainly seduced by the appearance of things, rather than by content, and I found myself moving aimlessly from one corner of the archive to the next, triggered by the coloured cover of a worn press book or by a carton overflowing with VHS tapes. In some areas the ceiling was extremely low, on account of ventilation pipes which circulated only a few centimetres above my head. To negotiate these cramped spaces one had to bend over to access the next section of the room, which was also particularly low and narrow.

As is common in archives, the predominant mood was one of stillness.<sup>48</sup> The archive storeroom was a few metres below Whitechapel High Street, and gave me the impression of a vacuum, separated physically, as well as functionally, from the rest of the building; it was detached from the activities that took place in the gallery as well as from the busy street.

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<sup>48</sup> I use the word 'stillness' to evoke the sense of non-activity; the suspension of time experienced in the quietness of environments such as archives and libraries. Although the Print Room was entirely different in both scale and scope from the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, the sense of stillness was evident in both places.



Figure 3: The repository where the Whitechapel Gallery Archive was stored until 2005. Photographs Nayia Yiakoumaki.

I sat on the folding chair, in front of the computer with the incomprehensible monitor display. The humming sound of the building's air conditioning equipment was the main audible backdrop and every now and then a District, or Hammersmith and City, line train passed by. The trains would stop at Aldgate East underground station, only a few metres from the archive; the station entrance positioned between the gallery and the adjoining Whitechapel Public Library. The thick walls of the gallery and the library filtered and diffused the sound of the passing trains, and what one heard is the characteristic sound of an approaching train, but reduced to a low hum. From time to time, the monotony of this particular ambience was interrupted by the footfall of pedestrians on the pavement above. After a few visits, and a short tour by the archivist, I was in a position to know the main divisions of the archive relatively well. I was, however, still unaware of the contents of the boxes and the folders. What did they enclose? Would I ever find out the totality of what they contained? What documents were confidential, if any, and why?

To be able to know all the contents of an archive –any archive – is extremely rare. Sometimes this is impossible due to the insurmountable size of the archive itself, but even in small archives it is difficult to acquire the level of familiarity or totality that will allow one to master the whole volume of material.<sup>49</sup>

The Whitechapel Gallery Archive had been maintained all these years without a records management policy; members of staff and external associates depositing material and records produced by the organisation. When, for instance, the gallery director came to the end of their term, it was their decision whether or not to donate their administrative records to the archive. Correspondence and minutes from meetings usually found their way to the archive, together with other records which reflected the activities of various directors. The lack of a strict acquisitions policy weakened the collection, as we are not sure that all departments are equally represented.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The main character in Stephen Poliakoff's 1999 film *Shooting the Past* is one of five archivists, working in a large photographic archive. This archivist, played by Timothy Spall, claims to recall every one of the archive's 30,000 documents, and it is further implied that he achieved this feat without recourse to finding aids, such as a catalogue. This obvious exaggeration is in line with the fantasy I refer to, and with the sense of totality in the archive. *Shooting the Past*. Stephen Poliakoff, Talkback productions, BBC, 1999 195 mins.

Similarly, in 'The System of Collecting', Jean Baudrillard refers to the collector's analogous fantasy. Baudrillard's collector desires to collect all items within a specific category, and will not settle until they have acquired the last remaining sample on earth. See Jean Baudrillard, 'The System of Collecting', *Cultures of Collecting*, ed. by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion, 1994) pp. 7–24.

<sup>50</sup> The archive does not exactly mirror what has taken place in Whitechapel Gallery, and, due to the way it has been put together, the material it contains is diverse and varied. If we were to investigate what the institution considers *its own history*, we would come across not one, but *two* histories. One, deriving from the Whitechapel's status as an important international art institution, reflected in such famous exhibitions as 'This is Tomorrow' (1956), 'The New Generation' (1964, 1965, 1968) and early exhibitions dedicated to Jackson Pollock (1958) and Mark Rothko (1961). The other history derives from its archive, in which researcher can find a wealth

Haythornthwaite had decided to maintain the archive mainly as an exhibition's archive.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the archivist was a volunteer who worked only one day per week did not permit certain regulatory procedures to take place, and the lack of an archival policy also meant that very little current material would become part of the archive. The archive comprised multifarious items: the correspondence of the gallery directors, such as proposals for exhibitions and requests for funding; folders with press clippings from the beginning of the Whitechapel's history; minutes from trustee meetings, and other important assemblies; material from the gallery's education programme; photographs of exhibition installations and of individual artworks; portraits of exhibiting artists and the exhibition catalogues and printed material produced for each exhibition (invitations, information leaflets and press releases). The Whitechapel Gallery had, only on very few occasions, appointed an archivist. In fact, prior to its expansion, the gallery's sole trained archivist was Jon Newman, who worked in

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of material about other, less-known, exhibitions, directorships and so on. As Jon Newman wrote in 'The Whitechapel Archive: History or Aide-Mémoire?': 'The Whitechapel has its archive and it also has its history. The two are not the same thing and while many people have a view on that history it has never truly been defined. No one has written *The History of the Whitechapel Art Gallery*. Instead there are versions, studies of themes and snapshots of moments. Some, like the founding of the gallery in 1901 by Canon Barnett, are well rehearsed. Particular shows like *Guernica* and *This is Tomorrow* have acquired resonance beyond their original conception ... Unfortunately, this is the moment where mythical history and archival documentation definitely part company.' See Jon Newman, 'The Whitechapel Archive: History or Aide-Mémoire?', *The Whitechapel Art Gallery Centenary Review* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2001) p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> In an interview with Janeen Haythornthwaite, former volunteer archivist, she mentions disparities within the directors' file. The material left by Bryan Robertson, director of the Whitechapel Gallery between 1952 and 1968, consists of a large amount of documents, while recent director Catherine Lampert (1988-2001) has not yet deposited anything into the archive. The absence of a policy for the Whitechapel's archive meant that for years it was seen by staff as the place where documents were stored, not as the place where documents were preserved as part of the gallery's history. See Appendix IV, p. 295.

the archive between 1995 and 1998. Newman organised what, at the time, must have been an anarchic collection of material, and transformed it into the group of organised records that I first encountered. Although the archive had been visited by researchers and by a few members of staff, it generally existed independently from the rest of the gallery; it had not been taken into account for marketing or publicity campaigns, nor had it been promoted to staff or external researchers.<sup>52</sup> Whitechapel Gallery staff did not have 'archival concerns', mainly because the archive had not been presented to them as an important record or resource. The majority of staff did not know where the archive was located. However, future plans for the gallery envisaged that the archive would become widely accessible to the public.<sup>53</sup> This struck me as a challenging task, because the archive did not seem to be in a condition to assure a researcher of its completeness. This was a space that functioned as an archive but was in a pre-archival state. There was much work to be done before it was sufficiently organised to allow full access.

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<sup>52</sup> In the same interview, Haythornthwaite mentioned that she rarely received or was asked to archive material by gallery departments, other than from Exhibitions. The various members of staff did not consider the benefits of the archive to their own work, and administrative records were independently filed by individual departments. Due to the lack of a specific policy, as well as restrictions on space, Haythornthwaite was not in a position to maintain an archive that might reflect the reality of what was taking place in the gallery. She was restricted to collecting material related to the Whitechapel exhibitions, and it was her management policy to keep three copies of each of the following: catalogues and other publication, invitations, information brochures and any other printed material, such as leaflets and press cuttings.

<sup>53</sup> The future of the Whitechapel Gallery and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive and the changes which occurred as a result of their major redevelopment is discussed in Chapter Five.

The Whitechapel Gallery Archive was not like the highly structured Print Room.<sup>54</sup> There were many differences between the two archives, and dissimilarities in size, scope, and the regulation of access were immediately evident. Both, in their own right, were extremely useful as archive models. On the one hand, the Print Room gave its users a sense of confidence. This was mainly a result of the institution's vastness and rigid structure, which made the Print Room seem a secure resource. On the other hand, the Whitechapel Gallery, as a smaller institution, had an archive which housed incomplete records, had an unregulated operating structure, and a total lack of funding. These conditions, instead of weakening the archive, on the contrary, presented it as a malleable resource. True, the researcher at Whitechapel relied entirely on the archivist to excavate the correct document and was not as comfortably seated as in the Print Room. The latter archive may seem less legitimate or even partial (due to the fact that all the acquisitions come from one source: the Whitechapel), nevertheless it presented an astounding field for research and curatorial work as the institution that hosted it refrained from exerting firm control over it. For a curator who researches potential exhibitions or projects, this condition could only be positive, allowing space for unfettered contribution and interpretation.

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<sup>54</sup> My initial perception that the Print Room was a highly-structured, exemplary place was subsequently challenged. From my regular visits and observations I realised that the cataloguing and classification systems were still in a process of development. However the building itself, the procedure, the handling regulations and grave silence conveyed a sense of solemnity, proper to a 'flawless' archive.

## Differences between archives

The archives I have described constitute just two examples of various models as they articulate the accessibility processes and their own systems of classification and cataloguing. Both the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive function within a framework provided and determined by the institutions in which they are based.

Regulations, formal and informal, determine the ways that the archives are accessed and how research progresses. Below is a brief account of key differences that derive from the spaces themselves, as well as from the ways that these two institutional archives had been managed.

If research and interpretation *makes* (composes) the archive, subsequently, the archive *makes* (affects) the research. In the Print Room the researcher is, right from the beginning, strictly regulated. He or she is under the direct surveillance of members of staff and is being observed by fellow researchers who also use the archive. All stages, from the beginning of the visit to the time the researcher finally leaves the room, are arranged in such a way, as to determine a specific pattern of interaction. At the Whitechapel Gallery Archive there was not a particular procedure to follow. As soon as I was able to locate and enter the archive, I was allowed to browse its contents. In spite of my expected

unfamiliarity with the space, I became aware, almost at a glance, of the archive's size, simply because the whole volume of the archive was laid out before me. At the Print Room (and in numerous other institutional archives), under no circumstances is one given right of entry to the repository. The only heralds of the archive are the catalogues, accessed through computers and folders, which represent the contents in an orderly manner. A researcher will rarely view the meticulous layout of an organised repository or see the piles of documents waiting to be catalogued. His or her physical interaction with the archival content would be clearly determined by the institution's regulations.

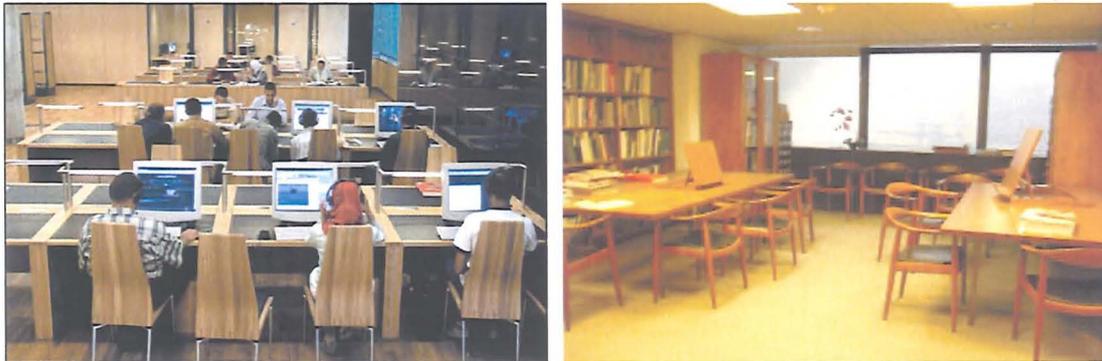


Figure 4 and 5: Reading rooms at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Cairo (left) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (right).

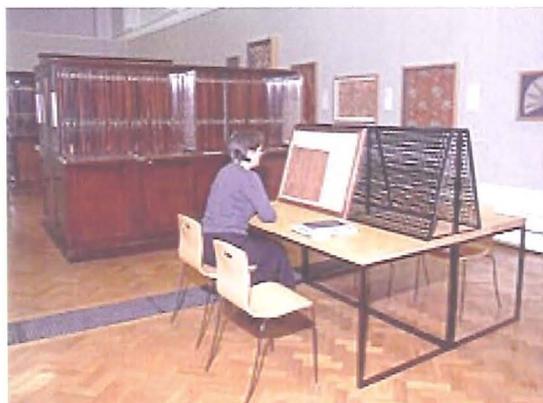


Figure 6: Textiles Study Room, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Farge's *poudre* is never visible in the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room.

The main archive is out of site and it is presented to a researcher only in measured quantities.

At the Whitechapel, I was in direct contact with the material. I was able to touch the shelves and the boxes. The whole volume of the archive was at my immediate disposal and there were no established procedure for handling the material, such as using gloves and acid-free tissue paper.<sup>55</sup> In the Whitechapel's archive I was not given an allocated space to sit in which to wait for the arrival of the archival *treasure*. In fact, the treasure was always at my disposal, the only obstacle was to locate it as there were no catalogues and the finding aids were minimal. Inside the Whitechapel's archive the researcher had to become an archaeologist; to *excavate* for the desired item in a manner that was not indicated, and therefore assisted, by the existence of accession numbers and catalogues. The Print Room was maintained by trained members of staff, whereas the Whitechapel Gallery Archive was sustained due to the efforts of a self-taught archivist, who initially approached the archive as a researcher and continued to work there as a volunteer.

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<sup>55</sup> At various stages in his or her visit, a researcher encounters the customer care services deployed by the institution. These procedures seem to guarantee the organisation of the archive, the quality of its resources, and the uniqueness of its collection. One is greeted, guided and allocated to a specific place to sit. In some reading rooms cotton or latex gloves are handed out, together with pencils, book cradles, book snakes and special cushions for protecting the material. There is a certain sense of assurance in highly-organised institutions which reminds the researcher (even if this is deceiving), that the institution cares for them.

The Print Room was an archive that reflected, in its style, policy and structure, the institution it belonged to, the Victoria and Albert Museum. On the other hand, one could not claim the same for the Whitechapel's archive, which did not perfectly mirror the institution it belonged to. The Whitechapel Gallery Archive had not yet been institutionalised. It had no repository, reading room, core policies, accessibility procedures or dedicated paid staff. Considering, on the one hand, that it housed a large volume of organisational records and, on the other, that they were somewhat organised into preliminary categories, the Whitechapel Gallery Archive was standing on the dividing line between a pre-archive and an archive. It was in a transitional phase which made it malleable to future augmentations and manipulations.

## Chapter Two: *The Whitechapel Experience*

## **Browsing in the archive – A *Flâneur* in Whitechapel**

As previously stated, the focus of this chapter is the Whitechapel Gallery Archive and my personal experience researching within it. Without mirroring it, the archive has direct links to the institution to which it belongs: Whitechapel Gallery.

The Whitechapel is a public institution established in 1901. Founded by the local vicar and his wife, Canon and Henrietta Barnett, it quickly became an established institution, exhibiting modern and contemporary art and the work of local and international artists. In parallel, it hosted a number of exhibitions or events aimed directly at educating the surrounding community such as ‘Mothercraft’ (1916), and numerous exhibitions organised by the London County Council, which was the principal education authority in London (it later became the Inner London Education Authority, ILEA). These exhibitions were organised from 1905 to 1914 and then again from 1947 to 1970. ‘Handwork’ (1913) and ‘Colour in Theatre’ (1961) were among the numerous displays aimed at school children, teachers and community groups. Some of the first exhibitions had an ethnographic agenda and were dedicated to Chinese, Japanese, Indian and other non-western art, as well as European art which was less known in England, such as Swedish, Irish, Polish and Czechoslovakian art.

Historically, the Whitechapel has been known as a local institution which brought art to a financially deprived community whilst engaging with international trends.<sup>56</sup> The Whitechapel has always been connected with East London because of its vital role in the education and moral instruction of its local community. This has had a significant impact on its constitution, and throughout the gallery's history decisions taken by the Board of Trustees have reflected significant interest in philanthropic enterprise and the instigation of modern art 'experiences'. Decades before the formal establishment of education departments in museums and galleries, which started mainly after the formation of the Arts Council in 1946, the Whitechapel was regularly visited by local schools and its programming had, on numerous occasions, incorporated the work of children and young people.<sup>57</sup>

The Whitechapel's role in London's contemporary art scene has been sustained by several well-established personalities who have served as director; notably Charles Aitken (1901-1911), Bryan Robertson (1952-1969), Mark Glazebrook (1969-1972), Nicholas Serota (1976-1988), Catherine Lampert (1988-2001) and

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<sup>56</sup> "To bring the finest art of the world to the people of East London"; this was the aim of the gallery from the outset. This policy was encouraged by the Barnetts who believed in art as a means of enhancing the everyday experience of the working classes. See the Identity Statement of the Whitechapel Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

<sup>57</sup> The gallery's close collaboration with local schools is demonstrated through the numerous exhibitions that took place with the general title 'Pictures for Schools' or 'Children's Work'. These took place in 1902, 1904, 1905, 1909, 1926, 1930, 1938, 1947, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1976, and 1982. In later years, these projects continue under the general title 'Creative Connections' or, as per the 2009 project, 'Archive Adventures'. See <<http://www.enquire.org/projects/study.aspx?cid=3&pid=2&sid=111>> and <<http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/education/schools/primary-school-projects>>, [accessed 30 September 2009]

most recently Iwona Blazwick (2001 to present). The gallery's connection to local artists has been highlighted by exhibitions such as 'East End Academy' and 'The Whitechapel Open', which opened the exhibition space to artists at the beginning of their career.<sup>58</sup> A number of other key events in Whitechapel's exhibition history include one of the first London showings of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* in 1939,<sup>59</sup> 'This is Tomorrow' in 1956, featuring works by the Independent Group,<sup>60</sup> Mark Rothko in 1961, and the first showing of Hélio Oiticica's installations *Eden* and *Tropicália* in 1969. All these events constitute the image that the Whitechapel has preserved and projected to its public. Before I approached the archive I anticipated that, most likely, it would be made up of continuous records that constituted evidence of the diverse and rich past of the institution.

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<sup>58</sup> 'East End Academy' was the title of a series of annual exhibitions, which began in 1932 and were open to local artists. The exhibition also included visits to local artist studios and became a well-established platform for showing the art of lesser-known artists and amateurs. The first call for submissions in 1932, reprinted in the Whitechapel's 2005 publicity material, addressed 'all Artists living and working East of the famous Aldgate Pump'. 'East End Academy' was abandoned in 1963 and revived in 1969–70 as 'East End Open'. In 1977 it was renamed 'The Whitechapel Open', but in 2004 reverted to original title, 'East End Academy'. The exhibition is now programmed to run biennially, but due to the Whitechapel's redevelopment, the first one took place in 2004 and the second in 2009.

<sup>59</sup> *Guernica*, Picasso's famous 1937 painting, was exhibited at the Whitechapel between 31 December 1938 and 14 January 1939. The exhibition of *Guernica*, which happened to be travelling from Spain to the United States, was organised in support of Spanish aid; it is still employed by many journalists and art critics as a paradigm for the Whitechapel's innovative programming agenda.

<sup>60</sup> The 1956 exhibition 'This Is Tomorrow' included artists, architects, musicians and graphic designers who worked together, forming twelve teams in total – this multidisciplinary collaboration was unusual in visual arts at the time. Each group took as their starting point the human senses and the theme of habitation, designing their own pavilion in the lower gallery of the Whitechapel. The artists in the exhibition included, amongst others, some members of the Independent Group, who formed in the 1950s and initiated a programme of lectures and events at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London.

The reputation of the Whitechapel Gallery had undoubtedly coloured my own expectations about what, as a curator, I might find in its archive. I was not aware of what to expect and was interested in reading documents and other paraphernalia which were relevant as well as revealing, of events, exhibitions and behind-the-scene situations that have constructed the myth of the organisation. I held the view that archives in general, and particularly archives attached to visual arts organisations, could become a prosperous field for curatorial work. At first I was interested in becoming familiar with the archive, and, at a second stage, in researching potential curatorial projects that could challenge the existing format of the archive and contribute further to its formation.

For the realisation of this project, I visited the Whitechapel's archive on a regular basis, initially as an independent curator and later, in a different capacity, as a paid employee of the gallery.<sup>61</sup> The possibility of infiltrating in the archive was

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<sup>61</sup> In May 2005, three years after I embarked on my doctorate, the Whitechapel Gallery announced a new position: a two-year post of Archive Research Curator, funded by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. I applied for this position and was successful. My employment commenced in June 2005. After an initial period of adaptation, the two capacities in which I was engaged – as independent curator and now archive employee – were in total synergy, and I continued my academic work without changing my initial thesis. Indeed, the fact that I was officially engaged with the archive positively affected the dynamic of my research project; I became very aware of how archives operate and worked steadily toward the current stage, in which 85% of its volume is catalogued and 100% of its volume is accessible to the public. In 2008 my post became a permanent position and was re-named Archive Curator, co-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Whitechapel Gallery. In this capacity I have already realised the exhibitions 'The Whitechapel Files' (2006) and 'The Whitechapel Boys' (2009), and will continue to program exhibitions instigated from the Whitechapel's archive. The gallery's redevelopment, as described in Chapter Five, cannot be viewed in isolation from the transformation of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, from the pre-archive described in this thesis, to a fully-accessible resource that continually offers material for research and curatorial projects. My new role offered

appealing and intriguing to me; I was aware that having the freedom to research in an archive that did not have a keeper was a rare and unique condition. This excitement was fuelled by a fantasy of myself as potential discoverer. I had certain expectations regarding findings that, in reality, were not necessarily existent in the archive. These expectations were triggered by a general knowledge of the Whitechapel's history and by the fact that certain shows had become landmarks in exhibition making. For example, by accessing exhibition files, I was hoping to discover further or confidential information about such exhibitions as 'This is Tomorrow' or 'New Generation' (1964), which showcased the upcoming artists of the day. Additionally, the significant 1914 exhibition 'Twentieth Century Art – A Review of Modern Movements' was of particular interest to me; at the time it was considered a controversial exhibition, it presented young artists who were contributing to the modern movement and it contained a section, 'the Jewish Section', curated by two young artists, David Bomberg and Jacob Epstein.<sup>62</sup>

I was about to embark upon research in the archive of a visual arts institution.

Due to the freedom allowed me, I was able to experience for myself what other researchers have many times referred to as the *unique* experience of researching

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me a platform from which I could apply ideas that had unravelled through my research, enabling me to finally see my initial hypotheses become projects with genuine applications.

<sup>62</sup> This exhibition was organised under the directorship of Charles Aitken, the first director of the Whitechapel Gallery and later director of Tate. Its aim was to present contemporary artists from the United Kingdom and Europe, and to highlight various tendencies in painting.

in archives.<sup>63</sup> The ability to directly handle archival material was initially absorbing. I was given permission by the gallery to access the archive as and when required for the needs of my project; I was seduced towards an indulgence into a sensational browsing of the archival contents. I had to ensure that I was not exposing the material to physical harm and that I was not going to disturb the 'physical order' of the archive.<sup>64</sup>

Due to my preconception of the archive as a mysterious storeroom, the driving force behind my project was the anticipation of finding a document of unique interest. In a sense I became something akin to a detective. I hoped to find something that had been concealed through the years and would only be revealed through my browsing; a forgotten record waiting to be shaken from oblivion, and which would come to the surface as a result of my dedicated and ongoing search.

The Whitechapel's archive housed files which were divided into descriptive categories. These categories directly reflected their contents and included the 'Early Files', a large grouping of all records produced before 1947. The decision to merge assorted records (the directors', exhibition and trustee files) into this one large section was made by the archivist Jon Newman, when he first ordered

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<sup>63</sup> See Farge, *Le goût de l'archive*; Bosworth, 'The Past as a Foreign Country?', and Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found'.

<sup>64</sup> Physical order is the order we find items in an archive. This applies to both catalogued and un-catalogued material.

the archive.<sup>65</sup> The 'Directors' Files' were files of personal correspondence and other professional documents produced by or sent to the Whitechapel directors. These varied because every director left an entirely different volume and types of records behind. 'Exhibition Files' related directly to the Whitechapel's exhibitions programme, and contained all the records produced during the research and organisation of an exhibition, including curators' proposals, correspondence with artists, private gallery owners, art dealers and museums, insurance and shipping documentation and condition reports. The 'Trustee Files' contained minutes from meetings, policies and other records, and dated from the constitution of the Whitechapel in 1898 until the early 1990s. More recent records were perhaps in use and stored in the offices. 'Publications' included the majority of catalogues and posters from 1882 until today. The same category also included press cuttings and photographic material dating from 1901. In addition, the archive contained smaller files such as material related to the Whitechapel Gallery Society, which included the administration of the Gallery's Society of

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<sup>65</sup> This is the only category in the archive that is organised chronologically rather than thematically, although the order of the 'Early Files' does not necessarily reflect the order in which they had been produced. The files were grouped in this way, either because the overall material prior to 1947 was insufficient to form separate categories, or was fairly incomplete. The fact that the records were not separated into individual categories reflects the operation of the Whitechapel in its first decades, a time when roles were condensed and centralised. For example, in the majority of cases, for each exhibition, the director would act as curator, fundraiser and as finance manager. Nowadays these responsibilities would be allocated to separate departments with members of staff specialising in particular operations.

Friends.<sup>66</sup> Gradually I acquired knowledge of each of these categories. On every visit I handled and read a small proportion of the documents contained in each category.

Actively researching in the archive necessitated direct contact and handling of the material. Browsing is an optico-tactile experience and the inspiration I found in the archive is echoed in Walter Benjamin's conception of the collector as inspired by their tactile engagement with objects:

Through this tactile encounter the collector becomes inspired. It suffices to observe just one collector as he handles the items in his showcase. No sooner does he hold them in his hand than he appears inspired by them and seems to look through them into their distance, like an augur.<sup>67</sup>

The opportunity to physically browse within a whole body of documents, which spanned the late nineteenth century to the present day, also gave me the ability to metaphorically *browse* through the archive. Facts, histories, misconceptions and preconceptions, art funding, staff changes, architectural modifications, display and curatorial tendencies - all were manifest in the various documents

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<sup>66</sup> The Whitechapel Society was founded in 1947 during Hugh Scrutton's directorship. Its aim was to encourage private contributions and to increase the general income which was essential to the Whitechapel for its operation.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, {H2, 7; H2a, 1} trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 207.

which I accessed and which were produced in different periods by Whitechapel employees and other associates.

Because I did not have previous knowledge of the archival contents, the method of *browsing* proved the most appropriate for the level of infiltration I was hoping to achieve. An alternative way of viewing the material would have been the orthodox method of listing items of interest and subsequently attempting to locate them amongst the boxes. Without the help of an archivist, or the use of an updated archive catalogue, this would have been a painstaking operation.

Moreover, by pursuing only specific documents of interest I would have missed a large volume of material which, whilst browsing, I had the chance to view.

Consequently, by browsing I was closer to the possibility of discovering records that would trigger a curatorial project.

In the World English Dictionary, the definition of browsing includes the following statements: 'To read through something quickly or superficially' and 'to look through or over something, especially merchandise in a store, in a leisurely manner with the hope of finding something of interest'.<sup>68</sup> The Oxford Dictionary provides a similar definition: 'Survey goods or text in a leisurely way'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Both definitions are from the online encyclopaedia Encarta, Word English Dictionary, developed by Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999.

<[http://uk.encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_/flaneur.html](http://uk.encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/flaneur.html)>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>69</sup> This definition is from Oxford Online, AskOxford.com, developed by Oxford University Press, 2006.

**Physiologie**  
**DU FLÂNEUR.**

PAR  
**M. Louis Huart.**

VIGNETTES  
De MM. Alophe, Daumier et Maurisset.



PARIS,  
AUBERT ET C<sup>ie</sup>,  
galerie Veru-Dodat,  
1841.  
LAVIGNE,  
Rue de l'École-St-André, 1.  
A. 10605

Figure 7: Cover of *Physiologie du Flâneur* (1841) by French writer and journalist Louis Adrien Huart (1813–1865) depicting a *flâneur* in the background.

The action of browsing in a light-hearted manner, without the pressure of a specific enquiry, bears similarities to the actions of the *flâneur* in a city. It is the leisurely, non-systematic, but simultaneously creative and informative, character of both the browser and the *flâneur*, which makes them resemble one another. Eulogised by Charles Baudelaire, and a chief protagonist in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, the *flâneur* has been a privileged typology of modernity's character; the term analysed in order to understand the nature and implications of the conditions of modernity.<sup>70</sup> The *flâneur* is the one who saunters through urban spaces, possibly aimlessly, observing the crowds, the shops, and streets without particular attachment. Suspended from any social obligation, he remains aloof of

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<<http://www.askoxford.com/results/?view=dict&freesearch=flaneur&branch=13842570&textsearchtype=exact>>,[accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>70</sup> See Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, trans. by L. Varese (New York: New Directions Books, 1970) and Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by H. Zohn (London: Verso, 1983).

the city and its crowds. Although the flâneur is portrayed as a character indifferent to his surroundings, at the same time, these surroundings constitute his or her vital environment, without which he or she would not be able to be a flâneur. The questions arise: What is the position of the flâneur in relation to the city? Does his mobility enrich the flâneur – is it a vehicle for enhanced experience and knowledge of the environment encountered? Or is it, perhaps like the above definition of browsing, a light hearted and frivolous experience? According to the *Physiologie du Flâneur*, the flâneur must be a ‘living guidebook’, who knows the city well and is able to remember where the best shops, services or views reside.<sup>71</sup>

The flâneur seeks refuge in the crowd. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city is transformed for the flâneur to phantasmagoria ... The flâneur plays the role of scout in the marketplace. As such, he is also the explorer of the crowd. Within the man or woman who abandons himself or herself to it, the crowd inspires a sort of drunkenness, one accompanied by very specific illusions: the man flatters himself that, on seeing a passer-by swept along by the crowd, he has accurately classified him, seen straight through to the innermost recesses of his soul – all on the basis of his external appearance ...<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Luis Adrien Huart, *Physiologie du Flâneur* (Paris: Aubert, 1841).

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 21.

If we consider the city as an archive, constituting people and events and enhanced by the layers of its history – the numerous buildings that have been constructed and demolished over the centuries, the changes in topography, the citizens who have lived and died within its borders – then the flâneur clearly becomes a passer-by with a dual capacity. On the one hand, the flâneur composes their own piece of history by being in and walking through the city, and, on the other, they observe activities that take place with the city as a backdrop; the flâneur infiltrates the *archive* of that city.<sup>73</sup> Via this permeation the flâneur feels the essence of the city and becomes aware of the actions taking place within it. The flâneur has also been characterised as the parasite of the city, albeit its most vital one. Wasn't I, by browsing in an archive, similarly experiencing the archive, not of a city, but of an institution? Couldn't a curator who browses in an archive, navigating by an experiential and undisciplined method, be equated to the flâneur who follows a similar mode of navigating the urban sphere?

Is the experience of browsing/flâneur-ing an infiltration to the archive/city? And does it deliver information and knowledge that would have been inaccessible via different methods of interaction?

The parallel drawn between the archive and the city effectively reflects the similarities that both spaces entail. The browser and the flâneur are both driven by instinct and circumstance, elements that are common to the methodology I

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<sup>73</sup> For a concept of the city as an archive see John Berger, *Here is Where we Meet* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005).

selected for researching the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. This methodology has indeed been effective; through the act of browsing and the experience gained from it, I was deploying a method of research that could potentially connect the 'light heartedness' of browsing with a profound infiltration of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

## **The researcher's fantasy - my own fantasy**

An integral part of the process of researching resides in the fact that researchers often bring their own preconceptions to the field. The degree of mediation is in accordance with the multilayered cultural and psychological weights they carry as individuals; that is, an enormous amount of conscious and unconscious baggage, histories and assumptions that will affect the 'interpretive moment'.

This moment, similar to the instant of scientific discovery, is appreciated amongst researchers for its uniqueness and individuality. At the early stages of research, and most explicitly with research conducted in archives – where the majority of the archival contents are unknown, the eagerness for discovery can turn to impatience as researchers (including myself) reach the moment of pre-emptive projection. Imagination takes flight, fuelled by various components that effect the researcher's anticipation in an archive. Contributing factors include expectations about the archival contents, the type of education or specialist training the researcher has received, and personal ambition. The multifarious elements that impact the researcher entering the archive are a mix of the innate and the acquired, the methodological and psychological. People who suffer from claustrophobia, for instance, tend to find enclosed spaces such as archives uncomfortable, even unbearable, whilst others find the idea of being in such environments appealing. Each individual's interpretation of the research

processes will be affected by a number of issues, as pragmatic as funding imperatives and as complex as cultural and personal influences. Consequently, the preconceptions and assumptions that govern quotidian experience also colour what we consider to be a 'realistic' approach to our research. James J. Scheurich, in *Research Methods in the Postmodern*,<sup>74</sup> gives a definition of realism, separate from philosophical positions that are labelled 'realism', such as scientific realism, and from doctrines like logical positivism.<sup>75</sup> Although Scheurich differentiates his own definition from those which claim that features or objects exist independently of our perception of them, he considers these notions to be related. Scheurich's definition of realism entails 'a set of inter-related assumptions about researchers, research, and reality that social science researchers act out of without understanding that they are doing so'. Realism, he elaborates, can therefore be described as 'the everyday way that research is conceptualised and practised'. Scheurich gives a paradigm of realism in action, with the example of a researcher who assumes they are a relatively independent individual, with 'a fairly well researcher-trained mind or consciousness'. Scheurich's researcher can independently enter a classroom, observe what is

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<sup>74</sup> Scheurich, *Research Methods in the Postmodern*, pp. 159-176.

<sup>75</sup> Logical positivism is the philosophical movement, which uses a strict principle of verification to reject as meaningless the non-empirical statements of metaphysics, theology and ethics. Scheurich's definition of realism is critical to logical positivism and questions the 'integrity' of empirical knowledge by introducing realism as presumption and not as condition.

happening there, and write a report that 'gives the reader at least something real in that classroom'.<sup>76</sup>

Research is morphing, archaeologically being morphed. What is to be a researcher is not what it was twenty years ago when there was one right way, and it will not be in another twenty years what it is today. Those who hold on to the old ways or the current ways, while both will continue to exist to some extent, will be increasingly ignored, as if they spoke Rorty's dead 'languages', by new researchers speaking new languages.<sup>77</sup>

Today's academic and artist-based research community are able to use tools from disciplines that in the past were considered contradictory, the best known example might be the changing relationship between art and science. The ability to consider and blend information and knowledge gained from other disciplines has enabled a more comprehensive and complex view of human beings within social and cultural processes.

Academic researchers often invest in a methodology that they trust to lead them to the conclusion targeted by their research. Methodology is conceived as the essential skeleton of the research process, and its planning takes a lot of time and consideration. Taking into account my practice as a curator who researches in archives, I have observed how seriously researchers invest in methodology,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>77</sup> Scheurich, *Research Methods in the Postmodern*, p. 175.

presumably starting from something solid in order to embark into the unknown. When the research is planned in advance, researchers take into consideration what they know about their topic and what they estimate will be the final outcome. As a result of this initial process, we might find ourselves in the contradictory position of outlining a preliminary outcome, in spite of the fact that we have just embarked upon a new journey, within a relatively unknown field. Reflecting upon my own research project in its initial phase, I became much more aware of certain preconceptions that I had not been able to clearly identify at the outset. According to Scheurich, researchers are bound by what they conceive as an individual and realistic approach. Scheurich claims that research itself (including the practice of archaeology) has multiple facets and can only be seen as a product of a specific culture. It cannot bear the fruits of reality or genuine discovery, as there are various individual standpoints from which the same issue could have been examined:

Because of deep Western assumptions about the nature of an individual and an individual mind, it is assumed that individuals and their minds are somehow a different kind of category and that this category is somehow universal, that the nature of an individual and her/his mind is universally the same in all cultures. It is as if the culture is writing on a slate (the individual mind), blank or not, but the slate itself is the same across different cultures ... Why should we think that the nature of an individual self or an individual subjectivity is universal, while

leaving all else contextual? ... However in the West and especially in the US, we cherish individualism.<sup>78</sup>

Scheurich claims that the perception of the individual, and of their mind, differs from culture to culture; correspondingly the western belief in the universality of individual subjectivity has no ground. When the above claim is contrasted with, as one example, the American endorsement of 'individualism', we encounter a contradictory thesis. The clash between these assumptions about the individual and their role in society are in accordance with my previous statement about genuine or pseudo-discoveries in archives. Although researchers might be aware of the social and cultural processes that affect their interpretations in the archive, the concept (a fantasy) of genuine discovery is nevertheless fundamental to their *modus operandi*.

Curators who use archives as their main resource of information are entering the space with the understanding that the principle behind the archive's composition is the fact that its contents are of value to the society as a whole, or at least to parts of that society. Each archive constructs its collections policy based upon criteria that are in harmony with the purposes of the collection and depend upon the category of users who are expected to access it. The items that an archive carries have been attributed with inherent meanings, which remain latent until the time of consultation, investigation and analysis.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

The archive seduces the researcher because it is offered to him or her alone, it provides an opportunity to reveal meanings held within the archival contents; moreover the sense of discovering facts. The researcher might experience the same excitement as if these facts had been discovered for the first time. He or she may feel responsible for the revelation of small *truths* that have been long hidden, and which have only come to light due to his or her interference with the material.<sup>79</sup> Through this endeavour a researcher may feel that they are in a position to make lost voices speak at last. The seduction of a probable discovery enhances the experience but remains subjective and forms part of a desire, rather than a realistic outcome. A recent example, drawn from my initial research at the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, involved the discovery/recovery of a large quantity of material that was considered lost for decades. To me and to other members of the gallery staff this was seen as a personal achievement; it made me feel as though I had personally discovered the material, albeit within the confined space of the old storage basement. For a number of years, the collection of press cuttings which spanned the period 1922 to 1939 was missing, presumed lost. Indeed these had never been seen by Newman, the archivist, who had originally ordered and catalogued the archive. As a result, this material had never been included in any list or catalogue and remained totally unknown to

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<sup>79</sup> See Farge, *Le gout de l'Archive*, in which she describes her experience in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, and the feeling of handling dusty items which have never been consulted before.

the Whitechapel. The most recent archivists believed that this material had disappeared decades earlier.

During my visits to the archive I had noticed a blue filing cabinet, which was positioned very close to a large plan chest. The cabinet's drawers were facing the plan chest, and it was impossible to open them at all. For several months, and whilst occupied with continuous browsing, I ignored the cabinet. At a later stage curiosity forced me to investigate further. With the help of a member of staff we gradually turned the heavy cabinet, affording full access to the drawers. Inside the cabinets were numerous files containing what were clearly old oxidised newspapers. These cuttings were organised by year but without labelling or any signs of preservation. I enquired about these findings and, after consultation with the previous archivist, I realised, with great surprise, that I had located the lost press cuttings. They told the history of the gallery in the 1920s and 1930s, as observed by the press. The importance of this material to the Whitechapel was indubitable, and the gain was significant for staff and researchers alike. Through these press cuttings they could investigate decades in the Whitechapel's history, which were previously inadequately represented in the archive. These cuttings also provided invaluable information about how the exhibitions of this period were perceived by the press. I experienced a sense of personal achievement from the incident, which was perceived by everybody as a type of archaeological excavation. Yet, without doubt, this cannot be credited to me as a personal

discovery; I was but a catalyst, who acted at that specific time and allowed this material to be recovered. Someone, decades before me, had gathered and organised the cuttings into groups according to the year of publication. In the intervening years, despite the number of people who had accessed the archive, such as members of staff, temporary archivists and volunteers, this material had never been discovered; its unearthing was a matter of time and circumstance.

The above example refers to the discovery of physical material; nevertheless a similar sensation accompanies an intellectual discovery: a researcher's innovative thought, a challenge to existing ideas or a new conclusion that derives from the reading of archive material.

Every single item that belongs to an archive would at one time be known to its first proprietor and/or to the person who selected and deposited it in the archive. In most cases the material would have been known to archivists who would have initially listed it, later catalogued it and, at another point made it available for research and consultation. Consequently it would have been accessible to researchers and may have been frequently handled and consulted.

And yet files that the researcher comes across can trigger a feeling of exaltation – as I realised from personal experience – regardless of the fact that a line of people has already seen the material before this charged moment of 'discovery'. The more we familiarise ourselves with the ways that archives operate, the more we understand that genuine discovery is a fallacy.

The careful classification of archival items ensures that archives will be approached and accessed via precise procedures. Navigation and guidance in an archive will be sought from specific identification numbers, which will identify each item and will give it a description, as well as expanded information about its origin and its precise location in the repository. Even if a researcher comes across rare items that might prove of vast importance for their own personal research, this discovery should not come as a surprise. In a way, discoveries are always imminent and take place as a result of fortune or coincidences. Thinking logically, if the researcher was to spend enormous lengths of time in a depository, he or she would most probably encounter files that shed new light on their research. In view of the fact that the archival items have been accessioned and catalogued, these hypothetical files will eventually be accessed. Their detection is a matter of time. Interestingly, although the researcher is always aware that they are searching in an organised physical repository, the probability of a genuine 'discovery' remains a captivating driving force; a force that fuels continuous exploration.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Is the researcher's need for an archival discovery associated with a profound need to discover something about our origin, which will prove that, within our origin, there is something worth remembering, worth preserving; something which will fight the death drive? As Derrida claims in *Archive Fever*, the death drive is destroying the archive because it does not have an archive itself. *It operates in silence...* Freud wrote in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that under the death drive there is no yearning of memory, but instead a wish to forget, to go into a non-existent quiescent phase. By researching in an archive and in hope of discovering material that will surprise us, aren't we searching for tools that will keep us interested, and thus fighting the death drive? See Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVIII (1920-1922) (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953) pp. 7-283.

Is this fascination sustained by the discovery itself or by the revelation that has come to light by a particular file? Is it sustained by the actual process that led to it i.e. the methodology of searching and the personal decisions that led the researcher to direct his search and to consult one particular file over another? According to Farge this fascination precedes all interactions with archival material; it even precedes entering the reading room. Farge describes the total fascination she herself developed with the archive. For Farge it is not only the research methods one deploys, or the information one receives, that is attractive but also the bare experience of visiting and touching items, of gaining something new. This is irresistible. Farge is feverishly entangled with the archive. In Derrida's words she is *en mal d'archive*: in need of archives. Derrida describes the symptom of being *en mal d'archive* as burning with passion, hence the English translation of *archive fever*.

...to be *en mal d'archive* is something else than to suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun *mal* might name. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a

homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement ...<sup>81</sup>

Carolyn Steedman's account in *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*,<sup>82</sup> and the further analysis of Jo Tollebeek in his essay 'Turn'd to Dust and Cultural History' provides an important depiction of the researcher's response within the archive.<sup>83</sup> Steedman cites, among others, the testimonies of Richard Cobb, a historian who has travelled in many provincial French towns researching in archives, and who describes the 'trembling excitement' that grips the historian when he or she brings to light archive collections or items that have remained closed for years. Farge's account of her experience in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal is analogous to Cobb's statements, especially when she refers to the feelings and the excitement experienced during her stay in the archive. Such accounts are not rare; in fact researchers in archives have frequently employed similar terms to summarise this seemingly monotonous job; one which is inextricably intertwined with enthusiasm.

Fantasy is one of the states of mind that is nurtured inside archives.<sup>84</sup> Inside the archive are we exploring known territory, desperately seeking for a surprise that will challenge our existing views? Researchers colour their research with

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<sup>81</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.

<sup>82</sup> Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*.

<sup>83</sup> Jo Tollebeek, 'Turn'd to Dust and Tears: Revisiting the Archive' *History and Theory*, 43, (2004) 237-248.

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix III, an interview between Jon Newman and I for a discussion on this topic, p. 283.

projections of what they anticipate finding; this is a consequence of the knowledge and experience each individual carries. Does the fantasy of the early historian, for instance of the Langlois and Bancroft archives, transmute into the modern fantasy of a contemporary researcher in the archive.<sup>85</sup> Is the modern fantasy still a desire to gather and preserve material for the future, with the aim of creating mega-sources of information, as was dreamed in nineteenth-century public institutions and by individuals in Europe and America? Kahn and Langlois in France, the Ethnological Society in the United Kingdom, the Bancroft archive and Harvard University in the United States all commissioned and financially supported the creation of archives, constituted by photography or by documents and objects.

The modern fantasy is the fantasy of connecting with the past, through a solitary procedure and unknown material that can be found in files and boxes.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps the solitude that archives offer is compensation for the over-stimulation which western societies experience today. The archive is a foil to the overabundance of information on all subjects, transmitted over the Internet, mobile phone, Blackberry device and via an increasing proliferation of digital media devices. This influx exceeds our capacity to access and handle information.

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<sup>85</sup> See Chapter One, p. 41.

<sup>86</sup> For the purposes of researching the subject of *archive experience* I interviewed two archivists, Jon Newman and Janeen Haythornthwaite. See Appendix III, p. 283, an interview conducted in February 2005 between Newman and I, in which some of the issues discussed in Chapter Two, in relation to the *experience* of the archive and the *archive sensation*, are raised. Newman currently holds the post of Archives and Library Manager at the Lambeth Archives.

The academic and artistic fascination with archives became more explicit towards the end of the twentieth century, a period which marked the natural ending of an era and which instigated concerns around the preservation and organisation of the products and outcomes of that era.<sup>87</sup> Is the fascination of connecting to the past via an archive an antidote to our inability to process and organise the stream of information that surrounds us on all levels of western society? Does immersion in the archive offer an alternative, comprehensive and manageable way of organising information?

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<sup>87</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist discusses the interest that artists developed in archives at the turn of the twenty-first century. See 'Preface', in *Interarchive, Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, ed. by Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, Beatrice von Bismarck, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Diethelm Stoller and Ulf Wuggenig (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2002), pp. 8–9.

## Experiencing the Whitechapel Gallery Archive

I have already mentioned that my first visit to the Whitechapel Gallery Archive also marked the beginning of this thesis; I remember purposelessly opening a box or two, to get a first impression and a scent of the material I was going to investigate. In the first encounter, as I was unfamiliar with the environment, it was the physical appearance and order of the archive that drew my observation. Being driven mostly by what the 'topological' nature of the archive reflected, I headed toward the racks of shelves and looked at boxes. Most of the racks were wide and comprised four deep shelves. Each rack was two metres high and each shelf was filled with brown and grey boxes, some of which had labels, I presumed their catalogue number. Although the boxes were common conservation boxes, similar to the ones found in every archive product catalogue, to me they seemed sacred containers bearing archaeological secrets.

I recall the first box I opened was from the category 'Directors' Files', which, as previously outlined, contained material deposited by previous directors: correspondence with artists and institutions, personal notes and instructions to their assistants, reports from trustee meetings and other administrative documents. By coincidence, the first box contained material from the era of Bryan Robertson (1952-1969). It contained correspondence with various organisations such as the then newly-founded Arts Council and other institutions such as the

American Embassy in London, which apparently (I realised this from the contents) was one of the sponsors of the Whitechapel in the 1950s. Amongst the letters were also numerous RSVP cards, accepting invitations to private views, dinners and meetings. A stack of letters referred to a Picasso exhibition that was being organised at the time.

Following the first box, I opened one more, and proceeded in this way on every visit from that first day onwards. This kind of browsing gradually granted me a sense of freedom because I was able to move in the archive without predetermined instructions, which, in another instance, would have prescribed the ways that I would consult the material, and would have presupposed that I could enter the archive only with specific enquiries.

Browsing became a way to engage deeply with the material and it was through the combination of browsing and perusing that this seemingly frivolous and superficial act became a rigorous and meticulous process.

In this case, the process of viewing items from an archive by following its regulations was substituted for a new methodology, which stirred instead of settled the material; as a consequence the order of the archive was shaken. Due to this unorthodox way of researching, items which would have otherwise rarely triggered a researcher's interest, and would have languished in boxes, were now becoming accessible and legible. The hierarchy of the material became unimportant and irrelevant; by browsing, the outcome of every search was

unpredictable. Important and unimportant documents are all waiting to be selected and, as a result the archive becomes less rigid. Here we recall Andrew Renton's assertion; 'There is a way of humanising the potentially inhuman nature of an archive, because the archive is constantly being animated'.<sup>88</sup>

To gain access to the correspondence of those who were once responsible for running the Whitechapel Gallery offered me the opportunity to infiltrate a history that I would have been otherwise unable to unfold. Initially, my interest was concentrated upon items that appeared of lesser historical significance, potentially mundane for other researchers; to me they seemed interesting and valuable for offering hints and snippets of information. The items of 'lesser importance' were pieces of paper with scribbles, informal corrections and instructions to secretaries and assistants, drafts of letters and to-do-lists. Such miscellany was usually written by hand in a simple and informal manner, and was akin to the memos, notes or drafts, which we produce on a daily basis and usually discard after they have served their purpose.

These items became significant documents for me and proved more revealing than other more 'official documents'. As I was reading, I delighted in the obvious fact that my fascination with such trivial documents must have been shared by

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<sup>88</sup> Andrew Renton, curator and Director of the MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths College, London, discusses the project *Browser*, a collection of artworks contained in boxes. The boxes contained a mix of established and non-established artists. The exhibition was set up in a manner similar to the organisation of archive boxes. *Browser* gave all visitors of the exhibition the flexibility to browse through the boxes and view the artists' work in any order or grouping they preferred. See 'Andrew Renton and Sacha Craddock in Conversation', in *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation (5)*, ed. by Susan Hiller (Gateshead: Baltic, 2002), p. 18.

somebody who, many years ago, had decided that these notes should be retained for the archive.

The archive was offering me a unique research experience as a curator; at the same time, in an almost mystical way, it enabled me to make contact with the past. This was not chiefly a result of the historical nature of the contents as such, but, as articulated by Johan Huizinga, owed much to my personal interpretation of the items:

This not completely reduceable [sic] contact with the past is an entry into an atmosphere, it is one of the many forms of reaching oneself, of experiencing truth, which are given to man. It is not an aesthetic enjoyment, a religious emotion, an awe of nature, a metaphysical recognition – and yet it is a figure in this series ... This contact with the past, which is accompanied by an utter conviction of genuineness and truth, can be evoked by a line from a document or a chronicle, by a print, by a few notes of an old song.<sup>89</sup>

Through browsing the archive, I was the recipient of an unpredictable wave of information, which was unfolding regardless of its chronological sequence. All this information put together could potentially have constructed interesting stories deriving from the Whitechapel's history; like a large jigsaw puzzle, the pieces were many, and one doubts their ability to completing the picture.

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<sup>89</sup>Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas. History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, trans. by James S. Holmes and Hans Van Marle, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

After the 'Directors' Files', I continued to research the 'Exhibition Files', the minutes of trustee meetings and photographs. Overall, I observed that throughout the decades, the administrative documents, in particular, did not significantly differ in terminology or writing. The key differences were found in the technology used to produce the documents. In the course of my visits to the archive I had the opportunity to observe the quill give way to the biro, the biro to the typewriter, the typewriter to the computer, and then the emergence of its peripherals, the inkjet and the laser printer.

Although each box contained 'similar' administrative documents, reflecting the organisation's function, each one offered quite a different experience. One record would take me to 1914 and to the files of the summer exhibition, 'Twentieth Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements' (8 May – 20 June 1914), whilst another would be from the 1970s, one of the most difficult decades in the Whitechapel's financial history, when the gallery was close to bankruptcy and possible closure.

The records of the 'Twentieth Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements' exhibition were chiefly comprised of invitation letters to exhibiting artists, thank you letters sent to the Whitechapel in response, and RSVP cards from guests confirming their attendance at the private view night. Amongst these documents there was a small typewritten letter on a piece of paper with a black border, it was folded several times, making it seem very informal. The letter was from

Henrietta Barnett, who, with her husband, co-founded the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1901. Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to describe in detail the general contents of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, I find significance in examples which demonstrate the variety of the archive contents, and which are indicative of the kind of material one comes across – seemingly insignificant but nevertheless extremely telling.

In the letter, transcribed below, Henrietta Barnett offers her advice to the gallery director, Ramsay. The 1914 exhibition had been organised in tribute to the memory of her late husband, nevertheless, her comments are likely to be interpreted today as paternalistic and didactic.

Dear Mr Ramsay,

Thank you for telling me your wishes about the Committee. I quite understand the difficulty and sympathise with your wish to avoid friction which might arise. But on the other hand, long experience has taught me that it is very difficult to say to people whose work one cannot take, that you do not want it, but it is helpful to be able to say to them that the 'Committee decides against it'. Otherwise the onus of refusal falls entirely on you, which might make things trying and appear as if you were influenced by personal or petty reasons. My suggestion would be that you should have quite a small Committee, consisting if necessary of Non-artistic people, such as - -, (sic) but perhaps I had better not mention them, but people representing the official and technical side of the Exhibition. Then you would have the cover of the Committee, and at the same time, not the antagonistic influences you fear. May I plead however that you do not get too many examples of the extreme thought of this century, for we must never forget that the Whitechapel Gallery is intended for the Whitechapel

people, who have to be delicately led and will not understand the Post-  
impressionists or the Futurists methods of seeing and representing things.

I am so pleased that all are working happily together in the beautiful memorial to  
my husband.

Believe me, yours very truly.

Henrietta Barnett

Amongst approximately 400 titles of exhibited works in the exhibition catalogue,  
the name of the then unknown painter, Amedeo Modigliani can be found. Two  
works, *Head* and *Sculpture for Drawing* were shown. In the relevant exhibition file,  
no record of Modigliani's invitation or any other correspondence has survived.  
Surprisingly there is no mention of the artist's name or of the works submitted in  
either the introductory text, the catalogue or in the press cuttings. Here the  
archive communicates the actual fact that Modigliani was indeed, at this point in  
his career, entirely unknown. His name appears only in the list of artists, together  
with David Bomberg, Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer, Clare Winsten, and Alfred  
Wolmark, amongst others who were part of the exhibition. A few years after the  
exhibition in Whitechapel, Modigliani's work earned international renown, and  
today most major modern art museums count at least one Modigliani amongst  
their collection. The artist's work has been commercialised to a great degree and  
in recent years has been reproduced on coasters, aprons and plates, for example.  
Conversely, the encounter with these archival records was grounding and  
sincere; it prompted my thoughts about Modigliani as a young artist (not the

famous 'brand'), as well as the much later (but at the time inconceivable) commercialisation of his work.

As a curator, these journeys in the archive offered me a unique experience that would have been impossible without browsing. If, for instance, I hadn't encountered the letter by Henrietta Barnett I would have missed out on a whole other group of records. The archive holds surprises for the curator, resulting from the direct and tactile interaction with documents of the past, what the Dutch historian Huizinga refers to as *historical sensation*. Similarly, *archival sensation* has its roots and links to historical sensation:

The feeling of an immediate contact with the past, a sensation as deep as the purest enjoyment of the Arts. You touch the essence of things, the experience of Truth through history ... You walk on the street and a barrel organ is playing, and if you approach it, it suddenly brings a breeze of recognition that blows through your mind, as if for a moment you understand things which otherwise would be covered by the shrouds of life ... <sup>90</sup>

The *historical sensation* occurs in moments when, through an unexpected incident, the past and the present unite, and their interconnection is clearly manifest.

Another example from the Whitechapel's archive is drawn from the files entitled 'Press Cuttings' and refers to a 1969 exhibition by Hélio Oiticica. The cuttings

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<sup>90</sup> Johan Huizinga, 'Het historisch museum', *Verzamelde Werken*, 2 (Nederland: Harlem, 1950) p. 566.

reveal a mood of scepticism surrounding the purpose and intention of the artist, which was also a criticism of the Whitechapel in general. Now, with our knowledge of developments in art from the 1970s onwards, these files provide a significant account of the immediate response and fierce critique garnered by an installation now esteemed as one of the first instances of a constructed environment within the art institution.<sup>91</sup>

What's going on at the Whitechapel Gallery (under its new director Mark Glazebrook, who has a formidable tradition to keep up) is not an art exhibition. It's not exactly a fun-fair; the attractions are too few and too faint. It's certainly not a Happening; compared with the street outside it offers a haven of uneventfulness. It's more like a bubble floating above the fumes of E1. At lastly I am plain embarrassed at seeing such a hypersophisticated escapist playground erected in an area where many people's backyards are prisons, clothes are necessities rather than 'encapsulating the human person in circumlocutions of different materials' and where Eden is more likely to resemble a luxury block than a tent pitched at borrowed sand. There is a time and a place, even for dreams.<sup>92</sup>

Although a span of fifty-five years separates the two exhibitions discussed here (the first took place in 1914, the latter in 1969), the archive swiftly drawn links

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<sup>91</sup> Opinions and comments expressed in the press of each period are representative of general beliefs and attitudes. The significance of the collection of press cuttings resides in the insight gained into contested ideas about art. The Whitechapel's collection of press cuttings contains material from 1898 to the present day.

<sup>92</sup> Nigel Gosling, *Observer*, 9 March 1969.

between otherwise unrelated events. Manifest in both Barnett's letter and the Oiticica press cutting is scepticism and uncertainty about modern art practice, and the effect art has upon society. These fears were expressed in two different eras and were instigated by very dissimilar gallery directors, artists and exhibitions. Another observation is that in both eras, the documents underline the Whitechapel's responsibility towards its surrounding community; the gallery's exhibition programme ascribed with direct accountability.

I had also come across a quirky record: a lengthy handwritten account by a member of staff who worked in the gallery as the chief security guard between 1993 and 2003. This man voluntarily recorded and donated to the archive an extensive account of incidents that had taken place during his employment. The nature of his job obliged him to remain standing in the galleries, invigilating. His job was one of the most demanding in the gallery; he had neither an office nor a chair and was compelled to view the same artworks day after day for the span of the exhibition, usually ten weeks. He did, however, have direct contact with the public, and in his account the guard included anecdotes that would not have otherwise been recorded. The text discloses conversations between visitors, unmediated reactions and comments about exhibited works, as well as staff's commentary about artists and even co-workers. Somehow the guard was a living archive of the human relationships that developed in the Whitechapel. He was the main point of information if new members of staff wanted to know details

about events that had taken place in the past, and in the archive this function might persist long beyond the term of his employment. I was surprised to find such a personal account in an institutional archive, it added to the history of the Whitechapel by enhancing the objective facts with these subjective anecdotes. Through the process of archiving, the guard's transcript revealed the informal and unrecorded inner processes of an organisation.

Below I describe the final example of material which, during the initial research period, captured my attention. At the time I regarded it as an interesting file that was unearthed through my browsing; I did not immediately consider it as a record which could be fertile ground for a curator, and certainly could not predict its significance for the future shaping of my thesis. The records were part of former director Bryan Robertson's correspondence with the American Embassy in London and concerned a proposed Picasso exhibition in London. The correspondence revealed fears that a Picasso exhibition would stir leftist political unrest in East London. I associated this with the fact that at the time of this correspondence, in the 1950s, Picasso was heavily involved and visibly associated with the French Communist Party. The contents of this specific box will be described and analysed in Chapter Three, which is devoted to the records related to the 1939 exhibition of Picasso's *Guernica* and the subsequent attempts by gallery directors in the 1950s and 1980s to bring the painting back to Whitechapel.

Browsing excavated information from the archive is comparable to the way the flâneur receives impressions from the city; following random routes, up hills and down, in curves or straight lines. The seemingly aloof flâneur is never ignorant of the city and its secrets. Following my own browsing, my research continued to add pieces to the jigsaw, providing fragments of information that somehow started to make sense as a whole.

In the attempt to analyse and comprehend the reasons behind the fascination and almost addictive nature of the archival experience, I concluded that there are three main characteristics which encourage and sustain this model of research.

The first is the aspect of *isolation*. This, in accordance with the researcher's personal choice, is a desirable condition for concentration; leaving no doubt as to why, in most cases, we enter the archive (or the library) alone. Consequently there is a precise moment in which we take the decision to be alone; to experience something that others will not be able to share. The fact that we consciously enter a public space in order to be isolated seems an oxymoron; nevertheless it is one of the main conditions of academic research. We enter a safe institutional enclosure with the secure knowledge that we will be able to exit it when we decide; it is only a temporary isolation.

The second factor is the *intimacy*, in relation to the material that we view and handle in the archive. We are not the intended reader of the archive. Archival documents thus differ radically from printed texts that are published and will be

distributed in the public domain. The files within archives were not intended for our eyes, but for the eyes of their original recipient. This makes the archive a place for intimacy, appropriation and longing. In *Le goût de l'archive*, Farge talks about the archival document as a 'crude trace of a life'; she continues, 'the archive does not write history but the derisory words of the tragic; it elicits the effect of the real'.

The third and final aspect is *closeness* and the persistence of self. The views we have and the baggage we carry are laid out upon entry to the archive, making the archive a reflection of what we already know and possibly expect to find.<sup>93</sup>

Fentress and Wickham articulate this process:

Behind the display of knowledge and the representation of the experience, behind the facts, emotions and images with which memory seems to be filled there is only ourselves ... The moment we 'think' our memories, recalling and articulating them, they are no longer objects ... At that moment, we find ourselves indissolubly in their centre.<sup>94</sup>

In the archive we usually experience thoughts that can only be fathomed in moments of social isolation and personal concentration. At the same time, the archive offers a mental space where we expect our views to be challenged, by a surprise resulting from our findings; in many cases this expectation fuels the

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<sup>93</sup> Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found'.

<sup>94</sup> James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) p. 201.

continuity of our research. It is as if we are desperately seeking something unknown, or something that will alter our perception of the particular search. And, like the audience of horror films, we anticipate the moment where this surprise will detach us momentarily from the safety of our intellectual shield. This is the moment of *archival discovery* perhaps, as we cannot speak here (as already discussed) about a genuine discovery.

The first thing that becomes apparent in an archive is its appearance; the order of the surrounding environment, the lighting, the colour of the boxes and folders. One notices the smell of oxidised paper and the dust, which remains on hands and white gloves. As a curator entering an archive for the first time, the environment was initially encrypted. I did not understand the combination of numbers, letters and slashes that were written on the outside of folders and boxes and which, I would learn, formed their catalogue number. Whether immersed in archival boxes, shuffling through documents or waiting for the archivist to bring the requested folder to the reading room, a curator experiences an *archival sensation* in the course of his or her visit. The archival sensation opens the keyhole of history and allows a voyeuristic peep inside. Although constrained by the restrictions imposed by each archive, and governing interaction with the material, this glimpse into history gives the impression that one is also participating in the process of the historical web, which only intensifies the curator's fantasy. Curators gain a feeling of being internal to the

documented events, because of the chance they have to view and handle original material, to read enclosed documents and be in a privileged position to re-interpret them. Potentially, they come closer to what was happening *then* in visual arts institutions.

From my own experience in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive I can remark that even the formatting of letters, the formalities used in addressing recipients, the phrases that people used to decline invitations or to comment on the poor handling of an issue, all become messengers of the past. Huizinga claims that his own historical sensation took place when he was looking at the engravings of the seventeenth-century artist Jan van der Velde, whose works were devoid of art-historical significance. *An intoxication of an instant*, the historical sensation that constitutes the historical experience comes unexpectedly without the historian being able to provoke or foresee it. For Huizinga, this experience was triggered not by the work itself but by the details of daily life that were depicted in the engravings.

Huizinga's views on history, although sometimes indirect and seemingly circumstantial, have made a significant contribution to the way in which the cultural and general history of the Middle Ages is conceived. In his work *Autumn of the Middle Ages* history itself is perceived as an experiential field where intuition plays an important role, even greater than material evidence.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Huizinga claims that there can be an emphatic and intuitive approach to history. Although the archive is incapable of offering a re-experience of the past (which has gone forever), it nevertheless provides the impetus for an archival-historical experience of the past. The material contained in an archive might not exactly reflect *how it was* to live in another period, but by providing the mediation which will animate the curator, it can lead to the sensation that Huizinga describes. Direct contact with archival files allows this *archival-historical sensation* to take place and is in fact a physical experience. Tactile interaction with archival material influences the curator in conceiving history not just as an abstract field but as a penetrable one; being present, touching and handling what are conceived as historical documents, enables a direct involvement with historical information. As Huizinga claimed, history is an attainable field open to everybody and calling to be experienced.

## Chapter Three: *The Picasso Material*

## *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery

In the text that follows I give an historical account necessary to understand Picasso's painting *Guernica* and its significance as a work of art and a political symbol.

Gernika is a Basque town in the north of Spain, which was bombed in April 1937. It also lends its name to Picasso's renowned painting, which was commissioned by the Spanish government to decorate the Spanish Pavilion in the International Paris Exposition of 1937. The painting reflects a synergy of the artist's spontaneous reaction to a war crime and his inspiration to produce an artwork, on commission, that would stand out in the international exhibition. According to various sources, such as biographers and fellow artists, Picasso was deeply disturbed by the relentless bombing of Gernika and decided to paint the canvas with reference to the event.<sup>96</sup>

The news of the bombing had circulated around the world, creating an electrified climate throughout Europe and the United States, inciting responses from

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<sup>96</sup> The bombing of Gernika in April 1937 was a catastrophic event which devastated the rest of the world. Carried out by German Nazi pilots (a fact that was covered up and denied by the Nazis and by Franco), it destroyed the majority of the city and caused the death of hundreds of innocent civilians. Public opinion perceived the bombardment of the city as totally unjustified. As Herman Goering, commander in chief of the German Air Force, declared during the war-crime trials, the bombing was also an opportunity to test 'experimental fighter units, bombers, and anti-aircraft guns ... under combat conditions; and added that he constantly rotated German 'volunteers' so that 'the personnel too, might gather a certain amount of experience'. See the *International Military Tribunal: The Trial of the Major War Criminals* [Nuremberg, 1947-49] (testimony of 14 March 1946), IX, pp. 280-282. This is cited in *Picasso's Guernica*, ed. by Ellen C. Oppler (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc, 1988), p. 57.

civilians, politicians and the media. The bombing of Gernika was, at that point, the biggest and cruellest attack against civilians.<sup>97</sup> Picasso was in the early stages of the commission for the Spanish Pavilion and the bombing provided him with an ideal subject.<sup>98</sup> In May 1937, he started sketching drafts and did a many as six sketches in one day. Two months of intense work led to the final painting we know today as *Guernica*, apparently named by vox populi.<sup>99</sup> The canvas was ready to be exhibited in the 1937 Paris Exposition, which bore the ambitious title 'International Exposition – Arts and Technology in Modern Life'. The Spanish

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<sup>97</sup> Historical accounts concur on the duration of the bombing which has been declared to approximately three hours. Bomber planes were targeting the busiest parts of the town during the busiest hours. The raid did not destroy specific targets; instead, raids were focused on the destruction of the whole of the town. Gernika was a particularly important place for the Basque people; an ancient town honoured throughout Spain as the oldest centre of democracy. The Nazis attack is considered an attack not only to the town per se but to a symbol.

<sup>98</sup> Picasso, of Spanish origin, was living in France at the time. Although not explicitly political in either his art or in his personal life, Picasso was mobilised by the bombing. As Picasso has mentioned in interviews, his works were never political or propagandistic, except of *Guernica* – which was his chance to associate his work with his native country and with the horrible realities of war. See 'Picasso in conversation with Jerome Seckler'. Seckler was an American soldier, and part of the first troop contingent to liberate France. He was also an amateur painter who had studied *Guernica*. Seckler met Picasso in two occasions in 1944 and 1945. Their conversation includes important comments by Picasso on his political approach to *Guernica*. The interview was published initially in *New Masses*, March 1945 (New York: International Publishers, 1945), pp. 4–7, and has been frequently republished.

<sup>99</sup> Juan Larrea narrates the anecdote that Picasso held many gatherings in his studio, inviting constructive comments about the work in progress: 'Then one afternoon, towards the middle of June, a group of us went to see the painting which was practically finished. We formed a line of some fifteen well-known persons in front of it and admired the monumental masterpiece, which produced in me profound emotions. And then when we were all more or less silent, Picasso stepped away from the group and, approaching the mural, tore off the remaining papers.' Larrea continues: '... moments later, Picasso repeated the manoeuvre: again he approached the mural and tore off the remaining paper strips and the last one to go was the one on the neck of the child. This evoked a spontaneous round of applause from those present and the applause was followed by warm congratulations. That is how *Guernica* – with the impressive austerity worthy of the Escorial monastery – set off a wonderful hubbub ... if I am not mistaken, the mural received its name by vox populi. Paul Eluard, Christian Zervos, and other French personalities began to call it by this significant stark name inspired by the passionate tempers of the times, a name that Picasso – sharing everyone's outrage – accepted as his own. See Juan Larrea, 'The Unveiling', in *Picasso's Guernica*, pp. 200–201.

pavilion was made of prefabricated flexible materials, and was designed according to modern architecture.

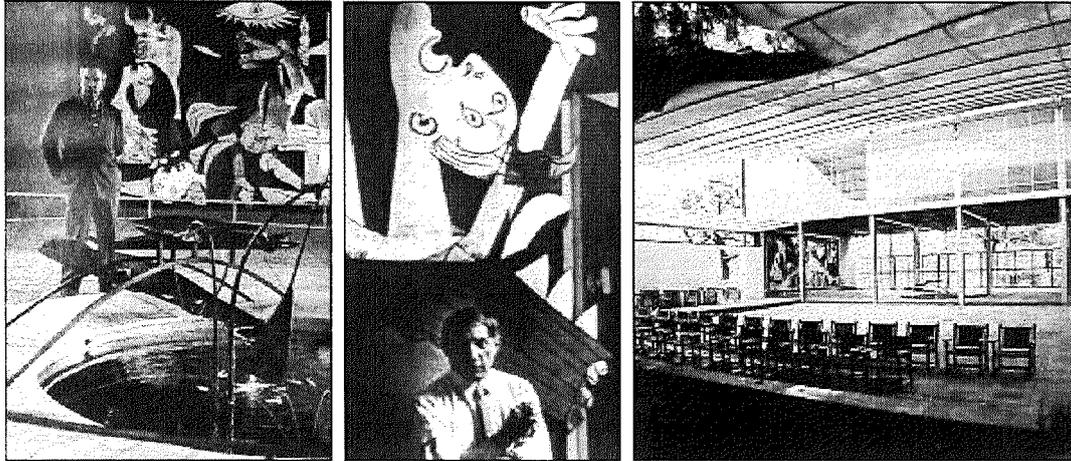


Figure 8, 9 and 10: Views of the Spanish pavilion in the 1937 International Exposition: (left) Alexander Calder by his work *Mercury Fountain*, with *Guernica* in the background; (centre) Picasso in front of *Guernica*; (right) view of the Spanish pavilion from the patio.

The pavilion interior was simple with large open areas where the public could view works of art, including Alexander Calder's *Mercury Fountain*, Picasso's *Guernica* and Joan Miro's *The Reaper*. The works of art were all by well-known artists and in this way compensated the visitor for the modest structure.<sup>100</sup> The pavilion was not designed as a renunciation of Spain's situation; on the contrary it was created very much with the idea that it was representative of a country under civil war. Visitors could either gather in the space which functioned as an

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<sup>100</sup> Josep Lluís Sert, a young Catalan architect, designed the pavilion with the assistance of Lluís Lacasa. The pavilion was clustered among the other European pavilions and positioned very close to the Nazi and Soviet buildings. The Nazi pavilion was an exorbitant 35 metres high, and featured at its apex a German imperial eagle clutching a swastika. The Soviet pavilion featured Vera Mukhina's colossal steel sculpture of a young worker and peasant woman carrying the hammer and sickle of the Soviet revolution. The architects of the Spanish pavilion chose, for reasons of practical economy, prefabricated material from which they assembled the whole pavilion. The simplicity of the pavilion came into contrast with the lavish décor of many of the other pavilions which used marble and expensive materials. See *Picasso's Guernica*, pp. 65–72.

auditorium and patio, or they could enter the structure to view the works of art and attend other events, such as music performances or film.<sup>101</sup>

The first reactions to *Guernica* when it was shown at the Spanish pavilion were mixed. Intense criticism was raised around the fact that *Guernica* was painted in cubist style and was thus not directly figurative. Many critics commented at the time that it was very difficult for the general population and international visitors to understand the work. The media's point was that if the work was about a major social trauma, which severely affected ordinary people, the work had to be understood by ordinary people, who were not connected to the world of art, or conversant with art movements. Against this criticism Picasso maintained an unwavering position.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, a number of art historians and critics expressed views in favour of *Guernica* as a profoundly symbolic painting, rather than a mere cubist abstraction. *Guernica's* individual elements have been analysed broadly; much has already been written and the analysis continues into the twenty-first century. In spite of the concerns that the message of the work was convoluted and difficult to comprehend, *Guernica* has become a symbol for the atrocities of war and the struggle for democracy. At this point I do not wish to detail various critiques raised in relation to *Guernica* but I

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<sup>101</sup> For more information on the Spanish pavilion's construction, including designs, plans and photographs, see *Picasso's Guernica*, pp. 65–72.

<sup>102</sup> Picasso was adamant that his work was a result of his own personal processes and he was not going to compromise to be understood by the masses.

will give a brief account of the main symbols which form *Guernica's* subtext, and which have been much discussed and analysed.

The bulb, the bull, the mother and infant, the feast, the horse – all can be interpreted as symbols which relate to Spanish culture, to liberty, to revolution, and to the human struggle. These symbols, sometimes elusive, have been analysed and through their analysis have prompted different readings of the painting.<sup>103</sup> When asked to interpret his own painting at the Museum of Modern Art symposium on *Guernica* in November 1947, Picasso explained his images as follows:

But this bull is a bull and this horse is a horse. There's a sort of bird too, a chicken or a pigeon, I don't remember now exactly what it is, on a table. And this chicken is a chicken. Sure, they're symbols. But it isn't up to the painter to create symbols; otherwise, it would be better if he wrote them out in so many words instead of painting them. The public who look at the picture must see in the horse and the bull symbols which they interpret as they understand them. There are some

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<sup>103</sup> The key symbolic figures are listed here:

Bull – symbol of Spain perhaps related to Picasso's native heritage; mother and child – recent proponents of psychobiography claim that Picasso is representing his mother giving birth to his sister Lola during a catastrophic earthquake that rocked Malaga in 1884; electric bulb – a device which could symbolise progress, but its shape also resembles a godlike eye observing the scene; the hand with the candle – shedding light on the disastrous scene, 'enlightening' the world; horse – a symbol of a universal victim, which tends to draw the attention of the viewer much more than the weeping women; bird – perhaps a pigeon, a favourite symbol of peace and associated to Picasso's iconography, specifically his celebrated 1949 'peace' poster. See John O. Jordan, 'A Sum of Destructions: Violence, Paternity and Art in Picasso's *Guernica*', *Studies in Visual Communication*, 8.3 (1982), 2–27.

animals. These are animals, massacred animals. That's all, so far as I'm concerned. It's up to the public to see what it wants to see.<sup>104</sup>

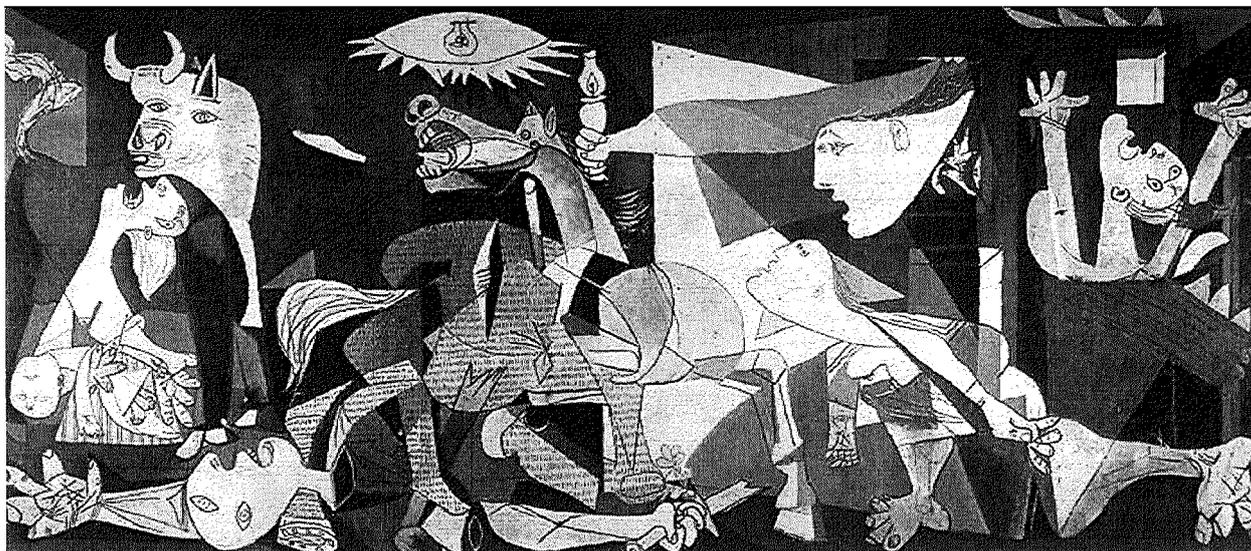


Figure 11: Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937, oil on canvas, 3.49 x 7.76 m, courtesy Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Spain.

Picasso believed that the painting belonged to Spain and he wanted it to become the property of the Spanish people but with one precondition, that Spain should have it only when it became a democratic state. The work was created in France in 1937 and it remained in Europe for almost two years after the first showing at the Paris Exposition.<sup>105</sup>

In 1938, one year after *Guernica* was painted, the work travelled around Europe as part of a campaign to raise funds for the Spanish war relief. It was on this tour

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<sup>104</sup> Symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA). Transcripts available in the MoMA Library. The Moderator of the discussion was Alfred Barr; the participants: Josep Lluís Sert, Jerome Seckler, Juan Larrea, Jacques Lipchitz, and Stuart Davis, with questions from the audience.

<sup>105</sup> In 1939 *Guernica* travelled to the United States, where it resided until 1981, when democracy was secured in Spain. At that time Picasso's lawyer Roland Dumas approved *Guernica's* transfer. The canvas, together with all the studies, was returned to Spain and was initially housed in the Casón del Buen Retiro in Madrid until 1992 when it was finally moved to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.

that the work stopped in London and was shown at the Whitechapel Gallery, amongst other venues. This was a significant event for London's artistic and political scene; perhaps in the West End, where it was shown first, it was appreciated primarily for its artistic value, with some attempt made to diminish its political meaning.<sup>106</sup> In the East End, it was received primarily as a political event and discussions about its artistic value were secondary. The exhibition of *Guernica* cannot be seen in isolation from the demographics of where it was shown. For instance, over the centuries, London's East End had become established as a rich font of political and cultural activity: as a centre of crafts and industry, as the point of reception for immigrants from many lands, and as the home of radical political and social movements.

Here, it is important to present to the reader the background of the London art scene, in order to draw connections and highlight the significance of this exhibition. The political situation in Europe did not leave the artistic community unaffected. These years immediately prior to World War II were pivotal for the strengthening of artists' groups in Britain, many of whom were also pursuing

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<sup>106</sup> Ironically, a few weeks after *Guernica* was shown at the New Burlington Galleries, an exhibition with a very different agenda opened near the room where *Guernica* was shown. It was an exhibition by Ignacio Zuloaga, a Spanish painter known to be a supporter of Franco. The exhibition was organised by Lady Ivy Chamberlain whose husband Sir Austin, had described Mussolini as 'a man with whom business can be done'. Lady Ivy wrote in the catalogue essay: 'For many years generations of Spaniards have been struggling to rehabilitate their nation. Zuloaga portrays the spiritual aspect of that struggle; it is part of his endeavour to recover the soul of Spain.' The exhibition of Zuloaga seems to have been a carefully orchestrated event designed to diminish *Guernica* and the Republicans' message. The exhibition attracted a good deal of attention in Spain, and focused especially on 'old' Spain and folklore. See Gijs Van Hensbergen, *Guernica, The Biography of a Twentieth Century Icon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) p. 92.

political agendas.<sup>107</sup> Other factors assisted the climate of growth and enabled new platforms which sustained diverse art activities, such as the newly established London Gallery and a periodical, the *London Bulletin*, which aimed to support the artists' groups who were forming under the wider umbrella of surrealism. The painter Roland Penrose was a key figure in organising artist groups and instigating activities and discussions.<sup>108</sup> Penrose was also a close collaborator with the Belgian surrealist E.L.T Mesens, who was in a transitional phase between leaving Belgium and settling in London. During 1937, Mesens took over the London Gallery at 28 Cork Street.<sup>109</sup> The gallery had been active in promoting modern art but did not have a specific policy before that time. Under Mesens's direction the gallery became a centre 'for resistance against obscurantism, making surrealism a pivot of living, avant-garde art'.<sup>110</sup> In a way, the London Gallery and the *London Bulletin* became the rallying force before the outbreak of war, for all progressive actions in art and culture; it did not concentrate specifically on surrealism. Spain held particular interest because of its political situation; the civil war outbreak, and the threat fascism posed to democracy.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See below for information on the Propaganda Art Courses, organised in East London by Norman King.

<sup>108</sup> Penrose became a known public figure later in the forties, as the founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) London.

<sup>109</sup> The London Gallery was originally founded in 1936 by Mrs Clifford Norton and Mrs Cunningham Strettell.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Remy, *Surrealism in Britain* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, Ashgate, 1999), p. 148.

<sup>111</sup> Amongst many fundraising events and marches that were organised to help the Spanish people, British surrealists contributed 'Declaration on Spain', a statement published in 1936,

The organisation of a Picasso exhibition in London, and particularly the decision to show *Guernica* in art galleries and other spaces, should also be seen in light of this vibrant pre-war climate.

Penrose, Picasso's close friend, arranged directly with the artist for the painting to be lent for a tour immediately after the 1937 Paris Exposition. In Penrose's absence, Mesens organised the first showing at the New Burlington Galleries.

The tour was organised to raise funds in aid of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, and its itinerary is listed here:

New Burlington Galleries, London (4–28 October 1938);

Leeds; (November–December 1938);

Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (31 December 1938 – 14 January 1939) and Manchester (1–15 February 1939).<sup>112</sup>

After the tour of English cities, the painting returned to France.

*Guernica* was shown for the first time in London at the New Burlington Galleries; it attracted many visitors but the attendance numbers were not as high as in Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and especially in East London at the Whitechapel. At the New Burlington Galleries approximately 3,000 visitors were recorded.

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which openly denounced the British Government for its non-intervention policy in other European countries, such as Portugal, thus, allowing Franco's forces to continue without much resistance from Europe.

<sup>112</sup>In Manchester the painting was shown at a car dealership. See van Hensbergen, p. 95.

Attendance was at its highest when the work was shown at Whitechapel, where approximately 12,000 visitors visited the gallery and £250 was raised.<sup>113</sup>

'The misgivings of those who imagined that Picasso's work would mean nothing to the working classes have proven false', noted Penrose.<sup>114</sup> The violence and absurdity of the bombing of Gernika had a profound and shocking effect upon the spectators. The exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery was organised under the auspices of the Labour Party and the Stepney Trade Council. Clement Attlee, Leader of the Labour Party, opened the exhibition and a number of other dignitaries were also invited to speak at the launch. The Whitechapel Gallery Archive unfortunately does not hold extensive records from the opening event. There are very few photographs of *Guernica* installed in the Whitechapel in which the work can be seen as a whole, but it does appear as a backdrop to Attlee's speech. Research on the actual display relies on a limited number of sources, such as press cuttings from that period as well as notes from past archivists and volunteers who were interested in finding out details about *Guernica's* showing.

It is believed that approximately forty people were present at the opening event. One of the confirmed speakers was the artist Julian Trevelyan and it is possible that other speakers included Tom Driberg (left-wing journalist and politician)

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<sup>113</sup> Information on visitors' attendance can be read in the local press of that period, copies can be viewed at the Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

<sup>114</sup> *London Bulletin*, January-February 1939, p. 59.

and James Cant.<sup>115</sup> Considering the significance of this event, there is still a lot of research to be done in order to gather the missing information from the Whitechapel's archive. For one of the gallery's most significant events the archive refuses to provide easy answers. One can continue the research through further exploration of photographs and records, and by looking for people who were present at the opening event. It is known, for instance, that members of the International Brigade were in attendance, and perhaps surviving members would be willing to contribute material that would both enhance the archive and shed light upon the interesting synergy between art and political propaganda. The fact that *Guernica* appeared at the Whitechapel in 1939 has been very significant for the gallery's history. Press from that period represents it as a significant occasion and a landmark event for the surrounding community. In *Surrealism in Britain*, Remy writes:

Though Picasso's painting became the occasion for a rather mixed gathering of politicians, writers, art lovers and realists and surrealists alike, the aim of the

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<sup>115</sup> The information about the speakers is taken from a single sheet of A4 typewritten paper (with some handwriting) that is deposited in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. The document is unsigned and undated and was found amongst assorted material related to *Guernica*. The handwritten comments seem vague and the information on the sheet is unconnected; the person who wrote the notes seems to have been searching for information on *Guernica's* presentation at the Whitechapel. The author mentions that they have been in touch with Julian Trevelyan and according to Trevelyan's testimony Tom Driberg, James Cant and F.E. Williams all spoke about the painting at the opening ceremony at the Whitechapel. Then the author continues by mentioning that Trevelyan provided Williams' telephone number (which he or she discloses). The person spoke to Williams, who said he was never involved with the Whitechapel presentation, and had seen the work when it was shown at the New Burlington Galleries. See inventory item IV, pp. 123-24.

exhibition, widely publicised, was the raising of funds in aid of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. It must be admitted that most of those who agreed to be patrons were more interested in the political meaning of the work than in the aesthetic challenge it posed.<sup>116</sup>

As the statistics demonstrate, the exhibition at the Whitechapel attracted those who were more politically sensitised. In my view, this also relates to the demographics of East London, a neighbourhood constituted by immigrants, people with lower incomes – hence groups which were more sensitive and vulnerable to political change – as well as a significant number of Jewish immigrants who had formed strong intellectual circles, buttressed by left-wing ideology. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, the exhibition raised awareness of *Guernica's* political scope and, by extension, of the atrocities of the fascist regime sweeping Europe.<sup>117</sup>

Further evidence of East London's status as a political hotbed in the 1930s, is provided by the establishment of the innovative Propaganda Art Course, which was organised by Norman King, a political activist and photographer whose wife

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>117</sup> Spain was already engaged in civil war and dictators ruled Europe. Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain collaborated in support of right-wing factions. The Spanish Civil War started in 1936 when rightist plots intensified against the newly-shaped government, which was formed by Republicans, Socialists, Communists, labour unions and even Anarchists. The civil war erupted in July 1936 as a coordinated revolt of army chiefs in Spanish Morocco and in the garrison towns of mainland Spain. Mussolini and Hitler assisted the insurgents. In November 1937, the two dictators recognised the Nationalists. (Depending on which side historians were on, they either employed the term 'Nationalists' or 'Rebels' and 'Insurgents', and for the government forces as either 'Loyalists' or 'Republicans'; Franco's side, as the official government of Spain, named them the Reds (*caudillo* being equivalent to *il Duce* and *der Führer*).

donated his personal papers to the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. The course took place twice a week at the Christchurch Parish Hall on Commercial Road.<sup>118</sup> King was also involved in bringing *Guernica* to the Whitechapel, possibly through his connection to the Communist party; both King and his wife ran as candidates for the party in the 1949 local elections.

Since the 1930s, the exhibition of *Guernica* has been the subject of some attention at Whitechapel Gallery, most notably in recent publicity material in support of the Whitechapel Project (the gallery's expansion to include the adjacent Whitechapel Library building): 'The Whitechapel has premiered international artists such as Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Nan Goldin...'<sup>119</sup>

As mentioned above, the archive does not hold extensive material from the exhibition of *Guernica*, or from the politically significant opening ceremony fronted by Clement Attlee. It does, however, hold other records which refer to Picasso and which are from a different context and era. For my own research it was extremely important to have come across these records in a fairly condensed block of time. The later Picasso records lingered in my memory, and allowed me

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<sup>118</sup> The aim of the Propaganda Art Course was to train people to make their own material for propaganda purposes such as posters, banners, typography and leaflets. Classes took place twice a week in the evenings and the course issued leaflets and notes covering the various subjects. The Whitechapel's archive has a number of the leaflets, as well as many photographs from demonstrations and other group activities that King and his fellow colleagues organised.

<sup>119</sup> Similar phrases feature in a variety of brochures and other printed material to promote specific events, development schemes and the Whitechapel Project. The sentence I quoted is taken from the Whitechapel's Facebook entry.

<[http://www.facebook.com/WhitechapelGallery?\\_fb\\_noscript=1#/WhitechapelGallery?v=app\\_2374336051](http://www.facebook.com/WhitechapelGallery?_fb_noscript=1#/WhitechapelGallery?v=app_2374336051)>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

to associate and interweave what were genuinely unrelated events. The fact that through my browsing I had acquired a spherical reading of the archive was very important as I was able to highlight records which were incomplete and presented many gaps.

I will refer again to the content of one of the first boxes I encountered, as mentioned in Chapter Two. The material of interest was from the 'Directors' Files', in papers deposited by Robertson.<sup>120</sup> From the first reading, I found the material enlightening. The papers indicated that in the 1950s, Robertson attempted to establish a Picasso exhibition at the Whitechapel. The file included all the correspondence between Robertson and various British and international organisations, regarding fundraising, the loan of works and other details concerned with the exhibition. From the letters I have now researched it is clear that Robertson did not have an easy task, as many museums were unable to lend Picasso works, due to either their condition or availability. In addition, it is apparent that some of the sponsors, including the American Embassy in London were unable to offer financial support. At the time, although these records seemed revealing and of historic value, I was not in a position to draw links with other archival records. The political reflections they conveyed, and the fact that I had started this research with the intention of discovering the impetus for a curatorial project, prompted me to note them in detail. Further to the

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<sup>120</sup> Chapter Two, *Experiencing the Whitechapel Gallery Archive*, pp. 88-89.

aforementioned material, I came across a significant box of 1980s files, containing Nicholas Serota's documents, outlining an idea he was developing to bring *Guernica* back to the Whitechapel Gallery; an idea triggered by the fact that *Guernica* was finally leaving MoMA to return to Spain. Serota considered this occasion a remarkable opportunity and envisaged a revival of the 1938/39 tour. His attempts, as the archived correspondence reveals, resulted in a negative outcome and *Guernica*, once again, failed to return to the Whitechapel Gallery.<sup>121</sup> My research for archival records that would result in a curatorial project addressing *Guernica's* pre-war display, highlighting its significance for the Whitechapel's history as well as its broader political significance, continued until I felt I had found sufficient material to plan the intended event.

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<sup>121</sup> Note the similar outcome to Robertson's attempts earlier in the century; MoMA refused collaboration, in spite the director's concerted efforts and the fact that the Whitechapel could offer a secure environment for the painting.

## Inventory of material

Below, I will provide a full inventory of the archive contents related to Picasso and *Guernica*. These are the precise records that I had noted in anticipation of a curatorial project that would highlight their multifaceted political potential.<sup>122</sup>

There is only limited material related to the first presentation of *Guernica* in 1939, and from Serota's efforts in the 1980s, and for these periods I have provided either a transcript or a precise description of these documents. The Whitechapel Gallery Archive records the early exhibition of *Guernica* via a small number of black-and-white photographs showing Clement Atlee speaking at the official opening, in front of the large canvas.<sup>123</sup> In addition, there are a small number of listings and press cuttings. Very little information is available as to the exact content of the exhibition; and the identity of the official speakers, their topics of address, as well as other details of the exhibition remain unknown.

Each item is presented in the order it was found within the original file. The order should, in principle, be chronological, although frequently, as a result of previous consultation, items lose their exact sequence. I wish to maintain and respect the order in which I found the documents. Although in some cases it

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<sup>122</sup> As the 'Directors' Files' form an independent category in the archive, I have scanned the group of documents; two letters from the archive are reproduced on pages 146-147, and the complete correspondence is included in the attached CD.

<sup>123</sup> The original photographs from the opening ceremony belong to The Roland Penrose Archives, Dean Gallery, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

would have been justified to intervene, to alter their sequence and reinstate a chronological order, I refrained from doing so. I have also included the catalogue numbers which appear at the top of each group.<sup>124</sup> This number refers to the general file to which the document belongs and is not the number of an individual document:

WAG/EAR/4/62 – This file contains early documents related to the exhibition of *Guernica*, Serota's correspondence as well as recent research that Jon Newman conducted to trace more archive material from the 1939 event:

- I. An A4 typewritten page probably produced in the 1980's. There is an underlined headline: people to call: pics/articles on *Guernica* at WAG Jan 1939 [sic]. The page contains a list of newspaper titles, including many still published today, such as *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Daily Express*, *Sun*, and other titles, such as the *Listener* and *Illustrated London News*. Handwritten notes alongside each newspaper title note 'will ring back', 'to let us know in 10 days', 'nothing', etc.

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<sup>124</sup> The catalogue numbers at the Whitechapel are a basic indication of the nature of the material, as is common in archives, libraries and museums cataloguing. The logic is AUTHOR/TYPE OF MATERIAL/PERIOD/INDIVIDUAL NUMBER. WAG stands for Whitechapel Art Gallery, and accordingly (see above) EAR for Early, DIR for Director and PHOT for Photograph. The numbers indicate the natural chronological sequence of the material and the very final numbers refer to specific items. For example WAG/EAR/2/1-15 means that this is a file whose author is the Whitechapel, it contains early material (1887-1947), these are exhibition related, and the quantity of items in the file is 15 (each numbered 1-15).

II. An A4 letter produced on a word processor, printed on headed paper from Lambeth Environmental Services and signed by Jon Newman, Archives Manager in Lambeth.<sup>125</sup> The letter is dated 15 December 1997 and is addressed to Mrs Marion King, whom Newman thanks for the granting of access to her late husband's papers 'last week'.<sup>126</sup> Newman adds that King's daughter has recently informed him that she has found further material relating to the *Guernica* exhibition in 1939. 'This is terribly exciting', he writes, and he is looking forward to another visit. Newman closes the letter by saying that he has spoken to the head of the Finsbury Library about her husband's papers and drawings and there is interest in acquiring these for the library.

III. Two A3 photocopies of a newspaper page. The newspaper's title is not legible but is written with pencil at the top of one of the photocopied pages [*Voice of East London*]. The main title of the article is 'At Whitechapel Art Gallery - Spanish Painter's *Guernica*'. The first paragraph starts by describing the event as 'outstanding': 'The outstanding attraction at the exhibition in the Whitechapel Art Gallery in connection with the Stepney Trades Council's Spanish foodship campaign will be the showing of

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<sup>125</sup> This must have been produced during the period that Jon Newman was archivist at the Whitechapel Gallery.

<sup>126</sup> Marion King, a retired teacher, had been politically active in the Communist Party as a young woman in the 1940's. She was married to Norman King, political activist and photographer and founder of the Propaganda Art Courses.

Picasso's *Guernica*.' The article continues by providing the necessary conceptual and historical tools for the reader to better understand the painting:

Because the picture is so advanced, because it is painted in a peculiarly Spanish way and because the East End of London has had so little opportunity of seeing and becoming accustomed to modern art, it is natural that this picture should, at first, be found difficult to understand. I think it will be easier to understand, however, when I have explained the circumstances under which it was painted.

The text concludes with a description of *Guernica*'s production and is divided into six sections, entitled: 'Lover of Freedom', 'Horrible Crime Against Humanity', 'Picture Inspired', 'Analogous Meaning', 'Unquestionable Spirit', 'Starvation the New Peril'. On the right column, which occupies a third of the newspaper page, an exhibition announcement gives the opening hours, capped by the slogan 'One million pennies will send a food ship from East London'.

- IV. An A4 page with typewritten notes.<sup>127</sup> The document is unsigned and undated; it is typed with vague handwritten comments. The person who wrote the notes seems to have been searching for information on *Guernica's* presentation at the Whitechapel. The author mentions that they have been in touch with Julian Trevelyan and according to Trevelyan's testimony Tom Driberg, James Cant and F.E. Williams all spoke about the painting at the opening ceremony at the Whitechapel. The author continues by mentioning that Trevelyan provided Williams' telephone number (which he or she discloses). The person spoke to Williams, who said he was never involved with the Whitechapel presentation, and had seen the work when it was shown at the New Burlington Galleries.
- V. Two A4 pages, photocopies from Penrose's book *Picasso: His Life and Work* (1958). The photocopies are of pages 286 and 287, from the chapter entitled '*Guernica*'.
- VI. An A4 typewritten letter to Penrose, dated 18 April 1980, and signed by Serota. The letter starts with the phrase 'Picasso is in everyone's minds at the moment, not simply because of the large exhibition, but also because so much of his work, especially the late work, quite suddenly seems particularly relevant for younger painters'. Serota continues by

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<sup>127</sup> I have referred to this record in footnote 115 of Chapter Three, p. 115.

acknowledging the fact that *Guernica* will be returning to Europe after four decades in the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA). He wonders whether one could repeat 'the tour of European capitals that was made in 1938-39 and in which London involved showing the paintings both in the West End and, of course, at the Whitechapel'. He concludes that he will be in New York at the time of the opening 'of their show' and that he will speak to MoMA curator, William Rubin. Finally, he asks if Penrose approves of the idea and if he is willing to suggest anyone else that Serota should contact about this matter.

VII. A slightly smaller than A4 letter dated 1 May 1980, from Penrose to Serota.

The letter is very brief. Penrose acknowledges Serota's letter of 18 April 1980 and remarks that the notion to return *Guernica* to London is 'a bright idea', but he fears the fragile condition of the painting may prevent the MoMA officials from giving permission. He adds 'so I am afraid for that reason alone the idea is unlikely to be workable', and concludes with the hope that they will both meet in New York in mid-May for 'the opening'.

VIII. An A4 typewritten letter dated 15 May 1980 from Serota to Penrose. The letter is brief. Serota thanks Penrose for his 'note on *Guernica*'. He continues by saying that there has been a meeting in Madrid between Margaret McLeod, British Council exhibition organiser, and 'the man

responsible for the return of *Guernica* [sic] to Spain'. Serota informs Penrose that in the meeting it was decided that the painting was too fragile to travel anywhere else between New York and Madrid. He finishes by saying that 'his disappointment is tempered by hearing that Joanna [Drew] has almost obtained final agreement for a major showing of the Picasso estate at the Hayward next summer'.

IX. An A4 photocopy of the *Voice of East London* as described in III.

X. An A4 typewritten letter dated 29 April 1980. The letter is written by Martin Rewcastle and is addressed to Max Levitas, London, E1. Rewcastle is asking for Levitas's help in the preparation of a strong proposal for bringing *Guernica* back to East London, on its way from MoMA to Madrid. Rewcastle says that he is writing to him after 'Dan Jones' suggestion' and because Rewcastle had recollections of the meetings held by the Trade Council in late 1938 (the year that *Guernica* was exhibited in London). He finishes with the hope that Rewcastle will call him as soon as possible; in his own words 'there is very little time left to put together a strong case for the exhibition'.

XI. Two A4 pages with typewritten text stapled together and dated 6 February 1980. The announcement is from MoMA and the headed paper is

especially designed with the logo: *Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition – Picasso*. The letter begins ‘Dear Museum Director’ and is not personally addressed to Serota. It announces the availability of ‘special group ticket arrangements for art museums and college and university art departments for its forthcoming exhibition ‘PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE’, and continues ‘This offer is available only to art museum and university art department groups, and tickets can be ordered through the Museum’s Education department’. What follows are details of the exhibition and analytic reference to the exact number of works and their medium. Booking procedure and prices follow (the group ticket was \$4.50). The announcement is signed ‘Richard E. Oldenburg, Director’.

WAG/EAR/4/62A (i) – The file contains early documents related to the exhibition of *Guernica*, Norman King’s papers as well recent research that Jon Newman conducted to trace more archive material from the 1939 event.

XII. Three items held together with a paper clip: Two press cuttings, one from *News Chronicle*, 9 January 1939 and the other from *New English W...* (the third word of the title is illegible), 12 January 1939, and a card from Piccadilly Rare Books Ltd.<sup>128</sup> The press cuttings are very small (one three-and-a-half lines, the other seven-and-a-half lines of a newspaper column).

Both cuttings have been distributed by the ‘General Press Cutting

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<sup>128</sup> Extensive research on possible newspaper titles starting with ‘New English’ published circa 1930s has not brought any results.

Association Ltd' and are glued onto a small green piece of paper. The cutting from *News Chronicle* is reproduced over the page:

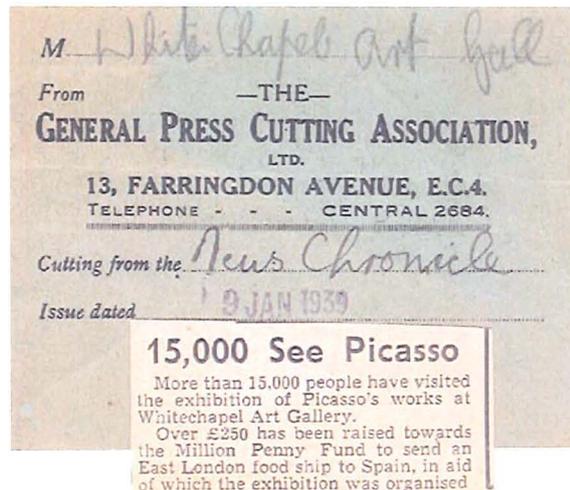


Figure 12: *News Chronicle* press cutting, 9 January 1939, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

The other cutting, from *New English W...* reads:

GO TO THE WHITECHAPEL AND SEE [sic] "Guernica," Picasso's latest hit staged in London's theatre of war. A big banner of truce between the pinks and the duns.

The card is A6 in size with brief handwritten notes on *Guernica's* exhibition at the New Burlington Gallery. It includes the date, the title of the exhibition and mentions the fact that the exhibition was held under the auspices of the 'Spanish Relief'. A figure of £20 is also noted on the card.

XIII. Three identical black-and-white photographs, each 20 x 25 cm, depicting a small group of protesters who are holding two banners which read:

'FRANCO "MURDERER" - FREE CARABANCHEL "10" - P.C.E.' (sign of hammer and sickle) and 'FREEDOM FOR THE CARABANCHEL!'

The clothing indicates this photograph was most likely taken in the 1970s.

Some of the figures appear to be covering their faces with scarves or their

collars. At the back of one photograph, which is of better quality and is

possibly it is the original, there is a logo and a copyright note: 'Morning

Star Photograph. 75 Farringdon Road, London E.C.1. 01-405 9242.

Copyright'.

- XIV. A horizontal black-and-white photograph, 20 × 15cm, depicting the official opening of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery. Eleven people are seated in front of *Guernica*. Clement Attlee is standing and appears to be speaking into a microphone. Three men with their backs turned to the camera are seated in the audience. The back of the photograph is imprinted with a logo and a copyright note: 'Copyright, Illustrated Press. 29, Water Lane, London, E.C.4.'



Figure 13: Clement Attlee, speaking at the official opening of *Guernica*, 31 December 1938, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, Roland Penrose Archives.

XV. A vertical black-and-white photograph, 20 x 15cm, depicting the official opening of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery (photographed from a different angle). Seven people are seated in front of *Guernica*. Attlee is standing and appears to be speaking into a microphone. The back of the photograph is imprinted with a logo and a copyright note: 'Copyright, Illustrated Press, 29, Water Lane, London, E.C.4.'

XVI. A horizontal black-and-white photograph, 23 x 16cm, depicting the official opening of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery (photographed, once again, from a different angle). Nine people are seated in front of *Guernica*. Attlee is standing and appears to be speaking into a microphone. Seven people, men and women, with their backs turned to the camera are seated in the audience.



Figure 14: Clement Attlee, official opening of *Guernica*, 31 December 1938, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, Roland Penrose Archives.

XVII. Two horizontal black-and-white photographs showing Attlee in conversation with two men. Attlee is flanked by the men and is greeting the man on his left with a handshake. A third man in the background is looking directly at the lens, and he is positioned at the far right of the image. Posters and a banner are visible in the background. The banners bear the slogan 'Major Attlee Battalion'. The back of the photograph is imprinted with a logo and a copyright note: 'Copyright, Illustrated Press. 29, Water Lane, London, E.C.4.'



Figure 15: Clement Attlee (middle) with two unnamed men at the official opening of *Guernica*, 31 December 1938, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, Roland Penrose Archives.

XVIII. An A4 page, a photocopy from a typewritten text. The main heading is '*City and East London Observer*, Saturday 7 January 1939, p. 7'. This seems to be a press release. The second heading is 'Spain Exhibition at Whitechapel, Opened by Major Attlee'. A short text follows:

On Saturday afternoon, Major C.R. Attlee, MP for Limehouse, and Leader of the Opposition, opened an exhibition of Spanish art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, organised by the Stepney Trades Council, in connection with a campaign to raise 1,000,000 pennies to send a foodship to Spain from East London. Councillor R. Silkoff presided at the ceremony, which was attended by members of the International Brigade.

The Exhibition is open until January 14<sup>th</sup>, and every evening a programme of talking films is given. In the entrance hall is the flag of

'Major Attlee' Battallion [sic], and among the pictures exhibited is the famous painting 'Guernica' by Picasso.

The campaign is being supported by the Mayor of Stepney, (Councillor J.Johnson JP) who is a patron of the East London Aid Spain Committee.

- XIX. An A5 handwritten note on headed paper from Marx Memorial Library, 11 May 1986. The note reads: 'Hope this is what you want' and is signed A.D.Atiensa (International Brigade Archive). Nothing else is attached to this document.
- XX. An A5 handwritten note on headed paper from Marx Memorial Library, 11 May 1986. This is very similar to the preceding record. The note reads: 'Hope this is what you want. Thanks for photos' and is signed A.D.Atiensa (International Brigade Archive).
- XXI. Three pages from an A5 notebook with handwritten notes. The notes are written both horizontally and diagonally: 'Get copy for archive and Norman King', 'The Voice of E. London January 1939 article by Wm. Busby (helping with exhibition - Spanish Art AIA)', 'Moxhouse Library Andrew Davies (Lib) - called will send a copy', 'Norman King (and his address)'. The third page reads: 'Isabelle, This is important [sic] Norman King has photographs of exhibitions of *Guernica* in Whitechapel in 1935 [sic] showing opening by Attlee - could you obtain prints please [sic].'

XXII. An A4 page with the title *East London Advertiser*, Saturday 7 January 1939.

The subtitle is 'Aid Spain, Exhibition, Paintings for Picasso, Major Attlee and a Crucial Struggle'. The text focuses on Attlee's speech at the opening of *Guernica's* display at the Whitechapel. Included are quotes from the speech:

If once Fascism gets hold, the people who will suffer most will be the young. Fascism tries to make the younger generation in its own image, to make every boy into the image of Hitler or Mussolini.

A parenthesis further down reads: 'article continues to outline speech, about defeating Fascism, etc.' The article continues:

The exhibition comprised the *Guernica* Exhibition and paintings and drawings, by the great Spanish painter, Picasso. The exhibition which will be open for a fortnight is being held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, to raise funds for the Spanish Republican People, and is part of a drive for a Million Penny Fund, organised by the East London Aid Spain Committee. Cllr. Silkoff, Secretary of the Trades Council welcomed visitors, and also members of the International Brigade, who were presented to Major Attlee. Apart from the artistic value of the paintings, the exhibition is unique, in that it is the first time that the work of a master of the standing of Picasso has been brought to the East End of London. In view of the

interests aroused, a very large attendance is anticipated. Well-known artists and critics including Mr Eric Newton, Mr Herbert Read and Mr William Penrose will be at the Art Gallery to explain the paintings and to answer questions.

The material listed below belonged to Norman King and was included in the same file; although these items are not directly relevant to the presentation of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel, they reflect the involvement of political activists in the organisation of the exhibition. This must be the material that Newman refers to in his thank you letter to King's widow, Marion in item XLVII.<sup>129</sup>

XXIII. An A5 Arts Council headed letter, 28 October 1985, with the handwritten note: From Norman King (address), Received Five Photographs of the Whitechapel A/G of *Guernica*, 1939 - for 'Homage to Barcelona'.<sup>130</sup>

XXIV. A season ticket for the exhibition 'Homage to Barcelona' in Norman King's name. Issued by the Arts Council, the ticket is attached to a compliment slip, which reads: 'Season ticket enclosed. Catalogue dispatched under separate cover. Marianne Ryan, Exhibition Organiser.'

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<sup>129</sup> See Item XLVII, pp. 143-44.

<sup>130</sup> 'Homage to Barcelona' was the title of an exhibition which was organised by the Arts Council and which took place at the Hayward Gallery (14 November 1985 - 23 February 1986). It appears that King had given some of his *Guernica* photographs for this exhibition.

- XXV. An A4 loan form from the Arts Council with Norman King's details and the credits of the five photographs which were lent to the exhibition.
- XXVI. An A4 Arts Council headed typewritten letter, 11 October 1985, (attached to the preceding loan form) explaining the form to King and asking for confirmation of his agreement to send the photographs. Andrew Dempsey, Assistant Director in charge of London exhibitions, signs the letter.<sup>131</sup>
- XXVII. An A4 Arts Council headed typewritten letter, 8 April 1986, addressed to Mr King from Joanna Drew, Arts Council. The letter begins: 'I am, writing on behalf of the Arts Council to say how grateful we are for your generosity in lending to the "Homage to Barcelona" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London', and it finishes with the paragraph 'It has been a great privilege for the Arts Council to have had the opportunity of presenting such an exhibition in London in collaboration with the Ajuntament of Barcelona and the Generalitat of Catalunya. Please accept this expression of thanks on behalf of the three organising bodies.' Joanna Drew, Director of Arts, signs the letter.

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<sup>131</sup> Coincidentally, Andrew Dempsey is a curator and partner of Catherine Lampert, who was director at Whitechapel Gallery (1988–2001).

XXVIII. A black-and-white photograph, 15 x 20cm, showing a group of people protesting. They hold large effigies of men and big banners. In one of the banners the following text is clearly visible: 'Spain 1937, Basque Catholic, Here fight for Democracy'. There is no indication of when the photograph was taken or of the identity of the photographer.



Figure 16: Demonstrations in protest of the Spanish Civil War, 1937, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

XXIX. A black-and-white photograph, 20 x 25cm, showing a monument. The monument is rectangular and stands on a stone base. Within the large frame stands a smaller frame housing a bust of Lenin. There is a plaque with the following text: 'Lenin Lived in the House Opposite This Site 1902–1903'. A broken chain is visible at the base of the monument, although it is unclear from the photograph if the chain is part of the construction, a security device, or unconnected to the monument. At the

back of the photograph there is a sticker with Norman and Marion King's address.

XXX. A cutting from a magazine featuring details of a television programme, from 9 November 1985. 'Saturday Review', to be broadcast on Saturday evening, will cover, amongst other events, the exhibition 'Homage to Barcelona' at the Hayward Gallery. The programme was presented by Russell Davies and other subjects covered in the programme include, Catherine Deneuve's nomination as 'the new face of the French Republic', Marina Warner's quest to find a 1985 'Britannia', and Kurt Schwitters' major retrospective at Tate.

XXXI. Two copies of the left-wing journal *Finsbury Clarion*, issue no. 63, April 1949, priced twopence [sic]. The journal is slightly smaller than A4 and has only 8 pages. One of the copies is marked at the top with the phrase 'See pages 4 and 7'. Page four features a small article by Kath King (Communist candidacy for St. Philip's Ward), titled 'Schools Meal Scandal', referring to her proposals for improved school meals. Page seven features a small article by Norman King (Communist candidacy for St. Philip's Ward), titled 'Don't Be Fooled', alerting readers to looming anticommunist propaganda, expected due to the forthcoming elections: 'You will, no doubt, hear a lot of this sort of thing from the loudspeakers

during the election period. A red scare makes an afficient [sic] red herring.'

XXXII. A preview invitation card for the Arts Council exhibition 'Homage to Barcelona', Tuesday 12 November from 6–8pm. The invitation features Francesc Xavier Nogués's work, *Two Cloaked Men with a Large Glass of Wine* (1915), and it bears the logo of the exhibition sponsor, SEAT (Sociedad Española de Automoviles de Turismo).<sup>132</sup>

XXXIII. An A5 private view invitation card for two people, for the Arts Council exhibition 'Homage to Barcelona', Wednesday 13 November 1–8pm at the Hayward Gallery. The card has information on the opening hours of the exhibition and the admission price (£2.50).

XXXIV. Four fold-out brochures from the exhibition 'Homage to Barcelona' with general information about the exhibition, images of the exhibited works and a list of events taking place throughout the duration of the show.

XXXV. An A6 invitation to the '1939 Exhibition', an exhibition organised by the Artists International Association which took place at the Whitechapel Art Gallery (9 February – 7 March 1939). At the top, with red ink, the invitation reads: 'The exhibition will be opened by THE MAN IN THE

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<sup>132</sup> SEAT (Sociedad Española de Automoviles de Turismo), automobile manufacturer established in Spain since 1950.

STREET'. Below this line there is an explanation of the exhibition concept and content, 'A cross-section of every form of contemporary art in Great Britain exhibited as a demonstration of the Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy and Cultural Progress'. There is no list of exhibiting artists, but rather a list of the advisory committee: James Bateman, A.R.A., Vanessa Bell, Misha Black, Sir Muirhead Bone, LL.D., D.Litt, Eric Gill, Duncan Grant, Augustus John, E. McKnight Kauffer, Hon. R.D.I., Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Lucien Pissarro. At the back of the invitation there are printed details of two events organised to coincide with the exhibition. The events are: Thursday 16 February, 8pm, 'They Know What They Like', Criticisms of the Present Exhibition. Speaker: Frederick Laws (Art Critic for *News Chronicle*). In the Chair: Quentin Bell; Thursday 2 March, 8pm, 'The Artist - What does he do; what could he do; what he can't do'. Speaker: Eric Newton (Art critic for *Sunday Times* and *Manchester Guardian*). In the Chair: Robert Medley. The final line reads: 'A discussion will follow each lecture. Admission is free'.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> The Artists International Association (AIA) was an exhibiting society founded in London in 1933 and active until 1971. It was principally a left-of-centre political organisation that embraced all styles of art both modernist and traditional. Its aim was the 'Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy and Cultural Development'. It held a series of large group exhibitions on political and social themes beginning in 1935 with the exhibition 'Artists against Fascism and War'. The AIA supported the left-wing republican side in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) through exhibitions and other fundraising activities. It tried to promote wider access to art through travelling exhibitions and public mural paintings. In 1940 it published a series of art lithographs titled *Everyman Prints* in large and therefore cheap editions. Tate Archive houses documents related to the AIA.

- XXXVI. A small colour photograph, 8x 11cm, depicting a banner in support of the republicans in the Spanish Civil War. It features a clenched fist and reads: 'International Brigade, British Battalion Volunteers. Spain 1936-38.' In two columns, written inside a ribbon shaped design, are the names of Spanish cities: Cordova, Jarama, Brunetem, Belchite, Saragossa, Teruel, Gandesa Road, The Ebro.
- XXXVII. One enlarged photocopy on A3 paper from a press cutting about the 'Homage to Barcelona' exhibition. The cutting is from the *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1985.
- XXXVIII. One enlarged photocopy on A3 paper from a press cutting about the 'Homage to Barcelona' exhibition. The cutting is from the *Guardian*, 19 November 1985.
- XXXIX. One enlarged photocopy on A3 paper from a press cutting about the 'Homage to Barcelona' exhibition. The cutting is from the *Financial Times*, 19 November 1985.
- XL. One enlarged photocopy on A3 paper from a press cutting about the 'Homage to Barcelona' exhibition.. The cutting is from the *Sunday Times*, 17 November 1985.
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- XLII. One enlarged photocopy on A3 paper from a press cutting about the 'Homage to Barcelona' exhibition. The cutting is from the *Observer*, 17 November 1985. The photocopies XXXVII-XLI have been stapled together.
- XLIII. An issue of *Finsbury's Future*, a small, eight-page journal published by the Finsbury Communist Party. On page three, and continued on page eight, there is an article by Kath King titled 'Finsbury Schools, as they are and as they could be'. This is very similar to item XXXI above.
- XLIV. A promotional flyer from a candidate for the Shetland Islands Council local elections of 7 May 1974. The candidate's name is A.I. Tulloch but there is no reference to a specific party.
- XLV. An A4 promotional brochure featuring the communist candidates for the Finsbury Council elections on Thursday 12 May 1949. The brochure has four pages. On the first page, a short presentation with photographs of the three candidates: Kath King, Norman King and Ray Meager. On the second page, the proposals of the candidates in regards to the following: Homes, Rents, Repairs, Open Spaces, Community Centre, Old People, Schools and Day Nurseries, Rates and Peace. On the third page, an article prompting voters to 'Think hard before you vote', and on the final page, a

summary of the achievements of the departing councillor Kay Beauchamp.

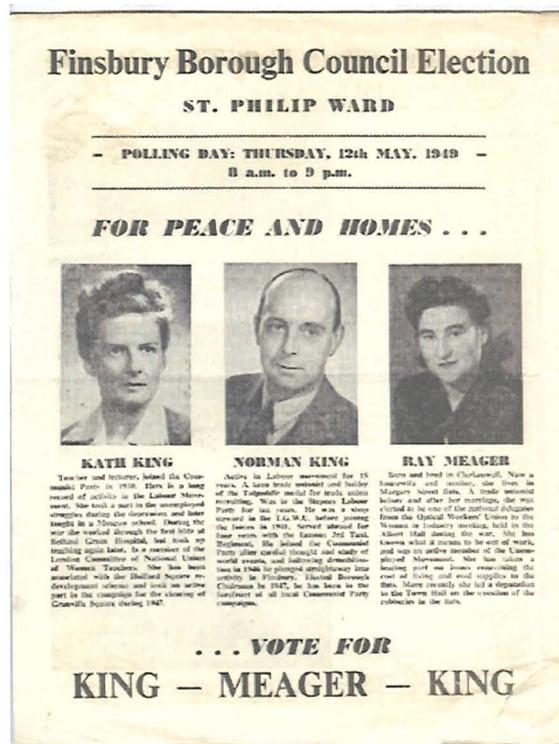


Figure 17: Finsbury Borough Council Election brochure, featuring the Communist candidates for the Finsbury Council elections, 12 May 1949, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

XLV. One A6 carte-de-visite from Marion King with her address and telephone number. The card has a handwritten note which reads: '6pm Thursday'.

XLVI. An A4 letter written on word processor and printed on Whitechapel Gallery headed paper. It is addressed to Marion King and dated 17 January 1998. It is a 'thank you' letter for Marion King's 'kind donation of a selection of your husband's photographs and papers'. The letter is signed by Jon Newman:

It is terribly exciting for us to finally have some images of the 1939 *Guernica* exhibition. In retrospect, this was one of the most important exhibitions at the gallery and until now we held no material on it beyond a couple of press cuttings. Norman King's other photographs and papers on his 'Propaganda and Art' courses and anti-fascist marches in the East London are obviously related to the *Guernica* exhibition and the political mood in the East End on the eve of World War II; I intend to keep all the material together at the archive and I hope that we may have the occasion to use it within a future exhibition.

XLVII. One A6 carte-de-visite from Marion King, received by the Whitechapel Gallery on 20 June 1998 (as indicated by the internal mail stamp). The card has the following handwritten note:

Thank you very much for your kind letter. I am pleased to know that Norman's photographs & other material will be stored in the Whitechapel archive. I am sure that this is exactly what Norman would have wanted. I shall be grateful if you could let Susanna and me know if you will them [sic] in a future exhibition. Best wishes from Wiholz [sic].

Marion King  
P.S. I do hope you enjoyed 'The Wasteland' at Wilton's

XLVIII. Nine numbered brochures from the Propaganda Art Course, each covering a different subject (way of demonstrating political activism):

Poster Design (1), Banners (2), Typography (4), Lettering (5), Pictorial Banners (6), Script Writing (7), Reproduction (9), Silk Screen (11).



Figure 18: Student handbooks from the Propaganda Art Course run by Norman King, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

The file *WAG/DIR/2/3* is drawn from a separate section of the archive and contains correspondence between former Whitechapel Gallery director Bryan Robertson and other individuals or institutions in relation to a Picasso exhibition, which was going to take place at the Whitechapel in 1953. The vast majority of letters are requests for borrowing works, as well as pleas to organisations and museums for their support. These letters have been written between May 1952 and December 1952.

This material has been scanned and presented in the thesis as a separate body consisting of letters and replies. Two particularly revealing letters, as an example of the correspondence, follow. The remaining documents are on a CD attached to the thesis, Appendix XXXII. By scanning them I could present them to the reader as facsimiles of the originals. Presented as a whole it is more immediate and revealing of the personalities and the politics involved in the negotiations for this exhibition.



GROSVENOR 9000

**UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE**

**AMERICAN EMBASSY - LONDON**  
41, Grosvenor Square, W.1.

*Ret. LRR*

December 18, 1952.

Dear Mr. Robertson,

I am very sorry to be the bearer of ill-tidings, but exploration of possibilities suggest that I ought to write to you immediately.

Unfortunately there is no way in which the American Embassy can be of assistance to the Whitechapel Art Gallery with regard to providing transportation facilities.

I think, perhaps, it would be wise, sometime after the first of the year, to make an appointment to come along here to see Mrs. Phoebe B. Stanton.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Taylor,  
Cultural Officer.

Mr. Bryan Robertson,  
Whitechapel Art Gallery,  
High Street,  
London, E.1.

*RC*  
*5.3*

Figure 19: Letter from Richard Taylor, Cultural Officer, American Embassy, to Bryan Robertson, Director, Whitechapel Gallery, 18 December 1952, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

30th December, 1952.

Dear Mr. Taylor,

Many thanks for your letter of December 18th. It was decided at a very recent Trustees' Meeting to abandon plans for the Picasso exhibition. The reason for this is the rather subtle and difficult political question - we are a public Gallery, dependent upon various bodies and institutions for our income and even if, at the lowest and most trivial level, the "Daily Worker" is sold outside our doors, our motives might be misinterpreted by these bodies. The Communist Party is active in this part of London and it is possible that they might try to make capital out of the Picasso exhibition.

It was kind of you to find out about transport for us, and I am very sorry that you have gone to so much trouble for nothing.

One day, if you are at all interested, I should much like to discuss with you the possibility of a really carefully chosen and reasonably comprehensive exhibition of modern American painting - with the possibility of it being shown in this Gallery. It is not known in this country as it should be, and such an exhibition would in every way be a most desirable thing.

With good wishes for the New Year,

Yours sincerely,

Director.

Mr. Richard P. Taylor,  
Cultural Officer,  
American Embassy,  
41 Grosvenor Square, W.1.

*reply from  
Mrs Stanton on  
behalf. Prop + Policy.*

Figure 20: Letter from Bryan Robertson, Director, Whitechapel Gallery, to Richard Taylor, Cultural Officer, American Embassy, 30 December 1952, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

## Facts and facts

This archive material offers direct, nevertheless disparate, information in relation to *Guernica's* presentation at the Whitechapel in 1939, as well about the subsequent attempts by directors Robertson and Serota to organise a re-presentation of *Guernica* in the 1950s and 1980s.<sup>134</sup> The information provided opens up various platforms for discussion and puts *Guernica* under scrutiny. The painting was a political instrument in the 1930s, and in the 1950s, both Picasso and *Guernica* were inextricably associated with the Communist party).<sup>135</sup> The archive material also reflects the importance of *Guernica* for the Whitechapel and how significant the painting has been for the gallery's history and its association with left-wing politics. Every file presented here gives a wealth of information which, if pieced together and seen as a whole, can provide a narrative that merges two main axes: politics and art. For instance, some material illustrates the exuberant response of the press to the 1939 Whitechapel exhibition, giving us a characteristic example of the terminology used to refer to modern art and artists – see item XII, in which the description of *Guernica* as 'Picasso's latest hit' reflects the artist's reputation and consequently how his work's value was perceived in

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<sup>134</sup> Robertson was organising a Picasso exhibition which would include *Guernica*, scheduled to take place in 1953; Serota's idea was solely focused on *Guernica*; he made a plea to MoMA to permit *Guernica* to travel to London in 1980.

<sup>135</sup> See Robertson's correspondence with the American Embassy, pp. 146–47 and Appendix XXXII, attached CD.

relation to the art market.<sup>136</sup> Other material gives us a view of the private correspondence between art professionals in different decades, the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s. Some letters reveal the diplomatic negotiations and sensitive dealings deployed between art institutions for borrowing valuable artworks such as *Guernica*. Loan requests for borrowing precious works, for example, benefit from letters of support and recommendations from other museum directors, well-known art historians or critics. In their own right, these letters stand as an invaluable learning resource for future curators and exhibition organisers. Apart from the assumptions one can make about the producers of these documents (journalists, artists, curators or museum directors), one can also draw conclusions about how these events were perceived by the Whitechapel. The questions are raised: What was their importance for the gallery? How significant was *Guernica*, for example, for both audiences and the Whitechapel itself? There is evidence that in the 1990s, one or more individuals were zealously investigating the pre-war exhibition of *Guernica*. They were actively searching for material and evidence of *Guernica*'s presentation, such as images and press cuttings (as illustrated in items I and XXII, pp. 121 and 127–28). The ongoing search for relevant records to fill the archival gaps, continued fifty years after *Guernica*'s first presentation, is indicative of how important the event is in the

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<sup>136</sup> The word 'hit' is mostly associated with success; a successful stroke, performance, or production; according to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary: 'a successful and popular film, pop record, person, etc.' <[http://www.askoxford.com/concise\\_oed/hit?view=uk](http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/hit?view=uk)>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

gallery's history. Initially, the archive did not contain material related to the 1939 exhibition, apart from one or two small press cuttings. The event had certainly occurred but the records were never deposited in the Whitechapel's archive. This was a *lacuna in the manuscript*, a gap that needed to be filled. In spite of the long and vital history of major modern and contemporary art exhibitions organised by the Whitechapel Gallery in his 1998 letter to Marion King, Jon Newman refers to *Guernica's* presentation 'one of the most important exhibitions at the gallery...' (item XLVII, pp. 143–44). How we interpret such an affirmative position is open to the reader. Did it derive from a general admiration for Picasso, for *Guernica* in particular, for the exhibition's political significance or its centrality to the gallery's reputation?

The press cuttings also reflect positive reactions from the local and national press with regard to *Guernica's* journey to London and its presentation at the Whitechapel in particular. A 1939 press cutting (item III, pp. 122–23) refers to the event as 'outstanding' and to the painting as 'advanced'. In the same item, the journalist compiles an aid for readers to better understand *Guernica*. The article provides information about its production, with many references to Picasso's style of work, as well as the political background of the period. On this occasion, 'advanced' equals 'incomprehensible'. It is not clear from the article whether the journalist made this assumption with the East End audiences in mind or if it was

a general comment on abstraction and cubism which they did not consider a straightforward visual language.

In the late 1930s, *Guernica's* status as a powerful symbol of struggle was already well established. This was the reason this particular work was selected to promote the cause of Spanish Relief.

The presentation of *Guernica* and its studies was a decision taken for a clear and specific political purpose. It was not driven by a curatorial interest in Picasso; possibly this was a moment where the Whitechapel's main programming was flexible and could easily accommodate external proposals as well as exhibitions which had a broader socio-political benefit.<sup>137</sup> Without doubt, the painting had, due to its subject, the bombing of Gernika, a strong anti-war significance of its own; in the particular display it was removed from its art context and instrumentalised for a fundraising purpose. In the few existing photographs of the official opening, the work stands in the space as a backdrop for the political speeches taking place in front of it. In a 1939 press cutting (item XXII, p. 133) segments of Attlee's speech from the opening are quoted. Attlee denounced fascism and the European dictators Mussolini, Franco and Hitler and praised Picasso and *Guernica*. He spoke about the threat of fascism overshadowing Europe and of the importance of young people becoming aware of this danger.

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<sup>137</sup> The exhibition preceding *Guernica* was by Toynbee Art Club (9 November – 23 December 1938) and the one that followed was by the Artists International Association (9 February – 7 March 1939).

Through Attlee's speech, *Guernica*, or to be more precise the mere act of visiting it at the Whitechapel, becomes an antidote to a threatening political inertia.

Serota's correspondence in the 1980s illustrates his attempts to exhibit *Guernica* once again at the Whitechapel. The timing of Serota's project cannot be seen in isolation from the gallery's situation at the time. The Whitechapel had overcome trying times and had been close to bankruptcy; in spite the gloomy financial condition, under Serota's directorship it was steadily securing funds for the first big expansion, which took place in 1985.<sup>138</sup> Serota's idea of bringing *Guernica* back to the gallery was going to return the Whitechapel to the public eye and verify its pivotal role as an international art institution; a positive outcome in light of the forthcoming expansion.

A presentation of *Guernica* during the 1980s would not have served a wider political role but rather a specific micro-political one. In contrast to pre-war exhibition, it would not be Picasso's privilege to exhibit *Guernica* at the Whitechapel Gallery; but instead an honour for the Whitechapel to be the hosting venue. Since 1939, *Guernica* has shifted from being a controversial, political work of art, to also being regarded as a renowned example of modernism, one considered a representative cubist work, symbolic of civil struggle all over the

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<sup>138</sup> 'What followed (1973) was an incredibly difficult period for the Whitechapel. A number of changes in personnel took place. The gallery depended almost entirely on public money largely from the Arts Council and the Greater London Council (G.L.C.). By 1975 annual subscriptions to the Whitechapel Gallery Society had dropped to a mere £68.' The quote is from Janeen Haythornthwaite, 'Roller-Coasters and Helter Skelters, Missionaries and Philanthropists: A History of Patronage and Funding at the Whitechapel Art Gallery', *Centenary Review* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2001), pp. 18–22.

world. *Guernica* also increased in value. Picasso's canvases accrued a high market value shortly after he painted them; but in the span of forty-three years (between *Guernica*'s production in 1937 and Serota's proposal for a second presentation in 1980), *Guernica*'s value had risen significantly.<sup>139</sup> *Guernica*'s evolution in art and intellectual status and in economic value – transformed from as political instrument in the 1930s to a certified masterpiece safeguarded by MoMA's security, is reflected in the growing difficulties and barriers that both Robertson and Serota faced.<sup>140</sup>

The museums which owned Picasso works turned down the requests of both directors, despite of the Whitechapel's reputation as a highly prestigious London venue which could guarantee safe handling of the painting and publicity. As evident in the letters in Appendix XXXII, MoMA's director and staff were reluctant to lend, and this position did not waiver throughout the correspondence. There were many negotiations, making use of contacts and active networking to find supporters for the idea and consequently to influence MoMA's director. This was a very different and more formal climate than the one in which the pre-war exhibition was organised; at which time Penrose, passionate about a non-fascist Europe, and in collaboration with Mesens and other artists from the Artists International Association, directly sought Picasso's

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<sup>139</sup> According to *New York Gallery* magazine (1995), the value of *Guernica* in 1995 was 1.6 million USD dollars.

<sup>140</sup>*Guernica*, whilst at MoMA, had been the site of occasional anti-war vigils, especially during the years of the Vietnam War. These protests were in general peaceful; nevertheless security measures had been intensified for this reason.

permission to arrange *Guernica*'s showing at the Whitechapel. In the 1980s more formal language and procedures were deployed.

The material discussed in this chapter and found in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive constitutes independent stories that sustain the Whitechapel's history and are far from being publicly known.

From a curatorial perspective, this material can be read very differently; these records clearly refer to the past of the Whitechapel and to three eras in the gallery's history. Seemingly their only linking point is *Guernica* and/or Picasso. A curatorial reading (initially) and further use of this material (potentially) will unwrap the records in question, and open them to numerous reinterpretations. The association and re-composition of archival material will give the curator the opportunity to discuss issues that arise from the readings.

Guided by their particular interest, the curator will select documents which they wish to use further. As discussed in Chapter One, the reading of archives is in itself an interpretative activity. The archive lends itself to the user and opens up for analysis. Every researcher using it enters into an exchange with it; they withdraw information and deposit personal interpretation.

To connect to the hypothesis above, if archival material becomes a primary source for a curator, it is expected that the files and documents will in turn become components of a curatorial project, and will form a dialogue with the viewer, initiated by the ideas and questions posed by the curator. The curator

here acts like the re-interpreter of known historical accounts, and the concept of the project is dependent on their positioning. Perhaps they will use the material as a reaffirmation of a purely historical account or to challenge and give another version of the known history by combining elements of the archive. The archive here becomes a malleable and flexible body, receptive to curatorial intervention. Paul Ricoeur's writings have been fundamental in defining the historiographical operation, a process through which historical accounts are read and understood. Ricoeur states that because 'action' is always 'interaction', there is no uniquely privileged model for historical accounts; the historian must be attentive to multiple meanings that are relevant in making action intelligible.<sup>141</sup>

In Chapter Four, I will discuss the concept of historiography in relation to Ricoeur's work, in order to define the archive and the curator's role in the re-reading, re-interpretation and re-use of the archive. My suggestion is that if we use the archive to curate exhibitions and events and consequently deposit the outcome of the intervention back into the archive, we potentially create critical platforms and enable the archive material not only to function as items for display but to incorporate critique. Thus, a curatorial intervention in the archive will ultimately become part of the archive itself.

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<sup>141</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 178

## Chapter Four: *The Curatorial Intervention*

## Curators' positions

There are many extant definitions that relate to the attributes of a curator but how do we really define the role? Almost by rule, word processing software regards the word *curator* as invalid and aims to correct its spelling. This is quite a telling insight in an era in which the term has been used more frequently than in any other period in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries! It is almost impossible to discuss contemporary art without a reference to the terms: curator, curating, curatorial, curatorship etc. The definition of a curator according to Wikipedia is:<sup>142</sup>

Curator of a cultural heritage institution (e.g. archive, gallery, library, museum or garden) is a content specialist responsible for an institution's collection and their associated collections catalogs. The object of a curator's concern necessarily involves tangible objects of some sort, whether it be *inter alia* artwork, collectibles, historic items or scientific collections ... In contemporary art, the title curator is given to person [sic] who organizes an exhibition. In this context, to curate means to pick objects and arrange them to achieve a desired effect.

Usually, this means finding a theme to link a set of works, or finding works to fit

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<sup>142</sup> Wikipedia is an enormous online source of information, which resembles the format of an encyclopaedia. Any Internet user has the ability to register and to edit or add to the definition of numerous entries. The above description of the term curator was consulted in August 2009 and valid at that time only, as Wikipedia is a constantly changing resource and produced by many different contributors.

a desired theme. In addition to selecting works, the curator is writing labels, catalogue essays, and other supporting content for the exhibition. Such curators may be permanent staff members, be 'guest curators' from an affiliated organisation or university, or be 'freelance curators' working on a consultant basis. In some American organisations the term curator is also used to designate the head of any given division of a cultural organisation. This has led to the proliferation of titles such as 'Curator of Education' and 'Curator of Exhibitions'.<sup>143</sup>

Traditionally, art historians held the main responsibility for thinking, writing and communicating ideas about art. For example, the Courtauld Institute, founded in 1932, and now based within the University of London, has been the major centre within Britain for the study of the history of art. This can be further evidenced by the fact that a number of freelance professionals who organise exhibitions, as well as many museum curators, have mainly been educated through art history courses or allied studies such as art criticism. Particular roles within art production, as well as art analysis and critique, were more defined and rigid in the recent past, as compared to the flexible model of the artist-curator or curator-artist that, since the late 1990s, we have taken for granted.<sup>144</sup> Within the

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<sup>143</sup> Wikipedia entry for 'curator', <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curator>>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>144</sup> Curators who are also artists, or artists who are also curators, is now a common model in the art profession. This flexible role was perhaps the result of the development of the artist-run gallery, begun in the United States in the 1970s and thriving today. Especially in London, numerous artist-run spaces were inaugurated from the 1980s onwards, such as City Racing,

previous, more rigid framework, artists produced the artwork and art historians provided the theoretical support or the critique, the entry point for others to achieve a coherent reading of the work.<sup>145</sup> However an important shift occurred in the 1972 edition of *documenta*, in which Harald Szeemann initiated a conceptual framework for curatorial practice, building upon and enhancing the existing model for exhibitions that mainly focused on historical readings of a single artist's exhibition or a group show. He arranged the artists' work in themes, such as 'Individual Mythologies', abandoning aesthetic categories or historical chronology. For Szeemann, curating became synonymous with introducing new ways of constructing and experiencing contemporary art for both artists and viewers. Museums and freelance curators alike had followed this linear model, which is considered an engaging and comprehensive way of viewing art, suitable for audiences of different backgrounds and degrees of education. Chronological exposition implies a logical placement of works and artists within a specific time and place, hence learning and memorisation were

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Untitled, the Tracey Emin Museum in Waterloo (1995–98) and most recently *Five Years*, Studio Voltaire, Whitechapel Project Space and Fieldgate Gallery, among others. At the same time the artist-curator or curator-artist also writes about art and may frequently publish. The British artists Liam Gillick, Paul Noble and Jeremy Deller are examples of artists who have been actively engaged with curating and writing about contemporary art.

<sup>145</sup> This example should not be read as an affirmation but mainly as an observation. The fact that artists were seen mainly as the producers of the work does not imply that they were not able to view their work theoretically. To a greater or lesser extent artists have always been analysing and contextualising their work, either through writing, teaching or artists' talks in formal or informal environments. In most cases though, and until the 1960s and 70s, artists were encouraged to master their technique, and to leave criticism to other professionals. With the introduction of Fine Art courses in universities, the taught curriculum slowly changed to include more theoretic classes, critical studies and oral presentations.

relatively uncomplicated. Arranging exhibitions by a conceptual framework adds another layer to the viewing experience and demands viewers' undivided attention to engage with the brief. When Tate Modern opened in 2000 it was the first public gallery in the United Kingdom to arrange works from their collection via a thematic rather than chronological approach. This presented a break from the traditional linear presentation of art, which was mostly attributed to art history, and can be seen in association with the emergence of curating as another vehicle for experiencing art.

Since the 1970s there has been a change in the employment status of curators; curators have usually been employed by museums or galleries, but there has been a steady increase in freelance curators who work across institutions and nations. The economics of the art market within a globalised society and the increase in platforms for the promotion and viewing of contemporary art have offered curators ever increasing opportunities to materialise their proposals and ideas. In Europe alone, in the span of a decade (1999–2009), we have seen the emergence of many biennials and triennials, such as the recent Berlin Biennial (Germany), Lyon Biennial (France), Liverpool Biennial (England), Seville Biennial (Spain), Athens, and Thessaloniki Biennial (Greece). In Asia, biennials and triennials have been established in the last six years across the continent, for instance the Guangzhou Triennial (China), the Gwanju Biennial (Korea), the Yokohama Triennial (Japan) and the Sharjah Biennial (United Arab Emirates). In

addition, the western art market has expanded into Bombay and Beijing.<sup>146</sup> Continuous developments which affect art-related professions include the emergence of specialised university courses (on Curating, Art Administration and Museum Studies), new art museums and venues (Tate Modern, Baltic), the redevelopment of existing venues (Whitechapel Gallery, Iniva), as well as available funding for the arts (Arts Council Grants and Arts & Humanities Research Council Grants), to name but a few developments in England. These changes have transformed and supported the role of the curator to become one that combines the instigation and production of art events, with the instigation and production of concepts and alternative ways of looking at art. The point being that a whole new cultural industry and network has emerged that links production to dissemination through intellectual endeavours.

Curators' close involvement in the production and presentation of art, mainly through their continuous contact with artists, has made them instrumental to the promotion, even to the making of art, and has positioned them as counterparts to dealers. A cult of emerging curators influences what is made, where it is shown and its dissemination, so an analogy might be that the curator represents a practice in much the same way as a dealer sells it. Perhaps dealers should now be

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<sup>146</sup> Large-scale exhibitions of contemporary Chinese artists, such as 'China Power Station: Part 1' which was organised in October 2006 by the Serpentine Gallery, London is only one example of the recent interest in Asian artists, and also of the investment of Asian markets in promoting their artists. Part 1 took place at Battersea Power Station, Turbine Hall, London; Part 2 in Oslo, Norway in 2007, and Part 3 in Beijing, China in 2008. 'China Power Station' was co-curated by Julia Peyton-Jones, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Gunnar B. Kvaran.

concerned with the circulation of artworks, whilst curators are the ones who make artworks credible by including them in exhibitions. It could be said that curators have been positioned in between the artist and the gallery or collector, as the guarantor of the intellectual credibility of the artwork. With a view to what is new and current within the art market, curators can be seen as authority figures of an art circuit as fickle as the fashion industry in its desire for newness and celebrity. Eleanor Heartney, art critic and president of AICAUSA (the American section of the International Art Critics' Association), discusses the transition of power from the art historian to the curator, as well as the celebrity status of the artist and curator:

By the 1990s, a shift in the power structure of the art world brought a new group to the fore. Collecting became less chic in the wake of the art market slowdown that accompanied the stock market crash of the late 1980s ... Meanwhile, the post-Cold War era opened once-closed markets, creating a global economic market that found its counterpart in art world globalism ... In this climate the new art world celebrities were nomadic artists with exotic pedigrees, and the new power brokers were the curators who served as gatekeepers to the global art scene. Critics saw a moderate rise in their stature as they were called upon to explain the unfamiliar cultural contexts of this new work.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Eleanor Heartney, 'What Are Critics for?' *American Art*, 16.1 (2002) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) 4-8.

This has not always been the case:

In Giorgio Vasari's Florence, Nicolas Poussin's Rome, and Denis Diderot's and Charles Baudelaire's Paris, there were no curators. Nor were curators found in the sophisticated traditional visual cultures of China, India, or the Islamic world. But Roger Fry was a curator. He organised in London a pioneering exhibition of French Post-Impressionism. The anarchist art writer Félix Fénéon played an important role in Henri Matisse's career. Clement Greenberg worked as a curator from December 1958 until February 1960, advising French and Company about what contemporary artists to exhibit. And Arthur Danto has curated several exhibitions, including a recent show responding to 9/11 at apexart. Curators are creations of, and very distinctive products of, the modern bourgeois market in art.<sup>148</sup>

Via a series of developments, as outlined above, the role of the curator has replaced the art administrator or exhibitions organiser in museums and shared the art historian's task of thinking and writing about art. An embodiment of this 'transformation' is Sir Norman Rosenthal, who was employed in 1977 by a rather conservative institution, the Royal Academy of Arts in London.<sup>149</sup> Regardless of restrictions imposed by the programme of the institution itself (contemporary art

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<sup>148</sup> Carrier David, 'Why Curators Matter', in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, ed. by Heather Kouris and Steven Rand (New York: Apex Art, 2007)

<sup>149</sup> When Sir Norman Rosenthal was first employed by the Royal Academy in 1977, he held the title of Secretary and later became Head of Exhibitions. The first title, Secretary, may be well-suited to the Academy's staff structure, but it certainly does not relate to the terminology used in contemporary art museums and galleries to describe art professionals. Until his resignation in early 2008, his role focused on curating exhibitions for the Royal Academy.

was not at the forefront of the Academy's agenda), he transformed the Royal Academy into an international venue, showing contemporary art alongside historical exhibitions. In the 1980s, Rosenthal co-curated with Serota 'A New Spirit in Painting', presenting a generation of neo-expressionists to London audiences. He continued in the 1990s with the exhibitions 'Sensation' and 'Monet in the Twentieth Century'. Here we observe the ambition of the curator overcoming the narrow scope of an institution (and in this specific paradigm, expanding it). In the next step, public perception of the institution is shaped and changed by the curatorial decisions of one individual, who overcomes administrative barriers to become an exhibitions programme *auteur*.<sup>150</sup> Working in a traditional institution such as the Royal Academy, rewarded Rosenthal with a reputation for 'daring', but also ostentation.<sup>151</sup> Choices, which in another institution would have been regarded as normal, at the conservative Royal Academy were deemed radical, and Rosenthal's objections to the Royal Academy Board were interpreted as the behaviour of an *enfant terrible*.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> The term *auteur* is borrowed from film theory. It is mainly associated with the French *nouvelle vague* cinema (new wave cinema in the 1960s) and it is used to describe a film director with a personal view and creative vision.

<sup>151</sup> These short excerpts from the newspaper articles reflect the impression that Rosenthal made upon the press and public: 'Now Normal Rosenthal, the RA's flamboyant impresario ...', Fiachra Gibbons, 'Sensation's over, now it's Apocalypse', *Guardian*, 30 May 2000; 'Sir Norman Rosenthal, the flamboyant and sometimes controversial Head of Exhibitions at the Royal Academy in London is to step down after 31 years...', Martin Hodgson, 'Rosenthal Quits Royal Academy after 31 years of blockbusters', *Guardian*, 31 January 2008.

<sup>152</sup> The term is borrowed from the French and means 'terrible child'. Originally it was used to describe a child who is terrifyingly candid and embarrasses adults, but is now widely used to describe adults with unruly or indiscreet behaviour.

In the last decade there has been much discussion about curatorial practices, the role of the curator as auteur or producer and about the future of the profession. These discussions were instigated primarily after the period in which a number of curating courses were established, both in the United States and Europe. Prior to the establishment of these courses, curators relied upon experience gained from their work in museums and galleries.<sup>153</sup> Contemporary curators are equipped through their studies with a critical understanding of art, as well as the practical capability to organise, project manage and execute art projects. The curator, either in a freelance capacity or under the auspices of a museum or gallery, selects artists, writes about their work and organises the final exhibition.

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<sup>153</sup> Courses in Art History, Museology, Art Administration or Gallery Studies have absorbed aspiring curators. In 1987, L'Ecole du Magasin in Grenoble, France established a curating course and in 1992 the Royal College of Art in London established the first curating course in the United Kingdom. The Centre for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in New York opened in 1994, and the Creative Curating at Goldsmiths College opened in 1997-98. The De Appel Curatorial Training Programme in Amsterdam accepted the first trainee curators in 1994. Since then numerous courses in curating have been established worldwide.

## Curating archives: Whitechapel Gallery Archive

So what does it mean to curate from a 100 years old archive, using it as the primary research source? I would argue that archives interpret the notions of *history, fact, and discovery* and provide the ideal background for the curator who aims at producing a dynamic and stimulating reinterpretation of material.

From my own practice as a curator I am aware of the necessary ongoing synergy between research and exhibition production; without the combination of the aspects, the outcome may not be powerful enough to instigate inspiring experiences.

At this juncture, it is important to remind the reader of the transition I personally underwent during the course of the thesis, from being an independent curator and external researcher freely browsing the archive material, I became the custodian of the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. As a researcher I was able to browse and experience the archive in a non-determinate and non-deterministic way, without having to work specifically with its material. I did not have to produce an exhibition or event and the Whitechapel was not obliged to host the fruits of my browsing. From the beginning of my employment as Archive Research Curator I found myself serving two different roles. The first was my institutional responsibility to the Whitechapel, the second, the development of my PhD thesis. Although these roles were distinct at the same time there were

important interconnections. To fulfill both roles, I research and examine the archive material. My employment offers me the resource that I need to understand the organisation and appreciate the wealth of its archive. This gives me unique access to a major resource for future exhibitions. On the other hand, my research capacity offers me the detachment one needs to evaluate the archive and be critical of the institution. This might seem a conflict of interest, and I had some initial concerns about how I would be able to overcome the hurdle of thinking about an external curatorial intervention for my PhD thesis whilst, at the same time, curating exhibitions according to Whitechapel programming and as an employee in the Exhibitions department. Was this a schism or a productive tension? How could I avoid identification with the curator I was discussing in the thesis, or was my concern about identification and conflict of interest unwarranted? The way forward was to acknowledge and recognise that schism and to think of how I might negotiate the terrain between the different roles, taking different positions in order to elucidate the issues at hand. The task of maintaining a distance from my direct day-to-day involvement, as a gallery employee, in order to feedback to my research project, and vice versa, needed to be explored not as a binary opposition but as a shuttle between engagements with the material at hand. I welcomed this dual role and responsibility, as well as the complexity of engagement and reflection which it brought. I concluded that as a curator, either external or internal to the organisation, I would have followed

the same curatorial line and methodology. Although obliged to adapt to conditions embedded in both these functions, (deriving certain deontology or practicalities) the idea that curating should instigate thinking platforms, would normally protrude. Therefore, the curator in this thesis is based upon a forecast of my actions, as applied to future projects and exhibitions at Whitechapel Gallery. In order to maintain consistency throughout the case study I shall employ the term 'the curator', thereby avoiding repetitive references to the first person.

Curatorial practice adds an additional and subjective layer to the interpretation of meanings in art production and dissemination. Artists produce their works in relation to a stimulus, personal or social. By selecting and juxtaposing works, curators communicate their own readings of the artworks. Curatorial practice can instigate different readings of specific works or of an artist's whole body of work; an alternative to the readings already publicly discussed and established. For example, Robert Rauschenberg's early silkscreen paintings were cited by the critic Douglas Crimp in order to propose an influential theory of postmodernism in the seminal text *On the Museum's Ruins*.<sup>154</sup> Another instance is the impact of the 2002 exhibition 'Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy', Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in attracting the attention of feminist scholars and inviting a re-evaluation of Gentileschi's

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<sup>154</sup> Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 47–48, 56–60, 134–136.

work. Additionally, the 1970 exhibition 'The Psychoanalytic Drawings of Jackson Pollock', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, gave particular insight into a practice hitherto unexplored through this lens. These three examples demonstrate the curatorial capacity for re-looking, re-visiting and re-examining artworks from a range of perspectives.

In my view, the curatorial process, through revisiting artworks, becomes a process of illuminating and of opening up spaces and of generating a critical platform for the enhancement of ideas through a scrutinised encounter with art and its diverse practices.

I am aware that there is a degree of speculation here about the function of the curator: the curator's role is one of contribution and meaningful production. At the same time, the same claim makes me wonder whether there is a need for more activity in this overloaded spectrum of cultural production. Can an increase in art exhibitions offer any further insight?

Although it can be argued that art as a medium, including curatorial practice, cannot, on a wider scale, change the way people think and cannot therefore instigate great social changes, nevertheless, the choices and proposals that artists and curators make can influence the cultural and financial values within society. Lately, there is a notable tendency for curating exhibitions with a focus on sociopolitical matters: I am thinking here of international-scale events that demonstrate this: 'Utopia Station' at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2003, curated by

Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rirkrit Tiravanija; 'Not only possible but also necessary: Optimism in the age of global war', the 10th Istanbul Biennale in 2007, curated by Hou Hanru, and or documenta 12, also in 2007, curated by Ruth Noack.<sup>155</sup> Neither artists nor curators can influence current sociopolitical conditions to a degree that can be considered revolutionary, but the conditions of social change can be manifest in those artistic and curatorial practices that offer alternative readings of the world. These strategies become significant as awareness is raised; this, it can be argued, is synonymous with empowerment. It can also be argued that curators cannot reach the wider community and affect audiences on a grand scale; generally speaking, curatorial work will reach the group of people who visit exhibitions and art events, the 'usual target group' evidenced in the statistical surveys that are conducted in galleries and museums.<sup>156</sup> These groups are more or less aware of the ways that museums and

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<sup>155</sup> documenta 12, for instance, aimed at investigating the following questions: 'Is humanity able to recognise a common horizon beyond all differences? Is art the medium for this knowledge? What is it to be done, what do we have to learn in order to cope intellectually and spiritually with globalisation? Is that a question of aesthetic education and cultivation? What constitutes life when everything is subtracted which does not belong essentially to life? Does art help us to penetrate to what is essential?', excerpt from documenta 12 website, <<http://www.documenta.de/geschichte0.html?&L=1>>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>156</sup> A survey commissioned between August 2001 and August 2002 by Arts Council England and organised by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, looked at eight London venues: Café Gallery Projects, Gasworks Gallery, London Print Studio, Photofusion, Serpentine Gallery, The Photographer's Gallery, The Showroom and Whitechapel Gallery. Morris Hargreaves McIntyre published the final report in May 2003 and showed the following key findings: 'Two thirds of the visitors are from Greater London ... The current audience in the majority of London's contemporary visual arts venues is relatively small and very committed one ... Visitors attend each gallery on an average of twice a year ... The psychographic profile of current attendees reveals a very high proportion of visitors who have an active professional or intellectual interest in contemporary art ... The demographic profile of visitors largely reflects that of the professional sector: mainly under 50, predominantly female and disproportionately white ... In terms of ethnicity 56% of

galleries work and have a fair understanding of the roles of professionals that work behind the scenes to organise exhibitions and other art events. Beyond these groups the job of a curator is not well known or understood. The role of curators, in my opinion, whether they are employed by an organisation (museum, gallery, collection) or are acting independently in a freelance capacity, is to become, to the extent that their powers allow, the instigator and the interpreter of a more critical point of view. In order to achieve this they have to face a number of diplomatic hurdles. According to Lawrence Alloway, curators face a number of different pressures that influence their activity.<sup>157</sup> Alloway outlines the pressures as follows:

The desire to get along with the artist or artists. The necessity to keep good relations with the artist's main dealer or dealers. The necessity of maintaining collector contentment. Taste expectations emanating from the trustees and director. Taste expectations of other members of the curator's peer group.<sup>158</sup>

In considering these points of pressure, the curator will have to decide whether it is possible to maintain an independent strategy as well as a balanced relation to the Artists-Dealers-Collectors, who underpin the contemporary art industry. Is

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respondents categorised themselves as being 'White British', with 'Other' being the second largest category...' For more information visit the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre website at [www.lateralthinkers.com](http://www.lateralthinkers.com)

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence Alloway (1926–1990) was an English art critic and curator who worked in England and America. In the 1950s he was a leading member of the Independent Group.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence Alloway, 'The Great Curatorial Dim-Out', *Artforum*, May 1975, pp. 32–34.

this a curator who can separate their considerations from the market value of certain artworks and from the celebrity status of certain artists? For instance, was documenta 11, curated by Okwui Enzewor, a successful paradigm for such a practice? My view is that with its numerous political references, the balance between aesthetic and ethical content was successful. The choice of artists, including Multiplicity, Walid Raad (Atlas Group), Fareed Armaly, Chantal Akerman, and the Raqs Media Collective surpassed the artistic aspect to the point that the focus became chiefly political rather than visual.<sup>159</sup>

As curators look at the diverse spectrum of art production to select works for exhibitions, contemporary curating can frequently be the action of looking into the past to produce something for the future. This play with time, which lies at the core of the curator's methodology, forges an important link to archival function: looking into the past in order to preserve for the future. Curators have to look back to what has already been created in the field of art, while archives, by default, are entities where material from the past is concentrated and organised. As such, an archive can offer a platform for a curator to research in and, as in the case study analysed here, to select and curate directly from.

Curators enact similar functions of research and selection, whether they use an

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<sup>159</sup> documenta 11, in 2002, led by Enzewor and co-curated by Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya, was the first edition to have a non-European director. Many of the invited artists came from countries not previously represented in documenta. Naturally, many questions arise in regards to the curator's choices and if these were independent of the art market. Perhaps Enzewor broke the dominant link with the western market but welcomed a peripheral and emerging one?

archive as a primary source or not. A curator's relationship with the archive is twofold; it is both determined by the size and subject of the material, but it is also potentially open to any narrative that the curator may apply to it. Artworks are less open to the imposition of new curatorial narratives, for artistic intention and/or art-historical legacy have likely already shaped impressions that limit the curator's investigations. An archive does not sustain specific narratives *only* about individuals or historical periods. When it contains records of institutional activity, it necessarily conveys some form of narrative about that institution's agenda. This should not be seen as restrictive. Regardless of the fact that the archive was not initially intended as a font of coherent exhibition material, it nevertheless offers appropriate fabric for multifaceted events.

Artists and curators alike, especially since the turn of the millennium, are increasingly looking to the archive as a way of understanding both the past and present.<sup>160</sup> The fact that we can now access information so readily online has triggered our need to access potentially *all* information. The majority of Internet users must have experienced, at least once, a consumerist impulse similar to shopping in a supermarket; although one visits to purchase a certain item, the availability of products, emphasised by the colourful display, tickles one's senses and influences us to buy more items than originally intended. Browsing the

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<sup>160</sup> Obrist has observed that a fascination with archives has become more explicit with the millennial turn; the end of an era prompting reflection and concern. See 'Preface', *Interarchive, Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, pp. 8-9.

Internet, one visits a website and the links lead us to other web pages, prompting us to spend much more time online than we originally intended to; searching for more and more sources which will satisfy either a specific research need or plain curiosity. Moreover, the immateriality of the interaction of the World Wide Web, together with the feeling that the information available to us is overwhelming, has created a fascination around tangible formats of information. The spatial conditions of an archive, such as lighting, temperature and the odour of the stored material may be more appealing now than ever before; perhaps this speaks to a renewed interest in all things sensory?<sup>161</sup>

My case study brings under scrutiny the Whitechapel Gallery Archive as a field open to curatorial practice; it examines the archive in its present condition, indicative of the fact that it is an institutional archive with gaps and inconsistencies and containing documents mainly produced by or for the institution it is housed in. My main concern is the fact that the archive contains, amongst other historical documents, material from the 1939 showing of *Guernica* at Whitechapel Gallery, as well as a series of letters and administrative documents revealing the subsequent efforts of gallery directors Robertson and Serota to organise a Picasso exhibition at the Whitechapel. When revisiting these documents, at a distance, respectively, of seventy, fifty-five and twenty-five years

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<sup>161</sup> New technology is changing our fundamental understanding of space and time. Infatuated with what we can do with our mobile phones and the web, it's easy to be distracted by the distant to the close at hand, thus detaching ourselves from a sensory experience of space and time. Using archives brings one in contact with all things tactile.

from their creation, they reveal the sociopolitical and economic concerns that continuously affect visual arts organisations. They indicate that an artist and an artwork, which brought recognition and positive visibility for the pre-war Whitechapel, later provoked a minor political episode and became a hurdle to smooth collaboration with outside institutions and organisations. The attempts by Robertson in 1953 to organise a major Picasso exhibition were met with difficulties and resistance from the American Embassy in London.<sup>162</sup> The anticipated exhibition held ramifications for public relations, funding opportunities and also the exhibition programme. In the end, the Picasso retrospective was never organised. Ironically, the same artist's work, *Guernica*, was to become an object of desire and in 1980 was, once again, invited back to the Whitechapel, now bearing the significantly different weight and status bestowed by an art world that now deemed it a masterpiece. The production of factual material related to *Guernica*, (potentially material to be added to the archive and considered within this concatenation of events), continues with the recent marketing campaign in relation to the Whitechapel Project.<sup>163</sup> The 1939 exhibition has been used widely circulated in publicity for the gallery's redevelopment, albeit entirely stripped of its political context.

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<sup>162</sup> For the reproduction of the original letters see the attached CD, Appendix XXXII.

<sup>163</sup> The Whitechapel Project refers to the major redevelopment of the Whitechapel Gallery, which linked the existing building to the adjacent disused Whitechapel Library building. The Library was closed by Tower Hamlets in 2005, its contents shifted to the newly built IDEA Store in the same area. The expansion scheme has doubled the Whitechapel's exhibition spaces and has introduced a gallery dedicated to archival projects. The gallery will present exhibitions twice a year using material from the Whitechapel archive in combination with borrowed works from other sources. It will also be a space for collaborations with curators, artists and other archives.

If a curator attempts to discuss the relationship of the Whitechapel to Picasso and, specifically, to *Guernica*, it is apparent that they will encounter different positions; the question inevitably arises: How will the curator deal with these seemingly contradictory archive statements to produce a coherent event? Across the four relevant periods: 1939, 1953, 1981 and today, different conclusions are suggested as to the position of Picasso and *Guernica* in the timeline and narrative of Whitechapel Gallery.

In principle, any work of art that has *ever* been produced can potentially be selected by a curator and included in an exhibition or other project. In a similar manner, any object or document stored in an archive can be selected for exhibition.<sup>164</sup> The processes one would follow in either case, whether curating from archive material or artworks, are very similar. In both cases one would need to identify the desired object and put in place the right procedures to obtain it. This involves writing letters to museums, galleries or private collectors, arranging for transportation and insurance, and finally receiving the items in the space where the event will take place. The major difference between the two cases, curating outside or inside the archive, is specifically a topological distinction. In the first case, where the majority of curatorial practice takes place, a curator selects individual works or directly commissions artists. The final event

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<sup>164</sup> There are restrictions in place for accessing and exhibiting archival material and this applies to artworks as well. These restrictions depend on confidentiality (in archives) but also on the physical condition of the material or artwork. The hypothesis is based on the fact that the conditions for exhibiting have been met.

constitutes of the combined contributions of the art producer (artist), the commissioner (curator) and the art product (artwork), which is integral to the realisation of the final project. When, for instance, I am asked to curate from an archive, I am actually responding to a site-specific and a notion-specific location. Two attributes of the archive will, potentially and simultaneously, affect and influence me: The archive as a real site – a topological entity, and the archive as a conceptual site – a nomological entity.<sup>165</sup>

Overall, curatorial processes within an archive are characterised, in many cases, by the entire absence of artworks. Connections then have to be drawn from the narratives that the archive material will instigate. In my view, a curatorial practice without an art object is based chiefly on conceptual grounds; meaning that the curator has to work on the interpretation of each item, whilst, with artworks, the meaning can be left open to the viewer. In both cases, the choice of archive items and artworks will be located; researched, selected, interpreted and consequently orchestrated to reflect the curator's ideas and proposals.

In contrast to curatorial practices external to archives, the three integral parties of exhibition making – the artist, the curator and the artwork – do not have the same presence in archive curation. Here, by default, the artwork and artist may

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<sup>165</sup> Similar 'attributes' apply to art collections; nevertheless, I would like to, throughout the thesis, differentiate the archive from the collection, as I will not be referring to both in this text. The archive is the structured gathering of diverse material, produced by one or more individuals, or an organisation, and gathered together either by the producers or subsequently another organisation. A collection is a specific gathering of objects (of any kind, including artworks), which has been put together by an individual or an organisation and reflects the producer's specific interests or taste.

be entirely absent. Thus, curating from archives is at a great level independent from existing art-market values and trends. It is a more flexible curatorial process, which is based to a great degree on independent research, allowing the curator to express his or her ideas, within the limits and constraints of budgets and of the organisations or venues with which they collaborate.

During my own research for curatorial projects external to archives, I sometimes come across difficulties in tracing information about particular artists or art projects; the artist, for example, may no longer be alive, the project undocumented, or the artwork lost. Fortunately, in most cases, these artists or art events are more or less known to the public, or have left some evidence that legitimises and grounds the research. In spite of the difficulty in tracing them or obtaining the information, there is *proof*.

When my given field for curatorial work is situated within an archive, strictly speaking no-one can be certain of the legitimacy of the findings as, in many cases, there is no way to compare information with other sources. A handwritten letter from a person whose name is unknown to me and who happens to mention something intriguing, may or may not be capable of sustaining the project or may even lead me in a different direction. In the same way, the numerous gaps in an archive's chronological sequence either indicate the loss of specific documents or signal the fact that these never existed. Archival items cannot be taken at face value. The curator has to make a number of decisions prior to each

visit to the archive; decisions related to how he or she will evaluate their findings, which of the findings will form the core research and consequently how the material and the gaps in the archive will be used, linked and bridged together to become elements of the curatorial action/event/project. Curating in the archive of a public gallery, specifically at the Whitechapel at this moment in its history, is a challenging and fertile undertaking.<sup>166</sup> At the Whitechapel, after its re-launch in April 2009, new procedures are in place. This affects what can be done. Different constituencies have expressed a well-founded interest in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive and its potential. On the one hand, I intend to curate from the archive and, on the other, I aim to encourage interventions. Consequently, my main objective is to archive the curatorial practices that will take place. This doubling and shuttling between roles is potentially very dynamic, but can be unsettling for an institutional archive.

Similar unsettling acts have been instigated by artistic interventions that look to the museum or the archive as a space for critical gesture. Artists such as Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Andrea Fraser and Hans Haacke have all contributed important destabilising, critical works and actions, sometimes to the dissatisfaction of organisers. The situation has radically changed since the

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<sup>166</sup> I refer here to the recent redevelopment of the gallery and to the transformation of the archive.

1970s and projects instigating 'institutional critique' are welcomed by the museum itself.<sup>167</sup>

The need for new audiences, as well as changes in cultural policy, have enabled art institutions to incorporate their own critique through the production of relevant exhibitions, talks and publications. This is a mode of curatorial and artistic endeavor which has been thoroughly integrated and encouraged by museums.

In this field of cultural activity, curatorial input can be seen as one which bears a degree of social and historical responsibility. Specifically, today's museums incorporate, through their infrastructure, the tools for their own critique. This is achieved by investment in human and material resources. Education

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<sup>167</sup> In 1979 Michael Asher participated in the 73rd American Exhibition held at the Art Institute of Chicago. Asher relocated the bronze sculpture *George Washington (1788)* by Jean-Antoine Houdon, which had stood in the main entrance of the Art Institute since 1925, inside a museum gallery. The sculpture was taken of its base and installed in the centre of gallery 219, which was then a period room dedicated to European painting, sculpture and decorative arts of the eighteenth century. This period was the appropriate historical context for the *George Washington*. Displayed in the front entrance where it existed as a commemorative and decorative object, the sculpture's meaning was redefined in this new context. Simultaneously, Asher's addition of the weathered bronze sculpture dramatically altered the appearance of gallery 219. *George Washington* served as a reminder of the selection, categorisation and contemporary repositioning that affect the perception of the art object in relation to its surroundings. Source: the Art Institute of Chicago website < [www.artic.edu/aic/exhibitions/asher.html](http://www.artic.edu/aic/exhibitions/asher.html) >, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

On another occasion, an institution at first rejected and later invited institutional critique in the form of an artist's intervention. In 1971, the Guggenheim Museum, New York, removed an artwork by Daniel Buren entitled *Peinture-Sculpture*. The work was a 19 x 9 metre black-and-white striped banner suspended from the museum's skylight. Other artists in the exhibition complained that the work was obstructing their own works and the museum decided to remove the work entirely instead of repositioning it or finding another solution. In 2005, the Guggenheim invited Daniel Buren to use the museum's spaces to install works for a major show dedicated to the artist, entitled 'The Eye of the Storm' (25 March – 6 June 2005). Buren, amongst other installations, positioned the large work *Around the Corner* (2000–05) below the skylight in the main space, aiming to distort the architectural lines of the renowned Frank Lloyd Wright building.

departments, staffed by employees with their own focal area (school pupils, youth and other groups), are allocated budgets for community workshops, dedicated artists' project rooms and so on.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, any non-conformist artistic or curatorial action that may lead to a critical evaluation of the artist, the museum or the art practice in general, is now facilitated by the communication and marketing departments of the museum, it is clearly demonstrated and communicated between all parties involved: artist, curator, museum staff, sponsors, visitors, general press, art critics and so on. Such events are no longer unexpected radical actions that take place outside the mainstream programming, instead such projects or events have been planned and agreed upon in advance. These changes give the curator added responsibility; they transfer their practice to a different level of function, one related to the instigation of an experience but also to the enrichment of the viewers' experience. Although the role and objective of curatorial practice may have slightly changed, from Harald Szeemann's *curator as the exhibition designer* to Obrist's *curator as producer/curator as artist*, in whichever category a curator falls, they are needed to locate interesting artists and present them convincingly to the public.<sup>169</sup> Although we have moved on from the pedagogic function of certain late nineteenth- and early

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<sup>168</sup> The Whitechapel is no exception, and in the renovated building the education department now occupy more building space and have a dedicated project space which can be used for artists' projects, music and theatre performances, poetry readings and exhibitions drawn from schools and community groups.

<sup>169</sup> Young Chul Lee, 'Curating in a Global Age', *Cautionary Tales, Critical Curating*, ed. by Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (Apex Art: New York, 2007), p. 113.

twentieth-century exhibitions, the role of the curator is still attached to an underlying social responsibility. Kate Fowle comments on the speech made by the Mayor of Walsall in 1892, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Walsall Museum: 'Exhibition making is given as a charitable sense of social responsibility...'<sup>170</sup> In the Mayor's speech, the importance of a new strategy to put more money and effort into the cultural development of the citizens, is emphasised, as are the anticipated affects; 'the manners of the people would become softer and less uncouth'.<sup>171</sup>

The social responsibility of exhibition making continues today, and is encouraged by specially designed funds, such as trusts and charities, which are made available to organisations to support programmes and, by extension, local communities. These approaches bring all kinds of people into a *dialogue* with contemporary art; an objective reflected in museum and gallery education programmes that have become an essential part of the core programming.<sup>172</sup> The founders of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Samuel Canon and Henrietta Barnett, spoke about the Whitechapel's ethos in a similar manner to the mayor of

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<sup>170</sup> Kate Fowle, 'Who Cares', *Cautionary Tales, Critical Curating*, p. 27.

<sup>171</sup> For a full report on the Walsall Mayor's speech see *Walsall Observer*, May 21, 1892. The article was transcribed and archived by the Walsall Historical Society and the journalist's name was not recorded.

<sup>172</sup> The Whitechapel Gallery Archive contains material from the beginnings of the Whitechapel, which give evidence of a significant interest by the directors and board in working with local schools and the community in a variety of different ways. Exhibitions such as 'Children's' Work', which took place numerous times in the first decades of the gallery's activity, or the Stepney School Pageant (1909), as well as exhibitions organised by the London County Council in the upper gallery of the Whitechapel, demonstrate that the notion of 'gallery education' was implemented in the gallery's activity long before official policies were put in place.

Walsall.<sup>173</sup> A museum's commitment to education influences the production of exhibitions and the development of its programme in general.

In a manner quite different from the pedagogic role of didactic exhibitions on a grandiose scale, such as 'Family of Man' (1955),<sup>174</sup> curators who are employed by institutions acquire an inherited responsibility towards the public; this responsibility is enforced by the institution itself, as such approaches aim to raise visitor numbers and to enhance existing audiences. Curators arrive with the pre-ordained role of having to deliver to and stimulate the audience, and while artists share this objective, they have historically been freer to 'play' than the curator.

It is quite common today to read commentaries that focus on the curatorial line that has been deployed within a specific exhibition, rather than on the art that has been produced and exhibited.<sup>175</sup> Through this newly acquired responsibility, the curator becomes, essentially, the instigator of events that will enhance the

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<sup>173</sup> For a brief history of the Whitechapel Gallery see Appendix II, p. 283.

<sup>174</sup> 'Family of Man' was a large photographic exhibition that took place at MoMA, New York, in 1955. It was organised by Edward Steichen and it contained 503 photos by 273 photographers in 68 countries. The final displays were selected from two million photographs. The concept behind the exhibition was to offer a universal picture of human experience, focused on birth, love, and joy, but also war, hardship, illness and death. Steichen wanted to prove that human experience is the same across the world and that photography was the most evocative medium to be used in such documentation.

<sup>175</sup> It is not an exaggeration to think that established contemporary curators such as Obrist, now Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery in London, draws art audiences who will visit the exhibition not only motivated by the art shown, but by their personal interest in the curatorial line that Obrist deploys. In a way, curators of this scale have become celebrities and in some cases this predetermines what work is shown and how, this also runs the risk of the art becoming subservient to the conceptual framework the curator has set up.

diverse histories of art practices, and the documentation of these projects will eventually find its way into archives and libraries. At the same time, as anyone who is expected to deliver a project to the public, research conducted by curators can be very laborious, meticulous and significant to the development of their projects. Following this condition, archives are essential resources for curatorial research as they offer specific fractions of 'history'; rarely offering whole answers and usually provoking more questions; they offer the right locus for curatorial research, interpretation and practice to take place. In this way, the archive gains one more layer of use and interpretation whilst the curator's historical incision advances ...

## Curating archives and history

The word history derives from the Greek *historia* (ἱστορία), which means 'a learning or knowing by inquiry, record, narrative', and from *histor*, meaning wise man or judge. History consists of testimonies, individual recollections and collective memories, facts, proofs, as well as historians' interpretations of these things.

The past is no longer accessible to us, although traces of it still remain. Through these traces we try to embody the past in the present. We achieve this through memory and through the composition and reading of history. Memory, however, is infamously imperfect and historical accounts, because they cannot represent the past just *as it was*, are inevitably partial and subject to change. They misrepresent (rather than represent) the past.

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur stated that there is no uniquely privileged model for historical accounts; the historian must be attentive to the multiple meanings that make action intelligible. Ricoeur has consistently opposed any claim that historical knowledge can be, or even rightly aspire to be, definitive or absolute knowledge. On the one hand, he rejects claims such as those made by Hegel and Marx that there is one universal history in which all local histories are

incorporated and made fully intelligible.<sup>176</sup> On the other hand, he also resisted the notion that there are simple, unchallengeable, raw facts accessible either to memory or to the historian. Nonetheless, Ricoeur's view is that there can be objective historical knowledge that deserves to be called truth.

In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricoeur explains this view. He begins with an account of things purportedly remembered, for without memories there could be no history involving individuals. On the one hand there is each individual holds a memory of what they have encountered, done or suffered. On the other, individuals share a set of memories with other members of their peer group; this is collective memory. Through collective memory a group of people has access to past events and deeds that have been reconstructed and recounted for them. It can be argued that our individual memories are formulated against the backdrop of our collective memory. Collective memory presupposes that there has been a report by one member of a community, who has witnessed something and is able to recall and communicate it accurately. Testimony of this sort, given and received, underpins a group's collective memory, its 'common knowledge'. It also demonstrates that there is a social bond among the group members that underpins their trust in one another's words.

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<sup>176</sup> Universal history is the presentation of history as a whole, coherent unit. In *Philosophy of Right* (1820), Hegel presented the idea that progress in history is the progress not of material existence but of humanity's spiritual development. Marx's theory of 'dialectical materialism' formulates his concept of history, as analysed in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), that the struggle to dominate the means of production governs all historical development.

In an archive it sometimes feels that we are entering in a theatrical enactment of collective memory; as we look through material it is very easy to associate documents with *voices* and through browsing to infiltrate an unknown story, as if it were an oral history project. It might seem we are moving closer and closer to an event that happened in the past and about which we have no previous experience or recollection.

Ricoeur calls the task of writing history a *historiographical operation*, employing a term borrowed from Michel De Certeau.<sup>177</sup> This operation comprises three distinct but inseparable constituents, all of which are interpretative activities: 'The Documentary Phase', 'Explanation/Understanding' and 'The Historian's Representation'. These stages are employed by Ricoeur to describe the historian's process but do not apply exclusively to just this group; to a greater or lesser extent they apply to all users of the archive, and these mental processes take place each time we visit, read and interpret archive material.

Curatorial practice, drawn from or born within the archive, finds an important analogy in this theory; the curator locates, reads, interprets, and finally uses archival material to produce an art project which will in turn be archived. This brings into parallel the historian and the curator as users and interpreters of the archive, but also as producers of historical/art-historical accounts.

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<sup>177</sup> Michel DeCerteau, 'The Historiographical Operation' in *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) pp. 32-37.

At this point I will delve further into the three constituents, and draw clearer links with the curatorial practice in the archive.

The first constituent is the building up and use of archives that contain, in some form, traces of the past. The main traces are documents that record testimonies and reports that provide context for particular events. Archival work is itself an interpretative activity. Guided by their research interests, historians determine which traces to preserve; the questions or hypotheses they raise, without which archives would remain mute, lead them to detect 'facts, capable of being asserted in singular, discrete propositions, most often having to do with the mentioning of dates, places, proper names, verbs that name an action or state.<sup>178</sup> These are not positivistic facts; they do not correspond directly either to what actually occurred or to living memory, such as the observation of an eyewitness. Facts are established only through historian's questions and thus are themselves interpretations of the archive.

'The Documentary Phase' is the moment when 'things tip from the oral field to that of writing, which history will not henceforth abandon'.<sup>179</sup> Ricoeur identifies this moment as the birth of the archive, which he considers to be a grounding resource where collected testimonies are gathered and organised together in the form of documents. It is the place where the transformation of the oral to the written occurs; the archive carefully shelters the documentary traces of history.

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<sup>178</sup>Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 178.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* p. 146.

The testimonies that the archive contains are inert documents, waiting in an idle state, at first for the archivist to organise them and make them accessible, and secondly, for another person to consult them. Ricoeur remarks that archives were once considered places of objective historical knowledge, coloured by the subjectivity of the person who interrogates them. As he sees it, the process of creating an archive begins with the initiative of a single person or legal entity to preserve the contents of its own activity. This initiative is what inaugurates the making of history. What follows is the systematic organisation of the material that has been selected for this purpose. In this phase an archivist is usually in control of the logical operations of creating classifications, and of the physical measures of preservation. The two main phases of this process, as described above, are in place for only one reason; to allow other parties' access to the archived material.<sup>180</sup>

When it has once been written down, every discourse rolls everything about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 168.

<sup>181</sup> Ricoeur refers to the dialogue between Phaedrus and Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* in order to emphasise the principles that govern oral testimony and the document. The dialogue appears in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) p. 552; 275e.

Ricoeur draws upon the positive implications of this Socratic statement, noting that in an archive a document is open to anyone to read, for unlike oral testimony, which is addressed to a specific audience, the archive has no designated addressee. Furthermore, a document in an archive is entirely detached from its author. It is in the hands of whoever is competent to question defend or criticise it.

For a less passive conception of consulting archives, the change in sign that turns an orphan text into one having authority is tied to the pairing of testimony with a heuristics of evidentiary proof. This pairing is common to testimony before a court and testimony gathered by the professional historian. The testimony is asked to prove itself. Thus it is the testimony that brings aid and assistance to the orator and or the historian who invokes it.<sup>182</sup>

It is the combination of testimony and the document that constitute 'objective' evidence. Ricoeur identifies the historian as the professional reader in the archive; and it is in this same light that I view the curator in the archive, thinking of a project which is fuelled by the 'evidence' of things that have occurred in the past.

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<sup>182</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 169.

## The Picasso evidence as curatorial ground

The strong association of Picasso's work with the Whitechapel Gallery can be demonstrated through various events spanning half a century: *Guernica* exhibited at the gallery in 1939, Robertson's attempts to host a Picasso exhibition in the 1950s and Serota's vision of *Guernica* returning to London in the 1980s. Picasso's relation to the Whitechapel, or rather, the Whitechapel's relation with Picasso, has been of great importance to the institution. This Whitechapel Gallery Archive does not, however, testify for or guarantee one irrefutable way of narrating this relationship. The Whitechapel's archive comprises written materials – documentary proof of events – but no oral testimony. The passage from oral to written testimony and on to the document in the archive is, for the living memory, both a utility and an inconvenience; as Ricoeur writes, it is a remedy and poison, a *pharmakon*.<sup>183</sup> Reading the archived document offers the curator a number of hints, but does not necessarily create an obvious thread to be followed. As everything is reduced to printed matter, without any corroborating testimonies, there is no evidence of truth about these events. The distance in time, and the fact that many Whitechapel staff and the artist have long passed away, make interviewing unfeasible. The very first Picasso event in 1939 can only be accessed through the few press cuttings, photographs and published sources.

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<sup>183</sup> *Pharmakon* is the Greek word for remedy, medicine.

The interpretational leap is inevitable here; in addition to the paucity of evidence there are many rumours yet to be confirmed, and so scant information is coloured by speculation. The rumours have not been validated; they have been taken for granted in the archive, thus creating hearsay evidence. The account of Picasso's connection to the Whitechapel is transmitted anecdotally to today's Whitechapel employees; their impressions and understanding of this relationship will eventually be recorded as a piece of oral history, which creates a new fiction of the future. A new deposit takes us back to the archive for reinvention and continual renewal and speculations can confirm or become part of the ongoing mythology of an institution. The order here is reversed, the oral history is created not from real life memories but is constructed through memories forged from archival fabrications. The curator in the Whitechapel's archive represents the objective reader; he or she aims to deliver a project that derives from research, which is shaped independently of existing narratives and does not further mythologise Picasso's association with the Whitechapel. This capacity presents a hurdle to overcome, as the archive's precedence is anticipated and will initially determine the curator's trajectory. As curator, my initial analysis of the archive is a necessary stage that shapes my thoughts towards this project and instigates the interpretational mechanism that Ricoeur refers to.

At this initial stage, the curator's role is parallel to an archive reader; they are open and susceptible to the information that the archive offers, and, in this

capacity, are preparing for the passage to the second phase of the operation, which emerges from the spontaneity of the ideas and questions generated. The second constituent of the historiographical operation is 'Explanation/Understanding', the activity by which historians make connections between facts:

Ricoeur rejects the longstanding supposed dichotomy between explanation of facts in terms of 'external' causes and their comprehension through reasons or intentions. Because action is always interaction and therefore a mixture of doing and undergoing, there is no uniquely privileged model for historical accounts.<sup>184</sup>

The 'Explanation/Understanding' phase is created by the questions of the historian, in which facts are related to one another. This is the stage that Derrida described as the enhancement of the archive, the precise point at which an idea is deposited in the archive, with the potential of altering as well as enriching it; archive; in principle every person's reading of an archive has this potential.<sup>185</sup> The historian must demonstrate flexibility in order to make connections between facts, while remaining attentive to the multiple meanings and possibilities that make actions intelligible. Sometimes disparate modes of explanation may combine and offer the historian an unpredictable understanding of history. In this phase the curator blends information found in the archive and understands

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<sup>184</sup> Bernard Dauenhauer, 'Paul Ricoeur', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur>>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>185</sup> See Chapter One, pp. 29–30.

the strengths and limitations of the material and the somewhat disparate stories it constitutes. They understand the 'problem' that arises from this conflict and the difficulties of pursuing a project, which may result in an unreliable and inconsistent presentation. The exploration of archival material, the comprehension of the curatorial problem and the search for a solution enhances the archive, thus adding to the reading and re-reading of the Whitechapel's role in sustaining all these accounts.

The existing material gives us information about three separate events, all related to Picasso. The reasons for this sustained interest reside within the plane of art history, but are also undoubtedly related to the fame that the artist gained during the twentieth century.<sup>186</sup>

The first event, the showing of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel, was evidently not organised by the Gallery itself. It was an exhibition in support of Spanish Relief and its aim was propagandistic: To inform about the atrocities of the war and to persuade people to contribute to the funds gathered for the victims of the civil war in Spain. *Guernica*, deeply political in artistic intention, was also directly

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<sup>186</sup> As of 2005 Picasso remains the top- ranked artist (based on sales of his works at auctions) according to the Art Market Trends report published by *Artprice* in 2005, <<http://www.artprice.com>>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

There are currently three museums in Europe dedicated to Pablo Picasso: Musée Picasso in Paris, Museo Picasso in Málaga, and Museu Picasso in Barcelona. Several paintings by Picasso rank among the most expensive paintings in the world. *Garçon à la pipe* sold for USD \$104 million at Sotheby's on May 4, 2004, establishing a new price record. *Dora Maar au Chat* sold for USD \$95.2 million at Sotheby's on May 3, 2006. See MSNBC News Channel website, <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12627809>>, [accessed on 30 September 2009]

instrumentalised by the organisers of the exhibition.<sup>187</sup> The 1939 exhibition and the role played by Whitechapel finds contrast in the 1950s, as born out in Robertson's correspondence with the American Embassy in London. A Picasso exhibition in the East End at the time would have given capital to the Communist Party, and therefore was not a favourable idea. By mutual agreement, the Picasso retrospective was cancelled.<sup>188</sup> The third and final attempt to bring *Guernica* back to the Whitechapel was made by Serota in the 1980s, and did not carry the political weight of the two earlier events. Rather it was reflective of the organisation trying to evade a given ideological position, and to win support. By the 1980s, Picasso and *Guernica* were *objects of desire*, commanding inconceivable fame and value; meanwhile, the Whitechapel was striving for publicity and support for its forthcoming renovation project. *Guernica* itself was in the midst of a significant and symbolic transition: the move from MoMA to Casón del Buen Retiro in Madrid, which signified the end of fascism in Spain. The painting was also considered one of the most precious art works of that time. The Whitechapel Gallery Archive documents all these events but refuses a single or coherent reading of the association between Picasso and the gallery. What we see here is one artist, one organisation and one archive observed in different periods of the twentieth century, each giving very different impressions about the artist's work and the organisation. Although this process raises further questions about the

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<sup>187</sup> See Chapter Three, *Guernica at the Whitechapel*, pp. 105–20.

<sup>188</sup> See Chapter Three, *Inventory of material*, pp. 120–48.

archive and its ability to provide a unified view of the wider picture, it also reflects conditions that have unquestionably taken place. We must not forget that the complex events outlined have been reduced within the archive to mere references, only capable of hinting at Picasso's relationship to the Whitechapel; the actual events have been compressed and summarised for use by the gallery's Communications and Development departments to advocate a 'history of firsts'.<sup>189</sup>

How might all this information be woven together to create material to be used for future projects and exhibitions? Each event is separated from the next by approximately two decades, and the documentary proof presents a number of contradictions. The material currently present in the archive is as significant as the material which is absent and the gaps in information. In order to appreciate and understand the material's full potential, the curator has to make constant leaps of the imagination and must speculate between what is there and what is absent. At the same time the curator must consider historical and social facts, for example information regarding political changes, which took place between 1939 and now; before concluding he or she has to attempt to justify the contradictions. During this process the curator will find themselves, in a phase employed by Ricoeur, as the third constituent: In order to conclude, the curator has to provide

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<sup>189</sup> The programme of the Whitechapel is promoted through the motto *a history of firsts* which advocates that the Whitechapel showcased a number of important artists long before other galleries and museums had discovered their work. The 1939 showing of *Guernica* is also presented in this manner, repeatedly omitting the earlier presentation in the New Burlington Galleries.

the solution, deposit the element that will provide an overall reading of the material, which will bring into equilibrium the material, the Whitechapel and the curator's objective.

The third constituent of the historiographical operation is 'The Historian's Representation'; the activity of producing a verbal representation of some part of the past in a text. This inscription is always rhetorical and therefore interpretative. Indeed, the historiographical operation, as a whole, forms a kind of 'circle of interpretation', for the historian's writing is also subject to archiving, and is ripe for subsequent explanation, comprehension and re-writing. This phase is intertwined with a stage of contemplation during which the curator realises that the gaps and inconsistencies of the archive are actually not gaps nor inconsistencies but issue a paradoxical challenge to present the 'whole volume' of a unique story, presenting irresistible information. The realisation that the archive, as a repository for diverse sources of information, is in a way a Pandora's Box, instigates questions and requires a range of methods for handling, interpreting and presenting this material.

This is an important point for curatorial practice within archives. The traditional methodology of curating i.e. initial proposal, research, confirmation of participants and execution of the final event is insufficient; indeed there has to be a new element, an innovation in approach, a solution that bridges the gaps by avoiding fabrication and distortion and does not expose or endanger the

integrity of the archival material. This is an important phase of the historiographical operation, as the curator is ready to return the contribution directly back to the archive, to react to the reading and redeposit their understanding, hence enhancing the archive. This stage, which Ricoeur describes as the third constituent, is pivotal to the writing of history:

With 'The Historian's Representation' we come to the third phase of the historiographical operation. It would be an error to apply to it the title of writing history or historiography. One constant thesis in this work is that history is writing through and through—from archives to historian's texts, written, published, given for reading. The seal of writing is thus transferred from the first to the third phase, from an initial to a final inscription. The documents had their reader, the historian in his 'mine'. Pulled by the archive out of the world of action, the historian reenters that world by inscribing his work in the world of his readers. In turn the history book becomes a document, open to the sequence of reinscriptions that submit historical knowledge to an unending process of revisions.<sup>190</sup>

In this way historical information is intertwined and redeveloped; this is a core curatorial contribution, as well as a resolution to the initial dilemma of how to proceed with a project based entirely on archive research. This particular condition could be presented to an artist as a brief; that is, a commission for new work, which will take into consideration the details and the issues discussed above. Commissioning an artist to work directly with the Whitechapel's archive

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<sup>190</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 234

exposes the archive and makes it susceptible to radical interpretation. The artist, as an external party, is liberated from the constraints and obligations to the Whitechapel that, for instance, my institutional role as curator entails.

A collaborative series of encounters and negotiations with the archive is the route for a curator who wishes to remain dedicated to the historicity of the material but at the same time wishes to discuss and expose the issues arising from it. An artistic intervention enhances the curator's initial aim of using the archive in ways that are open to interpretation and challenge; it is not only about exporting data but receiving it as well. Aware of the important role that archives play in academic and historical research, I emphasise at this point that an artist's intervention does not threaten the archive as a source for research; on the contrary it enhances it.

This is a point that I will take up in Chapter Five, where I discuss Goshka Macuga's work *The Nature of the Beast*, the inaugural commission for the newly expanded Whitechapel Gallery.<sup>191</sup>

Macuga's commission, viewed as a curatorial project based on the archive and destined for re-archivisation, is the cornerstone which complements the archive in a way that it makes it coherent, articulate and meaningful.

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<sup>191</sup> Goshka Macuga was born in Poland in 1967 and lives and works in London. She has participated in the Liverpool Biennial and Sao Paulo Biennial (2006) and was a Turner Prize nominee for 2008. Her work is particularly suited to the case study I present as she draws on the conventions of historical archives and exhibition making, enacting a form of cultural archaeology.

It can be argued that such projects, because they are invasive, could result in a manipulation of the archive to the degree that material could disappear or be re-fabricated, resulting in a false and misleading version of any historical accounts deposited in the archive. This could have been a possible effect in a frenzied and uncontrolled intervention, which aims at entirely destructing the archive.<sup>192</sup> The purpose of commissioning an artist to work with the Whitechapel Gallery Archive and the Picasso related material is not in order to threaten the archive, but instead to leave a permanent mark, an incision. As a curator in the Whitechapel's archive my wish is to preserve the archive and to communicate that it can be as revealing or as concealing as we wish. Distortion and destruction are diametrically opposed to the objective of highlighting through meaningful criticism, and enhancing by creating an association with the ideas that an artist would deposit.

Whatever methodology the commissioned artist decides to work with, and whatever direction they pursue, a project of this nature must be seen as a contribution to the experience of future archive users and other Whitechapel visitors. The archive's vulnerable points (its ideological inconsistencies and its information gaps) could, if re-visited by an artistic intervention guided by a curator, make the archive less susceptible to its own obscurities.

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<sup>192</sup> For instance, if the proposal for an art project is focused on completely messing up the physical order of an archive, there would have to be continuous monitoring and recording during the artist's commission. Consequently, as soon as the project comes to an end, it would be possible to return the archive to its initial condition.

The original archive and the intervention can exist parallel to each other in a symbiosis that does not threaten their status as independent entities; on the contrary, it adds to the reading and provides fresh answers.

The curatorial solution conveys the very essence of curating practice: the instigation of exhibitions and events which create and open up critical impetuses and further thought. Here, the curator is liberated from the historian's task, they are not charged with a historical agenda but instead offer their own contribution by highlighting the ebb and flow of the archive. Without compulsory responsibility, the curator inhabits the role of interpreter and producer as a result of their interaction with, reading and representation of the archive.

An artistic intervention which challenges existing historical facts will undoubtedly raise questions about the capacity of art to contribute to historical accounts. This debate is present in other similar projects, in which artists investigate certain historical periods or the activities of certain groups of people, and take charge of the representation of these events or actions. For example, the recent project entitled *Enthusiasts* by the artists Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, which took place in 2004 at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and was curated by Lukasz Ronduda, instigated a similar debate. The artists researched personal and institutional film archives, and traced a significant number of amateur films, made by Polish factory workers in the Communist era, from the 1950s to the mid-1980s. The artists

gathered these films, rescuing them from certain oblivion, and re-edited them, adjoining them all together to create a new narrative, dictated by the films themselves, but also their re-production. The edited material was divided into three main themes covering broad categories of human behaviour: Love, Longing and Labour. One year after the first presentation, a second exhibition took place at the Whitechapel Gallery, curated by Anthony Spira and entitled *Enthusiasm* (instead of *Enthusiasts*).<sup>193</sup>

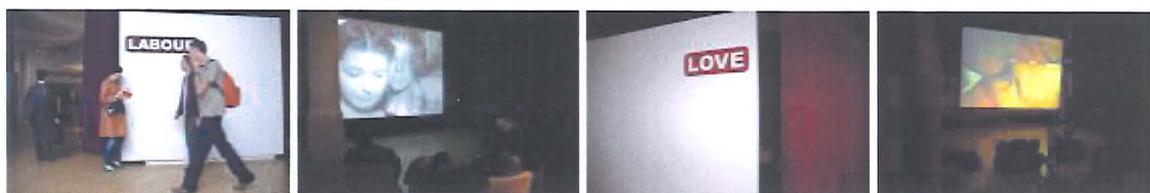


Figure 21: Views from 'Enthusiasm', Neil Cummings, Marysia Lewandawska, Whitechapel Gallery, 2005.

For the duration of the exhibition (1 April – 22 May 2008) FeedBack Project posed questions about the integrity of such art practices, not with the intention of challenging the project, on the contrary, but with the intention of generating questions around such methodologies.<sup>194</sup> Flyers were distributed to the gallery's audience asking them the following questions:

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<sup>193</sup> It was the artists' decision to change the title. See the interview 'From Enthusiasm to the Creative Commons' between the artists and Anthony Spira, at the time curator at the Whitechapel and currently Director at Milton Keynes Gallery. The interview was published in the exhibition catalogue *Enthusiasm* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2005) pp. 22–25.

<sup>194</sup> FeedBack Project is an ongoing curatorial initiative, which examines ideas that inform, construct and concern the production of exhibitions and events. It was founded by Elpida Karaba, Jacqueline Cooke and I in 2002. It uses various methods of activity, such as intervention in existing exhibitions and projects, by means of questionnaires, ballot boxes, by creating forums and discussions, online activity, by producing publications and by other methods that are suitable to each situation. For *Enthusiasm* we distributed questionnaires. The return of completed questionnaires was not overwhelming, but from the ones we received it was obvious that the topic was controversial and a lot of people disagreed with artists mingling with archives, whilst others found that it did not interfere with the reliability of historical accounts.

- *Does the intervention in and the re-arrangement of an archive impact on history?*
- *What happens when artists create their own vision of history?*
- *Is an artist's interpretation of history more or less credible than an historian's interpretation?*
- *How do the different artists' approaches and ways of working affect their reading of history?*

FeedBack Project's aim was to instigate discussion and thought about the credibility of such attempts; its general aim was to prompt people to think about history and to re-evaluate their faith in it. If history forms the background of our apprehension of the world, could an art project test the way one perceives certain historical facts and, if it does, will this have a positive or negative effect overall?<sup>195</sup> Is an informed audience more responsive to a project which challenges known views about history? Does unawareness of historical facts weaken the artist's critique as the work cannot achieve an exchange with the viewer, necessary for the comprehension and understanding of the artist's ideological comment? It is true that such projects function on various levels; apart from pleasure, they can be a critical platform and an informative one. In the first case, the project works by inviting critical response, and calling for the audience to challenge their own misconceptions and beliefs. On the other hand,

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<sup>195</sup> The audience responses were unclear and not very confident, but the vast majority of replies suggested that an artist reinterpreting history is fine, as long as it clearly defined and that poetic licence enables the amalgamation of historical fact and art intervention.

the same project functions at an informative level, communicating information straight from the archive and depicted in documents (unmediated). In this second case the audience is informed about a particular history and is concurrently invited to challenge it; thus hovering between myth-making and demythologisation. For instance with *Enthusiasm* one could visit the exhibition and view the films for the themes they depicted: romance, family life and work, or one could have an understanding of the social background and the circumstances under which these films were made. The engagement with this parallel narrative that the artists had implanted (the social critique) shifted one's attention from the mere appreciation of the cinematic value of the films to political commentary.

As history is not an impenetrable concept it is prone to changes and challenges; the artistic intention of using 'history' found in archives as a platform for creating new work is justified, and in some respects it is the ideal platform for a certain kind of social critique. It is true that an intervention, which is designed to intentionally manipulate facts in order to 'purposefully' misinform, will have a profound and radical effect on the archive, but this type of intervention is not the focus of the thesis.

I am looking into interventions which will not disrupt the slow accumulation of facts that built an archive's own archive. When Derrida in *Archive Fever* refers to the enhancement of the archive, activated with every passing archive reader, he

imagined a gradual evolution, a progression of accumulated beliefs and viewpoints which, when stacked together in the archive, would constitute an edifice of systems of thought. The curator's challenge is to maintain the edifice whilst implementing into it its own self-critique.

## Chapter Five: *Curating Archives, Archiving Curating*

## The Whitechapel Project: A momentous redevelopment

When in 2006 the Whitechapel Gallery acquired the adjacent building, in which the Whitechapel Public Library had been operating since 1892, it embarked on the biggest development in its history; bigger even than its first renovation in the 1980s under Serota's directorship.<sup>196</sup>

The Whitechapel's expansion coincided with a major regeneration of East London. Whilst this area has experienced brisk transformation over the last two decades, this has been escalated in recent times.

For centuries, East London has been the initial settling point for new immigrants arriving in London. Although not always a prosperous or desirable destination, as it was beset by financial and sociopolitical issues, its close proximity to the London Docks (London's original ports), made East London a first retreat for generations of immigrants. With a large geographical area adjacent to the Thames, it was an appealing destination for all kinds of travellers, and for skilled artisans and traders from all over the world.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> The first major redevelopment took place in the 1980s under Serota's directorship and resulted in a new building with staff offices, a café and an auditorium, which are used until the present day.

<sup>197</sup> Huguenot weavers (the French Protestants of the Reformed Church) came to the East London in the 1550s and, in relative terms, are considered the largest wave of immigration by a single community in Britain. The Jewish community of Eastern Europe was the second large group to arrive; from the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, large groups of Jews fled the Russian Empire as a consequence of the pogroms that resulted in significant loss of life. They too, until they gained stability and established their own businesses, worked in local workshops, textile sweatshops and at various crafts. Most recently, from the mid-twentieth century until today, the Bangladeshi community have gradually settled in the area.

The Whitechapel Gallery was built on the border of East London and the City of London in 1901.<sup>198</sup> Wedged between the prosperous City and the poor East End, it conjoined two parallel capacities: a community resource and an international art centre. The area's regeneration began in quarters close to the City in Bethnal Green and Whitechapel, Mile End and Bow and expanded to Stratford, Walthamstow and the peripheral Lee Valley. The 2012 London Olympics have been scheduled to take place in deep East London, and this has also dramatically increased the pace of the development.<sup>199</sup> A representative example is the redevelopment of Spitalfields Market, which started in 2005 and was completed in 2008. Significant parts of the old market were redeveloped and rented for commercial use by retail firms. The shops and restaurants are a continuation of the City of London, which now expands to the east towards Aldgate, Spitalfields and Whitechapel.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> See Chapter One and Appendix I for historical information on the beginnings of the Whitechapel Gallery.

<sup>199</sup> The area where the 2012 Olympic Games will take place is located between the boroughs of Waltham Forest and Newham in the surrounding area of Stratford. Residents have been relocated to enable construction of the large-scale athletic sites. There has been a proposed restructuring of the landscape and the re-naming of the area to 'Water City'. Numerous protests have taken place to stop this, some instigated by local residents and political groups, as well as artists. One recent art project was entitled *We Sell Boxes We Buy Gold* and was organised in 2007 by artists Richard Crow and Alberto Duman, curators Lucia Farinati and Louise Garrett and urban researcher/poet Jude Rosen. For more information visit the blog <http://boxesforgold.blogspot.com/> [accessed on 30 September 2009]

<sup>200</sup> For an analysis of the development and gentrification processes of East London see *Rising in the East: The Regeneration of East London*, ed. by Tim Butler and Michael Rustin Michael (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996).

The Whitechapel still stands on the same grounds that were purchased in the late 1890s, and in the original building designed by Townsend.<sup>201</sup>



Figure 22: Whitechapel High Street, 1891: Construction begins on the plot where the Whitechapel Public Library and, a few years later, the Whitechapel Gallery will be built, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.

The decision to embark on this major development should not only be seen exclusively in relation to the area's 'gentrification', but mostly in light of much older proposals and discussions, which predate the naming of London as host of the Olympic Games. These discussions did however coincide with the move of many private fine art galleries to the East End, and without these parallel

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<sup>201</sup> The architect was working in the Arts-and-Crafts tradition, and had initially designed the Bishopsgate Institute (1891–94), the first of three public buildings in London on which his reputation largely rests. He subsequently designed the Whitechapel Art Gallery (1896–1901) and later the Horniman Museum (1901–12). The Whitechapel Public Library was opened in 1892 by Liberal MP J. Passmore Edwards. The library was very significant to the communities of Whitechapel. It acquired the reputation of being the 'University of the Ghetto', because many immigrants educated themselves in its reading rooms. Especially important for the Jewish settlers, it became a gathering place for many locals, amongst others, the writers Simon Blumenfeld, Willy Goldman and Bernard Kops, the scientist and historian Jacob Bronowski, and the artists David Bomberg, Mark Gertler and Isaac Rosenberg, who all used the books and resources of the library to learn English or to develop their abilities and skills. The library had the biggest collection of Yiddish books in the United Kingdom, with many Jewish families donating their books.

changes it is possible that the Whitechapel would have not been so successful in securing the funds needed for its redevelopment.

Catherine Lampert, former director, initiated the idea of an extended Whitechapel. The first proposal was intended to make use of the Whitechapel Public Library and transform it into artists' studios and accommodation, as well as to house an art library. Other early proposals considered the demolition of the library building, but fortunately these plans were never realised.<sup>202</sup> Lampert resigned her post after serving the Whitechapel for thirteen years, and the plans were passed to the reigning Director, Iwona Blazwick. A fundraising marathon began. Blazwick further developed the idea of the Whitechapel Project and became proactive in securing support from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, (the local council), as well as from other governmental, charitable and corporate organisations. The project demanded a significant increase in staff within the Whitechapel's Development department. In addition, numerous profit-making ventures were introduced, such as an increase in ticketed events, the commission and sale of artist editions, the publication of books, the sale of

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<sup>202</sup> In text 'Finding Our Territory', written for the catalogue of her departing exhibition, Catherine Lampert wrote: 'Along with many others I am convinced that the Whitechapel Art Gallery, beyond 2001, has a larger role to play in releasing the potential of visual arts by a reinvention of the Whitechapel Library when the borough's general service moves to Mile End. For several years we have experimented with short-duration events like 000zerozerozero, opened the door to partnerships across arts and with schools and identified much-desired printed and new media resources. Acquiring the library site is the first overt step in its becoming our other half, as finely designed and as fitted to its new purpose as our own building has proved to be in its first century. As the departing director, my hope has to be that an inspirational team and board embraces high aims and garners imaginative and generous allies.' See Catherine Lampert, 'Finding our Territory' in *The Whitechapel Art Gallery Centenary Review* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2001), p. 8.

other merchandise and the Whitechapel Gift.<sup>203</sup> In addition, a number of annual fundraising events were established such as the Art Plus Party and the Whitechapel Gala. On 13 October 2006, the Whitechapel Auction took place at Sotheby's. Staff and external agencies had worked for two years in preparation for the auction, and artists who previously had solo exhibitions at the Whitechapel were asked to donate works in support of the gallery. Contributing artists included Georg Baselitz, Christian Boltanski, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Peter Doig, Lucien Freud, Damien Hirst, Walid Raad, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, Julian Schnabel and Jeff Wall. The gallery also published an auction catalogue, which included a number of commissioned essays and illustrations. The auction raised a total of £2,778,600. This amount was a fundamental contribution to the Whitechapel Project. Additionally, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Whitechapel £3,500,000 to support the establishment and promotion of what had in the meantime been evaluated as a historic archive.<sup>204</sup>

As mentioned before, in the last two decades and as a result of the artistic community's major migration towards East London, a number of centrally based private galleries had also moved east, thus creating a network of agents engaged

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<sup>203</sup> The Whitechapel Gift is a limited edition created by an artist of international repute, which is released for sale in small runs and is significantly more expensive than other gallery editions.

<sup>204</sup> The new archive repository, reading room, the archive gallery (Gallery 4) as well as the posts of Archive Curator and Archivist have all been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In 2003, the archive was described by the Historic Manuscripts Commission as being 'of considerable archival value and wide-ranging interest'. See Jon Newman, 'Conservation Management Plan for the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Archive Collection', April 2006, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

in the promotion and sale of contemporary art. Other major visual arts organisations and venues, which receive core public funding and are based in the area include: the Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA, Rich Mix Foundation, Tea Building, Space Studios, ACAVA, the Chisenhale Gallery, as well as smaller venues such as the Brady Art Centre and Oxford House. INIVA and the Rich Mix Foundation are dedicated to promoting and presenting diverse artistic activity from non-western countries or by non-western groups based in the United Kingdom.<sup>205</sup> Additional smaller artist-run spaces and non-commercial galleries bring the total number of visual arts related spaces in East London to 166 in 2008.<sup>206</sup> The Whitechapel is the oldest and most established international public art gallery in East London. The parallel development of both the Whitechapel and its surrounding area have impacted upon each other; the gallery has benefited from the funds that have been poured into the area supporting local businesses and generating new housing projects, and at the same time the presence of the Whitechapel Gallery is attractive for business owners, potential residents and for tourists, who have visited the Whitechapel in large numbers since its re-opening in April 2009.

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<sup>205</sup> These organisations are strategically based in East London, reflecting the diversity of the multiethnic communities that have been resident in the area for centuries, and attempt (through art) to eliminate segregation between the various communities.

<sup>206</sup> The Whitechapel's updated database contains 166 art spaces 113 of which participate in *First Thursdays* late openings – a Whitechapel Gallery initiative which encourages audiences to visit East End galleries on the first Thursday of each month, < <http://www.firstthursdays.co.uk/>>, [accessed 30 September 2009]

This Whitechapel expansion has had a direct effect on the programming of exhibitions and public events as well as on branding and marketing strategies. With more gallery spaces to fill (a precondition that implies much higher expenses) the Whitechapel has to ensure that there will also be a significant increase in income. The expansion thus includes a dining room and a bistro that remain open when the main galleries are closed and a new bookshop that also sells merchandise and memorabilia from the past and current exhibitions. These new revenue making ventures were also launched in April 2009. The new expanded Whitechapel has almost doubled the size of the gallery, with dedicated spaces for an annual commission, to showcase collections, in support of the education programmes, and for exhibitions drawn from the archive. For the launch, Goshka Macuga was selected to present a year-long project, the British Council's art collection was showcased, the archive was represented in an exhibition dedicated to 'The Whitechapel Boys', and the education department exhibited a project by Minerva Cuevas, who had collaborated with them earlier in the year.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> 'The Whitechapel Boys' refers to a group of artists who worked in the East End of London in the first decade of the twentieth century. They all came from similar demographic backgrounds, being sons and daughters of Jewish immigrants who settled in East London. They shared strong ideological and political views, a number of them being conscientious objectors in World War One. Some went on to study at the Slade School of Art, University College London, becoming important contributors to the British Modernist movement. Amongst them were the painters and sculptors: David Bomberg, Jacob Epstein, Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer, Bernard Meninsky, Isaac Rosenberg, Clare Winsten, Alfred Wolmark and the writers: John Rodker, Joseph Leftwich and Stephen Winsten. This exhibition brings to light material from the Whitechapel's archive, together with works borrowed from other institutions. The exhibition research and

In my role as Archive Curator, I am now supported by a full time Archivist who is responsible for the preservation and conservation of the gallery archive.

Together we ensure that the archive material is preserved and stored in the new repository, which has been built according to the latest specifications for archive strong rooms.



Figure 23: The Whitechapel's new repository with a movable racking system and shelves holding the Exhibition Files, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph Gary Haines.

These are remarkable changes, considering that during the course of the gallery's prior history there had only been one professional archivist.<sup>208</sup> The archive, moreover, had been stored in the basement of the building without appropriate shelving or other furniture and equipment. Access to the archive before 2005 was very restricted, but between 2005 and 2008 there was a significant increase in

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administration together with all correspondence will, as discussed, be archived in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

<sup>208</sup> Jon Newman was appointed as archivist at the Whitechapel Gallery (1995–1998). The system he implemented is the one the archive still uses today, with some additions and the establishment of new categories.

researchers consulting the archive; nevertheless the numbers I was able to accept were small in comparison to what the new facilities have enabled.

In addition to the dedicated gallery for archive projects, which is programmed around the year, systematic cataloguing made possible by a full-time archivist enhances and sustains a continuous and detailed recording of all exhibitions and projects. This is extremely important and significant for the development of the archive.

Over the next few years, through their archiving, I will be able to investigate how curatorial practices (directly or indirectly related to the archive) can be mapped and I will present a number of case studies and different models of how this can have an impact on researchers and audiences.

For the span of my engagement with the Whitechapel I have noticed the slow transformation of a previously loose and non-guarded archive into a fully-regulated and monitored body of material. This transition started with Newman continued with Haythornthwaite, was further developed with my employment and most recently with the assistance of the Archivist, Gary Haines. When I was initially recruited, I focused primarily on establishing and improving systems for accessing material and creating networks with other archives and local organisations. This determined the ways visitors were accessing and consulting the archive. Currently, the institutionalisation and professionalism of the archive means that the browsing relationship I had initially established with the archive

has permanently disappeared. The freedom of wandering inside the archive, disregarding the hierarchy of the material, which I describe in Chapter Two, will not be possible for another researcher in the future.<sup>209</sup> The Whitechapel Gallery's reading room is a place where everyone consulting material is now under surveillance.

As Archive Curator, I am responsible for organizing two exhibitions per year for the gallery. My programming will refer to the Whitechapel's history, seen through its archive, to current developments in contemporary art and, I hope, become a platform for invited international artists and curators to collaborate. It is mainly the result of such programming and collaborations that will contribute to the enhancement of the archive, which I have enthusiastically outlined in the previous chapters. These exhibitions will be presented in the dedicated gallery space which is adjacent to the archive reading room. Thus, the readers and users of archive material will be able to observe the exhibitions; items orchestrated in such a way to generate ideas and concepts that could only be shaped when individual items from an archive are juxtaposed with one another.

Through my role I frequently collaborate and advise on the majority of gallery projects that relate to the archive. These have included artists' projects, such as ones developed by Minerva Cuevas,<sup>210</sup> Rosalind Nashashibi,<sup>211</sup> the Canal

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<sup>209</sup> See Chapter Two, Browsing in the archive – *A Flâneur in Whitechapel*, pp. 62–75.

<sup>210</sup> Minerva Cuevas (born 1975) is a Mexican artist based in Mexico City. She is known for her social and political research which she brings into her projects, usually developed as site-specific interventions. She was awarded the 2005 DAAD residency in Berlin. Her project at the

group<sup>212</sup> and Melanie Manchot.<sup>213</sup> Recently, and most significantly, I worked for Goshka Macuga's commission, in a project that brought together my professional and theoretical interests and established the ideas I have developed in the thesis. Apart from its direct and obvious links to the use of archives in exhibition making (which is my primary interest), it has underpinned the theoretic issues here discussed.

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Whitechapel consists of a wall projection of glass lantern slides found in the gallery's archive and which cover various thematics; some are illustrations of novels such as Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* whilst others seem to be photographs taken by naturalists observing animals and birds. We are not certain about how these slides ended up in the gallery's archive, but what is interesting is that once again, this project depicts the relationship of an artist to the archive: The freedom of selecting an item of interest without being constrained by its history.

<sup>211</sup> Rosalind Nashashibi (born 1973) is an Irish-Palestinian artist based in Glasgow. She won the Beck Prize in 2003 with the film *The State of Things*. In 2008 she was shortlisted for the John Kobal New Work Award and has re-used film footage found in a rubbish bin in East London. The film is a documentary presenting interviews of women who have been victims of violence. The film's audio band is damaged so it is not a document of the interview; the viewer will only be able to speculate about the contents of the interview. Rosalind Nashashibi's filmography includes *Dahiest al-Baheed* and *Bachelor Machines Part 1*.

<sup>212</sup> Canal Group is an artists' and curators' collective based in London. Canal was formed in May 2006 with the aim of presenting a range of activities including discussions, screenings and performances. It was originally based in a dedicated space on Vyner Street, East London, but is now a peripatetic organisation hosted by different venues according to the project. As an informal group of artists and curators, Canal acts as a framework to generate a programme which is specifically not exhibition-led and which incorporates practitioners from other creative fields, in addition to the visual arts. Canal is Anna Colin, Matthew Darbyshire, Sarah McCrory and Olivia Plender.

<sup>213</sup> Melanie Manchot (born 1966) is a German artist who lives and works in London. Her work challenges socially and culturally constructed ideas about beauty, aging, sexuality and fantasy. Her project for Whitechapel is an investigation of 'street celebrations' in East London. In research for this project, Manchot visited several archives including the Chingford Newsreel, the Huntley Film Archives, the Imperial War Museum, the Museum of London, the Ragged School, Tower Hamlets Local History Libraries and Archives and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. From these archives she has borrowed documents and objects for the realisation of this project.

## The Bloomberg Commission: Goshka Macuga: *The Nature of the Beast*

*The Nature of the Beast* by Macuga is presented here as a case study that raises issues around curating, historiography and the notional expansion of archives. Through my involvement with *The Nature of the Beast* I have identified Macuga's commission as a perfect model for a curator and an artist working together with an archive. It not only demonstrates a deep engagement with the archive, it also shows that the outcomes of the project are crucial to the *making* and development of the archive.



Figure 24: Goshka Macuga and *The Nature of the Beast*, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph Patrick Lears

The project started from a general interest Macuga expressed in looking at the Whitechapel's archive and it developed through a series of discussions which took place between the artist and I, with contributions from other members of the

curatorial team at a later stage. It is a favourable position for presenting and analysing the case study. Although I was implicated in the formation of the ideas presented in the project, I was not responsible for directly curating it. This distance allowed me to develop an independent position, which was cultivated by my observations, criticality and primary interest in the concepts it has generated. I have been fortunate, on this particular occasion, to be spared the burden of the practicalities and administration which are entailed in the curation of a project. This, can on many occasions, transform the most challenging curatorial project to a predominantly administrative task. My contribution laid the foundation stone for the project and established the guidelines for the initial research. Moreover, my involvement underlined that the research for the commission could also be incorporated into the commission. Whenever the opportunity arose, I highlighted the importance of and analysed the theoretic issues that were pertinent to Macuga's commission. I view Macuga's project as a constitution of three stages which I will analyse in more detail. These stages are the backbone of Macuga's engagement with the archive and are directly linked with the three stages that sustain the curator's work in the archive. The similarities in the process deployed by the artist and the curator alike, also strengthens the links to the historian's processes. They are fundamentally interrelated and should be seen in parallel to the three constituents of

historiography which have been profoundly analysed by Ricoeur and described in Chapter Four.

I became involved in the formation of the artist's proposal at its very early stages. We had many discussions around the theoretic elements of the project but the more practical decisions, which would determine how the commission would shape up in the form of an installation, were still to come; there were many possible routes the project could take.

Up until the final proposal, there had been numerous discussions between Macuga and the Whitechapel regarding the content and the context of the commission: What exactly will be displayed inside the gallery, what shape would the space take and how would the display become a conveyor of the ideas we were discussing at a theoretical level?

It was at this early stage that Macuga and I discussed ideas around the enhancement of archives through curatorial projects and to my great appreciation, she was willing for the whole project, including every step of its research and development, together with all the material produced by the Whitechapel, herself or by third parties throughout the year-long commission, to formulate an archive of its own. This archive would be re-deposited inside the Whitechapel's archive, creating a remarkable addition to the existing repository; the primary source from which the project emerged.

Below I describe the background of *The Nature of the Beast*.

## Events

In spring 2008 Iwona Blazwick met with Macuga to discuss the commissioning of a new work for the re-launch of the Whitechapel. Andrea Tarsia, Head of Exhibitions and Public Events, at that time, was also present.<sup>214</sup> I was invited to sit in on the meeting and to advise on material that was available in the archive and which may be of interest for Macuga. Macuga had expressed an interest in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, and in the past had incorporated such material in her installations. Additionally, she has frequently investigated the history of the institutions in which she was invited to work, therefore looking into the Whitechapel's archive would give her the background of the institution.<sup>215</sup> During this meeting, the artist confirmed her interest in looking at the archive and specifically in researching exhibitions related to the subject of war. These exhibitions had mostly taken place during the years the Second World War. Macuga also expressed interest in exhibitions which referred to notions of 'national' art such as 'Irish Art' (21 May – 29 June 1913), 'Polish Art' (9 May – 4 June 1921) and 'Swedish Art' (12 March – 24 April 1926). In the early years of its

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<sup>214</sup> Tarsia's professional title was changed later in 2008 and he became Head of Displays and Curatorial Studies. This was a consequence of the appointment of Achim Borchard-Hume as Chief Curator in December 2008; he now heads the Exhibitions Department.

<sup>215</sup> Macuga uses techniques and styles which are common within archive environments and museum displays. She frequently makes installations which incorporate other artists' works or makes direct references to them. Recent projects include *Picture Room* (2003), at Gasworks, *Objects in Relation* (2007) at 'Art Now', Tate Britain and her participation in the 5th Berlin Biennale with the works *Haus de Frau I* (2008), *Haus de Frau II* (2008) and *Deutsches Volk – deutsche Arbeit* (2008) at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

foundation, the Whitechapel had organised numerous exhibitions which had an ethnographic and didactic undertone and related to art production outside of England. The exhibition of *Guernica* in 1939 was briefly mentioned at this meeting.

Throughout the meetings which followed, minor incidents and seemingly prosaic discussions proved to be of major importance to the development of Macuga's commission. This is symptomatic of collaborative practices and the ways in which ideas are mutually exchanged between a curator and an artist; both parties contribute different components to the formation of the final outcome.

When the first part of the meeting between Blazwick, Tarsia, Macuga and I adjourned, I invited the artist to join me for lunch so that we could continue our discussions further and sum up the main points of the meeting without losing momentum: We were both keen to organise a viewing of material from the archive. In this lunch meeting I had the opportunity to discuss with Macuga my sustained research on the curatorial potential of archives. I specifically referred to the Picasso material which was the subject of my, at the time, unfinished thesis. The discussion unraveled and I spoke to Macuga about my interest in archival 'gaps' and the challenges they offer to curators like me but likewise to artists who may find interest in working with such material. We talked about how these actual gaps in information can become narrating gaps and how the *lacuna* they

create could be used by curators and artists, and interpreted by future archive users.

It was very encouraging to realise, through this informal discussion, how although working from different viewpoints, we were both fascinated with working with the archive.

Looking at this incident as a strictly professional encounter, a curator was in conversation with an artist about notions of curatorial and of artistic intervention in the archive. Looking at it as an impulsive encounter, it should be considered as an inspiring moment for both Macuga and I.

The significance of this conversation in the shaping and development of our work was not immediately realised, but it was fundamental. We both left the meeting in a very positive and enthusiastic mood, as if a resolution had been found. Soon after I was able to see what had happened in that meeting and it was remarkable: a seed had been planted, which later on would enhance the Whitechapel's archive. The project would eventually bridge together the archive's gaps and inconsistencies, without concealing the political significance of the material. Macuga and I had identified a common concern and this mutual understanding became the basis upon which we continued our discussions from that moment onwards.

Shortly after that first meeting I sent information to the artist, such as lists of exhibitions related to the subjects that she was interested in. I invited her to visit

the archive to view the material from these exhibitions. In this phase, the artist's proposal was still in its infancy and no one, neither the Exhibitions team nor the artist had a clear idea of how this commission would develop apart from the fact that there was a core idea around the use of archive material.

Because of my work with the archive, both practically and theoretically, and because the Exhibitions department had not allocated a curator for the commission, I was in a favourable position to discuss with Macuga issues of theoretic concern, which derived from the project and which were of mutual interest. On 14 August 2008 Macuga and I met again to discuss the progress of her ideas. The artist had dispensed with some aspects of the project and was now very keen to work with the Picasso material from the Whitechapel's archive. She had already embarked on research herself and had found various interesting facts linked to *Guernica*. As anticipated, she was aware of the incident in February 2003, in which the *Guernica* tapestry displayed in the United Nations building in New York was covered up for a press conference.<sup>216</sup> The covering of the tapestry had received extensive press coverage and Macuga had already read several relevant articles, which I was also familiar with. As a common concern, we discussed the aggressive external politics of the United States at the time, and agreed that the reason for the covering of the tapestry at the United Nations must

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<sup>216</sup> When Colin Powell, John Negroponte and Hans Blix from George W. Bush's administration held press conferences at the United Nations about the American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, a blue shroud was hung over the tapestry. This action resulted in a public outcry and the incident was extensively covered by the press.

have been its thematic association with the invasion of Iraq and its depiction of the tragic loss of life as a result of war.

Macuga made a tentative proposal to display the tapestry version of *Guernica* and to create a number of sculptural elements around it, possibly made of blue fabric.<sup>217</sup> The tapestry at the time was hung outside the United Nations Security Council Chamber, and as the proposal was still in progress we did not yet consider a formal loan request.<sup>218</sup> Macuga's ideas conveyed a very symbolic act; bringing the tapestry from the United Nations building in New York to the Whitechapel in London was equivalent to making it accessible again, to revealing it. It was a direct commentary on the covering of the tapestry in 2003 and a direct

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<sup>217</sup> The blue fabric for the sculptural elements would make direct references to the blue fabric that the United Nations used to cover the tapestry in 2003. These sculptures were going to be in the shape of throne covers similar to canopies which originated from Baghdad. The seemingly coincidental association with an item that traditionally derives from Iraq's capital was discussed by the artist in order to enforce the powerful metaphor of the display. This historical element, if used, would become a reminder of the undisputed fact that Iraq was under occupation by the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

In the final installation there were no sculptural elements but the blue fabric was used as a 'theatrical' backdrop for the tapestry. The particular shade of blue is widely used in television studios and is known as 'chroma key blue', which is filmed as the electronic background for, as an example, weather forecast maps. It has the capacity of being 'invisible' when filmed. If, for example, someone was wearing a garment in chroma key blue and was filmed in front of a chroma key backdrop, they will become invisible on the film – apart from those parts of the body which were not covered. This material creates a 'non space' within an existing defined space which as a concept interested Macuga. Another idea that was not materialised in the final installation was to totally cover the gallery walls with United Nations flags.

<sup>218</sup> In 1956 Nelson Rockefeller commissioned Picasso to make three tapestries, exact reproductions of the original *Guernica*. The pieces were executed on the same grand scale (3.49 x 7.76m) in different colour tones (brown, taupe and blue). The brown hung in Rockefeller's upstate Albany mansion, for the admiration of guests. In 1985, his widow, Happy Rockefeller, placed the tapestry on loan to the United Nations, where it would hang outside the Security Council Chamber as a potent decial of war. The tapestry was lent to the Whitechapel for the duration of *The Nature of the Beast* and will be returned to the United Nations in April 2010.

The other two tapestries are located in the Museum of Modern Art in Gunma, Japan and in Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France.

renouncement of censorship, misinformation and the media's manipulation of the information we receive about war actions. It was also extremely significant for the Whitechapel's history (*Guernica* finally returning to the Whitechapel after its first display in 1939) and it encompassed the links that the archive had offered. Although it was the tapestry not the original painting that was going to come back to the gallery, somehow this made the commentary more piquant; it was a return journey that the original never achieved.

However tentative the proposal, the artist had conceived the core axis of the installation: *Guernica*, the painting, a symbol of protest and an object instrumental to the history of the Whitechapel and *Guernica* the tapestry, which conveyed stories of its own. The archive material would be presented as an important part of the installation, in order to sustain debate on the political issues exposed by the installation.

The fact that my curatorial concern was to investigate ways of enhancing the notional and physical aspect of archives, precisely by 'curating the archive', prompted me to bring this issue to the discussion. I also brought to the dialogue, the concept that an archive is altered with every intervention in ways that open it up and charge it with further meanings and interpretations. We talked about the effects the project could potentially have on the archive and I made a clear statement that it was my intention, if the artist agreed, to proceed with the

archive's enhancement; we agreed that regardless of the final format of the commission, this would be a major component of the project.

Blazwick called another meeting on 16 October 2008 which was attended by Adam Szymczyk, Director at Kunsthalle Basel an exhibitions organiser at Whitechapel, Shamita Sharmacharja, and I. The subject of that meeting was a joint publication, which would be published by Kunsthalle Basel and the Whitechapel. Macuga had a forthcoming exhibition in Basel in January 2009, three months before the inauguration of the Whitechapel commission. The publication would focus on Macuga's use of archives and the re-appropriation of material, specifically looking at the similarities and drawing connections between the Basel and London projects. Everybody contributed ideas and Macuga asked if I could write one of the essays for the book, discussing the curatorial issues surrounding archives. The two directors discussed financial and other practical details and it was agreed that the book would coincide with the opening of the Whitechapel, that it would be bilingual (English and German) and that the production cost would be shared between the two organisations. There would be ten chapters, including one dedicated to the project at Kunsthalle Basel and another dedicated to the Whitechapel project, two chapters would contain archive material, and the remaining chapters would be devoted to essays. In the meantime it was decided that Anthony Spira would curate Macuga's commission. Until that time, the Whitechapel had not appointed a member of

staff to officially curate the commission. Apart from the first meeting with Blazwick and Tarsia, Macuga had only discussed her progress of ideas with me. On 23 October 2008 Macuga was invited to the Whitechapel to be introduced to Spira as well as to view the archive material related to *Guernica*, the unrealised Picasso exhibitions and Norman King's papers.<sup>219</sup> The meeting was attended by Tarsia, Spira, Macuga and I. The artist still hadn't submitted a formal proposal hence the meeting's secondary purpose was for the curatorial team to gain a clearer understanding of the artist's progress. My knowledge and familiarity with the theoretic elements of the proposal proved to be an important contribution to the meeting. Introducing elements from my personal research, I proposed a plan of action that would use the archive material in an enhancing and encompassing way. This proposal was based on the intention of exploring all avenues that the reading of the material unraveled. Specifically, I identified five strands of research for further exploration, so that a first notional opening to the archive could be prompted:

- *Guernica*, the painting and its history (the commission, Picasso's ideas, its making, possible anecdotal evidence from persons related to Picasso).
- *Guernica* in London (the relation with the Whitechapel in 1939, 1952 and 1980, the association of the Local Trade Unions, Communist and Labour

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<sup>219</sup> See Chapter Three, Inventory of material, pp. 127–44.

Parties, and the use of *Guernica* for raising awareness of the Spanish Civil War).

- *Guernica* the tapestry (Nelson Rockefeller's commission, its production and donation to the United Nations, the 2003 concealment).
- The Norman King papers (Propaganda Art Courses, political activism in East London, King's relation to the Communist Party, recent political activity such as anarchist groups active in the area)
- Art projects which reference *Guernica* or projects which have been conceived as a means of political activism.<sup>220</sup>

This research strategy which was envisaged as a means to generate a wealth of new material related to *Guernica* was unanimously accepted. Macuga declared to Spira and Tarsia her intention of borrowing the tapestry from the United Nations building and of using it as a central part of the installation.<sup>221</sup> This proposal was remarkable and everyone present recognised how evocative it could be on a number of issues: political propaganda, art and politics, depictions of war in the media, as well as the Whitechapel's own history.

In addition, Macuga introduced the idea of inviting speakers to give talks in the gallery, ideally on a weekly basis. The artist's major objective was that the commission would become a platform for people to engage with and feel free to

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<sup>220</sup> For instance actions such as Tony Shafrazi's intervention on *Guernica* in 1974: Shafrazi sprayed the phrase 'KILL LIES ALL' on the painting at MoMA, as a protest against Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War.

<sup>221</sup> It has to be noted that at the time we were not aware that Rockefeller had commissioned three versions of the *Guernica* tapestry.

speaking about their own political beliefs, using the installation as a podium where they could present ideas. The final display was intended as an environment which would house a series of talks and other political events in which different voices could be heard. The suggested speakers would be political party representatives, members of anarchist groups, community groups, various commentators, journalists, artists, curators and anyone else interested in making a statement; a form of speaker's corner.<sup>222</sup>

Macuga's politically-motivated notion of transforming her commission into a living 'sculpture piece' by inviting speakers on a weekly basis was queried at subsequent meetings, as it was anticipated to prove very complicated and laborious in terms of administration.<sup>223</sup>

Before the meeting adjourned we all highlighted the importance of implementing a clear and meticulous time schedule and the importance of the immediate distribution of tasks between the team members so that the multifarious axes of research could be effectively followed. Macuga was about to embark on a trip to America to work on the forthcoming exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel and she would not be available to continue her own research during that period. This trip

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<sup>222</sup> *Guernica* itself could instigate endless discussions. Picasso's motives in painting it, for instance, were questionable as it is known that his political stance as an artist was never dynamic. As mentioned in Simon Schama's *Power of Art* TV series on *Pablo Picasso*, Picasso had always been a friend of freedom but mainly of artistic freedom. He was not involved in politics and was not known to discuss this aspect in his social domain. Schama refers to the testimony of one of Picasso's friends (name undisclosed), describing Picasso as 'the least political person I've ever known', *Power of Art: Picasso*. Simon Schama, BBC 2 London, 2006, 60 mins.

Nevertheless, the invited speakers would not necessarily need to base their talk on the installation or *Guernica* and Picasso.

<sup>223</sup> This idea was discussed later on with Blazwick; details of the meeting are described below.

presented an opportunity for Macuga to view the *Guernica* tapestry in New York and we agreed to organise a viewing on her behalf.



Figure 25: *After Picasso*, woven by Mme J de la Baume Dürrbach, *Guernica Tapestry*, 1955 wool, collection of Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller.

The working team was constituted by the Director and staff from the Exhibitions department with the support of an intern, Eleanor Nairne, who was working across departments.<sup>224</sup> The main team was Blazwick, Spira, exhibitions organiser, Cassandra Needham, Nairne and I. Tarsia, who was involved in the project until that time, withdrew his direct involvement.

According to my instructions we generated a 'Goshka Macuga research file' which was updated weekly. We sent a copy of each weekly update and research findings to Macuga, keeping a copy on file for the Whitechapel. I coordinated the research according to the five strands identified in the meeting of 23 October

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<sup>224</sup> The intern was Eleanor Nairne, an Oxford History undergraduate, daughter of Sandy Nairne and Lisa Tickner, two prominent curators and art historians living and working in London. Nairne worked closely to me and conducted parts of the research relevant to the commission.

2009. Macuga had also employed an assistant, who was conducting some elements of the research. Both parties shared each other's findings.

The research brought to light a lot of information and evidence around *Guernica*, its creation and itinerary in Europe in 1938 and 1939. It highlighted several political links associated with *Guernica*'s reception in England, such as information on the involvement of the local trade unions, the support that both the Labour Party and the Communist Party offered for the first showing at the Whitechapel in 1939, the instrumentalisation of the work in support of Spanish Relief, as well as other facts that were mostly related to the history of the Whitechapel. More information was discovered about the attempts of Robertson and Serota to borrow *Guernica*. Similarly, interesting facts were gathered regarding the commission of the *Guernica* tapestry and the donation to the United Nations. We made contact with the Nelson Rockefeller Archives in New York, thus establishing a link between the two bodies, and we requested copies of their holdings related to *Guernica*.

The penultimate meeting before the official opening of the commission took place on 4 December 2008 in Blazwick's office. It was attended by Blazwick, Nairne, Needham, Macuga, Spira and I. This meeting focused specifically on the installation and Macuga explained how the idea had developed. She discussed her forthcoming project at Kunsthalle Basel and drew theoretic links between the two projects. I argued that what Macuga was actually following in her practice

was a historiographical process and that her approach was very close to Ricoeur's three constituents. This theoretic association was accepted by all parties and Macuga commented that this parallelism supported her work with a conceptual basis through which it could be better understood and appreciated. In the meeting we also spoke about the forthcoming publication. It was agreed that as the Whitechapel commission was running for a year, during which time the contents of the exhibition space would change dramatically, the publication's chapter dedicated to the Whitechapel commission would not be adequate to give an impression of the project and hence to provide a picture equal to the one dedicated to the Kunsthalle project. If the two chapters were not equal in content the comparison which we wanted to draw would not be feasible. Everyone agreed that we should withdraw from the publication and produce a separate text halfway into the year-long commission.

Macuga's interest in inviting speakers on a regular basis and the conception of the space as an open and unrestricted platform was discussed in detail. Blazwick thought that this element of the project was unwieldy. Such a demanding programme of speakers would have to be organised, in addition to the schedule of education events, by the small Education department. Blazwick estimated that this would prove to be a difficult administrative assignment to keep up. Another hesitation was that a large number of visitors coming to the visit *The Nature of the Beast* would miss out on the majority of the talks and events taking place

throughout the year. Blazwick commented that if this part of the work was of primary importance to the artist, then it should be offered to all the visitors, not only to the ones who would be able to attend the numerous events. Finally, the funds allocated for Macuga's commission would not be enough to recompense so many speakers. If the speakers were volunteers, again, Blazwick believed, this would become problematic.<sup>225</sup> Understanding the importance of Macuga's proposal we discussed the possibility of scheduling a number of talks throughout the year.<sup>226</sup>

From January 2009, Spira and Needham continued to meet with Macuga to discuss the practical details of the commission and the final production of her work. Between December 2008 and February 2009 Macuga finalised her

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<sup>225</sup> The Whitechapel was not in a position to accept Macuga's proposal to invite a large number of speakers, with a lecture held every week for the duration of the commission (April 2009 – April 2010). Voluntary talks presented the risk of speakers cancelling without sufficient warning thus creating organisational havoc which would end up in disappointing audiences. The introduction of such informal structures to an organisation is an interesting gesture in itself and can challenge how visual art institutions are programmed and structured. Nevertheless, recurrent unpredictability and chance are not sustainable as an ongoing process. There was overall concern that this would become problematic for the smooth running of the organisation. Similar projects have taken place and proved feasible, such as projects organised by the Serpentine Gallery. The '24-hour Interview Marathon' which took place in 2006 and was hosted by Obrist and Rem Koolhaas enjoyed good attendance and also resulted in a publication. Similarly, the 2007 'Experiment Marathon', which featured performances by artists, architects and scientists, was equally well attended. These events, each with duration of 24 hours, reflect the flexibility of the Serpentine Gallery and the will to stretch their opening hours and staff timetables beyond the average. Nevertheless, I doubt these events would be so successful or manageable if they were running continuously for a longer period of time.

<sup>226</sup> Macuga had mentioned to me her intention of inviting Sacha Craddock (art critic) and Pablo Lafuente (Editor of *Afterall*, an art theory periodical) to curate one or more events which would latch on to the existing project. We also mentioned Michael Rosen, writer and BBC broadcaster, and Dr. John Reardon, artist and lecturer on the MA in Art & Politics at Goldsmiths. The main idea was that the display would be simple and dramatic but would evolve during the course of the year and would grow both formally and conceptually through the artist's collaborations.

proposal. Blazwick had made a formal loan request to the curator of the Rockefeller Art Collection and had secured the loan of the tapestry for one year.



Figure 26: In New York, The *Guernica* tapestry is crated and loaded into a truck to be shipped to Whitechapel Gallery, December 2008, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph Cassandra Needham.

Needham travelled to New York to act as courier for the transportation of the tapestry.

At the end of February 2009, a month before the main press view and the Whitechapel's reopening, Spira called another meeting with Macuga, Needham, the Archivist Gary Haines and I. The purpose for the meeting was so that we could advise on the final selection and handling of archive material and to update all parties on the development of the commission. The installation had started to take its first form:



Figure 27: General view of *The Nature of the Beast* installation, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph Patrick Lears.

The tapestry was displayed on the wall facing the entrance of the gallery. A long blue carpet (2 x 20 metres) led from the entrance to the tapestry. The walls to the left and to the right of the tapestry were left bare. In the middle of the room and in front of the tapestry there was a large round table with fourteen black leather 'board room'-type chairs around it. The table would have a double function as a meetings table and as a large display case where material from the archive would be exhibited.<sup>227</sup> The table top was constructed with eight adjoined display sections and provided a solution to Macuga's idea of accommodating speakers throughout the project; the table would be made available free of charge to anyone wanting to book it and use it for meetings or discussions.

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<sup>227</sup> Spira, Macuga and I agreed that high quality facsimiles would be produced from the archive material for this display. The display of original items was not feasible due to the fact that the gallery was not climate controlled and the duration of the project was much longer than the period within which we could safely expose archival documents. Finally, after Macuga's project launch and the expected press coverage, we anticipated high interest from researchers and we wanted to make the files available in the reading room.



Figure 28: The top of the boardroom table divided into eight sections containing archive material from the Whitechapel Gallery Archive, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph Patrick Lears.

The Whitechapel would be compensated in kind; every group would provide some form of documentation, audiovisual material, minutes or other records of the organised event. This documentation would be part of the new body of material that we would, at the end of the commission, deposit in the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. A newspaper would be printed and distributed to the public, possibly free of charge; it would contain news pieces derived from information

found in the archive, together with other information related to *Guernica's* historic political journey. It would feature an interview between Spira and Macuga where they would discuss how the project was conceived. There were several suggestions about the title of the newspaper. For instance, one suggestion was that the title should be inspired by *Finsbury Clarion* the local newspaper found in King's papers, in which he and his wife featured as candidates for the Communist Party in the 1949 local elections.<sup>228</sup> Accordingly it would have been titled *Whitechapel Clarion*. Finally the newspaper was given the title *Goshka Macuga: The Nature of the Beast*.

In selecting the material for the final installation, Macuga was chiefly interested in material with a direct political connotation. We discussed once again the formation of the final 'archive' of the project and Macuga confirmed her continuing support for the idea. The project had taken its final shape and there were no uncertainties about the concept and the objective of the installation. In addition to the above arrangements the final installation includes a sculptural bust of Colin Powell, in Picasso's Cubist style, a reference to the Secretary of State's infamous 2003 speech about alleged Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction. Also, anti-war documentary films were projected onto a screen in the gallery, with the films changed on a monthly basis.

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<sup>228</sup> See Chapter Three, Inventory of material, item XLIV, p. 142.



Figure 29 and 30: Colin Powell demonstrating the evidence of chemical weapons in Iraq, United Nations Council, 4 February 2003. Photograph Associated Press (left); Goshka Macuga's sculptural depiction of Powell's speech, *The Nature of the Beast*, 2009 (right).

Beneath the projection, a hand-woven Afghan war rug placed on the floor depicted military scenes from the American invasion in 2001. Newspapers are placed in three big stacks on the floor.

The above account presents the chain of events as they took place between June 2008 and March 2009, from when the first discussions between Macuga and the Whitechapel took place until the final shaping of the commission.<sup>229</sup>

Evaluating the whole project, I realise that the moment when Macuga and I shared ideas and mutually arrived at the same conclusions was very significant. Macuga and I were both, in different ways, very familiar and experienced in using, interpreting and 'transforming' archive material through our professional practice. This provided the project with a common conceptual basis in the way we viewed archives, and the interpretation (and re-interpretation) of historical facts. This collaboration provided my thesis with a powerful case study, which

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<sup>229</sup> Any further developments after this meeting will be presented as an appendix. The thesis is scheduled to be submitted in October 2009 and Macuga's commission will continue until April 2010.

would be materialised, rather than only used theoretically within this thesis.

Moreover, the project offered me the opportunity to become an advisor to a factual proposal for an artistic commission, related to the archive and the ideas discussed here.

Below I will look into the methodology deployed by Macuga, with particular reference to the Whitechapel commission. I will analyse the significance of Macuga's commission to the archive and, in addition, the general impact to the archive of all the forthcoming curatorial projects which will derive from it.

## Curating archives, archiving curating

Goshka Macuga's practice revolves around archives or involves them in the process of her work. She has directly used archival material in 'Art Now: Objects in Relation', 2007, at Tate Britain. Similarly, she constructed museological displays in the 5th Berlin Biennale in 2008. She is interested in the production of historical facts as her work in Kunsthalle Basel also demonstrates.<sup>230</sup>



Figure 31: (left) Goshka Macuga, *Picture Room*, 2003, mixed media, Gasworks, London;

Figure 32: (centre) Goshka Macuga, *Architectural Unions of Early Fancy in the Gay Morning of Youth and Dreams in the Evening of Life by JM Gandy 1820*, 2003, mixed media;

Figure 33: (right) Goshka Macuga, *Library Table*, 2005, mixed media, Kate McGarry Gallery, London.



Figure 34: (left) Goshka Macuga, *Sleep of Ulro*, 2006, installation, Liverpool Biennial 2006;

Figure 35: (centre) Goshka Macuga, installation at Moderna Museet, 5th Berlin Biennale, 2008;

Figure 36: (right) Goshka Macuga, *Madame Blavatsky*, from 'What's in a Name', Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, 2007.



Figure 37: (left) Goshka Macuga, *I am Become Death* (detail), 2009, Kunsthalle Basel.

Figure 38: (right) Goshka Macuga, *I am Become Death* 2009, installation view, Kunsthalle Basel.

<sup>230</sup> For more information on the project *I am Become Death*, see Appendix XXIX, p. 403.

The archive is at the centre of Macuga's research. Her presentations are far from stereotypical; she does not merely imitate archival structures or classifications as has been the case with many artists who use the model of the archive in their work, on the contrary, she avoids this formalistic simplification.<sup>231</sup> She believes a display inspired from archive material or concerned with a particular archive, should not necessarily imitate the archival format (i.e. documents exhibited in conservation frames or display cases). Macuga is concerned with revealing unknown or latent associations between people and events, (through her practice she links seemingly unrelated historic events) and in this process she instinctively lifts the drape which covers historical facts in order to see what lies behind.<sup>232</sup> Macuga is interested in the configurations that shape the world surrounding us; in patterns of thought which are demonstrated through conceptual and formal arrangements within everyday life. Her exhibitions are melting pots for these very different states of affairs, which she extracts across *history* and across *archives*.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Some artists who have worked with archives are Christian Boltanski, Neil Cummings, Andrea Fraser, Rene Green, Susan Hiller, Marysia Lewandowska, Ruth Maclennan and Walid Raad, amongst others.

<sup>232</sup> Although this is a wider metaphor for the investigatory element in Macuga's work, by bringing the *Guernica* tapestry to Whitechapel, she has actually 'lifted the drape'; a real and symbolic act which is a strong critique of censorship and the media manipulation of news and information.

<sup>233</sup> From the press release of *I am Become Death* presented at Kunsthalle Basel (16 January – 8 March 2009 I quote: '...She ventures into a variety of disciplines, including art making, curating, art history, ethnology, psychology and esoteric science. Macuga's many exhibition projects and publications converge in a multi-faceted oeuvre that cannot be squeezed into such pigeonholes

In order to make work, Macuga starts from something that has triggered her interest and then researches its background. What do databases virtual or physical hold? Can she call on testimonies from oral history? Are there any formal resemblances between the people, items or events that she is interested in? Her work consists equally of *excavations* and *constructions* which interrelate almost concurrently during Macuga's research on what, in most cases, are previously unrelated facts.

I view her methodology in parallel with the curator's process when curating from archives and in extension with an historiographical operation.

Its first stage is the engagement of the artist with the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Triggered by her interest in archives, Macuga's first enquiry was a visit. The coded and classified lists which were available as finding aids in the archive provided Macuga with the necessary information on various areas of interest; this information constituted historical data. Subsequent to the first encounter followed a more engaged connection; one which was triggered by the particularity of the Whitechapel's archive (or indeed any archive). The deeper the

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as "politically committed" or "formalist". In short, her work is rigorous in form and anarchistic in content. The artist's practice has always been marked by an interest in collaboration with other artists and cultural producers. Macuga also makes extensive use of existing cultural material: original arts and crafts; documents related to historical figures, such as artists, their patrons and their opponents; forms of exhibition display devised and applied in diverse political contexts; and references to vernacular culture. Her work predates the often insufficiently reflected inspiration that many contemporary artists draw from the history of (mostly Western European and American.) modernism. Her oeuvre has developed as a study extending in time, through which she addresses and modifies prevalent modes of perceiving and interpreting cultural production, in order to give new meaning to familiar forms and artefacts. For Macuga, art is a tool for understanding and a blueprint for social change.'

artist looked into the archive, the deeper was her understanding of the narratives it contained. Subsequently, the narratives which derived from the archive material, or the ways they had been put together by the archivist, became the impetus for the artist's inspiration. Specifically, from her first general enquiry on exhibitions related to war, national art and women, Macuga's central focus became the showing of *Guernica* in 1939 at the Whitechapel. This material became the starting point for the project: the information on *Guernica* enriched with discussions (primarily between Macuga and I), extensive research by the team on the strands outlined above, and any information we could gather on similar events that took place in Europe during the same period.

The second stage took place away from the archive but is a direct consequence of it. It is the ideological framework built by the artist as a response to the encounter with the archive. What ideas derived from this encounter? How do these ideas form inspirations and aspirations for the artwork? How do they interweave with the artist's philosophical and political standpoint?

For instance, from the interest in *Guernica's* pre-war display a number of conjectures and points of inquiry have been generated: *Guernica* as an anti-war symbol; the political climate in England and the rest of the world; *Guernica's* subsequent reproduction as a tapestry and its concealment at the United Nations. These events made a strong impression on Macuga and triggered a process of thought for the artist which was fuelled and developed in conjunction with her

political and ideological positions. The encounter with the archive generated ideas that functioned as a backbone to the whole project.

The third stage was a consequence of the absorption of the various stimuli and provocations; it is the time when firm ideas for the production of new material (an artwork), start flowing, though not necessarily with a direct link to the archive. In some cases these new works emerge a long time after the initial encounter with the archive, and for others, as in Macuga's project, they are formulated shortly after the association with the archive and are the direct outcome of the artist's response to it. In consideration of the above, I view the archive as the starting point, a major influence and the agitator of ideas; sometimes though the archive becomes idle in anticipation of the receipt of the 'new'.

The artist gives her own account; the production of new work is the reaction to the initial stimulus, the archive material materialised through a particular action forms the artwork. This process entails a major conceptual expansion; from the original encounter with the archive material there is an augmentation which reconfigures the meaning of certain material in the archive. Here the artist tells their own story and their own version of history; they offer a re-interpretation of the archival material.

The artist's modus operandi in the archive includes the process by which it was initially instigated. The artist's methodology informs and results in the

production of new work, which correlates with the curator's *modus operandi* in archives. I analysed this in Chapter Four.

In this project, the curatorial inclination and the artistic tendency share a striking synchronisation.<sup>234</sup> At this point, the curator and the artist became deeply involved in a historiographical operation. The operation was instigated by the curator's will to use the archive to its full potential, through investigating, interpreting and re-presenting its material. Subsequently the operation was enhanced by the selection of an artist who not only welcomed the invitation to scrutinise the archive but who herself proposed to augment it, thus achieving what the curator had aspired to, a vibrant and malleable archive that uses its own contents as a fertiliser for its own growth and development.

The curatorial process impelled by researching in archives contains traces of the past; the perusal of archival material, and the forging of connections, is a process similar to the one an artist working with an archive follows. According to Ricoeur, this is precisely the process followed by a historian. The outcomes of the curator's proposal, the artist's production and the historian's account are all representations (reinterpretations) instigated by the archive.

The curatorial intervention materialised through an artist's commission, leaves an incision which ought to become an impetus for further contemplation.

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<sup>234</sup> However this is not reflected in the interviews the artist has given since the beginning of the project. The idea is presented solely on artistic merit.

The process demonstrates the complexity and richness of the historiographical operation, as it has been described and analysed by Ricoeur, it solidifies the practice of curating and the practice of art making as paths for the research, explanation and interpretation of history.<sup>235</sup>

Macuga's commission will be documented in all its stages and this process has already started; from the initial meetings to the growth and development of the installation itself. The research process has been documented and records of every email and research link have been kept. Organised events will be documented and recorded in audio and/or video and will feed into the exhibition itself, and also be a resource for future researchers. The archiving of the whole project may result in what Macuga has envisaged as the 'the most comprehensive archive on *Guernica*' deposited as a sub-archive in the Whitechapel Gallery.

As I have discussed, in this process of archiving, the curator's actions become part of a historiographical procedure. Moreover, the condition this procedure has instigated is also recorded in the archive. As a consequence, the archive becomes more transparent. Decisions and judgments made within the curatorial process are revealed. Through this 'opening', which is inaugurated by making the archive available to curatorial interpretation, the future researcher will be able to view the Whitechapel's archive not only as a gathering of historical material

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<sup>235</sup> See Chapter Four for a detailed analysis of the 'historiographical operation'.

accumulated through the organisation's operation, but as a rich and enlightening entity. The researcher will not only have the opportunity to view the individual material, they will simultaneously be able view the ideas this material has generated and what events they have instigated.

With the Whitechapel's recent redevelopment the archive may have become more regulated and the idea of browsing no longer possible; nevertheless, the fact that the curatorial project I analyse, together with forthcoming projects, promotes a sense of infiltration and makes curatorial processes transparent, may outweigh the fact that researching in the archive has become more controlled. Already, and even before the project had started, there had been interesting responses triggered by Macuga's commission. *Sunday Telegraph* journalist Royah Nikkau, for example, has become extremely interested in investigating Serota's attempts to bring *Guernica* to the Whitechapel. He had proposed to write an article to discuss the results of his research and was interested in interviewing Serota about that period. It is worth considering how a project from the archive has prompted an almost detective-like interrogation about an abortive art event that (almost) took place three decades ago ...

Another important contribution was a letter from Mick Jones, son of Jack Jones, late President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust.<sup>236</sup> The letter, written before the death of Jones senior, is an invaluable addition to the Whitechapel

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<sup>236</sup> See Appendix XXI, p. 376.

archive and especially the files concerning *Guernica's* showing in 1939.<sup>237</sup> The correspondence started with a letter that Needham wrote to the International Brigade Memorial Trust seeking information about the exhibition in 1939. The letter was subsequently published and prompted a cordial, handwritten response from Mick Jones. The two-page letter opens up another link for further research and has presented the Whitechapel with the possibility of acquiring an interesting volume of material which will give us further information about the showing of *Guernica* at the Whitechapel, as well as about the work and efforts of the 'Major Attlee Company', a company of the British Battalion of the 15th International Brigade dedicated to the fight against fascism. The wealth of material that may yet enter the archive as a result of this letter can only be guessed at. What is crucial to me as Archive Curator is the fact that the newly acquired material will potentially enforce the political meaning of the existing files and will affect these files in a way that would have not been possible before Macuga's commission. The political information will be embedded in the archive in an irreversible manner. Derrida writes, 'The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out to the future'.<sup>238</sup>

I quote Jones's letter, which has since been deposited in the archive:

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<sup>237</sup> Jack Jones was the President of the International Brigade Trust and had fought in support of the republicans against Franco's regime during the Spanish Civil War. Jones died age 96, April 2009. The Trust exists to commemorate those volunteers who fought against Franco in Spain, in order to support the democratically elected government in the Spanish Civil War. It also aims to raise awareness of the causes of the Civil War and the World War Two.

<sup>238</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 68.

Dear Cassandra Needham

I am writing on behalf of my father who is one of the last of the International Brigadiers, and from myself as a committee member of the above Trust. In our recent Newsletter you appeal for any information regarding the *Guernica* exhibition held at the Whitechapel in early 1939...

The forthcoming exhibition of the tapestry of *Guernica* is a wonderful moment, not only to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the original exhibition, but to reveal to a new and very likely, largely ignorant public the true meaning of the twentieth century's most significant work of art, created by that century's most famous artist at the height of his powers in a desperate attempt to draw peoples' attention to the plight of his homeland.

The Memorial Trust will, I'm sure help in every possible way to provide information to ensure the forthcoming exhibition is a great success, so please don't hesitate to contact us either through our secretary, Marlene Sidaway, or the editor of the Newsletter, Jim Jump, or myself, as there exists an extraordinary amount of material on this period which could provide the most meaningful resource and backdrop and opportunity for involvement and debate to really stimulate the Whitechapel reopening.

Yours sincerely

Mick Jones

In addition to the letter, Needham also received a poem written by a member of the International Brigade and entitled *Guernica!* The significance of the particular poem is not important here; what is significant is the gestures and all the actions that have been triggered by *The Nature of the Beast*. People affiliated to *Guernica* in a variety of ways, have responded to the project with personal contributions.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> These contributions have continued since March 2009 and the archive has acquired books, letters and the documentation of many meetings which have taken place around the roundtable which is part of the installation.

During the year-long project it is expected that a large number of letters and contributions in other formats will make their way to the Whitechapel's archive. The significant involvement of Michael Rosen, author and BBC broadcaster, is also of note.<sup>240</sup> His late father, Professor Harold Rosen, visited the exhibition of *Guernica* in 1939. Rosen had previously expressed interest in the Picasso material because he was preparing a proposal for a programme on 'Guernica in London in the 1930s' for BBC Radio 3.<sup>241</sup> When the proposal to the BBC was declined, I

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<sup>240</sup> Rosen had been in contact with me in spring 2008, at the same time that Goshka Macuga was nominated as the artist for the Bloomberg Commission at the Whitechapel. These events were unrelated at the time but as I was keen in linking actions related to the Picasso material, I encouraged Rosen to propose a project which would support Macuga's commission.

<sup>241</sup> I quote from the draft of Rosen's proposal: "The *Guernica* exhibition at the Whitechapel is a focal point of a variety of important issues for the art world. The two main areas of interest for me are what it tells us about the relationship between class/community and culture; and what it tells us about the struggle committed artists have over what they produce and how they produce it. Whitechapel in the thirties was a largely Jewish community, politicised by its struggles against local fascists, its mass rent strikes, its awareness of events in Germany, its struggle against unemployment and poverty. It was the local trades council that secured the showing of *Guernica*. Survivors and activists from this period and some of whom also saw the show include Jack Jones (ex Gen Sec of TGWU), Bertha Sokoloff (leader of the rent strike). Other informants include ex-councillor and Spanish Civil War Maurice Levitas, Bill Fishman, Nat and Betty Fisher, Dinah Kesselman, Sam Russell (sec of the Spanish Civil War International Brigade veterans association). Others can be contacted through the Jewish Museum and David Rosenberg who leads local 'walks' of the area commemorating the sites of this political and cultural activity.

A major irony and fault line in all this is the question of '*Guernica*' itself. After 1936, art that was sympathetic to Communist causes was in the grip of Socialist Realism and yet Picasso himself produced a painting that does not in the slightest way conform to these requirements. And yet here was a group of largely Communist trade unionists organising an exhibition of the painting as a means of showing solidarity with Republican Spain. Linda Morris is particularly expert in pulling out some of the contradictions here, showing how Picasso was able to position himself as a great Communist artist but who was somehow 'above' or 'beyond' Socialist Realism.

In some ways, these two aspects of the Whitechapel showing of '*Guernica*' highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of the Left cause at this time: on the one hand, highly successful local activity (culminating in the election of a Communist MP for 1945) and on the other a slavish adherence to Soviet Communism which ultimately led to a collapse of Communist Parties. Interestingly, '*Guernica*' was criticised by the covert Communist Anthony Blunt for being too 'subjective' (a standard Socialist Realist critique of other kinds of art).

There are various academics and researchers who could be brought together to tease all this out if it proved possible to convene a symposium. If not, it would still be possible to present an illustrated talk on some of these themes, which I would be very interested in doing. I should

encouraged Rosen to consider an event at the Whitechapel, and he hosted a day's symposium in September 2009.<sup>242</sup> This event was another consequence of the recent exposure that the Picasso material has received; the event is important as an attempt to respond to some of the questions raised by the project.



Meetings held around *The Nature of the Beast* boardroom table: Figure 39: (top left) Inaugural meeting with invited speakers, 2 April 2009; Figure 40: (top centre) Minority Rights Group International, 27 May 2009; Figure 41: (top right) Curatorial Group, University of the Arts, 3 June 2009; Figure 42: (bottom left) Artangel English/Urdu language class, 18 April 2009; Figure 43: (bottom right) International Brigades Memorial Trust, 4 July 2009.

declare that part of my motive for this is to commemorate my father, Professor Harold Rosen (1919–2008) who died in July this year. He was an author of stories and essays on this period 'Troublesome Boy' and 'Are You Still Circumcised?' (Five Leaves Press) and was himself a visitor to the 'Guernica' exhibition. He lived behind the London Hospital from 1922–1940 and was active in the Communist Party as was his wife (my mother) and his mother and grandfather.

There is an archive at the Whitechapel on the exhibition and there is a short film showing the opening. It would also be possible to secure some interviews with Jack Jones and others which could be played at such an event". Proposal to Nayia Yiakoumaki, Archive Curator and Caro Howell, Head of Education and Public Events, Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

<sup>242</sup> Symposium on Guernica: 'Exhibiting Guernica 1939–2009: Contexts and Issues.' Participants included historians and curators: Tom Buchanan, Valentine Cunningham, Mike Gonzalez, Lynda Morris, Paul Preston, David Rosenberg and Nayia Yiakoumaki. Organised and chaired by Michael Rosen, it took place on 12 September 2009. See Appendices XVI and XXVII, pp. 358–63.

I hope that *The Nature of the Beast* will instigate many more events and responses and that it will further unpack the social, political and artistic significance of *Guernica's* display in the East End in 1939.

## Conclusion

Since April 2009, the Whitechapel Gallery and the adjacent former Whitechapel Library – organisations with parallel histories – have functioned as a unified entity. This redevelopment widely affected the Whitechapel Gallery Archive in ways which were impossible for me to foresee when I began my project as a part-time researcher in 2002. Some seven years later, the archive has been made widely accessible to the public for the first time. The unification and physical connection of the two buildings has enabled Whitechapel Gallery to encompass a number of dynamic spaces including a new gallery devoted to archive exhibitions, a reading room and a state-of-the-art archive repository where the gallery's historic records will be preserved for the future. Until the Whitechapel closed for refurbishment in 2007, the archive was accessible only to a very small number of users as there were no facilities to accommodate researchers on a regular basis. The archive was then opened to the public once a week by appointment and there was capacity for only one or two readers at a time. In anticipation of the redevelopment, in January 2006 a dedicated programme of cataloguing and preservation commenced. At this point in time, approximately 80% of all gallery records have been catalogued and preserved to archival standard. The redevelopment has ensured the long-term sustainable management of the collection and has placed the archive as a core function

within the Whitechapel. All gallery staff have been introduced to the archive and many have used it widely; especially staff from the Education, Publications and Exhibitions team.

Access to the archive collection has improved significantly, both through the dedicated exhibition programme which communicates to visitors the contents and potential of the archive, as well as through research facilities, which enable up to eight researchers to access the dedicated reading room at any one time. An updated online catalogue is currently being designed and will soon be available as an internet resource.<sup>243</sup> There are policies in place for the digitisation of the archive that will enable access for users worldwide and will develop new audiences. The new facilities of the archive have enhanced and enriched the potential of the archive as a research, educational and curatorial resource.<sup>244</sup>

The Whitechapel Gallery Archive contains material produced from just before the foundation of the Whitechapel Gallery in 1901, up until the present day. The majority of records constitute evidence of events instrumental to the presentation of modern and contemporary art in the United Kingdom and, as such, I have used extensive examples in this thesis, notably surrounding Picasso. The archive

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<sup>243</sup> The online catalogue will be accessed directly at <http://archive.whitechapel.org> or via the general archive page at <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/archive>.

<sup>244</sup> Additionally, in order to ensure its smooth running after April 2009, a number of new policies have been drawn for the archive, such as an acquisitions policy, records management policy and digitisation policy. The existing collection, as well as our future accruals, will be stored in the basement of the new building, in the new archive repository. The new repository has all the necessary controls in place in order to monitor and ensure optimum conditions for the preservation of records. It is designed and constructed to meet the British Standard BS5454:2000, which specifies the ideal conditions for archival storage.

material provides rich insight into the Whitechapel's operations at many levels and in all its phases and aspects. The archive has the potential to generate reflection on a wide spectrum of processes embodied in the running of a visual arts organisation, such as curating, fundraising, liaising with artists and the delivery of education programmes. These records, however partial, are threads of interest, which potentially connect the archive to what is taking place in the world of art and in society in general.

My project *Curating Archives, Archiving Curating* has been concerned with the archive, its histories, formations and discourses. I have paid particular attention both to the Whitechapel Gallery as the place where I work and, drawing on my own curatorial experience and practical and theoretical knowledge, as a site of immense curatorial potential.

From the launch of the new Whitechapel onwards, all curatorial and artistic proposals, projects and other events, will be submitted into this new repository. In this way, they will enhance and complement the archive. Alongside the more conventional archive sections, there will be another new branch of documents which stems from the archive gallery itself; an 'archive of the archive'. In this way, a future researcher not only has the opportunity to view historic material but can simultaneously examine the ideas, discussions and events that the archive has generated and materialised in exhibitions and projects.

The future users of the archive will engage in a series of unexpected encounters which will make possible a more complete reading of the archive and will hopefully generate and sustain stories for the archive to narrate.

Specifically, by looking at the contributions and responses that *The Nature of the Beast* has already instigated, I am confident that my early discussions with Macuga on her commission's impact upon the archive are totally justified. The archive will steadily, from this point onwards, gather elements and information, revealing all the stages of the commission, the research, the production and its reception. The very final accrual will become an archive on its own right which will be deposited within the main archive and will be interlinked to (without being restricted by) the relevant Picasso files (1939, 1952, 1981).

Throughout its duration the project had the opportunity to trigger three main archival functions and therefore three degrees of intervention: One, being the exposure of archival material in a display especially staged to extract meaning and build bridges. The second is the formation of a new volume of acquisitions which will be deposited in the archive as part of the normal archiving of all Whitechapel projects, and will include exhibitions files, press material as well as installation shots from the project. The third, and most desirable, aspect is the intentional build up of a body of material, a sub-archive which will function as an archive within an archive. This will include all the research material, the

testimonies and everything else that will come into the archive as responses from other parties.

As the initial idea has currently evolved, the archive would provide future readers with additional intellectual stimulation in regards to two artists (Macuga and Picasso); it would make the exhibition material and general project information accessible to the public and would enhance the archive catalogue with new keywords and entries.

There is no doubt that all additions to an archive alter it and inform it. Inevitably the deposit of a large body of archival material into an existing archive is a significant intervention. All the more so, when the added volume brings into the archive new facts and events that potentially affect the interpretation of previously deposited material.

For instance, after one year, when all material related to Macuga's commission will be fully archived and catalogued and accessible to readers, there will be little room for doubt about the political meaning of *Guernica's* exhibition in 1939. This will also apply to material relating to Robertson and his inability to organise a Picasso exhibition in 1952 and likewise will explain Serota's eagerness to do the same in 1981.

The strong political echo of this material and its significance was apparent to me as curator and my interest was sparked even from the initial browsing of the archive. The desire to challenge and expand the material was my primary

concern but I was not in a position to challenge it as disassociated research material alone. Consequently the ideas that the curator's encounter with the archive had generated could be best materialised by commissioning another party; in this instance an artist (Macuga). Macuga was presented with potentially enthralling archive material and she successfully implemented it physically and conceptually into her project. The irregularity of the Picasso material brought together by the curator reflected the political ramifications of the painting across different eras (1939, 1952, 1981, and the recent use of the pre-war *Guernica* in the Gallery's marketing campaign).

This project cemented the archive as a fertile field for continuing intellectual and artistic debate; presupposing the curator's preliminary work. This is necessary in order to locate and define these parts of the archive that have the potential to be further analysed.<sup>245</sup>

The sub-archive which I tentatively name '*Guernica* Archive' is a radical intervention to the Whitechapel Gallery Archive because it generates interest, provides information and stimulus but also colours the existing files in a way that strengthens the links between the existing materials. The project re-produces and re-constructs the umbilical cord connecting *Guernica* and the Whitechapel through material that could have easily been overlooked or, as was previously

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<sup>245</sup> The curator is drawn to specific material through their research; this, as a consequence, will inform a project or an individual artist who will be commissioned to utilise the source and provide a 'solution' which will expose (and hopefully discuss) the divergence that was nurtured in the archive until that moment.

the case, only looked at in isolation. Additionally, it offers a significant alteration to the size of the archive. It changes the *soul* and *body* of the archive; its nomological and topological entity. Whether the new addition will integrate with the main archive or remain a detached body of material, is something which at present cannot be fully assessed. This intervention should function by both shaping the history of the Whitechapel and by forming an element of an art project; it is crucially important that an incision in the archive has been made which has instigated this symbiosis.

What is apparent once again is that the curator's role within the archive, viewed in light of historiography, is charged with a degree of accountability. I have already mentioned the capacity of artists to contribute to the writing of history and have discussed the particular debate about the validity and integrity of such involvement.<sup>246</sup> Although the archive is subject to an accumulative process and each curator, archivist, or researcher alters it by charging it with another interpretation, it is only the artist who is granted 'carte blanche' to intervene and alter it; a license that neither the curator, archivist nor researcher possess. A whole new set of questions related to the use of archives by artists and curators alike can easily generate from here, although these cannot be analysed in this thesis; for instance, does the artist have the freedom to use archives in a way that the curator does not? Is it also the responsibility of the artist to maintain

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<sup>246</sup> Chapter Four, Curating archives and history, pp. 185–91.

archives? Or is it more fruitful for the artist to engage with the archive in a playful manner, leaving the strict responsibility of maintenance to the archivist and the interpretation to the curator or the historian? These are only few of the many questions the thesis instigates for the reader's consideration.

Macuga's work has until now been directly or indirectly related to archives. Her methodology is effective because she remains faithful to the historicity of her material, but at the same time she is not intimidated by the aura of the 'document' itself, and so she alters it. The artist is not tied by the archival spell, so to speak; she overcomes the constraints inherent in archives (to constantly preserve) by manipulating (physically and conceptually), not of course the original but a replica of the original, and consequently, re-deposits it in the archive.<sup>247</sup> Through artistic intervention in general and Macuga's practice in particular, an aestheticisation of archives and their contents is almost inevitable; this aestheticisation may be essential to the distinction between the pre-existing material and the new, intervening ones; it may also be necessary to sustain these extra layers of interpretation which would otherwise dissolve into the main body of the archive and become less evident. The result would be a historically-

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<sup>247</sup> The exact format of the archive which I want to produce as part of Macuga's project will be finalised in the coming months, as the archive is still growing. So far there have been two main ideas; one is to incorporate the material generated by the project into the existing Picasso files (described in Chapter Three), and the other to preserve the new *Guernica* archive in separate boxes. In both cases there will be aids for the users which will help them connect and interlink the information from both bodies of material.

grounded archive but, at the same time, one that can trigger imagination and offer an *archival sensation*.

During this study a transformation has taken place: an unorganised and inactive archive became an open fertile organism, pregnant with ideas around curating from archives. It enabled a view of curating not only as a potentially critical tool but as a powerful self-reflective instrument of analysis.

In the last decade we have witnessed a very strong interest in archives and observed their potential to be in dialogue with other disciplines such as art and curating.<sup>248</sup> Although academic research in this field has, until now, been limited, fortunately there are a growing number of publications and events that explore the archive's functions and its relationship with the arts and curating.<sup>249</sup>

Continuing with a model of curatorial practice that aims at instigating continuous negotiations and collaborations between arts-based institutions and audiences, such as in FeedBack, or between arts institution archives and audiences, such as recent projects at the Whitechapel Gallery, I believe that my

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<sup>248</sup> Institutional or personal archives have become the subject of increased attention. A number of organisations have either initiated or have welcomed interventions in their own, previously unexplored, archives. For instance, the London School of Economics initiated in the late 1990s an artists' residency programme centered at their archive. The Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles (CHRRRC), since 2003, has organised projects in relation to the textile archives it houses. Most recently in 2009, the late John Latham's archive is the subject of a recent grant which aims at organising Latham's personal archive in accordance to the artist's theory on space and time.

<sup>249</sup> Recent research projects and events include, 'Investigating the Archive', University of Dundee, Napier University of Edinburgh and National Galleries of Scotland; 'Archive Fever 2: From Material to Virtual Engagements', CHRRRC in Textiles, London, September 2008; 'Archival Impulse: Artists and Archives', Tate Britain, November 2007; 'Archiving the Artist', Tate Britain, June 2009. Most recently, 'Archive/ Counter-Archive: Exploring relations between contemporary art and the archive', organised by Monash University Prato Centre, Prato, Italy, July 2009.

research will provide future dialogue and exchange with other relevant projects across institutions and divergent practices.

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## Appendices

## *Short Histories*

## Appendix I:

### **A brief history of the Victoria and Albert Museum, ed. 2002**

The origins of the V&A museum stems from the government's movement in the nineteenth century to improve scientific and technical education. Prince Albert was a supporter of this movement and he was greatly involved in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which aimed to promote the achievements of technology and science. After the Great Exhibition the Government set up the Science and Art Department. This newly founded department, together with the availability of funds that the government had raised from the Great Exhibition, provided fruitful conditions to support more institutions, which would promote and improve science and technology. According to the information from the History section of the Science's Museum website, a decision was made by the government to buy the land in South Kensington in order to establish these institutions. This was the land where the South Kensington Museum was built. It opened in 1857 with Henry Cole as his first director<sup>1</sup>. The objects on display came from various sources, most of them being art objects. But it also included scientific apparatuses, models, books and educational resources. Gradually the science collection and the art collection expanded and became independent one from the other. As a result of this expansion the museum separated into two museums in 1909: the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The V&A remained in the premises of the South Kensington Museum, in the Victorian and Edwardian buildings, whilst the Science Museum was inaugurated in a new building. The V&A museum was named in honour of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Over the years it became dedicated to decorative arts and today it houses more than four million objects, in 145 galleries. It has been estimated that the V&A collection covers seven miles of exhibition space<sup>2</sup>. The museum has also an enormous

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<sup>1</sup> What was launched in 1857 as the South Kensington Museum was later separated into three renowned institutions, the Museum of Science, the Natural History Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which are still based in the same location. For the history of the South Kensington Museum see the printed material in the Science Museum and the facts available from the museum's website at [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitors/history.asp](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitors/history.asp)

<sup>2</sup> See Christopher Wilk, 'The V&A British Galleries - Victoria and Albert Museum', *History Today*, History Today Ltd, (December 2001)

collection of prints. This collection is housed in the Print Room, a room in one of the top floors of the museum. The Victoria and Albert Museum's website reads:<sup>3</sup>

The Print Room is the study room for the department of Prints, Drawings and Paintings. At the Print Room one can see works of art on paper from the V&A collection. Over one million objects are available including designs, drawings, illustrations, ephemera, fashion plates, graphics, greeting cards, miniatures, photographs, prints, posters, wallpapers, and watercolours.

The reflection of the whole of the museum can be found in the Print Room.

As an archive within a museum, the Print Room constitutes a microcosm of what takes place beyond its walls, outside in the main museum.

The Print Room houses its own collection, which is kept separately from the other acquisitions. It employs staffs who work in the visitor services, and in the archive, the archivists, the curators and the conservators. It has different opening hours from the general opening hours of the Victoria and Albert museum and it has its own internal policies and visitor rules.

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<sup>3</sup> <[www.vam.ac.uk/resources/printrooms/?section=printrooms](http://www.vam.ac.uk/resources/printrooms/?section=printrooms)>, [Accessed 30 September 2009]

## Appendix II

### A brief history of the Whitechapel Gallery, ed. 2002

The Whitechapel Art Gallery opened in March 1901 as the first purpose built gallery in the United Kingdom. Charles Harrison Townsend designed the building. The founders of the gallery, Canon Barnett and his wife Henrietta Barnett, established the Whitechapel Art Gallery and through their contacts with philanthropists and social reformers raised funds in support of the gallery. The Barnetts believed that art 'would educate people so that they might realise the extent and meaning of the past, the beauty of nature, and the substance of hope'<sup>4</sup>. The free annual exhibitions that the couple was organising before the Whitechapel's opening were very popular in the East End of London. This popularity persuaded the Barnetts of the need for a permanent exhibition space in the East End. Land was purchased next door to the John Passmore Edwards Library, with a large donation from Passmore Edwards himself, and Edgar Speyer, A F Yarrow and Lord Iveagh. The first exhibition that took place at the Whitechapel was attended by 206,000 visitors. Today, the Whitechapel continues to provide space for a diverse range of temporary exhibitions. It holds no permanent collection of its own. It is governed by a trust scheme, registered with the Charity Commissioners founded in 1901, with Canon Barnett as the first chair until his death in 1913. Some of the exhibitions presented to the public have been curated by the Whitechapel while others are touring exhibitions, which have been organised by other international museums. Exhibitions of design have also been part of the program, and in the past have included trades unions as well as the Contemporary Arts Society. During the 1950s and 1960s, exhibitions included works by Modernists such as Braque, Kandinsky, Barbara Hepworth, Jackson Pollock and Robert Rauschenberg. The Whitechapel went through further changes in 1982. I quote from the *Identity Statement* of the Whitechapel Gallery: In 1982 the Whitechapel Gallery Board felt the need for a separate Trust to be created to channel non-government funding in the form of exhibition sponsorship and donations to the gallery, and a planning group for a

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from the *Identity Statement* of the Whitechapel Gallery registered in AIM 25, Archives in London and the M25 area, compiled by Alison Field as part of the London Signpost Survey project. Source <<http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/80/7210.htm>>, [Accessed 30 September 2009]

Development Trust was established. This led to the formation of the Whitechapel Art Gallery Foundation on 1 Feb 1984. At the same time an Advisory Board was set up to provide expert advice to the gallery on areas such as advertising, marketing and sponsorship. In 1988, an annual joint meeting of the Gallery and Foundation trustees was instituted.

The Whitechapel Art Gallery Society was formed in February 1948, in order to support the gallery financially through private and business subscription and to serve as an opinion forming body on Gallery policy.

Today the Whitechapel is supported by the public sector, by corporations, trusts and individuals. In the future, the Whitechapel is planning a future major development. The purchase of the Passmore Edwards building next to the gallery which now houses the Whitechapel Public Library, has allowed the recent expansion of the Whitechapel. Through this development the gallery has expanded its exhibition programme which now includes the commissioning of works of art, the presentation of national and international collections and exhibitions based on the Whitechapel's archive

## *Interviews*

## Appendix III

### Nayia Yiakoumaki interviews Jon Newman, archivist of the Lambeth Archives, February 2005

**NY: How did you gain an interest in the Whitechapel Archive?**

JN: I am a trained archivist I have worked since the early 80's as a professional archivist mainly in local authorities archives. The Whitechapel Gallery advertised a post in 1995. At the time I was working as a job share at a local authority and I was attracted to the job because back in the late 70s early 80s the Whitechapel was a very special place for me and I have very strong memories of some of the early shows that I came to see here, the British Sculpture show, the Frida Kahlo show, the earliest one I came to see probably when I was at school which was an American artist who puts things in little boxes, I have forgotten his name...[Joseph Cornell]. The Whitechapel had a personal meaning for me so I applied for the job, it seemed like it would be an interesting job.

**NY: What were the duties of the new job?**

JN: It was actually starting from scratch, which is also slightly unusual for archivists, most archivists work in organisations who have an ongoing process of preserving cataloguing, and making accessible their materials, this was an opportunity to work from first principles to set up a system of organising material and cataloguing stuff where nothing really had been done before.

**NY: What were your thoughts when you were about to start organising this archive?**

JN: Well, in a sense because I had done plenty of other archive jobs before it wasn't perhaps as daunting as it might strike a researcher; it was a kind of process that I had done with other collections so it wasn't intimidating in that sense. Nevertheless there were plenty things to do and in terms of getting a sense of the collection I needed to decide how it would need to be organised and as within the other archive projects, the basic and underlying premise when organising material is to try and retain the original

order when the various records would have been created. That is, the process of the activity of the gallery. Exhibitions, Education files, Gallery manager records, Legal documents such as minutes from Trustees meetings and so on. The principle is to try and reflect the original order. There is an important distinction between archives and other sorts of historical collections and the archive of the Whitechapel Gallery is the organised historical records that have been generated from the early institution, being of course that the gallery was in business that is what we have to reflect; we don't put all the Picasso material in one box and the material related to someone else in another. It is about going back to core principles; the archivist is preserving the records of the institution for a number of possible different values. One is the administrative value to the organisation, why we need to refer back to a show file possibly of damage reports, name and address of the owner of that particular work; they will also retain items for their legal value, so evidence of minutes of a decision taken by the Trustees. So things that have been kept for their institutional and evidential value, we keep record of the activities of the gallery that we'll be able in the future to refer back to.

**NY: How much speculation goes on when the archivist comes across inconsistent or missing records?**

JN: I think this question reverts back to my earlier statement about the difference between the archivist and the historian - where the former is there, among other things, to serve the latter. As I also acknowledged, it is sometimes difficult for the archivist to avoid becoming engaged in constructing historical versions of the fonds, but that is never his or her primary activity.

So I would argue that the archivist would not take a view on missing material. At a simple level where, say, a volume within a larger and ongoing record series was missing, then the fact would simply be noted in the catalogue. However, for many situations the archivist may not even be able to know what is missing; the archive is often given fonds that one does not have the power to correct or speculate on. And indeed at one level the identification of missing material pre-supposes a historian's overview (rather than the archivist's attention to the specific) and the creation of an intellectual whole.

I think the same applies to the issue of contradictory material. This is really the preserve of the historian who has an assumption that the evidences will test, not that of the archivist whose role is to document the component parts.

So, while individual archivists who are engaged with their fonds and who are perhaps moving on to assume a historian's role - like I perhaps was in the piece I wrote for the Centenary Review, will want to speculate on what the archive does and does not contain and the inconsistencies within, I think that the activity is not one that is part of the archivist's professional roles.

**NY: In this sense how much does the archivist contribute to the 'making' of the archive?**

JN: You do, you do! You cannot and do not wish to keep everything. So the archivist working and always making decisions from the records that move from current to semi-current to historical and making decisions on what gets preserved and what gets destroyed. And no organisation is going to retain more than about 5-10%. So yes you are making decisions about what gets preserved and you perhaps are advising your colleagues in the gallery in different departments as to what records you would expect them to keep. You are also making decisions about what records do not need to be permanently preserved. Actually you are actively responsible for the destruction of information; you are sometimes responsible for deliberately ensuring that certain things do survive. So you do have a kind of responsibility for, not the history of the gallery but for the survival of some of the things of the history that will be written by certain researchers.

**NY: The fact that the Whitechapel was not organised before you came and there had never been an archivist before you, was that in a bizarre way for the better?**

JN: I will answer that question but I will start by getting to it from a different way, which is to say that one of the very interesting things of the Gallery when I was working with the collection, was the role of the directors in determining just how much material were kept and it is clear that from what has survived that in 1947 when the predecessor of Bryan Robertson, I cannot remember his name, who was probably responsible for turning the gallery round and changing how it was perceived by the London art scene,

but his predecessor anyway, had modernised the administrative systems within the gallery and had set up record keeping procedures that persist through to today. So from 1947 there is a new start and there are many activities which were documented. From 1947 you get a consisted run of posters, catalogues, press clippings, the guard books with all the examples of the ephemera. The documentation from 1957 is generally very good. Certainly under Robertson as well; then you get Mark Glazebrook in the 1960's and suddenly things fall apart.

**NY: What happened then?**

JN: There was a series of directors, and the record keeping, the retention of the archive was almost a paradigm of what was happening, the chaotic, and the demoralised state of the gallery, it almost shut for good. And it only picks up again when Serota comes in the late seventies and suddenly once again the record keeping tidy, everything is there, everything is kept and it is as almost the state of the archive is almost a reflection of the stage of the Gallery, or the leadership of the gallery, it is quite an interesting phenomenon and then after Nick Serota goes, with Catherine Lambert there is very few documentation, I am sure it is the same now with Iwona [Blazwick].

[Off the record discussion about the current stage of the Whitechapel]

In some sense archives are self defining things because organisations keep things that they know they need to keep. And people within an organisation have a sense of the value of what they do and what they are producing so there should not necessarily be any great mystery about the way that an archive accumulates, it should almost happen instinctively.

**NY: Yes, but there is the division between what has been archived and what hasn't in relation to their place in the history of the Whitechapel. Just because things are not in the archive and are still in staff's offices they are not considered to be important enough.**

JN: Yes this can be the case sometimes.

**NY: You mentioned in your essay for the Centenary Review that the Whitechapel has *its history* and it has *its archive*, referring of course to the fact that these are two entirely different fields. Could you define this in more detail?**

JN: There is a very common conflation that people make, where an organisation has an archivist that archivist necessarily, inevitably becomes quite knowledgeable about the organisation, the history of the institution. Because the archivist is working closely particularly with cataloguing the collection from scratch, literally moving through time looking at what how the institution has developed. It is a mistake to assume then that that person is also a historian! They may have a very good sense of a version of the history of the organisation from what they have read whilst working in the archive but they are not historians, that the important thing to remember about the archivist's function is that it is one of preservation and access. So they are there to ensure that the archive has been created and it has survived and it is made accessible through cataloguing; and they are there ultimately to serve researchers, some of which may be historians who will use the archive to create their version. The history of the institution is written, it is an edited down version and an interpreted take on the contents of the archive. But it should not just be the contents of the archive. There are other sources of the Whitechapel's history which reside in all sorts of other places. Nobody sat down and interviewed the surviving directors for instance, their personal take and what it is that they were doing. So the archive is the source, the key source, for which history is researched and written, but it is not the history.

**NY: The history of the Whitechapel as we know from different sources seems to be referring always to the same reading of the Whitechapel. Considering this fact, does the archive of the Whitechapel challenge the existing general view that people have about the Whitechapel?**

JN: Let's remember one thing that nobody yet has written a detailed History of the Whitechapel. There are various versions of what people think the Whitechapel was, often quite political, it is quite easy to try and confirm what we want the Whitechapel to be by selective use of the archive that is what I was writing in this article; demonstrating that there are different versions of the Whitechapel history that you can construct from selective use of the archive. If you just pull out what Bryan Robertson was doing in the

late 50's and 60's in terms of New York shows coming over and if you look at the Guernica piece which in fact it wasn't a Whitechapel Gallery event at all, and you select some of the most interesting artists who popped up in the Jewish shows, and some of the postmodern shows from just after the first world war, then of course you can construct that the Whitechapel was this crucible of modernism in London before the war. Partially and incidentally from time to times it was, but it was certainly other things as well and that is the retrospective justification of your own position. I sometimes feel that that kind of version of the Whitechapel has resourced from a late 20<sup>th</sup> century marketing position that we wish to present the gallery in this way because it gives us kind of credentials, it gives us credibility.

**NY: In relation to this marketing strategy, are you referring also to specific authors who wrote about the Whitechapel apart from the journalists?**

JN: I am not sure what there is actually out there, I do have the sense that this position has arrived at around the Robertson-Serota period. I am thinking of the *New Generation* show in the 60's and *This is Tomorrow* and few key shows; and these are the shows that people refer back to again and again and again, without looking what was going on in the gaps between the shows. Another kind of agenda was being explored, yet people talk about the Open and the local East London tactic that is also important, but there is also other stuff.

**NY: As you mentioned before there were times when the archive was reflecting a chaotic situation but I guess these were never strong marketing points...**

JN: No, there is that fantastic show that I mentioned in the essay, *Sweets*, this was about 1975, this was when things were getting really dire, there was some pro-Common Market group who gave some money to do the show --Britain wasn't in the European Community then. The show was basically importing fancy confectionary from other European states, and there is this glorious moment on the last day where clearly the parties of school kids were brought in and were given these rather inferior English sweets as a sort of treat. They said actually 'No we want some of this stuff' and smashed the display cases! I was reading ahead your questions and there was there one about 'a moment where you were thrilled, having a sense of discovery', and in a sense although

it is rather silly, there was this kind of glorious feeling then because literally the only piece of evidence of this only taking place – it was not reported in the press, it didn't feature in the Gallery file at all – I found one typed letter written with very bad French from a Whitechapel typewriter from someone who probably had done O levels in French, so there was this kind of grovelling apologetic letter to Confectionary Luxembourg, explaining what had taken place and apologising for not been able to send back this exquisite 'chocolate chateau'. And this little letter tucked away into the file was as far as I am aware, the only evidence of this. Moments like that are glorious, when you come across something like that...

**NY: One always thinks that a discovery would be related to a rather grand historical document or something important like that.**

JN: Yes, but this is glorious because it undercuts this whole slightly pompous image of the Whitechapel as this serious space where people came and looked at Modern art that you could not see anywhere else in London. It was that time when everything was falling apart...

**NY: Did you have a kind of *fantasy* in regards to the Whitechapel archive, where you were hoping to find something specific when you started working there? Could we speak about the *fantasy of the researcher* in general, is there such a thing?**

JN: Yes, there is one. I supposed the fantasy that I had was very much based around my received notion of the significance of the Whitechapel as an institution and in part that was, this slightly confectioned view of the crusader of Modernism. I was thinking there would be all this stuff about *Guernica*, and these interesting early modernist shows in the 1920s and the reality of course was somewhat different, there was nothing on *Guernica* because it wasn't a Whitechapel show. But if I can just digress about that, there was quite an interesting follow on from that; we were talking about the power of the researcher or the ability the archivist has to even 'create' the archive. The *Guernica* show was interesting partly because there was almost nothing there. And then looking through, it must have been some of the Serota's Director's correspondence files, I think in 1980 when *Guernica* was travelling back from New York to Spain because Spain was considered to be sufficiently democratic country to have this painting back, and there

had been a number of attempts to get *Guernica* back again. There was a letter from Robertson to Picasso, in one of the Robertson files about 1965 when he tried to engineer a Picasso show, you know a very eloquently 'Dear Pablo' letter, and there was no letter back at all, Pablo never replied...

But in 1980 perhaps inspired by what Robertson tried to do, Serota also started writing letters to MOMA where *Guernica* was before it came back to the Prado, and there are letters from Serota 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if it could stop off back again?' Because it stopped off at the Whitechapel on its way to New York during the Spanish Civil War, so there was this kind of glorious mirror image if it could come back to the Whitechapel before it returned to Spain; and of course it never happened. But they had done some scratching around and they had done little bits of research and there was a phone number with a bloke's name apparently he was a photographer who was involved in getting the first show to the Whitechapel and I thought well, it was sixteen years before, I'll just ring the number. And I got this guy's widow, he died, and it was kind of these glorious moments of serendipity, she was still living in the same house at the back of Kings Cross and she said, yes my husband has all this paper here, would you like to have a look at it, and I said yes, I would actually, and I went over to this sweet little regency town house somewhere in the back of Kings Cross, and there was this old lady and she showed me her late husband's study and all his papers and she said you can go through them. I went through them and I actually found this box file of stuff relating to the *Guernica* show. He was a member of the Communist party in the 1930s he was living in Shadwell and he had done various kinds of work, sort of art pieces and he had made these photographs of workers' processions and there were the photographs of the *Guernica* show. And she said: "yes, of course you can have the file"! Coming back to your question about 'can the archivist influence the making' yes, in a small way I did, as there is now this additional file donated and deposited related to the *Guernica* show. So that was a rather wonderful feeling, sitting in this town house looking at all the stuff.

**NY: Browsing in the archive are we flâneurs in the Whitechapel? Did you ever feel that by looking into the archive and finding information about the past you were embarking on a sort of flânerie?**

JN: I think this is a very good way of putting it. Again I would say that the ability to browse as you did, from box to box is exclusive to the archivist as a professional. Most people would not but there is still a sense of being a flâneur even by using catalogues. You can kind of move through things, yes that can be very delightful sometimes.

**NY: Were you also a flâneur of modern art history as you knew it, because by your browsing you are actually abruptly transferred from one period to another?**

JN: Yes, I agree.

**NY: Arlette Farge, the French art historian talks about the excitement or intoxication of the Researcher. Is this intoxication something that relates to the archivist's psyche that has not got much to do with the practicalities of the profession as such, but that indeed complements it?**

JN: I think it is. Professionally there is no reason why you should be expected to feel like that. And there are probably many archivists perhaps working in collections that don't personally inspire them but to which they have to apply the core professional principles about selecting and cataloguing, who are just working with routine collections where there is no kind of sense of engagement but it is something that I have often – and that is the reason why I enjoy the jobs that I do I suppose – because I often do get those moments where you are drawn into the narrative of whatever it is, the particular file that you are dealing with is revealing to you or the photograph, if it is an image. This feeling is in the micro level but on the macro level --I have worked for lots of very different institutions and organisations on a part time basis alongside my main job-- there is also a sense of a kind of *organisational voyeurism* that you participate in, because, you – kind of quickly – become the person who knows most, not perhaps about how the organisation operates in the present, but who very quickly gets a sense of the culture of the organisation and how it operates and how it is different from others so – what is the attraction there? Is it a sense of knowledge, an overview that you get over an institution--that is quite a privileged one, not many people end up arriving there?

I work for a lot of different organisations and on the macro level, there is this sense that I understand how this organisation has been operating.

**NY: Do you get over this fascination as an archivist as time goes by?**

JN: No you don't, I still can get drawn into new collections when I work and I still get the excitement. The fact that you are going down to the archive and browse through things is quite an unusual situation of dealing with the archive.

**NY: Could it be that an archivist experiences what a collector lives but without actually collecting?**

JN: This is an interesting one. I don't think I collect anything except books but I sometimes wonder if the fact that I do not collect is because I don't need to because I am surrounded by objects. There is a privileged access to collections; quite literally you are the only person who actually goes down there. Everybody else is dependent on the catalogue card, or the online catalogue, the list or the mediation of other archivists who suggest that 'you could try looking into that' whereas the archivist is something like the catholic priest, you deal directly with god and you are mediating for everyone else, but you have actually direct access to the collection.

**NY: What do you think will be the effect of the Whitechapel Project to the archive? I do not mean in terms of access and publicity but in relation to its very structure and essence.**

JN: It will professionalise the way that the archive is managed. There will be a professional person in post, the storage will meet the appropriate British standards in terms of temperature and humidity and all that, the Whitechapel will be doing all the things it needs to do to ensure the long term preservation and use of the archive, an hopefully will be a new professional archivist in post, it will become much more accessible, cataloguing will be dealt with, researchers will be able to have access to the material on a daily basis rather than once a week, the archive will be used much more proactively because it will inform respective exhibitions in the space where a curator post will be reworking material from the archive to create exhibitions so in that sense all those things will have to be seen as positive. The only thing that will not be possible anymore is for Nayia to go downstairs and look into all these boxes! Of course this is

rather sweet and engaging and special about working within an institution and been able of having this kind of exclusive access to collections that most other people can't get their hands on. There is a pleasure attached to that, but that will go.

**NY: Overall how permeable are archives?**

JN: Unless the new archivist decides to de-accession and destroy material which he or she thinks they would not be preserved. Normally the professional guideline is that once something has been accessioned and in the archive then it's there and although the subsequent archivist might disagree with his/her predecessor's decision if it is catalogued then it should remain. It is not like a library collection where if a book has remained on the shelf for 20 years, nobody is reading anymore, they are getting old and tired, 'let's get some new ones and throw these away'... It doesn't work like that. An archive grows all the time unless the organisation that produces the record stops and it becomes a closed collection, but the archive of any ongoing institution will continue to grow. So nothing should disappear; what needs to happen perhaps in fact is that some of the collection needs to be catalogued in more details.

**NY: Is the Whitechapel under the 30 year enclosure rule?**

JN: No, the thirty year rule has disappeared under the freedom of information leeway as from this year. That was set by local and central government to control information. But records of private organisations such as the Whitechapel could determine their own in terms of access. They might not want researchers to have information about the more recent files for example. The thirty year rule might apply if in the opinion of the archivist the material that had been discussed was sensitive. The Whitechapel might have an opinion let's say on the Trustees' minutes, whether they are public documents or not. It will be down to the archivist perhaps with a discussion to the director to decide the particular course of action.

**NY: What is the deontology of the archivist?**

JN: Part of professional practice is that the earlier finding aids, the earlier catalogues, the earlier lists are also part of the archive and should be retained. You certainly would not say 'actually we are using software now' so you would throw these away. You might

well re-catalogue the collection by using software but you would also hold one of your earlier finding tools.

**NY:** Thank you very much.

**JN:** It is my pleasure, thank you.

## **Appendix IV**

### **Nayia Yiakoumaki interviews Janeen Haythorthwaite, volunteer archivist at Whitechapel Gallery, July 2004**

**NY: How long have you been the archivist of the Whitechapel gallery?**

JH: I think it is about 5 and half years, something like that.

**NY: What were your feelings when you started on this post? Did you know the archive at all?**

JH: I did know the archive before because I had done my MA thesis research and I had spent 6 months. I knew a certain section very well. So I knew what it contained and what its potential was. In theory when I started it was a temporary measure because the gallery had lost funding for the archivist and the archivist's assistant. I agreed to fill in for few months and have stayed for 5 and half years.

**NY: Were you excited to work in an archive that you had already used before?**

JH: Oh yes, because I knew what potential it had and what an amazing resource it was.

**NY: How did your work has change over the years?**

JH: It has changed a lot actually. The major thing that has happened and changed it was the internet. It has totally affected what I do from when I started. Largely because there are many more enquiries and people know what is available now.

**NY: How were the first years without the Internet?**

JH: People would contact me by phone and letter which was a much longer process and fewer queries. Now I sit down and have to reply to many emails.

**NY: Do you find that the researchers are always coming from the same group of people?**

JH: No it is still a cross section. The majority are students from MA's and PhD's or academics writing books. Then you have the general public, school kids etc.

**NY: Do you get enquiries from people who just want to have a look in the archive?**

JH: You get people who just want to find out about their grandfather. They have a relative who had exhibited here and they have a painting of theirs so they are keen to trace their history or many other stories.

**NY: Are you able to accommodate all these enquiries?**

JH: It depends how much information people need to get them started. If they know a little bit of their research area it is easier for me to help them than if they do not know anything at all. They always need to give me a hint on where I should to start looking.

**NY: In principle do you wish to accommodate all enquiries?**

JH: Of course, I do not have a hierarchy of who is allowed and who is not.

**NY: And this brings me to the next question, do you feel that an archivist, by being in her post, protects the archive? Because there is an intrusion from the researcher... isn't there? I have a feeling that the archivists are there to maintain and to protect it in a very open sense.**

JH: To some extent a juggling goes on, particularly with very popular material. Generally no, I do not feel I need to protect the archive but it has been the case with material that has been heavily handled. There has been so much research done on particular material and this wear is beginning to show now. With popular material, what I do is to photocopy it and give to people the photocopy to handle.

**NY: So are there popular areas for research at the Whitechapel archive...**

**Who do you think creates the myth around them? Is it the art courses that mention them a lot? (Giggles)**

JH: I don't know, perhaps that's what it is...(giggles).

**NY: How has the archive been maintained over the years?**

JH: It has been very vague; it was not catalogued at all at some periods. I mean that there were no catalogues at all until recently. They've had a number of people like me coming in as volunteers for a year or two and trying to put some order to it, then they would leave and it so it will be abandoned for a while again. It has a circle of being maintained, catalogued and then neglected.

**NY: Are there 'personal touches' of archivists in the Whitechapel archive? I know that before you there was for example a trained archivist.**

JH: Yes, there was. I followed the structures that have been put in place by Jon (Newman). In that sense I did not change anything.

**NY: Do you know if there were archivists in the past that had been appointed by the gallery since its beginnings?**

JH: As far as I am aware the only trained and paid archivist was Jon Newman. All the rest were volunteers.

**NY: It is amazing that it is here today and kept in this condition considering the neglect it had been through.**

JH: I know! When Nick Serota was here directing he would take an evening and try to put some order in all the papers that were down here. That is why there are still so many papers in the archive. If the material was properly catalogued a lot of items would have been removed.

**NY: This makes it very interesting especially when you are looking into the director's letters and find scribbles or corrections which otherwise would have been removed and not available for consultation.**

JH: Oh, certainly, a lot of staff would have been binned.

**NY: What were the criteria for the material that were collected? We have worked together and I had been giving you representative material from exhibitions, but in**

**other areas, how else would you prioritise the material that goes there? What happens with administration documents or minutes from meetings?**

JH: I tend to focus on exhibitions; I can't archive the whole gallery. I have decided to make it an exhibitions archive. And you are right asking before, because that is where I have put my personal influence. The administration side is a little bit vague at the moment.

**NY: Do you get stuff from Administration or other departments?**

JH: I get stuff from Administration, and occasionally from Development none of it is in any cataloguing style or order. But even then, I keep the items; I remove very few material from the archive.

**NY: The material you get from the Whitechapel staff, is it a response to your call for archival records?**

JH: The problem with the archive is that I get things that people feel they might use themselves again but they do not want them on their desks...

**NY: Do they see the archive as a kind of storage space, perhaps?**

JH: Yes, they see it as storage space.

**NY: Is there a policy in place which obliges directors to leave documents and records to the archive when they finish their directorship in the gallery? Is there a deontology of some sort?**

JH: There is but it varies. For example Nick Serota left what he wanted to leave. Another case is Catherine Lampert who hasn't left anything yet but I am assuming that she would do. Bryan, (Robertson) just left everything.

**NY: So this is a common thing to leave everything?**

JH: Yes, that's right.

**NY: Why to your opinion some exhibitions have been more recorded than others? Is it a matter of practicalities?**

JH: Because there wasn't an archivist in place, there was never the issue of what should be documented and what shouldn't. The Whitechapel has curated exhibition and this affects enormously how the gallery is documented. Exhibitions change very frequently.

**NY: At the moment, is there a specific request from your side to the staff, in terms of archiving specific items?**

JH: I try to put a protocol in place and I collect everything from an exhibition, such as posters, catalogues etc.

*[I speak about the Kounellis installation/performance with the horses that was restaged in June 2002. I have documented it independently and hold records of it at home but the Whitechapel has not got this material. A discussion starts about these 'coincidences'<sup>5</sup> which bring new material to the archive regardless the gallery's concerns with the archive].*

**NY: Is everything you know about the Whitechapel reflected in its archive or do you feel that through the archive you know more about the Whitechapel than it is generally known to the staff or public? Do you think that it is revealing about many aspects of the Whitechapel that we do not know?**

JH: Oh! Absolutely! It is.

**NY: Is there a similarity to the requests you get from various researchers? What I would really like to know is if there is a general idea to the public, of what they will discover in the Whitechapel's archive?**

JH: There is an image of the Whitechapel that it is fairly experimental, it reflects the East End at the time and the local artists as well as the populations that lived here. So yes, people come to me thinking they know what they are going to find.

**NY: What is the reaction of people when they see the archive? Do they expect to see something different?**

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<sup>5</sup> The coincidence is that I was there at the time when the horses were entering the gallery and I took permission from Janis Kounellis to take a lot of pictures. As the Whitechapel had not arranged for anyone to photograph this event, I am the only holder of such material. I have proposed to donate the photographs to the gallery. In a way it is 'by chance' that the Whitechapel will gain the records of this historic re-staging of Janis Kounellis performance.

JH: People usually find a lot more material than they expected which makes what I do worthwhile and it is quite often that they find material here that they were unable to find anywhere else.

**NY: It is amazing that this is a hands-on archive. Do people ever come down here?**

JH: No never. I think people would be appalled of how it looks. But it is clean and dry on the other hand so I know that it is in the best conditions possible.

**NY: But in a way it looks like the stereotypical archive! You are going downstairs and it is located in the basement with a lot of grey and brown boxes everywhere... How would you like it to become in the future?**

JH: I would like to see it with proper archival storage and that the space enables the archive the archivist and the researcher to be all located in the same floor.

**NY: Talking about Steven Poliakoff's film *Shooting the Past*, and the idea that the archivist has a 'total knowledge' of the archive, I want to ask you whether you think that this myth or is it near to reality? Are there materials in this archive that you do not know off? What about this idea of the hidden archive that neither the researcher nor the archivist know about?**

JH: Absolutely! People who are doing research in exhibitions end up looking folders and through the process of helping them to find what they want you find things yourself, all the time.

**NY: How important for the archivist is to organise an archive they already knew well? Is there any parallel with the analyst's principle who believes they should not know their patient previously?**

JH: I can only speak of my experience but I think that it makes an enormous difference if you know it. Then you are sensitive to the archive. And you have a sense of what it contains. I think you are less ruthless...

**NY: So you allowed much more things to stay in?**

JH: Definitely...

**NY: If you could speak about the Whitechapel's archive in relation to other archives that you know what would you emphasise?**

JH: The only other I know is the Tate archive which is fabulous and well maintained and well funded and all those things but I think the Whitechapel is more of a discovery. It is less structured and as you say there are exhibitions that are poorly documented but it is more fascinating.

**NY: Do you think that other archives disclose all their material to the public?**

JH: I do not know, I am really not sure. I think we here are very open and one can come and look at it. And this is why researchers get so excited.

There are people coming from the States and New Zealand to research the archive and I do feel responsibility in order to give them what they need; to make their trip worthwhile.

*[Finally we discuss my forthcoming PhD seminar and I ask permission to demonstrate material from the archive in the seminar. Haythornthwaite advises me that it is only through a combination of resources, for example through cross references, with the Trustees Minutes, Finance documents and others that I will find what I need in the Whitechapel Archive].*

***Guernica* the tapestry**

## Appendix V

### Information on the Guernica tapestries, compiled by Eleanor Nairne, intern at Whitechapel Gallery, September–December 2009

#### The weavers

Picasso had been replicating his works in tapestry form since the 1930s - a period in which the discipline had enjoyed a renewed prestige in France. In 1951, he met the weavers René and Jacqueline de la Baume Dürrbach, who were part of an exposition at Annonciade in Saint-Tropez. Jacqueline had set up her own studio in Cavalaire in 1949, not far from Picasso's home; here she reproduced many of the masters of the modern movement, including Léger, Villon, Delaunay and Gleizes.

Picasso admired her ability to preserve the gestures of the strokes, maintaining each painting's energy, without falling prey to mere imitation. As the master explained, they were 'not forging banknotes, and that's good', since 'if you imitate too much you are false'. In 1953, Picasso (who had previously worked with numerous studios including Aubusson, Les Gobelins and Cauquil-Prince) pronounced that he would henceforth work with the Dürrbachs alone on tapestry reproductions.

#### The work

Nelson Rockefeller's taste for tapestries stemmed from his youth: his father, John D. Rockefeller Jr., had hung antique pieces in their New York townhouse, including the famous Unicorn series (ca.1500) which was subsequently donated to the Cloisters museum. Nelson's first commission, in 1955, would be for an exact copy to be made of *Guernica*. Picasso entrusted this task to Jacqueline, who was to produce her tapestry in the same dimensions as the original - 22 foot by 10 foot. The fabrication began in January with the creation of a 'tapestry cartoon' from a poster of *Guernica* - she would not come face to face with the original until its exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, in June of that year. The tapestry, woven with eleven knots of wool string over a

cotton warp, was produced in Cavalaire after six months of hard labour. Picasso delighted in the continuation of his work onto a new platform; when shown the finished product in the Grimaldi Museum in Antibes, in November of 1955, he offered resounding praise for the Dürrbachs' craftwork.

### **The copies**

Like all the Picasso tapestries, *Guernica* was made in triplicate. The first (1955) was produced in a palette of creams and browns; it hung in Governor Rockefeller's mansion in Albany until his death in 1985, when his widow, Happy Rockefeller, lent it to the United Nations Security Council, to hang as a powerful deterrent to war.

The second (1976), which was rendered in cobalt blues, belongs to the Unterlinden Museum of Colmar. They have lent the tapestry to Bayonne and Bilbao, thus allowing it to be exhibited for the first time in the Basque country. It was also recently exhibited at the Grenier des Grands-Augustins, Picasso's atelier from 1936-55 where the original *Guernica* was painted. The last copy (completed in 1985) was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in Gunma, Japan.

## Appendix VI

### **Information on Picasso's tapestries at Kykuit, the Rockefeller Estate, compiled by Eleanor Nairne**

Excerpted from Kykuit Guide training materials; property of Historic Hudson Valley  
December 15, 2004, [www.hudsonvalley.org](http://www.hudsonvalley.org)

The twelve Picasso tapestries at Kykuit, all interpretations of Picasso paintings, are from a group of roughly twenty acquired by Nelson Rockefeller between about 1955 and 1974. With Picasso's permission, all the tapestries were made by the French weaver, Jacqueline de la Baume Durrbach and her husband, Rene, who lived and worked at Vallauris in the south of France, not far from where Picasso lived. In 1955 the first tapestry that Gov. Rockefeller commissioned from Jacqueline Durrbach was a replica of Picasso's famous 1937 Spanish Civil War painting Guernica. While he was Governor, the tapestry hung in the Governor's mansion in Albany (it is now in a private collection and is on loan to the United Nations in New York, where it hangs outside the security council chamber).

Gov. Rockefeller, who admired Picasso more than any other artist, once owned more than sixty Picasso works of art. The Governor was always very interested in the idea of art reproductions. In the late 1970s he had a store on 57<sup>th</sup> Street in New York, The Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Inc., where he sold reproductions of selected pieces from his collection, including reproductions of some of the Chinese ceramics at Kykuit. The concept of tapestry reproductions is also linked to the Governor's commitment to making art accessible to the public. Most of these tapestries were hung in the Governor's mansion in Albany where he regularly entertained and where many guests had an opportunity to see them. In Albany he also created the collection of modern art displayed in the Empire State Mall. Other efforts to bring art to the people include his founding of the Museum of Primitive Art (now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), and of course, his bequest of his portion of the Pocantico Hills estate to the

National Trust for Historic Preservation so that it would be a museum where visitors would see and enjoy works of art.

The Governor's interest in tapestries dated to his childhood. His father, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. had hung antique French and other European tapestries in his New York townhouse including the famous Unicorn series (ca. 1500) which Mr. Rockefeller, Jr. eventually gave to the Cloisters Museum.

Over the course of twenty years, beginning in 1955, Gov. Rockefeller's curator, Carol Uht, would, at intervals, write to Jacqueline Durrbach with a list of perhaps three or four paintings that the Governor had selected for possible tapestry reproduction. To fulfill an order, Durrbach would first visit Picasso and have him sign a permission form authorizing her to weave the copies. The form would include the size of each proposed tapestry. Picasso usually required that the tapestries be larger than the original paintings so that they not be mere "reductions". Gov. Rockefeller however sometimes noted that the tapestries were "getting too big." He preferred them modestly sized to give him the flexibility of hanging them in rooms either at Kykuit, the Governor's mansion in Albany, or his home in Maine where the rooms were not huge. However, he finally succumbed to Picasso's demands and the last tapestry of the series, *Girl with a Mandolin*, commissioned just before Picasso's death in 1973, is the largest, over ten feet in height and several times larger than the original 1910 canvas (39 1/2" x 29 1/2"). Note that *Girl with a Mandolin* is worked in silk, whereas the others were all done in wool. All of the tapestries carry the mark of the Durrbach's atelier, the Atelier Cavalaire, which looks like a letter "C" with an "A" inside it.

Before Durrbach could weave a tapestry she would paint a full scale cartoon (tapestry design) of the painting she was to work on. For this purpose, color transparencies, usually 10" x 8", were supplied to her by Carol Uht. In the case of *Girls with a Toy Boat*, woven for the Governor from a painting in Peggy Guggenheim's collection in Venice, not only were transparencies specially made, but an artist copied a small section of the painting in order to show Durrbach the texture of the surface so that its unusual style

could be successfully reproduced – which it was. Carol Uht sometimes made detailed diagrams about the range of colors in a painting, as with *Night Fishing at Antibes* to ensure that Durrbach had as much information as possible about the original. Picasso would inspect each cartoon and approve its design and color. Wool was then ordered and specially dyed. For paintings at MoMA, or in Gov. Rockefeller’s collection, wool samples were mailed by Durrbach to New York for the colors to be checked against the originals. Each tapestry took roughly six or eight months to weave. Before they were delivered to the Governor, Picasso would usually see the finished weavings and give his final approval.

The 12 Picasso tapestries at Kykuit are:

Girl on the Beach

The Studio

Three Musicians

Three Dancers

Night Fishing at Antibes

Harlequin

Dawn Serenade (L'Aubade)

Pitcher and Bowl of Fruits

Interior with Girl Drawing (The Muse)

Girl with Mandolin (silk; all others are wool)

Fish and Coffee Pot (Poisson et Cafetiere)

Girls with Toy Boat

*The Nature of the Beast*

## Appendix VII

### Text from the Whitechapel Gallery's 2009 season guide

#### **Goshka Macuga: The Bloomberg Commission**

**5 April 2009–18 April 2010**

#### **Gallery 2**

London-based Polish artist Goshka Macuga is widely acclaimed for her sculptural installations of artefacts and photographs, derived from art history, politics and anthropology. The artist focuses on a key moment in the history of the Whitechapel Gallery: the presentation of Picasso's *Guernica* in 1939. Organised in collaboration with the Stepney Trade Union Council in east London to raise awareness of the Spanish Civil War, the suggested price of entry was a pair of boots, left underneath the work, to be sent to the Republicans in Spain. Forming the centrepiece of Macuga's installation is a life-size tapestry of *Guernica*. Commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in 1955 it was created, in

collaboration with Picasso, by weaver Jacqueline de la Baume Dürrbach, of the great Dürrbach Atelier in Paris. In 1985, the Rockefeller Estate lent the tapestry to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, to offer a deterrent to war. It has hung ever since outside the United Nations Security Council. Macuga's project draws connections across historic and contemporary world affairs, their protagonists and the cultural ripple effects they have triggered. Evolving throughout the year, this major new commission intertwines narratives and constellations of objects to demonstrate the profound relation between aesthetics and politics.

Admission free

Supported by: Bloomberg

The Bloomberg Commission invites an international artist to create an annual site-specific artwork inspired by the rich history of the former library. Bloomberg's support reflects its commitment to innovation, and its ongoing efforts to expand access to art, science and the humanities. Additional support provided by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Henry Moore Foundation, the Polish Cultural Institute, and the Wingate Scholarships. With thanks to Kate MacGarry. Goshka Macuga is the Wingate Artist-in-Residence at the Whitechapel Gallery.

## Appendix VIII

### Letter from Iwona Blazwick, Director at Whitechapel Gallery to Mrs Nelson A. Rockefeller; loan request of Guernica tapestry

Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller  
200 Lake Road,  
Pocantico Hills,  
Tarrytown,  
New York 10591  
USA

17th November 2008

#### Guernica Tapestry

#### Inaugural Display, Whitechapel Gallery, April 2009 - March 2010

Having had preliminary discussions with your curator, Cynthia Altman, I am writing formally to request the loan of the remarkable *Guernica Tapestry*, currently at the UN building in New York. We would like to include this work in our inaugural display at the Whitechapel Gallery.

The Whitechapel Gallery is a public museum and educational charity founded in 1901 to bring great art to the people of East London. The Gallery is internationally acclaimed for its exhibitions of modern and contemporary art, and its pioneering education and public events programmes.

The Gallery has premiered international artists such as Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Nan Goldin, and provided a showcase

for Britain's most significant artists from Gilbert & George to Lucian Freud, Peter Doig to Mark Wallinger.

The Whitechapel Gallery is embarking on the most exciting phase in its 100-year history: an ambitious expansion doubling the size of our galleries and research facilities. As part of the Whitechapel's grand re-opening in April 2009, we have commissioned an exciting young artist named Goshka Macuga to create a sculptural installation.

Macuga's commission will celebrate a significant moment in the Gallery's recent history: the display of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* in 1938-9. An impassioned response to the Luftwaffe bombing of the Basque country, the presentation of *Guernica* in London was intended to raise consciousness about the Spanish Civil War.

The exhibition included both the painting and a number of important preparatory studies. It was the only time this great masterpiece has been shown in Britain and the exhibition received more than 15,000 visitors in the first week alone.

We are writing to request the loan of the following work from your collection:

*The Guernica Tapestry*, 1955

Tapestry

10 x 22 ft

Our venue offers climate-controlled galleries of the highest international standards and 24-hour surveillance. We are happy to forward Facilities Reports upon request. Our technicians are trained in art handling and the insurance and shipping costs will of course be covered by us, the borrowing institution.

We have taken the liberty of including a loan form with this letter. If you agree to lend the work to the exhibition please, complete the forms and return both copies to our exhibitions department at the below address.

We very much hope that you will feel able to help us realise the full ambitions of this important exhibition. Should you have any further questions relating to the project, please do not hesitate to contact our curator, Anthony Spira, at the Whitechapel Gallery on +44 (0)207 522 7866, or by emailing [anthonyspira@whitechapel.org](mailto:anthonyspira@whitechapel.org).

The opening will be on 3rd April 2009 and we very much hope you will be able to join us to celebrate this special occasion.

Thank you in advance for considering our request.

Yours sincerely,

Iwona Blazwick, OBE

Director

Whitechapel Art Gallery

Tel: +44 20 7522 7890

Fax: +44 20 7377 1685

[director@whitechapel.org](mailto:director@whitechapel.org)

## Appendix IX

### Anthony Spira, Curator at Whitechapel Gallery interviews Goshka Macuga, artist. Excerpt from the draft transcript, February 2009

AS: Your projects tend to begin with research related to the sites where you exhibit. This provides you with a seed from which you develop a series of narratives, often tracing a number of different routes prompted by the material that you encounter. Recently you created work inspired by Mies van der Rohe for an exhibition in the Neue Nationalgalerie, which he designed and at Tate Britain you devised an installation around documents by British artists, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Paul Nash, etc. that you found in the Tate archive.

Could you describe how this installation at the Whitechapel Gallery came about?

GM: The invitation to do the inaugural commission for the newly expanded Whitechapel compelled me to explore the history of the gallery since its opening in 1901. It was only then that I realised that Picasso's *Guernica* was shown in the gallery in 1939. While reading the papers in the archive, I became fascinated by the circumstances around this event. Instead of being presented as a great work of art, *Guernica* had immediately been appropriated as a political symbol. The Whitechapel's mission had always been 'to bring the finest art in the world to the people of the East End' and local organisations used the gallery as a cultural centre. In this case, the event had been organised by the Stepney Trade Union Council who approached the gallery for help with their ambition to fight fascism and to promote a Communist spirit within the working classes. They wanted to use a painting by 'a famous Spanish painter' to raise awareness and funds to help enlist volunteers for the Republican cause in the Spanish civil war. The freshly created painting had a growing reputation for commemorating the aerial destruction of the Basque city of Gernika by the Nazis and Italians and the exhibition happened only a couple of years after a notorious battle between local residents in Whitechapel and Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts. Incredibly, 15,000 people visited the show in the first week.

We will never know how many were converted to the cause that day and rushed to Spain to defend their ideals but there is one striking statistic that tells us something of the event's resonance: one of Picasso's conditions for allowing his painting to come to London was that each person admitted should try to donate a pair of boots. By the end of the exhibition, some 400 pairs had been collected to send to the front.

All these stories fascinated me and there is a great photograph of Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour opposition, giving a speech on a platform with the painting as a backdrop. It wasn't a conventional art exhibition, but an event that echoed in the community of east London. I was keen to play with these ideas in my installation.

AS: So the context of 'Guernica' at the Whitechapel clearly provided fertile ground for the development of ideas around this project. But what about the painting itself and its original context? It was commissioned for the Spanish pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937...

GM: Yes, this exhibition happened at an interesting historical moment, just before World War Two. The spirit of the time was manifested through major architectural undertakings such as the German Pavilion that promoted Fascism, the Russian Pavilion that promoted Communism and the relatively small Spanish Pavilion, among others, designed by Jose Luis Sert with the assistance of Luis Lacasa.

This pavilion had been designed primarily to affirm the legitimacy of the Spanish Republic and to condemn the attacks of Franco's Nationalist army, which by then controlled over half the country with the support of Mussolini and Hitler. The pavilion's goal was specifically to celebrate the Republic's social programs, particularly those in agriculture and education, and to bring worldwide attention to the suffering of the Spanish people in the civil war.

In the context of this project, my attention was drawn to the installation of *Guernica* within the space of the Spanish Pavilion. It was positioned in front of Alexander Calder's 'Mercury Fountain' and accompanied by hard-hitting films by Luis Bunuel, Joris Ivens and Ernest Hemingway, depicting the horrors of the Civil War.

AS: So, while you were researching all of these elements, you would also have come across letters between Bryan Robertson (Whitechapel director from 1952 to 1968) and the American Embassy in London about the possibility of organising a major Picasso exhibition in 1950s, perhaps with the inclusion of *Guernica*. Effectively, the Ambassador withdrew funding for this exhibition, citing concerns that it would mobilise Communist sympathies in the area, and, instead, he encouraged exhibitions of the Abstract Expressionists. You would also have seen that Nicholas Serota (Whitechapel Director from 1976 To 1988) tried to bring *Guernica* to the Whitechapel in the 1980s when it was returning to Spain from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Unfortunately, it was deemed too fragile. These anecdotes also form part of the story of the Whitechapel and *Guernica* but how did you decide to extend and add further layers to these narratives?

GM: All these interesting stories attached to *Guernica's* short visit to east London led me to find a way of recreating this event. Of course, I was aware that bringing the original painting back to London was totally impossible but during my research I remembered that Picasso had authorised the production of some life-size tapestries of *Guernica*. In fact there were three tapestries made but the most famous one had been on display at the United Nations headquarters in New York since 1985. It had been commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in 1955 and produced by the Atelier J. de la Baume-Dürnbach before being loaned to the UN as a memento mori and deterrent to war.

We eventually managed to borrow this tapestry, which I thought would be a great way of bringing the spirit of *Guernica* back. And of course, this object itself has its own stories and mythologies that I was keen to add to the original narratives at the Whitechapel and to bring everything up to date.

AS: I guess it is not so much about the original object but more about the enduring power of the image? Wasn't *Guernica* considered as a poster originally? It is such a powerful symbol, reproductions were apparently banned in Franco's Spain, and it has been appropriated by so many different groups and people. It was vandalized in 1974 by an Iranian artist who wrote 'Kill Lies All' on the canvas in protest against the Vietnam war (although easily cleaned off the varnish) and has appeared in murals in Belfast

[image??] and elsewhere. Most recently, it has been associated with Fallujah, the city in central Iraq that was decimated by aerial bombardments. It is unsurprising that when the painting eventually went to Madrid, it was installed in a huge bulletproof steel and glass cage, flanked by soldiers.

Given the extreme sensitivities around *Guernica*, which seems to have become a universal anti-war symbol, could you explain the context around the tapestry at the UN? The tapestry hung outside the Security Council's chamber for twenty years, providing a backdrop for many important press conferences.

GM: In 2003, the UN hosted a meeting of international representatives in New York to assess the security threat posed by Iraq and their supposed stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. The US Secretary of State Colin Powell made his infamous presentation accompanied by images and telephone conversations recordings, to 'prove' that Iraq was producing chemical weapons. During this speech, Powell persuaded the United Nations representatives to endorse a pre-emptive strike on Iraq and effectively triggered the second Iraq War, named 'Shock and Awe'.

The press conference announcing these events took place at the entrance to the Security Council chamber, precisely in front of the *Guernica* tapestry, but a decision had been made to cover the image with a blue curtain. Although it had served as a backdrop for many years, official statements claimed that the colour of the tapestry was interfering and that they needed a monochrome colour.

AS: It seems that launching a war in front of such a powerful anti-war symbol would have appeared too hypocritical... But could you say a little more about why Colin Powell is so important for you? Are you sceptical about his projected image as a moderate 'dove' or does he does symbolise a crisis of conscience, someone torn between personal ethics and national duty? As a mediator or spokesperson, in this case, for the Bush administration, does he somehow also embody the role of a storyteller, medium, reporter or even an artist?

GM: Looking back at Colin Powell's presentation in the Security Council in 2003 you can definitely appreciate his performative skills and talent in mediating false information. I have made a bronze portrait bust of him in an attempt to translate these ideas into a formal language that refers to Picasso's Cubist style and to the collapsed architectonic forms in *Guernica*. He has certainly come to represent the failure of moral responsibility attached to his position in government.

AS: By aligning atrocities created by fascists in the Spanish civil war with those perpetuated by the US and UK more recently in Iraq (and the comparison between Gernika and Fallujah has often been made), is it right to assume that this exhibition is not about ideological allegiances? Is it less about condemning American foreign policy than seeking archetypes or universal truths that go beyond ideology? Would it be more appropriate to consider this presentation as an anti-war statement, as a rallying cry for collective cooperation and, even, as a call to learn the lessons of history? These are bold requirements, a long way from art historical references...

GM: Looking at the history of wars makes you realize that there is a pattern, which has repeated itself so many times in so many contexts. I am mainly concerned with the mechanisms of war, with the way war is represented in order to address issues of humanity.

*Guernica* itself succeeds in mediating emotion but of course fails to represent the actual event and perhaps this extends to cultural representations in general. Perhaps the only way of going beyond symbolic value is through historical research, using factual, archival material and creating documentaries?

I am also interested in the role of an individual in the hierarchy of power, patriotism and national identity. And I am keen to question the role of an artist. Can art mediate a message that goes beyond its own context? What is the role of the individual within society? Are community projects a thing of the past?

AS: Could you say a little more about you intended to work with and infiltrate the archive?

GM: Since the very beginning, my intention has been to extend the Whitechapel's Guernica archive. During my research I have found much more information about the history of the painting with a special focus on its visit to east London in 1939. I hope that this can be included in the archive folder of my exhibition and extend the references attached to the original archive.

Effectively, this will be the second visit of *Guernica* in the gallery, but this time in a different form. The tapestry and the story around it takes us to a different period of time, to the wars and politics of today. This is achieved using the same image, which demonstrates the enduring symbolic power of Guernica itself, to the extent that it can transcend its time and remain relevant 70 years on.

AS: In relation to community projects, could you explain the thinking behind the design of the room and the round table? The deep blue carpet, oak table and leather chairs present an almost corporate language of power...

GM: The round table and the layout of the room was triggered by two images: the Spanish Pavilion with Calder's circular mercury fountain in the foreground; and the circular table in the UN Security Council chamber in New York. With *Guernica* once again as a backdrop for serious discussion, I am hoping that people will use the table as a meeting place for discussions throughout the exhibition period. There will be a booking form for groups who can use the space for their meetings free of charge. The only requirement is that whoever uses the space, sends us notes, minutes, photographs or films of their meeting that can then be inserted within the Whitechapel archive.

AS: What about the Afghan and Iraqi rugs? With these rugs, you are hinting at another departure that this exhibition could go on: on of technical correspondences, eg between the tapestry woven in France and some rugs, woven in Iraq.

GM: I was interested in the tradition of waving in Middle East and I came across an article about the factory in Baghdad, which has been making carpets all through the war employing mainly women. I found a carpet with a map of Iraq and a sign in Arabic (god is????) This image somehow brought to my mind aerial slides presented by Colin Powell in 2003. The message was very different, but in many ways represented the essence of the conflict.

*A full version of the interview is published in the newspaper The Nature of the Beast, distributed at the Whitechapel Gallery (April 2009 - 2010)*

## Appendix X

### Goshka Macuga's invitation to Gallery visitors to use the roundtable during *The Nature of the Beast*, April 2009

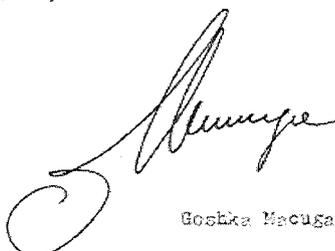
Dear Visitor,

This exhibition revolves around the presentation of Picasso's original painting, 'Guernica', at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1939 and the placement and role of the tapestry at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 1985 to 2009. In both instances, the image has been used as a backdrop for political debate.

The room has been designed with a real emphasis on accommodating and encouraging meetings for discussion groups, with 'Guernica' used once again as a backdrop. You are therefore invited to host meetings and discussions around the central table.

The space is offered free of charge. Contact [guernica@whitechapelgallery.org](mailto:guernica@whitechapelgallery.org) for advance booking. We only ask that you send photographs, recordings or minutes of your meetings to this address for inclusion in the gallery's growing archive.

Many thanks,



Goshka Macuga

## Appendix XI

### Whitechapel staff email about the roundtable discussion to launch *The Nature of the Beast*, April 2009

**From:** Nicola Sim  
**Sent:** 01 April 2009 17:13  
**To:** All Whitechapel Staff  
**Subject:** Goshka Round table Tomorrow 11am-1pm!

Dear all

For those who don't know about this last minute addition to our already bulging programme of events this week, Goshka is holding the first round table discussion tomorrow morning from 11am – 1pm to coincide with the G20. A number of people (max. 20/25 curators, activists, gallerists etc.) have been invited to participate in this closed event, which will focus on the political and economic climate.

Our own Stephen Escritt has stepped in to chair the discussion, which will be recorded for our archive. Attendees should arrive through the front entrance where they will have a quick tea/coffee by the stairs before going into Gallery 2. If any of you would like to join in the discussion please come along!

Any questions, just ask – my mobile is [REDACTED].

Many thanks

Nicky Sim  
**Public Events Assistant**  
Whitechapel Gallery  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7522 7857  
Fax: +4 (0)20 7377 1685  
[nicolasim@whitechapelgallery.org](mailto:nicolasim@whitechapelgallery.org)  
[www.whitechapelgallery.org](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org)

## Appendix XII

### List of the films screened for *The Nature of the Beast*, April–June 2009

Title and Production Company.

1. *Sir, No, Sir*, Displaced Films.
2. *Spanish Civil War*, Future Media Productions.
3. *Baghdad Stories*, Year Zero Films.
4. *Testimonies from Fallujah*.
5. *Occupation Dreamland*, Rumur Releasing & Greenhouse Pictures.
6. *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*, RAI News 24.
7. *Caught In the Crossfire*, Conception Media.
8. *Winters Soldier*, Stoney Road Films.
9. *Serbian Epics*, BBC.
10. *Fallujah - April 2004*, Progressive films.
11. *Meeting the Resistance*, Mercury Media.
12. *Welcome to Hebron*, Mercury Media.

*Responses to The Nature of the Beast*

## Appendix XIII

### The Nature of the Beast roundtable inquiries

Dear Nicola

Thanks very much for your letter.

Because nothing was fixed, I have to say I haven't firmed up any arrangements with any of the possible contributors nor have I had much of a chance to plan out the day.

What I had in mind was something that had the following elements:

1. A discussion about who exactly booked 'Guernica' to come to the Gallery? Who comprised the Stepney Trades Council? What was their connection to the painting? Can we reconstruct their attitude to it?
2. A discussion about the contemporary conditions of life, cultural life and political organisation in the area surrounding the gallery?
3. What kinds of reaction did the exhibition elicit? How did contemporary newspapers, magazines and political/cultural outlets respond?
4. More specifically, the painting posed some critical difficulties for the official 'line' of the organisation most interested in bringing 'Guernica' to the Gallery. To spell this out: In 1936, the official attitude to Art was that it should be 'Socialist Realist', with certain elements that presented the working class (and its leaders) as 'heroic'. The mood should be 'positive', 'optimistic' and/or 'triumphalist'. Art should be figurative, literature should be narrative and so on. Clearly, 'Guernica' didn't obey the rules, and yet Picasso was welcome in the Communist Party.
5. There are some people still alive who visited the exhibition. It should be possible for some to either attend or be recorded (audio or video) to talk through their impressions and thoughts on some of the above.

I had begun to assemble some names who could contribute to these sections but I haven't contacted them, as I had no specific date or go-ahead.

Dave Rosenberg does Sunday walk-tours in the area where he tells the story of the political, cultural and economic lives of people living in Whitechapel at this time.

Linda Morris has written about Picasso's uneasy relationship with the Communist Party.

Bill Jones was a Trade Union leader at this time and also fought in the Spanish Civil War. He is on record talking about the exhibition.

Several friends of my mother are still alive. 'Alice' attended the exhibition and is very well (over 90), a good talker and would, I think, be prepared to contribute either live or recorded. 'Bertha' is less well but might also be willing. Others could be found, I think. (My father attended but I'm afraid he died in July 2008).

There are several historians of the period who might be interested in attending, one of whom did his Ph.D on the rent strikes in the area. However, he lives in Canada.

This is where I've got to at the moment. I hope that this is along the lines you have in mind. I can be more specific if you would like me to be.

very best

Michael Rose

---

Dear Goshka,

The illustration department at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth would like to hold a meeting on Monday 27 April from 2 to 4pm. The plan is to bring 30 illustration students who will produce practical work in response both to the newspapers of 27th April and your installation.

We hope this slot is still available and look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

David Evans

Senior Lecturer, Illustration

---

Nicky

I promised to let you have some notes about the event at 1430-1630 this afternoon.

Here is where we are at the moment.

We are expecting six people.

Mariana Bogdanova Cass PhD Student

Angela Dove Poet, Cass Visiting Lecturer

Clive Holtham Cass Professor

Susie Howarth Artist and Illustrator

Jolanta Jagiello Artist and Lecturer, Middlesex Business School

Vansh Kapil Cass MBA student

Our plan is to hold a stylised meeting in the room, which we will record. The general theme is arts and management, and we hope to narrow down to a more specific topic.

The first part of the meeting will involve the group deciding on the topic and how to proceed. Several of the participants are experienced facilitators and will if necessary be able to lead segments of the meeting. Some of these might involve writing on flip charts on the table. Is this likely to cause any problems?

We will then proceed with the stylised meeting. We do not want to use projection facilities or powerpoint. Finally we will have a formal debriefing on the meeting. We will for our own purposes write up the meeting and put a copy of the electronic media on disc, which we will send in to the gallery afterwards.

In terms of facilities the main issue I can see arising relates to 13 amp powerpoints. Will there be any we can use, or is it possible to use an extension lead with extra sockets to power equipment?

Logistically we also have to think how we look after our equipment etc in a gallery with members of the public visiting the gallery at the same time.

Finally do we just turn up in the room and get started or ask for yourself first?

My mobile is [REDACTED]

Professor Clive Holtham

email: [REDACTED]

phone: + [REDACTED]

fax: + [REDACTED]

video: + [REDACTED]

Short CV: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/experts/c.holtham>

Map: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/about/location/index.html>

Cass Business School, City of London, 106 Bunhill Row, LONDON EC1Y 8TZ

---

Hi,

I just attended a talk at the Whitechapel gallery about the Guernica room/installation by Goshka Macuga.

I would be very interested in finding out if it could be possible to arrange a booking of the round table?

I have been involved with David Toop's Unknown Devices group through studying Sound Arts at London College of Communication.

Unknown Devices, sometimes referred to as The Laptop Orchestra, is an improvising music ensemble who have played in various venues including galleries.

The group is a mix of laptops and acoustic/electronic instruments.

Some information about the group can be found here

<http://www.crisap.org/index.php?id=22,82,0,0,1,0>

It could be decided that musicians collect sounds from Whitechapel or those relating to the themes of the exhibition, though it may also be true that music is the best response to the violence of war. Of course we would be able to record our performance for the archives!

Best Regards,

~Yan White

---

Hello

I am writing on behalf of the Arts and Ecology Centre at the Royal Society of Arts to ask if we could book the table in Goshka Macuga's 'The Nature of the Beast' Bloomberg Commission on 5 June 2009.

It is the UN World Environment Day on 5 June and we would be delighted if we could hold an informal salon event as part of Macuga's work by way of celebration.

The event would form part of our online campaign 'Respond!', which we are running throughout the month of June to raise the level of visibility and debate around ethically and politically engaged practices.

With best wishes

Emma

Emma Ridgway

Curator

Arts & Ecology Centre  
RSA, 8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
T: + [REDACTED]  
[www.theRSA.org](http://www.theRSA.org)  
[www.RSAartsandecology.org.uk](http://www.RSAartsandecology.org.uk)  
<http://artsandecology.rsablogs.org.uk/>

---

To whom it may concern,

As a theatre company with an interest in performing in different spaces, our attention has been drawn to Goshka Macuga's exhibition, featuring Picasso's Guernica, and a round table offered for group discussions.

As Picasso was also a playwright, we wondered about bringing our adult theatre group into this space and performing a public reading of one of his plays. *Desire caught by the tail*, written during World War II, does not offer direct references to war, but embeds themes of hunger, and the basic human instinct to come together and share – food, poetry, warmth; elements which may link in with the artist's vision for the installation.

If this idea is of interest to you, please let us know how we might go about booking the space, and if there would be any costs.

Thanks,

Jonathan Petherbridge  
Creative Director

---

Dear Nicky,

Can I clarify about the bookings, are they only available up to 18 April, or do you have times available beyond that? If beyond, can you let me know the availability from this Sunday and next week, is the space available during the evening, from 6.30pm. I anticipate approximately 15 people, but there maybe more, I will let you know. The nature of the meeting is a re-convening of the various groups involved in the G20 Meltdown.

Simon Wells

---

Dear Jussi,

Many thanks for the phone discussion yesterday. Unfortunately we find that the 25th June is not a suitable day after all because of speaker commitments. But we would very much like to use the Gallery on another occasion and I will contact you again in due course.

With best regards,

Tony Kempster  
Chair of Movement for the Abolition of War

---

Good morning,

I saw 'The Nature of the Beast' installation last week and in the accompanying 'newspaper', I noted that the round table is available for discussions.

I am in the Prospect (magazine) reading group. Unlike most reading groups, we read both fiction and non-fiction. From time to time, for our non-fiction month, we read a book in conjunction with visiting an exhibition. Since I was aware that the *Guernica* tapestry was going to be in the Whitechapel for the re-opening, I suggested that we read *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon* by Gijs van Hensbergen. It is our May book so to speak. Our intention had been to come on a Thursday, see the installation and then retire to the café to discuss the book and *Guernica* in terms of the installation. But when I saw that the round table could be available for discussions, I thought, hmmm, I wonder.

Would a reading group discussion about the subject at hand be acceptable? We always have a summary of our book discussions written up, for the group and sometimes for placing on the Prospect website so placing something in your archive would be no problem. A photographer friend could also take photographs, if that would be useful. Also, how does the booking procedure work and what are the available times? The week we have in mind is the week of May 18<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any other questions and prefer to ring rather than e-mail, my landline is 020 8993 1760.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Ann Hushlak

---

To whom it may concern,

I am interested in booking the space for a discussion group that I am part of. We are a group of individuals that meet regularly to learn Urdu and English, we have a class that meets behind Yaseen's barbers on Bethnal Green Road on a Monday evening between 6.45 - 8.45pm every week.

The course is free and open to anyone, the course is based on conversation and exchange between Urdu and English speakers, suitable for all levels especially beginners. The course teaches useful conversation through spoken and practical activities. We are a group of about 6-12 people, it varies from week to week.

I am very interested in us having one of our classes in the context of the exhibition in particular in the presence of the Guernica tapestry.

I look forward to hearing back about possible dates? And also if there is a possibility of an evening? Between 6pm - 9pm?

Kind regards Karen Mirza

The Urdu / English class has been developed as part of an art project by Karen Mirza and Brad Butler with Hasan Navid. Commissioned by Artangel Interaction.

Karen Mirza

1st Floor

316-318 Bethnal Green Road

London, E2 0AG

email: [REDACTED]

tel: + [REDACTED]

[www.mirza-butler.net](http://www.mirza-butler.net)

---

Hi Nicky:

Thanks for getting back to me with the guidelines, we are very pleased to bring our discussion to the table and share it with the visitors at the gallery. In order to secure the guests we are looking for and as I will be on an artist residency abroad all summer I would like to request 17 October 2009 in the late afternoon for our meeting. In the coming months I will prepare for you a final list of guests and a topic brief for any website use you may need.

Many thanks,

Roberto

---

To 'Goshka's Table'

The James Nayler Foundation is a local Quaker charity that works around issues of eradicating violence. We would like to discuss the possibility of booking the use of the table to hold an event on Thursday June 25th 2009.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you and best wishes,

Lesley Katon

[www.jamesnaylerfoundation.org](http://www.jamesnaylerfoundation.org)

mob: XXXXXXXXXX

---

Dear Goshka Macuga,

A friend passed on the information below regarding the Whitechapel Gallery and the use of the room free of charge. I would be interesting in looking at this for a venue of one of my up and coming seminars I am planning which is focussing on turning negative experiences into positive outcomes.

I'm not sure what your criteria is for the use of the room apart from what is outlined below but hope this type of seminar would fit the bill. A few Questions:

- 1- how far in advance would I be able to book the room
- 2- how many people will it hold
- 3- how long will this offer be available

I would be more than happy to have a chat if you have any questions of me. Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Teresa Dukes  
District 71, Lt Gov Marketing  
Toastmasters International  
mob: + [REDACTED]  
[www.d71.org](http://www.d71.org)

---

Re: meeting on Friday 17 April

This is terrific news.

We'll go for the 1430-1630 slot

TO be honest we are still working out what to run, and it depends quite a lot on how many and which of our students, staff and associates turn up. But it is related to our

pioneering MBA course called "The Art of Management" where we take the fine arts as lenses onto the process of management.

Interestingly, ours is probably one of the few MBA courses in the world where we study the shape of tables as key factors in knowledge sharing - the round table is in many ways the ideal shape for this. Will send you more details in the next 24 hours.

Professor Clive Holtham

email: [REDACTED]

phone: + [REDACTED] fax: +44 [REDACTED]

video: + [REDACTED]

Short CV: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/experts/c.holtham>

Map: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/about/location/index.html>

Cass Business School, City of London, 106 Bunhill Row, LONDON EC1Y 8TZ

Hi

Would it be possible for us to book the space for a team meeting Wednesday 06 May between 11.00-12.30.

Also we would like to eat in the café afterwards (the library dining room looked nice but @ £15 head for a two course meal is a bit out of our price range) would it be possible to reserve a large table?

Thanks

Tim

---

Terry Patterson, head of e-learning for Tower Hamlets

Would like to hold their e-learning "ThinkFest" on 1st July, 2-4pm

E-mail [REDACTED], Tel: [REDACTED], Mob: [REDACTED]

Hi, I'm contacting you in the hope that you can support our project which is based on Picasso's Guernica. I teach art at a school in Derbyshire and every year we do a "well dressing" which raises money for charities. This year, because of the tapestry coming to the Whitechapel, we decided to focus on raising funds for war orphans (SOS) and to use the painting as our stimulus. All our year 7 students (approx 100) have been involved in planning the design, and in a few weeks time we will start making the design, using a wooden base filled with clay into which the design is drawn. We then build it up using natural items such as leaves, flowers, shells, stones etc. It takes us a week, and all the school (approx 650) has the opportunity to take part. The finished well then goes on display in the town (Wirksworth) for the weekend of 23 -25 May. Lots of people come to see the well dressings and we collect money for the chosen charity. I am hoping that you might be able to send us some information from your gallery about the tapestry. We had also thought about asking the public to donate shoes (as was done when Guernica came originally to the Whitechapel) which will then go to the charity SOS. You might be interested in seeing the photos of the finished well, and I will send them to you if you wish. The school is Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth, Derbyshire and my name is Jane Griffiths.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope to hear from you soon.

Dear Goshka Macuga,

I would very much like to make a booking(s) for the London Group. We have an ongoing debate about the reason for our existence (the group was constitutionally established in 1913), and the Guernica room would be an ideal atmosphere and space to further the debate. In 1955 the Group exhibited at the Whitechapel gallery.

Not only would we be able to supply "meeting" evidence for the Whitechapel, but all our activities are also recorded in the Tate Gallery archives. There is to be a large Open Submission exhibition, in two parts at the Menier Gallery, later this year.

I look forward to your response,

Regards,

Peter Clossick

[www.thelondongroup.com](http://www.thelondongroup.com)

---

Hi there,

I run a new art blog called Glovebox, which can be found at [www.gloveboxzine.com](http://www.gloveboxzine.com) .

We're currently trying to expand from a blog to an online magazine format, and we're having a few writers' meetings in the next month to discuss this.

I was wondering if the Guernica meeting room would be available any time for this kind of meeting? We'd be really thrilled to use the space.

Please let me know.

Thanks and best wishes,

Ellie Rose

Glovebox

Mob: [REDACTED]

---

Hi Nicky

Robert Walgate, Global Humanitarian Forum (founded by Kofi Annan)

Tel: [REDACTED]. Would like to enquire about holding a discussion/press conference around a paper on the human impact on the climate.

Could you contact him? He is expecting to speak to Emily so explain you're the one dealing with it.

Cheers

Zoe

---

Hello:

I would like to book the central table space of Nature of the Beast for a discussion regarding the role of the 'Everyman' in today's society. The discussion group will be composed of a variety of invited artists, writers, educators, therapists, scientists, solicitors, journalists to begin a dialogue that would be hosted by Lotos Collective.

Many thanks,

Roberto Sanchez-Camus

[www.lotoscollective.org.uk](http://www.lotoscollective.org.uk)

---

Hello

I visited the exhibition today and very much hope to be able to book the inspiring Guernica meeting area to conduct we20 meetings.

we20.org is an initiative to allow anyone anywhere to host their own G20 summit to create action plans for the future.

we20 is a neutral and independent initiative, run by volunteers, and simply hoping to provide a platform for anyone to create change. We launched the we20 website 2 weeks ago and had over 2,000 visitors to our website last week during the G20 Summit.

We are now looking to take we20 forward particularly as Gordon Brown announced that there will be a further G20 Summit later this year. A we20 meeting at the Whitechapel gallery would be a superb and timely opportunity.

You can read a little more about us in some media coverage we received this week: Guardian; BBC; Financial Times.

We have a number of interesting individuals who would be keen to host their own G20 summits at the Whitechapel gallery in the superb summit room you have created. We will be happy to organise this to take place (including filming etc) and very much hope to hear from you so that we can arrange one or more summits to take place in the space.

As a little background to myself, I have lived just up the road from the Whitechapel gallery for over 5 years and have received much inspiration from the gallery.

Best regards

Paul

Paul Massey

Mob: [REDACTED]

---

Nicky

We would like [and I will copy this email directly to the guernica email also] to initiate a series of discussions around the themes explored in the G20 meeting.

These we would organise under our 'Public Reading Rooms' hat. The impetus behind the Reading Rooms is set out below. Last year we produced the main memorial

conference on May 1968 which looked forward as well as backwards - that can be seen at [www.1968andallthat.org](http://www.1968andallthat.org).

We would like to begin the discussions on May 1st 2009 and carry them weekly until the end of the exhibition. The day can be varied to fit in with the gallery but it seems Thursdays might be best. They would last for 2 hours.

Already there are a number of people wishing to speak - on Italian autonomism, Islamophobia , economic crisis and its solution and so on.

Can you pass on this email to Goshka - I'd like to know her thoughts.

best

Andrew Burgin

\*The Public Reading Rooms - Aims and Objectives\*

"/The true, greatly misunderstood collector is always anarchistic, destructive. For this is its dialectics: to combine with loyalty to an object, to individual items, to things sheltered in his care, a stubborn subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable/" -  
Walter Benjamin

1] This will be a project which will archive and document the many lost causes and small movements which litter our collective existence. The material covered will be pamphlets, books, magazines, badges, photographs and posters. Areas archived will include: the situs, underground newspapers, fanzines, the sixties, class war, solidarity, anarchy, left communism, conscientious objection, Maoism in England, rock against racism, Peter Kennard, Clifford Harper, deviant trotskyism, Walter Benjamin, radical feminism, squatting, Frank Zappa, lesbian separatism and the 1970s mens movement and many others.

2] Together with PM Press from the States we will publish short runs of books magazines and posters. Our first publication is the third issue of Icteric - a political/art/anti-art journal whose first two issues were published in the mid 1960s.

3] A cinema club - in alliance with the Rochester Film Salon we will show a series of interesting and unusual films with a discussion element.

4] Regular events, parties and an annual conference in association the with South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall. The first Public Reading Rooms conference was the May 68 event on May 10th 2008.

5] Outreach lectures to schools and colleges - to spread the word on the subjects that concern us.

6] A website which will archive the oral history of these movements - with interviews and film.

The archive will be a legal entity controlled on a trustee basis and will hold open monthly meetings.

The following are sponsors of the PRR:

Nina Power / philosopher

Jan Byrne / fine art ceramicist

Paul Flewers / Cold war warrior

David Wilson / Playwright

Amanda Sebestyen / Explorer

Nick Rochford / Compendium

Alan Woodward / Workers Council Socialist Peter Kennard / Artist Dave Chapple /

Chair National Shop Stewards Network Pete Green / Economist Ian Bone / Class

Warrior Anna Hunt / Artist Craig Liddle / Father Ron Heisler / Polymath Paul Stott /

Class War Nick Heath / Veteran anarchist John Rudge / Credit cruncher Esther Leslie /  
Benjaminite Barry Buitekant / Councillor Bill Hetherington / Conscientious Objector  
Ben Watson / Zappatist Keith Flett / sec London socialist historians Ron Hunt / Icteric  
Andrew Whitehead / Archivist John Plant / Revolutionary History Chris Bertoud /  
Spoon Unit Marg Nicol / Photographer Sara Brown / Psychotherapist Andy Meinke /  
Statistician Malcolm Hopkins / Tumbling Man Leila Kassir / Librarian John McAllister  
/ Accountant

---

Dear Whitechapel,

I was at the opening of the gallery yesterday and was excited to see that Goshka Macuga is inviting groups to use her exhibition space for meetings and discussions. I am a leader of an arts group based at Christ Church Spitalfields, and we would love to take up this opportunity. Is the room available in the evenings? If so, is there a vacancy on the evening of Tuesday April 14th?

To give you a bit of the idea about the group - we're called Forum - we are one of 5 'missional communities' based at Christ Church Spitalfields. This means that most of our members are part of the church congregation, but we meet outside the church (often at Rich Mix). We go to exhibitions and films a lot, and hold discussions based around themes of art and contemporary culture. In the year we've been running, topics have included the body in relation to art and faith, the Olympic legacy, and Britishness in relation to architecture.

We'd be very happy to send photos from a meeting for the Whitechapel archive.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Holly Slingsby

---

Hello,

I just attended the roundtable talk with Goshka & Andrew from the Stop the War Coalition - in the past I helped with the collection of artists who featured in the Pax Britannica publication that Andrew mentioned following the last Gulf War protest. I have also exhibited work with Goshka Macuga. (Magazin 4 'Go-Between' Palace Thurn Und Taxis, Bregenz, Austria - 2005) I had a chat with Goshka and following her suggestion and your invitation I would like to book the room for 'The Free School'. This magazine was published a few weeks ago and asked for art & text contributions that related to the recent attacks in Gaza, the occupation of Palestine, media bias, the corporate sponsorship of art, Bloomberg, art as a speculative commodity, art & protest, and other related subjects.

It featured art work contributions and text by:

Andrew Cooper, Dean Kenning, Arnaud Desjardin, Youngmi Kim, John Cussans, Lado Daraxvelidze, Rachel House, Martin Sexton, Corinna Till, Eddie Farrell, Emma Hart, Michael Wedgewood, Antonio Cabrera, Sam Tomson, Lisa Craddock, Oreet Ashery, Larissa Sansour, Lee Holden, Melanie Gilligan, Huw Lemmey, Guy Allott, Enda Deburarca, Lilly Barson, Jonathan Trayner, Joanna Choukier

It is hoped that all those who contributed will attend and a record in notes and film will be made for the Whitechapel archive.

I think and Goshka agreed - that this would be an excellent follow on meeting & discussion from today's meeting.

I or Dean Kenning would chair the discussion. It is hoped that we be able to also ask Sophie Feinnes who is directing Slavoj Zizek's new film on ideology to help document the event. I will talk with her later today.

Please advise of a date as soon as possible.

With warm regards

Martin Sexton

a r t w a r s project space

23-25 Redchurch Street

London E2 7DJ

Tel; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@artwars.co.uk

---

Dear Goshka,

If as reported in the londonpaper today, you are inviting groups to come and hold meetings in the room with Guernica, then I would love to be considered. It is my favourite painting and I have never had a chance to be in its presence. Other trainee doctors are also interested in coming to have a meeting there. If it's true, please could you let me know how you are choosing groups and what information you would like?

Thanks,

Krishna

---

## Appendix XIV

### Email from Nicola Sim to Goshka Macuga

-----Original Message-----

From: guernica

Sent: 19 April 2009 19:53

To: Goshka Macuga

Cc: Cassandra Needham; Nayia Yiakoumaki; Gary Haines

Subject: Table bookings

Dear Goshka

This is Nicky emailing from the Guernica address. How are you? I know you are extremely busy with Venice but I wanted to get in touch to update you on table bookings in The Nature of the Beast.

The response has been quite amazing and requests are coming through every day. We held the first public meeting at the table on Friday - led by professors, lecturers and students from the Cass Business School.

They were so 'energised' by the experience that they are running another larger meeting at the table in the near future. Other people have also requested multiple bookings - Andrew Burgin in particular would like to run a meeting every week up until the end of the exhibition and he would like to hear your feedback on his suggestion if possible (his email is pasted near the bottom of the document attached).

Cassie and I are in conversation with Gary and Nayia about developing a process for archiving the material we receive. Cassie and I have also talked about posting images, minutes and recordings on an 'archive' tab to the side of the exhibition page on the commission. If you would like to feed into any of these discussions please let me know.

When the meetings are in progress it would seem appropriate to have a sign inside/outside the space indicating the name of the group (if

applicable) and the times reserved - do you agree? We could put a sign on the table itself? For the archive, is there any specific information that you would us like to draw from bookers? E.g. names of attendees, proposals for meeting content, background information on organisations? Most give this information anyway but do let me know if there is anything in particular you would like us to capture.

You mentioned that you were interested in attending the 'Hope' Salons, the first of which will be led by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on 7 May.

Would you like me to reserve you a comp ticket?

[http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/shop/product/category\\_id/22/product\\_id/40](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/shop/product/category_id/22/product_id/40)

We have two meetings booked at the table next week starting from 5pm on Thursday. I can send you a weekly update on bookings and correspondence?

Many thanks and all best wishes

Nicky Sim

Public Events Assistant

## Appendix XV

### Summary of roundtable meetings & visitor inquiries

Information kindly provided by the Education Department, Whitechapel Gallery.

#### 17 April

Cass Business School

2:30-4:30pm/20 attendees

Clive Holtham brought his MBA The Business Mystery Course to discuss Guernica, the Geneva Conference and creative problem solving through art.

#### 23 April

Glovebox

5-6pm/6 attendees

Glovebox (an art blog) held a planning meeting about how to move their blog to an online magazine format. [www.gloveboxzine.com](http://www.gloveboxzine.com)

#### 23 April

G20 Meltdown

6:30-7:30pm/6 attendees

A reconvening of various groups involved in the G20 Meltdown Meeting organised by Simon Wells.

#### 24 April

Richard Naylor

12-12:15 pm/5 attendees

Richard Naylor read a statement he wrote, *The artefactual aftermath of wars' and what can we do with it?* and led brief discussion, after which he and one attendee agreed to ask Whitechapel gallery to collect one million pounds for donations to the relatives of genocide victims.

**30 April**

University of Hertfordshire

2pm-6pm/28 attendees

A group of interior & special design students met with their lecturer, Heidi Saarinen, to discuss and work on performance space-based short projects.

**6 May**

Public Health Department, NHS Tower Hamlets

11am-12pm/10 attendees

A team meeting was held.

**13 May**

University of East London, First year students

11am-12:30pm/20 attendees

Si Safford and Faisal Abdu'allah brought their first year seminar class based upon the ideas of confessions, for which they all wore matching t-shirts with an X.

**14 May**

London College of Communication

11:30am-12:30pm/19 attendees

Cary Young held an MA photography seminar in which students gave presentations on current art exhibitions, including *The Nature of the Beast*.

**21 May**

Prospect Magazine Reading Group

7:30-8:30pm/16 attendees

A reading group discussed the book *Guernica: The Biography of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Icon* by Gijs van Hensbergen.

**27 May**

Minority Rights Group International

1-2pm/34 attendees

Mark Lattimer gave a lecture titled *From Guernica to Gaza: Picasso, the Geneva Conventions and death from the air*, for the public and members of MNGR, a non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the UN, working to promote the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide. [www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org)

### **29 May**

Cass Business School

11am-2pm/20 attendees

Clive Holtham brought another class (he met with a class previously in this space on 17 April), from his MBA The Business Mystery Course, to discuss Guernica, the Geneva Conference, and creative problem solving through art.

### **2 June**

Welling School

12pm-1pm/12 attendees

Becky Heaton brought her class of year 10 students for a fine arts discussion.

### **3 June**

Uncharted Stories

2:30-5:30 pm/13 attendees

A curatorial group of research students from University of the Arts London discussed the planning of a future exhibition.

### **4 June**

Welling School

5-6pm/8 attendees

A group of teachers held a department meeting.

### **5 June**

Royal Society of Arts

12:30pm-2:30pm/4 attendees

Curator Emma Ridgway of the Arts & Ecology Centre held an informal salon event in the form of a discussion with artist Gustav Metzger to create a text addressing issues of environmental change, in honour of UN World Environment Day (5<sup>th</sup> June).

**10 June**

British Interactive Media Association

1-4pm/20 attendees

BIMA will hold a planning meeting for upcoming festival.

**11 June**

The Survivor's Fund

5:50-6:50 pm/40 attendees

The Survivor's Fund will coordinate readings aloud of testimonies from Ruandan survivors (16 readers will be seated at the table and the rest will stand around the table listening to the testimonies).

**11 June**

Node.London

7-9 pm/20 attendees

A loose group of media artists will hold a monthly meetings to develop plans for their next Festival in March 2010 (Season of Media Arts March 2010).

**12 June**

London Cultural Strategies Group

9:30-12:30pm/36 attendees

The Mayor's Office London Cultural Strategies Group will hold a public meeting, chaired by Iwona Blazwick.

**12 June**

The Cass Business School

3-5:30pm/23 attendees

Clive Holtham will hold an MBA seminar for the third time in the space.

**18 June**

English/Urdu Class

6-8:50pm/12 attendees

Karen Mizra, in collaboration with Artangel, will hold an Urdu/English language class in which native speakers of each language will learn from each other.

**19 June**

Godolphin & Latymer Schools

4-5pm/25 attendees

Spanish language students will hold a class.

**25 June**

Tower-Hamlets Schools of Columbia Primary

1-3pm/16 attendees

Administrators will hold a school council meeting.

**26 June**

Prior Weston Primary School

Time, attendance, and theme to be confirmed.

**1 July**

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

2-4pm, attendance and theme to be confirmed.

**4 July**

International Brigades Memorial Trust,

10-3pm

Celebration of Guernica at the Whitechapel, speeches.

### **8,9, 10 July**

We20

Time and attendance tbc

We20, a neutral and independent initiative run by volunteers who hope to provide a platform for anyone to create change, will hold summits at the gallery over the 3 days corresponding to the G8 Summit in Rome. [We20.org](http://We20.org)

### **23 July**

Uncharted Stories

2-5 pm/14 attendees

A curatorial group of research students from University of the Arts London will hold a second meeting in the space to discuss the planning of a future exhibition.

### **30 July**

*Not in Our Name* Film and Discussion

7-8:50pm/30 attendees

Independent filmmaker Hazuan Hashim would like to screen *Not in Our Name* featuring Tony Benn, about how a number of different artists have responded to war. The screening will be followed by a discussion with the directors and artists, Bob & Roberta Smith and May Ayres.

### **23 July**

Uncharted Stories

2-5 pm/14 attendees

A curatorial group of research students from University of the Arts London will hold a second meeting in the space to discuss the planning of a future exhibition.

### **30 July**

*Not in Our Name* Film and Discussion

7-8:50pm/30 attendees

Independent filmmaker Hazuan Hashim would like to screen *Not in Our Name* featuring Tony Benn, about how a number of different artists have responded to war. The

screening will be followed by a discussion with the directors and artists, Bob & Roberta Smith and May Ayres.

### **27 August**

Talkaokie

6:00pm to 8:50pm/ 15 attendees expected

The People Speak will host one of their "live mobile talk-show" Talkaokie events next to the Guernica Table.

<http://thepeps.net/>

<http://talkaokie.com/>

### **30 August**

VHS Video Basement

4.00pm - 5.50pm/ 10 attendees expected

A small scale screening and discussion is to be held by the VHS Video Basement (A free cinema in Soho).

[www.vhsvideobasement.org](http://www.vhsvideobasement.org)

### **10 September**

School of Oriental and African Studies

1-3pm/20 attendees

Students and teachers from the 'International Relations of the Modern World' course will convene under the title and purpose of "Debating the Iraq war".

Lecturer Chris Boyle will lead a discussion on the rationale for the Iraq war, referencing The Nature of the Beast as a learning tool for understanding the situation.

[www.soas.ac.uk](http://www.soas.ac.uk)

### **12 September**

Exhibiting Guernica 1939-2009: Contexts and Issues

11am-4pm/40 people at a time, ongoing throughout the day

Drawing upon personal memories, contributions from local historians and expert knowledge of Picasso's relationship with party politics, this symposium unpacks the

social, political and artistic significance of *Guernica's* display in the East End as well as its lasting legacy for the community today. Participants include writers and historians Tom Buchanan, Valentine Cunningham, Mike Gonzalez, Lynda Morris, Paul Preston, David Rosenberg and Nayia Yiakoumaki. Organised and chaired by Michael Rosen, writer and broadcaster, whose late father Professor Harold Rosen visited the exhibition.

### **16 September**

Toastmasters International

2-5pm/20 attendees

Teresa Dukes will hold a workshop for her clients on the theme of "Turning Negative Experiences into Positive Outcomes".

### **17 October**

Lotos Collective

Time and attendance tbc

The Lotos Collective would like to host a discussion regarding the role of the 'Everyman' in today's society. The discussion group will be composed of a variety of invited artists, writers, educators, therapists, scientists, solicitors, and journalists.

### **20 or 21 November**

The Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW)

1-3pm/20 attendees

MAW is organising an exhibition of quilts and arpilleras in London during November, entitled 'The human cost of war', at the Imperial War Museum on Remembrance Sunday (8 November) and at the St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace between 17 and 20 November. They would like to hold a discussion meeting near the tapestry, chaired by Roberta Bacic, the curator of the exhibition and an expert in quilts and arpilleras.

### **26 November**

TBC London Committee Meeting 10-12pm, Jane Stancliffe

**11 and 18 February 2010**

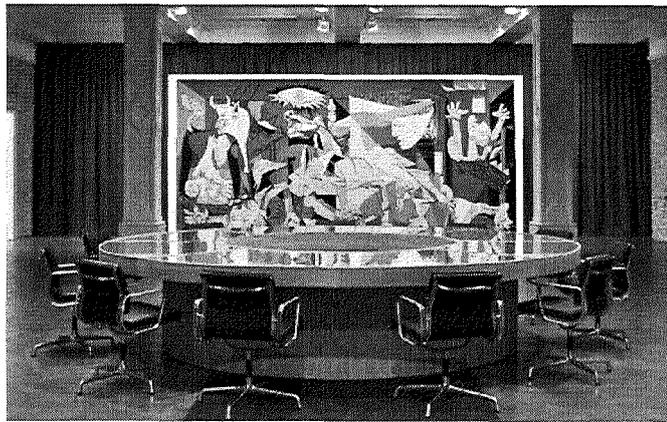
Goldsmiths College

4-6 pm/ Attendees and meeting theme TBC

## Appendix XVI

### Information on the Symposium on *Guernica*, adapted from the Whitechapel Gallery website.

Gallery Symposium: Exhibiting Guernica 1939–2009: Contexts and Issues



Gallery 2

11am-1pm Morning session

2pm-4pm Afternoon session

4pm-5.30pm East End walk

Free

Seats will be allocated on a first come, first serve basis for each session.

Picasso's *Guernica* was first shown at the Whitechapel Gallery under the auspices of the Stepney Trades Council. Drawing on personal memories, contributions from local historians and expert knowledge of Picasso's relationship with party politics, this symposium unpacks the social, political and artistic significance of *Guernica*'s display in the East End as well as its lasting legacy for the community today.

Participants include historians and writers Tom Buchanan, Valentine Cunningham, Mike Gonzalez, Lynda Morris Paul Preston and Nayia Yiakoumaki. Organised and chaired by Michael Rosen, writer and broadcaster, whose late father Professor Harold Rosen visited the exhibition.

This event will be followed by Anti-Fascist Footprints: a free walk through the 1930s East End from Gardiners Corner to Cable Street with David Rosenberg, teacher, writer, and coordinator of the Islington local2global educational project. Through tracing the people and places of the period, this walk tells the story of how East Enders organised to combat fascism locally and in Spain.

No booking is required. If you wish to attend this event and you have special access requirements please inform the Information Desk in advance on +44 (0)207 522 7888.

## Appendix XVII

### Programme of the Symposium on *Guernica* and Michael Rosen's introductory speech, September 2009

Programme of Gallery Symposium, Saturday 12 September 2009.

11-11.10am Doors open. First come, first seated.

11.10-11.30am **Michael Rosen** (Chair): Introduction.

11.30-12.00 **Paul Preston**, leading specialist on the Spanish Civil War, discusses the bombing of Guernica, politics and context.

12.00-12.30pm **Mike Gonzalez**, writer, active anti-war campaigner and Emeritus Professor of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University, discusses Picasso's response to the bombing of Guernica.

12.30-12.50pm **Nayia Yiakoumaki**, Archive Curator, Whitechapel Gallery, presents a paper on Guernica and the Whitechapel.

12.50-1pm **Michael Rosen** interviews **Alice Hitchin**, who visited the original exhibition of Guernica at Whitechapel Gallery.

1-2pm Break

2-2.05pm **Michael Rosen**: Afternoon Introduction

2.05-2.30pm Curator and writer **Lynda Morris** on Picasso, Spain and political correspondence.

2.30-3pm Poetry readings with **Valentine Cunningham**, Professor of English Language and Literature, Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford, **Mike Gonzalez** and **Michael Rosen**.

3-3.30pm **Tom Buchanan**, Reader in Modern History at the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education and Fellow of Kellogg College, on Guernica and British Politics during the Civil War.

3.30-4pm Spanish Civil War Veteran **Sam Lesser**, Chairman, the International Brigade Memorial Trust, speaks on the local political situation surrounding the original exhibition of Guernica.

4pm-5.30pm East End walk led by **David Rosenberg**. See above for details.

## Introduction by Michael Rosen

This symposium came about because of connections I have made between the personal, cultural, artistic and political. My parents - my father in particular - talked throughout my childhood and way beyond of places, people and times in such a way as they became in their own way, mythic. So the Whitechapel Gallery and the library that used to be alongside it were described as his informal universities - places that he, coming from a poverty-stricken home, could come, with no charge, and discover literature and art beyond the world of his own family. The East End itself was a time and place my parents spoke of with a mixture of affection, nostalgia, amazement and pride. Compared to my suburban life with them, it seemed to teem with people, excitement and conflict. I would discover that this was because a migrant Jewish community had established itself in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. Looking at it through their eyes and their talk, it spoke in several languages and dialects: Yiddish, Russian and Polish mostly, laced with Cockney English; it was full of stories and jokes; special foods; and it told of a fierce struggle (through rent strikes) for better housing, better standard of living, and the right not to be assaulted and insulted by antisemites and fascists. For them, it also talked of things far away: the rise of Nazism in Germany and the Spanish Civil War. I know this is hard to explain, but my parents were at great pains to explain that this list I've just assembled is in itself misleading. These weren't separate or unconnected features or events. They were all, each one of them about how life was lived. It was living personally, culturally and politically all at once.

In many ways, my parents tried to integrate the first twenty years of their lives (roughly 1920-40) with the rest, but in reality it was all another country. If ever, I or they came to look for it, it had gone. My father wrote about it cleverly and comically (as have others - Bernard Kops, Arnold Wesker, Emmanuel Litvinoff and many more). His book - 'Are You Still Circumcised?', which he wrote quite late on in his life. Even later - even as he tried to recover from a big operation at the very end of his life, I happened to ask him if he had been to see the showing of 'Guernica' at the Whitechapel. He was certain he had. He remembered it well. He remembered walking down the stairs from the library (now

in the same building) with his great friend Moishe Kaufman to see it. There were pictures showing how Picasso painted the picture, he added.

So, that's how I became drawn into the story of 'Guernica' being exhibited at the Whitechapel. My mind went off in several directions at once: there's the artistic question of Picasso himself. Isn't there an irony that he was a hero to the Communist movement but resolutely resisted producing socialist realist art? There's the matter of the role of art galleries in relation to their local communities. To what extent should they be 'serving' that community, or look further afield? And there was the matter of the specific politics that led to 'Guernica' arriving in the East End. It was the local Trades Council - that loose federation of local trade union delegates - that brought it into the Gallery. It was a political act led by the representatives of local working people, many of whom were intensely involved in the political activity I mentioned earlier. Does this make the exhibiting of 'Guernica' a unique politico-cultural event, never to be repeated? Or are their (sic) pointers there for the future?

The Gallery has very kindly made time, space and facilities for some of these questions and many others to be aired. This is a symposium - not a series of lectures - which means that it is about sharing ideas, thoughts and memories. There will be talks but it is our intention that there should be plenty of time for contributions from visitors. I hope that we can all come away from the day with a sense of what it meant to exhibit 'Guernica' at the Whitechapel 70 years ago.

Michael Rosen

## Appendix XVIII

### Michael Rosen and Nayia Yiakoumaki, early correspondence

(In reverse chronological order)

From: michael rosen [REDACTED]

Sent: 17 October 2008 14:36

To: Nayia Yiakoumaki; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: from the Whitechapel

Hello Nayia

Bad news! We heard today that Radio 3 do not want to commission the programme.

What can I say? We had worked out many aspects of the programme, potential interviewees etc, but it's not to be.

As it happens, there's one aspect of the story that interests me enough to want to pursue it: that is, exactly how was it that the Stepney Trades Council managed to get 'Guernica' to the Whitechapel? Was there a link with Picasso's friend Penrose? And following from that little mystery, is the irony in that the Communist Party at this time had decided that art should be 'socialist realist' but of course Picasso's work does not in any way fall into this category! How was this particular gap in artistic theory bridged by the Party's art experts? Covert Communist, Anthony Blunt, later to become the guardian of the Queen's paintings, attacked 'Guernica' at the time.

I'm beginning to feel that finding out some of these things is one way in which I can commemorate something of my father's life.

very best

Michael

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Subject: RE: from the Whitechapel

Date: Fri, 5 Sep 2008 11:12:40 +0100

From: NayiaYiakoumaki

To: Michael Rosen

Dear Michael

Thank you for your prompt reply, it is a pleasure to have this exchange with you. The information I take from our archive indicates that the exhibition opened in the Burlington Gallery and then came to the Whitechapel in December 1938 until January 1939. The material we have here in the Gallery reflect some of the background information you kindly share in your email on organising Guernica's display here at the Whitechapel but where our archive is weak is the actual documentation of the event and people's testimonies (we have some photographs showing Clement Attlee speaking from Penrose's papers but not other general installation shots).

I can't remember if I have mentioned previously that apart from my professional interest as archive curator at the Whitechapel, I have a strong research interest in this subject as my PhD thesis case study was looking at all the Picasso related material in the Whitechapel Archive. I am sure there will be opportunities to exchange more information in the near future.

I also wanted to mention that we will be running a parallel research here on the same era and subject because the artist who will inaugurate one of our new spaces is Goshka Macuga (nominated for this year's Turner Prize). She has proposed presenting the tapestry version of Guernica which was commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in the 1950s and has been hanging at the United Nations building in New York. This has not been officially announced yet to press. Her project requires a lot of historical research so we will be organising a small team to pursue this and will be covering the 1938-39 Guernica's presentation.

I wish you good luck with the proposal to Radio 3 it will surely make a fascinating programme.

Best wishes

Nayia

Nayia Yiakoumaki

Archive Curator

Whitechapel

Tel: +44 (0)20 7522 7879

Fax: +44 (0)20 7522 1685

Email: [NayiaYiakoumaki@whitechapel.org](mailto:NayiaYiakoumaki@whitechapel.org)

Web: [www.whitechapel.org](http://www.whitechapel.org)

In the office Wednesday - Friday

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From: michael rosen [REDACTED]

Sent: 04 September 2008 19:41

To: Nayia Yiakoumaki

Subject: RE: from the Whitechapel

Hello Nayia

Thanks so much for this letter. Our present position on the 'offer' for Radio 3 is as follows: we submitted a paragraph for the first round. This was accepted which means that we had to submit a page and a half or so as a complete offer. This we have done. We now wait till mid-October to see if it is accepted. If we succeed, the very next day we will be rushing round to the people I know who are still alive who may have been there - friends of my parents. As it happens, we know for certain that Jack Jones, ex General Sec of the TGWU was there, because he has written about it. (It's online). Several other likely folk turn out not to have been there, eg Sam Russell, Daily Worker correspondent, because he was still in Spain. It turns out that the painting came first in Sept 1938 to, I think from memory, the Burlington Gallery in the West End and didn't get to the

Whitechapel till the first days of 1939. Atlee, later to be Prime Minister, who was then MP for Bethnal Green, gave a talk. Roland Penrose, Picasso's friend and biographer was instrumental in bringing it to England but it was the initiative of the largely Communist Trades Council that brought it to the Whitechapel. Penrose's son is still alive....I'm talking on and on...

Thank you so much for your kind offer. Can we hang fire on that just for the moment, until we find out if we're successful with our proposal.

very best

Michael

Subject: from the Whitechapel

Date: Thu, 4 Sep 2008 12:17:34 +0100

From: NayiaYiakoumaki@whitechapel.org

To: michael@michaelrosen.co.uk

Dear Michael

I am Nayia Yiakoumaki, the archive curator at the Whitechapel. We spoke a couple of times during the summer about the Guernica exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1938-39. First of all I wanted to express my deepest condolences for your father's death; you mentioned to me that he was very ill and I heard the sad news on the radio in August.

I do not want to disturb you at such a difficult time but I wanted to ask you if in the future you would be interested to discussing with me your research around the Guernica exhibition and your father's memories of the opening event if he had visited. I would also like to take the opportunity to invite you to the Whitechapel Gallery so you can see what material we have on this subject in our own archive.

With kind regards

Nayia Yiakoumaki

Archive Curator

## Appendix XIX

### Proposal by Eleanor Nairne for a television documentary

#### GUERNICA'S RETURN

A proposal for a single television documentary by Eleanor Nairne.

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#### THE STORY

In 1938, Picasso's *Guernica* was exhibited at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London's East End. It was an impassioned response to the Luftwaffe bombing of the historic heart of the Basque country; the showing was intended to rouse recruits for the International Brigade, and to rid the British of their passivity towards Franco's illegitimate Nationalists.

Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour opposition, spoke at the opening of imminent dangers that would 'make every boy into the image of Hitler'. Since Mosely's Black Shirts had battled residents on the streets in October 1936, the area had felt cast in the shadow of the fascist threat. This was no time for inertia. More than 15,000 visitors saw *Guernica* in its first week alone. The price of entry was a pair of boots fit to be sent to the Spanish Front, and so serried lines of working men's shoes gathered at the painting's base.

In 1939, *Guernica* began its American tour, before settling in the Museum of Modern Art. In an intensifying Cold War climate, Picasso began to be seen as a real, 'red' threat. The FBI's dossier (suspect number 100-337396) included documents speculating on whether the famous *Dove of Peace* was in fact a pigeon of the Russian Trumpeter breed. So when in 1952 Brian Robertson, then Director of the Whitechapel, hoped to restage a Picasso

exhibition he was informed unequivocally (by those working on behalf of the US government) that this would not be allowed.

Across the Atlantic *Guernica* was appreciated by a tiny elite of luminaries. Among them was Nelson Rockefeller, who in 1956 commissioned Picasso to have an exact tapestry reproduction made. The piece was executed on the same grand scale (22 foot by 10 foot), in muted browns and taupes, and hung in his upstate Albany mansion, for the admiration of guests. In 1985, his widow, Happy Rockefeller, placed the tapestry on loan to the United Nations Security Council, where it would hang as a potent decrrial of war.

By this point, *Guernica* was a formidable political icon. While the Johnson administration had tried to claim that the Vietnam war was about avoiding past errors of appeasement, US anti-war protesters continued to condemn intervention as 'Spain not Munich'. In 1967, 400 artists petitioned Picasso to withdraw *Guernica* from MoMA. In 1974, the My Lai massacre prompted the guerilla artist, Tony Shafrazi, to spray 'Kill Lies All' across the canvas.

But *Guernica's* emotive powers were best expressed in 2003: when Colin Powell, John Negroponte and Hans Blix held press conferences at the UN regarding American intervention in Iraq, a blue shroud was ignonimously hung over the tapestry. The ensuing public outcry proved that even thirty years after his death Picasso's resonant protest was still difficult to mute.

In spring 2009, *Guernica's* inexorcisable spirit will return to the Whitechapel's galleries. As part of the grand re-opening, Turner Prize-nominated artist, Goshka Macuga, will be undertaking the inaugural commission. Her dynamic work, which deconstructs historical narratives, by permeating the boundaries between archivist and artist, intends to use the Rockefeller tapestry as the centerpiece to her show.

## THE DOCUMENTARY

It is a remarkable and largely untold story, with all the ingredients for a brilliant television documentary: Picasso, propaganda, politics, power. It is a narrative that spans a century of conflicts, from the Spanish Civil War and the dawn of World War Two, to the Cold War, the Vietnam War, Spain's transition to democracy and the Iraq War. These are combative and arresting visuals.

The cyclical framework of opening and closing with the Whitechapel will enable the documentary to examine, in the words of Kofi Annan, how 'the world has changed a great deal since Picasso painted that first political masterpiece'. In exploring *Guernica*, you explore contemporary history.

This sort of film-essay would lend itself to a dramatic musical score. It would also be strong enough to stand alone without a dated voice-over narration. Instead, a more contemporary combination of visuals and talking heads.

This would put the documentary in direct contrast to Simon Schama's *Power of Art*, which was a drama-documentary authored by a populist art historian, severely lacking in intelligent commentaries. This story picks up where Schama's lets off – the completion of the painting.

## SOURCES

I have tracked down footage of the original Whitechapel opening in 1938, which is not kept by either the BFI or the BBC. This would be complemented by rarely-shown material like Alain Resnais' film from 1956 of Picasso painting on a translucent canvas. There are also wonderful stills, such as Dora Maar's photographs of *Guernica* in its varying stages of completion.

Within the Whitechapel there is access to unused archival material, as well as the resources of Nayia Yiakoumaki, the archivist [sic], who is currently writing her PHD thesis on the 1938-9 *Guernica* exhibition. The Director, Iwona Blazwick, would make for an important contributor, as would Goshka herself, who could discuss her aesthetic and conceptual designs for the exhibition.

I have already made contact with the leading academics in the field. These include Gijs van Hensbergen, author of *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth Century Icon*; John Richardson, peer and biographer of Picasso; Elizabeth Cowling, a Picasso expert from Edinburgh University; and Professor Christopher Green of the Courtauld Institute.

I am hoping to meet with Kofi Annan later this month, who would make for an indispensable contributor given his political status, knowledge of the tapestry, and connections to the art world.

The television and radio presenter Michael Rosen, whose father attended the Whitechapel opening in 1938, has outlined a programme for BBC Radio 4 relating to the original *Guernica* exhibition. If we can join forces, he will prove a great contact for local interviewees. Rosen has chosen radio because this is the medium with which he is most comfortable, but *Guernica* is a subject that demands televisual exploration. His project is therefore complementary to mine, not competitive.

The programme would ideally be released in Spring 2009 to coincide with the reopening of the gallery. This would enable us to collaborate with Erica Bolton, of Bolton & Quinn, who will be undertaking the PR for this event. That said, the show will run for a year so there is some flexibility with timing.

## Appendix XX

### Email correspondence between Cassandra Needham, Exhibitions Organiser, and Marlene Sidaway, Secretary, International Brigade Memorial Trust

(In reverse chronological order).

From: Marlene Sidaway [REDACTED]  
Sent: 12 February 2009 17:12  
To: Cassandra Needham  
Subject: RE: Guernica Research

Dear Cassandra,

I can't remember if I sent you our Newsletter at the end of January? Please let me know, and if not, I'll put one in the post for you.

As you know, Jim put an appeal in the "Can You Help" column, and I hope you have received some positive responses by now.

One of our members expressed the hope that when the newly refurbished gallery is opened you might like to invite some of our surviving Brigaders, or relatives who possibly had ancestors living in the East End of London at the time of the Guernica Exhibition. Would this be possible?

All good wishes,

Marlene.

Marlene Sidaway, Secretary, I.B.M.T.

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**December 2009**

On Thu 2:00 PM , "Cassandra Needham" cassandraneedham@whitechapel.org sent:

Dear Marlene, Dear Jim

Thank you for your email and looking into it for me. Any information about the Guernica's presentation at the Whitechapel Gallery would be very much appreciated. DO let me know if you would like further information or chat on the phone.

Wishing you both a very good Christmas

Cassandra

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From: Marlene Sidaway [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 December 2008 17:43

To: Cassandra Needham

Cc: Jim Jump [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Guernica Research

Dear Cassandra,

Thank you for your email, I'm sorry if I have taken a long time to answer it - I have been given a new email address as "secretary" of the I.B.M.T. and I've been unable to access it until now.

I have forwarded your email to Jim Jump, our Newsletter editor, because I have a feeling we have done a feature about Guernica and the Whitechapel Gallery before - and if I'm mistaken, then Jim could put in a piece for the next edition in January, I'm sure

some of our members would have some record of it., and I will look into the books and papers I have here.

I checked the index in Jack Jones' book and there is no mention of the painting being exhibited at the Gallery, but he may have a photo in his private collection if he was there. If you would still like a copy of "Union Man" I have them here - £10.00 plus £2.50 P&P.

All good wishes,

Marlene.

Marlene Sidaway, Secretary, I.B.M.T.

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**December 2009**

**On Tue 5:24 PM , "Cassandra Needham" [cassandraneedham@whitechapel.org](mailto:cassandraneedham@whitechapel.org) sent:**

Dear Marlene,

I hope this email finds you well. I work at the Whitechapel Gallery which reopens next spring with our newly expanded galleries. As part of our opening displays, I am researching a significant moment of the Whitechapel Gallery's history – the presentation of Pablo Picasso's seminal work Guernica in 1939.

The painting Guernica is Picasso's impassioned response to the Luftwaffe bombing of the Basque country, and it was exhibited in London with the intention of raising money for and consciousness about the Spanish Civil War. It was the only time this great masterpiece has been shown in Britain and the exhibition received more than 15,000 visitors in the first week alone.

The exhibition was organised by The East London Aid Spain committee of the Stepney Trades Council, which was a local Communist Party front organisation whose agenda

was to raise awareness of and funds for the war in Spain. The exhibition was opened by Clement Attlee, local MP and the leader of the Labour Party, flanked by the International Brigade. We believe that Jack Jones from the TGWU might also have been there and it has been reported that payment for entry to the gallery was a pair of boots to be sent to the front.

I had a couple of questions I wanted to ask you as part of my research:

- 1) I'm interested in the Jack Jones biography to see if he talks about the Whichapel exhibition and if he does we would like to purchase it. Do you know if I can obtain a copy from a library?
  
- 2) Do you have any references to the exhibition of Guernica in your archives? Unfortunately there is not much information in ours and we are very keen to learn more about it?

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you

Best wishes

Cassandra

Cassandra Needham  
Exhibitions Organiser  
Whitechapel Gallery

## Appendix XXI

### Letter from Mike Jones to Cassandra Needham

Jack Jones  
President  
International Brigade Memorial Trust  
■ Ruskin Park House  
Champion Hill  
London  
■ ■

Cassandra Needham  
Exhibitions Organiser  
Whitechapel Gallery  
80-82 Whitechapel High Street  
London  
E1 7QX

Dear Cassandra Needham,

I'm writing on behalf of my father (above) who is one of the last of the International Brigadiers and from myself as a committee member of the above trust. In our recent newsletter you appeal for any information regarding the Guernica exhibition held at the Whitechapel in early 1939.

I'm sure you are cognisant with the book 'Guernica' by Gijs van Hensbergen, published 2004 by Bloomsbury. At the end of chapter 3 on page 94 there is a photo of the opening of the exhibition with Major Clement Attlee standing in front of the painting and the related pages describe well how the exhibition was used to raise awareness of the plight of the Spanish people, the role of International Brigades is opposing fascism, despite the appeasement policies of the British government, and indeed to raise material assistance for the Republican Army still fighting – boots in fact!

You will notice on the table in front of the speakers some posters, one of which has a picture. This is a photograph of the commander of the No. 1 Company of the British Battalion of

the 15<sup>th</sup> International Brigade – the ‘Major Attlee Company’ (named in his honour as leader of the Labour Party and an opposor of the appeasement of fascism) – whose name was Paddy O’Davie, an Irishman with an extraordinary history previous to, and subsequent to, his phenomenal role in fighting Franco’s fascist invasion, (My father was the Liaison officer, or Commissar, of this company at the Battle of Ebro, the last major battle of the war where he was badly wounded).

His photo is there obviously because Attlee is speaking of the great efforts, and sacrifices of the volunteers who went to Spain, in large part ordinary working men, who felt they had no other course but to offer their lives to help the democratically elected Spanish government fight a brutal invasion backed by Hitler and Mussolini. If the British government has opposed fascism when Franco invaded Spain the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War could have been prevented, as it was they assisted Franco and thus conspired in the conflagration that subsequently swept through Europe and beyond.

The International Brigade Memorial Trust exists not just to commemorate those volunteers, but to make as many people as possible, especially young people aware of the causes of the Spanish War and therefore the real causes of the Second World War – ignorance of which will allow the growth of dictatorial politics again.

The forthcoming exhibition of the tapestry of Guernica is a wonderful moment, not just to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original exhibition, but to reveal to a new and very likely largely ignorant public the true meaning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most significant work of art, created by that century’s most famous artist at the height of his powers in a desperate attempt to draw people’s attention to the plight of his homeland.

The Memorial Trust will I’m sure help in every possible way to provide information to ensure the forthcoming exhibition is a great success, so please don’t hesitate to contact us either through our secretary, Marlene Sidaway, or the editor of the Newsletter, Jim Jump, or myself, as there exists a extraordinary amount of material on the period which could provide the most meaningful resource and backdrop and opportunity for involvement and debate to really stimulate the Whitechapel’s reopening.

Yours Sincerely

Mick Jones

## Appendix XXII

### Email from Marshall Mateer to Cassandra Needham

**From:** Marshall Mateer [mailto: [REDACTED]]

**Sent:** 27 January 2009 23:13

**To:** Cassandra Needham

**Subject:** Guernica research

Dear Cassandra Needham

I read your request for help in researching Guernica in the latest International Brigades magazine - I am an IBMT member.

One small thing if you are not already aware is that Marx Museum which houses the Int' Brigades archive also has the complete collection of 'The Daily Worker' and it may be there's an article on the original Whitechapel exhibition there. Recently I went through the papers for reports of the bombing itself and that was very helpful as there were a number of articles, reports and adverts for help - and not the usual ones that are repeated in most of the books. BTW, though I'm sure you like to do these things yourself, if you want a volunteer to go and do a search just ask...any excuse!

You can see one of the article's I photographed on my webpage on Guernica at <http://www.shapesoftime.net/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=12397> (my website is a sort of wiki-blog, adding information, as I find it...rather than a finished project or publication). There is also some stuff on the Belfast peace wall mural version of Guernica on the same page.

Marx Museum is <http://www.marx-memorial-library.org/> and the curator is Professor John Callow.

I have also done a page on the IB memorial on the South Bank by Ian Walters which takes on the art/social/political themes and may be of interest.

<http://www.shapesoftime.net/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=11254>

I work for the National Education Network - the gov supported broadband network that connects up all the schools in the UK. (see [www.nen.gov.uk](http://www.nen.gov.uk)) and would be very interested to talk to one of your team about the education aspects of the exhibition.

Best wishes and I look forward to the exhibition and seeing the tapestry.

Marshall Mateer

email: [REDACTED]

[www.nen.gov.uk](http://www.nen.gov.uk)

[www.shapesoftime.net](http://www.shapesoftime.net)

## Appendix XXIII

### Letter from Ron Bill to Director/Curator

8 April 2009



Dear Director/Curator:

8/4/09

(Your identity is not revealed in the current brochure!)

I was very pleased today to visit the enhanced and extended gallery and, in particular to see the splendid Guernica tapestry. The newspaper by Goshka Macuga is a brilliant innovation with many interesting historical facts and pictures. The Colin Powell deception speech was even better than Blair's to the House of Commons!

In 1991 Stan Newman and I published a biography of Vera Manning who was born Mrs. Kerr 1945-1950. In 1937 she was very involved in the London based Spanish Medical Aid Committee. In April 1937 she was asked to go to Bilbao to arrange the evacuation of Basque children to the U.K. She arrived on 20th April - two days before Guernica was bombed on 26th April, when 1,654 people were killed, including many children, and 889 people were injured. She visited the town the next day and wrote later in her autobiography:-

"The scene of utter devastation will be painted forever on our minds. It cannot be described in words; only

Picasso's 'Guernica' can depict its stark horror."

Kerr arranged the evacuation of 3,800 Basque children from Bilbao on 21st May 1937 and they arrived in Southampton 2 days later and were allocated to "colonies", arranged by local supporters, around the U.K. Another interesting refugee at the time was Michael Portillo's father. Not all the children returned home and, much later, those remaining formed the Basque Children of '37 Association UK. As far as it is aware none of the members actually originated in Guernica.

April 26th next will of course be the 72nd anniversary of the bombing of Guernica. With the tapestry now in London I wonder if my visit

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RON BILL. 63 UPPER PARK, HARLOW, ESSEX CM20 1TP 01279 - 434997

(2)

is planned around it for that day?

Of course the bombing of Guernica was, as noted in "The Nature of the Beast" the first experimental/rehearsal of the new German Air Force in bombarding civilian targets. It went on to similarly attack Warsaw in 1939 - and then the City of London - and Stepney/Aldgate in 1940/1941. Although many of the buildings in Aldgate High Street were destroyed the terrace containing the library and Gallery fortunately survived largely untouched.

I suppose one other link with the Spanish Civil war was the number of Aldgate/Stepney and other East Enders who volunteered, and served - and some died, in the International Brigades. The International Brigade Memorial Trust would probably know of any survivors still alive in the Beaulieu manor.

If any special event is planned could members of the Association be invited for the day? The Association Secretary is Natalia Benjamin of 8, Hermes Road, Oxford OX2 7PA. 01865-459744 [www.basquechildren.org](http://www.basquechildren.org). She could provide details of the Association and its London members. If it is too late to organise an event for 26th April perhaps a letter invitation could be passed to the Association. I'm sure they would give a talk around the fountain.

You may also be interested to know that the last surviving English nurse, who served in the war, is Penny Seiver who will be 100 on 23rd April. I think however she ~~will~~ would be unlikely to travel from her home in Bourne mouth.

You may at some time like to consider showing Roberto Menéndez film "Las Niñas de Guernica Tienen Memoria" and Steve Bowles award winning documentary "The Guernica Children". I'm sure Steve would be pleased to introduce the latter.

On my next visit I would like to donate a copy of the book Manning back for the Gallery library.

(3)

Whilst at the Gallery I collected some brochures for sending to interested friends. I wondered if you are aware that the current brochure measures 240 x 167 whereas the Post Office permitted size for small envelopes is 240 x 165. This means that the brochure becomes a large letter in Post Office terms and incurs a much higher rate of postage.

One other minor point you may wish to review. The integral leaflet racks on the front of the Reception and Clerkroom desks are neither visible or accessible when people are standing at the desks. Perhaps a nearby wall location would be a better option.

The incorporation of the former library building has added valuable extra space and given historic Aldgate/Stepney - and national and international visitors, a superb new gallery.

I'm sure it will be successful. I'm talking friends - potential future visitors, to include a visit to the nearby Fawcett Library and Exhibition Centre in nearby Old Castle Street.

I'm sure there is a lot of common interest between your two centres - to at least mutually exchange brochures/information etc.

Weil done Whitechapel!

Yours sincerely  
Ron Bell

P.S. Adrian Bell's book "ONLY FOR THREE MONTHS" is the story of The Basque Children in Exile "ENGLISH PENNY" is Penny Fawcett (Fyvel) account of her time in Spain.  
"RECUERDOS: BASQUE CHILDREN REFUGEE"

TO: THE DIRECTOR/CURATOR IN GREAT BRITAIN  
THE WHITECHAPEL GALLERY NATHAN BENJAMIN  
77-82 WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET  
LONDON E1 7QX

## Appendix XXIV

### Email correspondence, Nick Rankin and Cassandra Needham

From: Nick Rankin [mailto:████████████████████]

Sent: Mon 2009-01-26 PM 4:17

To: Cassandra Needham

Subject: Guernica

Dear Cassandra

I have just seen your message in the IBMT newsletter and would like to add my ha'p'orth. I wrote a book called Telegram from Guernica, about George Steer, which Faber published in 2003, so I am interested in the subject.

First off, surely the Whitechapel showing is not strictly the only one in Britain. I have a reproduction of the Burlington Galleries catalogue "Picasso's 'Guernica' with 67 preparatory paintings, sketches and studies", dated October 1938. The sketches then went on to Oriel College, Oxford in November and Leeds City Art Gallery in December. If you check out the reviews of October 1938 you will find Anthony Blunt being very snooty from a Marxist viewpoint in The Spectator. The Hon Treasurer of the Burlington organising Committee was Roland A Penrose Esq and in "Visiting Picasso: the Notebooks and Letters of Roland Penrose" edited by Elizabeth Cowling (Thames and Hudson, 2006) you will find an account of the picture's visit to Britain on page 40-44 with a picture of Clem Attlee speaking in front of the great mural, when it showed for a fortnight at the Whitechapel in January 1939 and 12,000 (sic) visitors came.

Secondly, do check out the story I read somewhere that David Hockney's father went to see Guernica at the Whitechapel and the price of admission was a pair of boots.

Thirdly, do check with Gijs van Hensbergen (sp?) who wrote a good biography of the picture.

Fourthly, a trawl through all the newspapers of January 1939 at BL Colindale will surely

yield results.

With best wishes

Nicholas Rankin

---

Subject: RE: Guernica

Date: Tue, 27 Jan 2009 20:46:33 +0000

From: cassandraneedham@whitechapel.org

To: Nicholas Rankin

Dear Nicholas

Thank you for your email. I didn't realise my enquiry would go in the newsletter but it is great to get your feedback.

Yes, you are right about the other venues and we have been in contact with Gijs van Hensbergen. He also told us about the admission price being a pair boots. It is such a fascinating history. I have also forwarded this email to our archivist so perhaps she'll have a few questions if thats okay. We'll also follow up on some of your kind research tips.

We will be exhibiting the 'Tapestry of Guernica' (presently hanging in the UN building) as part of our inaugural commission by Goshka Macuga when the gallery re-opens in April. Goshka is absoluted fascinated by the tapestry's (and the original painting's) history. If you are in London I do hope you will make it over to the show.

With best wishes

Cassandra

---

**From:** Nick Rankin [mailto: [REDACTED]]

**Sent:** 27 January 2009 22:30

**To:** Cassandra Needham

**Subject:** RE: Guernica

Dear Cassandra

I live in NW10 so would be delighted to come. Tell your archivist I have lots of books and info on Gernika the place and Guernica the picture. Here is a big piece I wrote for the 70th anniversary:

<http://t1s.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,25340-2647061,00.html>

Best wishes

Nick

---

## Appendix XXV

### Email from Giovanna Bloor to Cassandra Needham

**From:** Giovanna [mailto:████████████████████]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 25, 2009 6:15 PM

**To:** Info Desk

**Subject:** Guernica

Dear Whitchapel (sic) Art Gallery, I was interested to hear the item on Radio 4 Today programme (today March 25th) about Picasso's Guernica. Rebecca Jones, the Art correspondent said that Guernica was only shown once in Britain. I am 82. In 1938 we lived in Manchester (my father P.M.S. Blackett was Prof of Physics). I remember my mother telling me more than once that she had helped "roll up the Guernica painting". So I am sure it was also on show in Manchester. (I remember, aged 12, knitting dozens of squares that were then sewn up into blankets that were sent to Spain. I have an old 78 record of the Basque children's choir. I remember my mother telling me that the children were booked to make the recording and then heard about the bombing but they still went on to sing). I wondered if you could let Alan Penrose know that I am sure Guernica was also shown in Manchester. (I could not find a contact for him)

Giovanna Bloor (nee Blackett)

## Appendix XXVI

### Email correspondence, Mark Hartley and Cassandra Needham

**From:** Cassandra Needham [mailto:[cassandraneedham@whitechapelgallery.org](mailto:cassandraneedham@whitechapelgallery.org)]

**Sent:** 06 April 2009 12:02

**To:** Mark Hartley

**Subject:** Guernica at Whitechapel

Dear Mark Hartley,

Following our telephone conversation, please do send some images and a brief discription of the project to this address. I would be happy to forward them on to our education team and the artist.

One of the artists main intentions is to build upon the Whitechapels exisiting archive so she is very interested in these kinds of materials.

I look forward to hearing from you and best wishes

Cassandra

Cassandra Needham  
Exhibitions Organiser  
Whitechapel Gallery

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7522 7854

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7377 1685

Email: [cassandraneedham@whitechapelgallery.org](mailto:cassandraneedham@whitechapelgallery.org)

Web: [www.whitechapelgallery.org](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org)

**From:** Mark Hartley [mailto: [REDACTED] ]

**Sent:** 14 April 2009 16:11

**To:** Cassandra Needham

**Subject:** Guernica at Whitechapel

Dear Cassandra

Thank you for calling me last week. Unfortunately my computer was shut down whilst I was away as some technical work was being completed at the school over the holiday period. Hence I was unable to send you the compositions via remote access. Please find attached the two compositions which are based upon Picasso's work. They were produced by some of our Year 4 children (8-9 year olds) working alongside a graphic designer using quite a complex graphics program (one of the Serif suite of programs). I heard about the reopening of the Whitechapel, and the fact that a tapestry version of the Picasso's painting would be part of the exhibition. The children's project was completed in February, before I heard mention of your exhibition on the radio. Both compositions have been printed on canvas (through a company called Canvas Dezign) with each of the separate sections being A3 size. We think that the final printed work looks stunningly good (but we may be prone to bias!). We would welcome a visit from the artist and any further interest that your gallery may have.

Kind regards

Mark

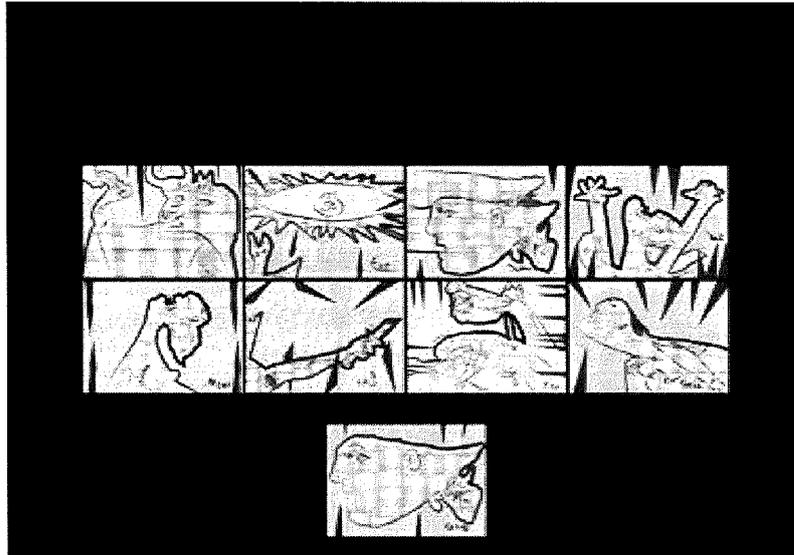
Mark Hartley

Headteacher

Barnes Primary School

Cross Street SW13 OQQ

Tel: [REDACTED]



Samples of work from workshop at Barnes Primary School, London

## Appendix XXVII

### Email correspondence, Frank Cassey and Gary Haines, Archivist

**From:** Gary Haines  
**Sent:** 23 September 2009 10:08  
**To:** Cassandra Needham; Nayia Yiakoumaki  
**Subject:** FW: hunger march/some feedback

Hi thought you may want to see this. Amazing stories. Will pass on to Goshka. The photos referred to are the ones in the Round Table.

Gary

---

**From:** eileen casey [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** 22 September 2009 09:59  
**To:** Gary Haines  
**Subject:** RE: hunger march/some feedback

Dear Gary,

The two older men who feature in two of the photographs are the Blantyre N.U.W.M organisers, Mathew McNaught and Ned Laughlin. They are prominent in the photo with the wee girl. All three I.B. volunteers who died in Spain were on the march, these were Tommy Brannan, Willie Fox and Tom Fleck. Brannan and Fox were to die at Jarama four months later, Tommy Fleck outlived them by two months. he was killed at Chimorra in April 1937. All 3 set out together directly from London to Spain, they never saw Blantyre again. Fleck had won the military medal in the Great War. Prior to the war he had been the Blantyre postman. There were 24 or 25 Blantyre men in the 780 strong Scottish contingent. Other names include Hugh Duffy, John Carrol, Willie Marshal, John MacLean, big Ned McGuire, Tony Brown and Mick McComisky. McComisky developed

blood poisoning when one of the brass tackets came through his boot and penetrated the sole of his foot. He narrowly escaped having his leg amputated. He was Brannans brother in law. Duffy fell out of the march through flat feet so niether he nor McComisky feature in the photos. My bronze and granite tribute to the three brigaders will be unveilled on Saturday,24th of October at 11a.m. at the Miners Welfars Club ,Calder street ,Blantyre.Glasgow G72 OAU. followed by asocial event in the evening. I don't Know if your duties will free you up to come and it is a long way from the east end, but you are very welcome If you can make it . I will attempt to match up faces names and 'photos while I'm up in Blantyre.

Kind Regards,

Frank.

---

From: Gary Haines <gary@whitechapelgallery.org>

Subject: RE: hunger march/some feedback

To: "eileen casey" <[REDACTED]>

Date: Monday, 21 September, 2009, 12:46 PM

Dear Frank, thanks for the call. Sorry I missed you am caught up helping to install a new show in the Archive Gallery this week. Could you put your findings in an email to me that would be most helpful.

Many thanks

Gary

---

**From:** eileen casey [mailto:[REDACTED]]

**Sent:** 01 August 2009 17:12

**To:** Gary Haines

**Subject:** hunger march/some feedback

Dear Gary,

We did manage to see the main gallery. There is some impressive work by local talent on display. What an opportunity, to have such a resource available to allow local

artists to display their work. As for the evacuation, it added a certain something to the day, an element of surprise. Luckily we managed to get home without involving any more of the emergency services!

Regarding the Blantyre hunger marchers:

I am very familiar with the faces of those eight of the eleven volunteers from the Lanarkshire coalfields who died in the Spanish War of whom photographs survive and I knew that Tommy Brannan was among the 800 men in the N.U.W.M Scottish contingent who took part in the '36 march.

I didn't see Tommy in the photos, but I did identify one of the men with a high degree of certainty and another with some degree of confidence. I also managed to confirm the year in which the pictures were taken. The Blantyre Banner includes the legend 'March Against The New Scales'. This was the slogan adopted for the 1936 march and refers to the Unemployment Assistance Board scales and regulations which had been rejected in February '35 only to be re-imposed virtually unaltered in the following year.[p328 Wal Hannington. Unemployment Struggles, 1919-1936]

In the photograph displaying the banner, 'Scottish Youth March Against Unemployment' the young man seated at the forefront of the picture I strongly believe to be Charles Goodfellow. He was a Bellshill man, a pit village in North Lanarkshire. He was 2nd in command of the British Section of the I.B. at the time of his death in July 1937. His demise is graphically described in Daniel Grays' book, 'Homage to Caledonia'. As a portraitist I am used to studying the planes of the face. I am certain that my identification is accurate but will cross refer to confirm absolutely. The other man I am less sure of. He bears a strong likeness to Willie Keegans. He stands with three other men in the forefront of the photograph on the extreme left of the group and is giving a clenched fist salute.

Keegans hailed from Bailieston, now a part of Glasgow but in the '30's lay within the borders of Lanarkshire. The Scottish March set off in October '36, so an arrival date of November the 8th would be right on the money. Incidentally prior to departure there had been a sit in at Dixons Colliery over wage rates, the first time that this tactic had been used in Scotland. The 'Fed' had withdrawn support and the coal master had cut of

the water supply to the men. They also slowed the fans to force them to the surface.  
Despite this the Men held their ground and forced the management to capitulate.

When I confirm identities positively or discover names to any of the other faces I will get  
in touch,

All the Best,

Frank.

*Goshka Macuga*

## Appendix XXVIII

### Goshka Macuga Curriculum Vitae

GOSHKA MACUGA

Born 1967 in Poland, lives and works in London.

#### Solo exhibitions

2009

Goshka Macuga, Commissions Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery

2008

Goshka Macuga, Kunsthalle Basel

Goshka Macuga: Gottessegen, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich, May - June

2007

Objects in Relation, Art Now, Tate Britain, London, June - October

What's In a Name, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, February - March

2006

Mula sem Cabeça (Headless Mule), How to Live Together, 27th São Paulo Biennial, October - December

Sleep of Ulro, The Furnace Commission, A Foundation, Liverpool, September - November

2005

Goshka Macuga, Kate MacGarry, London, March - April

2003

Kabinett der Abstrakten, Bloomberg Space, London

*Picture Room*, Gasworks Gallery, London

2002

Friendship of the Peoples (with Declan Clarke), The Project, Dublin,

Untitled, Fundacja Galerii Foksal, Warsaw

Homeless Furniture, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow

2000

Cave, Kunstakuten, Stockholm

1999

Cave, Sali Gia, London

### **Group exhibitions**

2008

Turner Prize 2008, Tate Britain

The Great Transformation: Art and Tactical Magic, Frankfurter Kunstverein, June – September; travelling to MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporanea de Vigo, Spain, September 2008 – January 2009

5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, Neue Nationalgalerie, April- June

Cohabitation: 13 Artists and Collage, Francesca Kaufmann, Milan, March - April

Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Barbican Art Gallery, March - May

Santhal Family: Positions Around an Indian Sculpture, MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, February - May

2006

We've Lost Our Heart and Mind, Event Gallery, London, December 2006- January 2007

Moving in Architecture, (selected by Cyril Lepetit),  
Camden Arts Centre, London, July, and Curzon Cinema Soho, London, September  
The Past is a Foreign Country: They do Things Differently There,  
Mathilda is Calling, Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, Germany, July – October  
3rd Attese Biennale di Ceramica nell' Arte Contemporanea,  
Museo della Ceramica Manlio Trucco, Albissola Superiore, Italy, July -September  
16th Biella Prize for Engraving (curated by Jeremy Lewison), Museo del Territorio  
Biellese, Biella, Italy, March - June

2005

Communism, Project Arts Centre, Dublin, Ireland  
The British Art Show, Baltic & touring the UK, 2005 - 2006  
Go Between, Amt der Landeshauptstadt Kultur, Bregenz, Austria, July – September  
Can Buildings Curate? Architectural Association, London, April  
*Spring/Summer*, curated by Simon Moretti, Program, London, May - June 2006

2004

Autumn Catalog Leather Fringes, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland  
Perfectly Placed, South London Gallery, London  
Expo 21: Strategies of Display, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham  
Expo 21: Strategies of Display, Mead Gallery, Coventry  
Relay, PR04, Puerto Rico  
Trackers, PM Gallery, London  
Tonight, Studio Voltaire, London

2003

Vis á Vis, Platform, London  
Ponce, The Ship, London  
Creek, Cell Project, London  
The Straight or Crooked Way, Royal College of Art, London  
Chockerfukingblocked, Jeffrey Charles Gallery, London

2002

T.O.F.U, Barts Wells Institute, London

The New Religious Art, Liverpool Biennale

London Underground, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

Pause, Conception, Gwangju Biennale 2002, Project 1

The House of Horror, Outline Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland

The New Religious Art, Henry Peacock Gallery, London

Woof Woof, Becoming Animal, Project , Dublin, Ireland

2001

Zawody Malarskie, Galeria BWA Bielsko-Biala, Poland

Open Plan P 3 The Marathon, Alphadelta Gallery and Artio Gallery, Athens, Greece

Woof Woof, Becoming Animal, Austrian Cultural Forum, London

Skuggspel, Tullkammaren, Umea, Sweden

Teeth & Trousers, Cell Project Space, London

Forever Yours, Wooden Heart, London

Free Wahlen/Uptight out of control 3, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden Baden

Avalanche, Hales Gallery, London

Curatorial Mutiny Part 4, Nylon, London

A very nice film club, Vilma Gold, London

1999

The Mountain and the Valley, Cubitt Gallery, London

(curated with Dexter Dalwood and Matthew Leahy)

### **Education**

1995-6 Goldsmiths College, MA Fine Art

1991-5 Central St. Martins, BA Hons Fine Art

## Bibliography/Selected press

2008

Shortlist for Turner Prize promises end to male domination, Arifa Akbar, The Independent, 14 May 2008, pp.12-13

Shortlist for Turner is dominated by women, Stephen Adams, The Daily Telegraph, 14 May 2008, p.13

ReTurner of women artists, Louise Jury & Rashid Razaq, Evening Standard, 13 May 2008, p.3

Female artists dominate Turner shortlist, Andrew Dickson, Guardian.co.uk, 13 May 2008

Mannequin on toilet bids for Turner Prize, Sherna Noah, Independent.co.uk, 13 May 2008

The Simpsons become art for this year's Turner Prize, Polly Corrigan, Telegraph.co.uk, 13 May 2008

Goshka Macuga Talked to Declan Clarke and Paul McDevitt in Clärchens Ballhaus, Berlin, on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, printed project, Issue 9, Visual Artists Ireland, April 2008

2007

Goshka Macuga, frieze, July 2007, Jonathan Griffin

Goshka Macuga, Time Out London, July 18-24 2007, Gabriel Coxhead, p.36

Putting Relations in Perspective, The Independent, 30 June 2007, Jonathan Evans

Goshka Macuga FlashArt, May-June 07, Armelle Pradalier, p.133-4

Goshka Macuga: The New Museum, ArtReview, April 07, Skye Sherwin, pp.62-5

Goshka Macuga, Artforum, April 2007, Michael Wilson, pp.258-9

Die Watchlist de luxe für 2007, Monopol, n.1, Jan 07, Tirdad Zolghadr, p.87

Looking Back: Emerging Artists, frieze Jan/Feb 07, Alex Farquharson, p.136

2006

Liverpool Biennial, frieze, Nov-Dec 06, Jonathan Griffin, p. 158

Belgian Artist, Presumed Dead, Alive in Brazil, Marcel Broodthaers Resurrected at the São Paulo Biennial, *Modern Painters*, October 2006, Martin Herbert, pp.81-85  
Not All Ha, Ha, Hee, Hee: Liverpool Biennial, *Art Review*, Mark Rappolt, Sept 06, p.25  
*Das brüllende Lachen des Großherzogs Ernst Ludwig*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18.8.06, Kostanze Cruwell  
*Beuys, Böcklin, Kippenberger und Co.*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14.7.06  
Focus: Goshka Macuga, frieze, June 06, Jonathan Griffin, p236  
Dazed & Confused, Issue135, March06, Iphgenia Baal, p123  
*British Art Show 6*, Neil Mulholland, *Flash Art*, January-February, page 100  
*British Art (does It) Show?* Neil Mulholland and Andrew Hunt, frieze, January- February, page 132-7  
Dazed & Confused, Iphgenia Baalp, Issue135, March, page123

2005

London Critics' Picks, Goshka Macuga, *Artforum* website, March, 2005  
Goshka Macuga, *Frieze*, issue 92, June/July/ August, Peter Suchin, page 168-9  
Goshka Macuga, *The Guardian Guide*, March 5-11 2005 page 37  
Dazed & Confused, N258, Charles Danby, p.60

2004

*Goshka Macuga, Contemporary*, nr. 64, Sacha Craddock  
*I am a curator*, *Art Monthly*, April 2004, Paul O'Neill

2003

*Time Out*, 12-19 November 2003, Martin Herbert  
Untitled, Nr 30, Summer 2003, *Goshka Macuga, Gasworks*, Pablo Bronstein  
*Flash Art*, Vol XXXVI, May- June 2003, *Sculpture Forever*  
*Frieze*, Issue 75, May 2003, *Goshka Macuga and Declan Clarke*, Sally O'Reilly  
100 Reviews, April, *Creek*  
*Time Out*, 26-2 April 200, Martin Herbert  
*Flash Art*, March – April 2003, *Goshka Macuga at Gasworks*, Lee Trimming

Dziennik Polski, (The Polish Daily), 14 March 2003, *Prosta lub kreta droga*, K.Bany  
Time Out, 5-12 March 2003, Martin Herbert  
Art Review, Feb 2003, vol. LIII, *Behind the scenes*, Charlotte Edwards

2002

Wysokie Obcasy, 23.11.02, nr 47  
*Goshka kontra biały szescian*, Paulina Skirgajllo-Krajewska  
Circa, 102, Winter 2002  
*Goshka Macuga and Nick Evans at Transmission*, Sorcha Dallas  
Make, edition 92  
The Irish Times, 17 January, Arts, *All the pretty horses*, Aidan Dunne  
The Irish Times, 16 January, The Ticket, Visual Art, *Woof Woof: Becoming Animal*  
Contemporary, January 2002, International News, Athens, Katerina Gregos

2001

Art Review, December/January 2002, vol.LII, *Let's get to work*, Charlotte Edwards  
Magazyn Ratuszowy, nr 24/2001, *Jakie Malarstwo*  
Gazeta Wyborcza, 19.11.01, *Totalne przegiecie*, Lukasz Kielebasiak  
Gazeta. pl:Katowice, 19.11.01, *Nowoczesnie w BWA*, Lukasz Kielebasiak  
Trybuna Slaska, 17-18.11.01, *Malarstwo w nowym wieku*  
Vasterbottens -Kuriren, 7 September  
*Nar London moter Kaddis*, page 1&5, Andreas Sjogren  
Fluid, Nr 10, *Goska Macuga*, *Artystka ktora moze*, Michal Wolinski  
Elle (polish edition), Nr 84, September 2001  
*Cool Polonia*, Ewa Cieplinska - Bertini  
Frieze, Issue 60, *3 in 1 Curatorial Mutiny, Part 4*, Neal Brown  
Flash Art, Vol. XXXIV nr.218, Art News, *Curatorial Mutiny@ Nylon*, Lee Trimming  
[a-n] Magazine for Artists, June 2001, *Beyond borders*  
*A 3 in 1 Personal Evaluation Report*, Gavin Wade  
The Independent on Sunday, 15 April, *Pick of the Galleries*, 3 in 1  
Time Out, no 1598, Art, *3 in 1*, Sally O'Reilly, Evening Standard, 25 March

Contemporary Visual Art Magazine, issue 33, Previews, *3 in 1 Curatorial Mutiny*

2000

Nojesrepubliken Soderamal, 4 November, Konst, Lena Nestius

Svenska Dagbladet, 28 October, Konst, Fred Andersson

Nojesguiden, October, *Cave*, Nils Forberg

Aftonbladen, 13 October 2000, Konst

The Guardian, Space 20 July 2000, *Sexy*, Houldsworth Fine Art

Independent on Sunday, 14 May 2000, London Biennale, Neal Brown

1999

thegallerychannel.co.uk, *Cave*, Sali Gia

London Art Magazine.co.uk, *Cave at Sali Gia*, London, Sherman Sam

Untitled, nr 17, 1998, *Show Me the Money 3*, Michael Wilson

### **Selected publications**

When Things Cast No Shadow, 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, exhibition catalogue, JRP/Ringier, 2008

Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Francesco Manacorda, Merrell, 2008

Goshka Macuga – Sleep Of Ulro, Edited by: Bryony Bond & Lucy Wilson, A Foundation, Liverpool/ Kate MacGarry/ Veenman Publishers, Rotterdam, 2007

Mathilda is Calling, exhibition catalogue, Hatje Cantz Editor, Ostfildern, 2006

3rd Attese Biennial of Ceramics in Contemporary Art 2006, exhibition catalogue, p.105-7

16th Biella Prize For Engraving 2006, Art in the Age of Anxiety, Jeremy Lewinson, Skira, Milan, p.34-5, 150-1

Frieze Art Fair Yearbook 2005-6, Tom Morton, Frieze, London

Go Between, 2005, Bregenzer Kunstverein/Magazin 4, p.150-7

The Straight Or Crooked Way, 2003, Eliza Patten, RCA, London, p.82-5

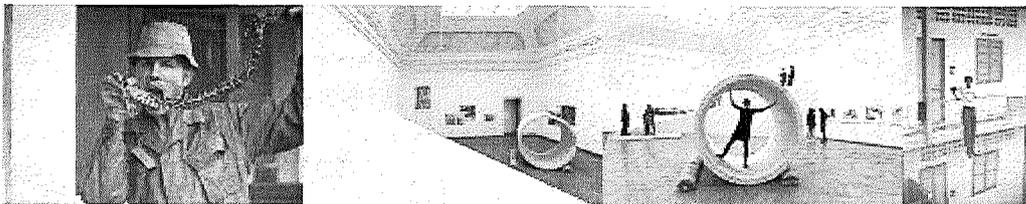
Transmission, Speaking & Listening, Vol. N4, 2005, Site Gallery-Sheffield, p.36-45

## Appendix XXIX

Press Release of *I am Become Death* at Kunsthalle Basel, January 2009.

# Goshka Macuga – I Am Become Death

16 January–8 March 2009



Goshka Macuga (b. 1967), a Polish-born artist based in London, tests and transcends the boundaries of sculpture, installation, exhibition design and photography. She ventures into a variety of disciplines, including art making, curating, art history, ethnology, psychology and esoteric science. Macuga's many exhibition projects and publications converge in a multi-faceted oeuvre that cannot be squeezed into such pigeonholes as "politically committed" or "formalist." In short, her work is rigorous in form and anarchistic in content.

The artist's practice has always been marked by an interest in collaboration with other artists and cultural producers. Macuga also makes extensive use of existing cultural material: original arts and crafts; documents related to historical figures, such as artists, their patrons and their opponents; forms of exhibition display devised and applied in diverse political contexts; and references to vernacular culture. Her work predates the often insufficiently reflected inspiration that many contemporary artists draw from the history of (mostly Western European and U.S.) modernism. Her oeuvre has developed as a study extending in time, through which she addresses and modifies prevalent

modes of perceiving and interpreting cultural production, in order to give new meaning to familiar forms and artifacts. For Macuga, art is a tool for understanding and a blueprint for social change.

Her discursive scenarios involve deconstruction of our society's cultural conditioning and defy the currently dominant mode of artistic practice as a market-driven activity that is detached from a broader social practice of making and marginalized as a plaything of the art world. Her work addresses the actual phenomenon of making art, the manual and intellectual labors of an artist. This residue of free action, often embedded in traditions and codes that transcend the particularities of generations and national cultures, can be a testing ground for new formulations and also the point of departure for a lesson in subversion — either as a direct act of resistance or by way of persiflage and humor.

Goshka Macuga's first institutional solo exhibition in continental Europe, at the Kunsthalle Basel, comprises an ensemble of photographic works incorporating documents and images selected by the artist from the archives of the Tate Gallery in London, The Warburg Institute at University of London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Kunsthalle Basel. The exhibition's title, *I Am Become Death*, invokes a scene from the sacred Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita* (The Song of God). This line from the epos ('Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.') was quoted by J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Manhattan Project during World War II, on seeing the scale of destruction after the Trinity nuclear test at White Sands Missile Range near Alamogordo in New Mexico, on July 16, 1945.

In her new group of works, Goshka Macuga also reflects on the history of exhibition display. *Road to Victory*, an exhibition of 1942 mounted by the MoMA in New York, while the Manhattan Project was well under way, sought to promote America's military strength and helped to consolidate the rationale of a nation embarking on a major war. The show was conceived as 'a procession of photographs of the nation at war' by Edward Steichen in a setting designed by Herbert Bayer and with texts written by the American poet and author Carl Sandburg. Later in 1955, Edward Steichen's *Family of*

*Man* exhibition at the MoMA aimed to illustrate the many facets of mankind—love, work and leisure—in the universal quest for peace and happiness. The show ignored and leveled out the inevitable political contradictions entailed in such an agenda and instead promoted an idealized vision of abstract “humanity.” Supposedly best embodied in the American notion of democracy, it was represented in a selection of photographs, showing human beings as if seen by a naturalist. This largest photographic exhibition of the Cold War era toured worldwide as an American cultural export. One of the European venues was Kunsthalle Basel (1958), where many substantial exhibitions of American art subsequently took place, and most notably the first presentation of Abstract Expressionism in Europe entitled *New American Painting*, and a solo show of Jackson Pollock’s paintings, both in 1958, conceived by the International Council of MoMA.

For the exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, Goshka Macuga transposes Herbert Bayer’s display concept for *Road to Victory*, presenting a series of collages made of images coming from several different sources, including Aby Warburg’s photographs taken during his exploration of Hopi culture in 1896, Macuga’s own photographs from her journey in the USA in 2008, as well as installation shots from the American artist Robert Morris’ show at the Tate Gallery in London in 1971.

Private photographs from a Vietnam War veteran’s collection are also included, which, in contrast to *Road to Victory*’s well-defined ideological content, deal with daily, un-heroic, funny or just boring aspects of a soldier’s life at a military base in Vietnam.

The show also includes replicas of some of the sculptures Robert Morris made for his exhibition at the Tate. Simple constructions made of wood, steel and ropes, they encouraged viewers’ physical interaction, but since the museum could not guarantee the visitors’ security, the show closed after the first weekend due to the fact that some visitors had injured themselves while using sculptures in a performative way. In the context of the Vietnam War, the possibility of participating in this exhibition at one’s own risk can read as a political statement on the nature of the freedom and limitations imposed by the state and (art) institution.

Macuga will also present a new documentary film made in collaboration with the visual anthropologist Julian Gastelo. It is based on the video documentation of their recent journey through the United States, from New York to the Arizona desert, following the route taken by the German art historian Aby Warburg in 1896, when he went to Arizona to study the rituals and iconography of Hopi Indian art. Warburg recalled his travels in a lecture on the serpent ritual, delivered 27 years later at the psychiatric clinic at Kreuzlingen. His presentation of Hopi mythology and the origins of symbols in general successfully proved to his doctors that he was fit to leave the clinic. Macuga's filmed exploration of (art-) historical America is seen through the filter of contemporary impressions of the country and includes a personal encounter with a Vietnam war veteran. Hence, the artist has abandoned the neutral stance of the detached observer, instead positioning herself as a participating agent within society in an age when nations are again engaged in wars that bring suffering and destruction to entire communities, and when individuals must again face choices that – not so very long ago – were held to be obsolete. *I Am Become Death* investigates the aesthetic form as a weapon deployed in conflicts between political powers and the impact of official ideologies on the production of art that still aspires to autonomy. At the same time, the exhibition puts forward the possibility that aesthetic potential can be used to opposite ends, as a means of taking a critical look at the present day.

Podcast on the exhibition at radio [DRS2](#)

Online emission on the exhibition at [Regioartline](#)

Online review and the opening at [Vernissage-TV](#)

The exhibition is supported by: **Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte FABA, Stanley Thomas Johnson Stiftung, British Council.**

**Solo exhibitions (selection): 2008:** *Goshka Macuga*, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich / **2007:** *Objects in Relation, Art Now*, Tate Britain, London; *What's In a Name*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York / **2006:** *Mula sem Cabeça* (Headless Mule), *How to Live Together*, 27th São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo; *Sleep of Ulro*, The Furnace Commission, A Foundation,

Liverpool / **2005:** *Goshka Macuga*, Kate MacGarry, London.

**Group exhibitions (selection): 2008:** *Turner Prize exhibition*, Tate Britain, London; *The Great Transformation – Kunst und taktische Magie*, Frankfurter Kunstverein; *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art*, Barbican Art Gallery, London; *When Things Cast No Shadow – 5th berlin biennial*, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin / **2007:** *Les Palais Des Etoiles: These Are Also Wings* (performance with DADADANDY), Selfridges, London / **2006:** *We've Lost Our Heart and Mind*, Event Gallery, London; *Moving in Architecture*, (selected by Cyril Lepetit), Camden Arts Centre, London and Curzon Cinema Soho, London.

## Appendix XXX

### Email from Goshka Macuga to Beth Chaplin, Director's Assistant

From: Goshka Macuga [mailto: [REDACTED]]

Sent: 01 September 2009 12:45

To: Beth Chaplin

Subject: Re: coffee with Iwona

Dear Beth,

Thank you for your e-mail. I have just got back from my long holidays.

I wanted to see Iwona and tell her about my new exiting project which I am doing for Muchka [sic] in relationship to the Whitechapel exhibition.

It will be a tapestry based on a collage from deferment meetings ,which took place in front of the Guernica. I attach the image. The work is in production now and it will be presented in Muhka in September. I will be travelling there in the 7-11Th [sic] of September.

It would be great to meet and have a coffee before or after I get back.

Best Wishes

Goshka



Goshka Macuga, *On The Nature Of The Beast*, 2009 Courtesy Kate MacGarry Gallery, London.

## Appendix XXXI

### Information on the group exhibition 'Textiles Art and the Social Fabric', featuring new work by Goshka Macuga, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerp, Belgium

Compiled by Nayia Yiakoumaki

Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen

Leuvenstraat 32, 2000 Antwerpen België

<http://www.muhka.be>

#### *TEXTILES*

11 sep 2009 - 03 jan 2010

Textiles Art and the Social Fabric is a large-scale group exhibition of artists who use textile materials or related concepts in their work. The exhibition looks at the reasons why artists choose to do this, and finds that it is often to tap this medium's potential to communicate complex layers of social meaning and address the political as it appears in subjects such as labour, culture, identity, protest and display.

For example Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé Capes take the support structure of painting and turn it into a 'live element' so that its colours and forms become diffused and operational in social space. The Parangolé is worn like a costume or banner linking it to performance, transgender and masquerade where the body is incorporated, collapsing the division between the work and the viewer.

This project by Oiticica is an open proposition with wide ranging conditions of participation, a nexus within which a number of concepts come together through textile structures. Positioned close to the body but also expanding outwards to occupy architectural and political space, the textile medium is rich with significations: from

textiles as an interface between human subjectivities connected to clothing, body language and gesture, to the direct expression of ideas in political banners; from the use of textiles to transform the experience of architecture where it constitutes a flexible means of defining public and private space, to its indexical link with genealogies of art and art history where it has been situated on the margins - textiles articulate the nuance and inflections of social meaning and manifest this in diverse material forms.

With a conceptual rather than medium-specific focus, the exhibition features several different kinds of work including sculpture, installation, tapestry, books, banners, photography and film. The first installation encountered upon entering the exhibition is *The Greatest Happiness Principle Party* (2001) by Alice Creischer. Here, using cardboard cut-out figures dressed in various costumes, the artist restages a (fictional) party given by the Austrian Credit Institute in 1931, thrown the evening before the bank is going to go bust. Behind these figures a banner decorated with hand-written and embroidered texts connect this event to the movement of capital, recurrent financial crisis and the politics of economic reconstruction. Nearby a display of rare books selected from the library of Seth Siegelau's Centre for Social Research on Old Textiles (CSROT) reflect his interest in textile history, its connection to trade, the development of capitalism and industrialisation and in particular the range and ideology of its literature.

An archive of historical works displayed on an exhibition structure stretching across several galleries (designed by the artist Luca Frei) plot out a varied history of artists who have worked with textiles in relation to social and political concerns. It departs from Hélio Oiticica's *Parangolé* project (first shown in 1965) with original capes, as well as replicas that can be worn by visitors to the exhibition, photographs, texts, drawings, and film footage. The archive also includes documentation of James Lee Byars' 1969 performances and installation at the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp, 1920's fabrics for workers' clothing by Russian Constructivist artist Varvara Stepanova and small, screen-printed, gouache and ink textile designs by Anni Albers from the late 60s and early 70s. Twentieth Century flags from progressive Flemish political parties and unions are shown alongside two giant banners by John Dugger of Banner Arts: The

Chile Vencera banner which was made for a mass rally in Trafalgar Square in 1974, and the Wu Shu Kwan' Banner that Dugger produced in 1977 for use in the Flaxman Sports Centre in Brixton, South London.

Contemporary elements in the archive come from Narcisse Tordoir, who shows a collection of Bogolan textiles made during a workshop in Mali, and a new large-scale photographic montage by Joke Robaard, who extracts elements from her archive of fashion magazine cuttings (assembled over thirty years) and juxtaposes them with captions and texts that draw out the latent meaning of the image to reveal how they mirror the preoccupations of the society and times that produced them.



Goshka Macuga, *On The Nature Of The Beast*, 2009 Courtesy Kate MacGarry Gallery, London

The exhibition presents a number of other newly commissioned works including Tonico Lemos Auad's sensory environment using elements of interior architecture and decor, a sculpture by Sheela Gowda composed of Indian vernacular textiles (the mass produced strips of printed cloth that are often hung in doorways) and a tapestry designed by the artist Goshka Macuga and produced by a specialist company in Flanders. This tapestry is a woven interpretation of an image constructed from press photographs taken at the artist's exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. For the Whitechapel show, Macuga borrowed the tapestry version of Picasso's *Guernica* from the UN building in New York and installed it in the gallery, where it became the backdrop for meetings by various groups, speeches and community events. The tapestry shown in this current exhibition depicts an address given in front of the *Guernica* tapestry by Prince William,

and is a critique by the artist of her own work and how its political intention came to be circumvented. The work also reflects a history of royal tapestry workshops, and the description of royal scenes which were often depicted using this medium.

The historical importance of textiles production in Flanders provides the exhibition's backdrop. It is a region which has been associated with textiles since the Middle-Ages through the trade in wool, linen, luxury cloth and tapestries and (in the 19th Century) industrialised textile manufacturing. Today Flanders is still rich with expertise in this field. A work collaboratively produced by the artist Enrico David and the designer Lieve De Corte of Tasibel (a textile company based in Hamme) links contemporary art practice to local design and technical know-how, resulting in one of David's motifs (inspired by Wiener Werkstätte designer Ugo Zovetti) being woven into a repeat pattern, eighteen metre long cloth. In the museum installation, the regimentation and high quality rendering of this cloth dissolves into an aggregate display of works on paper that give voice to the uncertainty that is present in any collaborative creative endeavour.

An ensemble of works by Rosemarie Trockel (an artist with a long history of using textiles) includes *Grote* (2006) - an enclave filled with woollen strands coloured in vegetable dyes within which the visitor can be immersed, as well as several sculptural and photographic representations of women - where surface pattern, clothing, and gesture combine to produce a complex staging of cultural and gendered codes. In his installation *Favourite Clothes Worn While S/he Worked* (1999/2000) Bojan Sarcevic also presents clothing as a field of information to be read- with garments normally associated with leisure time laid out on tables, marked by the residue of the profession of their owners, who have been asked to wear them to work. Shown in the same room as Rosemarie Trockel, *Tapta's* (Maria Wierusz Kowalski) hanging rope installation *Formes pour un espace souple* (1974) from the M HKA collection creates a tactile environment in which people can congregate and interact, and from a similar oeuvre (and also from the museum's collection) Marie-Jo Lafontaine's *Monochrome Noir* (1979) provides a rich, textured backdrop of woven fibres to one of the gallery spaces. These two last works serve as a footnote in the exhibition to 'Fibre Art,' a movement which took off in the 1960s (although the term was coined the following decade) that connected the use of

non-traditional materials with feminist concerns, but which today rarely registers in exhibitions or art historical writing.

A series of events taking place at the museum respond to the exhibition's theme. These include an interview with Seth Siegelaub and a performance by Stefanie Seibold in collaboration with Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio revolving around the costume politics of musicians Sun Ra (presented by *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution*).

The experimental music ensemble Champ d'Action will produce a special program, which includes a recital at the opening and a day long series of concerts including Morton Feldman's *Coptic Light* inspired by Eastern tapestries and textiles. A collaboration between students of textile design at Sint-Lucas Hogeschool in Gent and students of dance will result in the production and demonstration of Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé capes, made using his *Do It Yourself Parangolé* instructions.

Appendix XXXII

'Directors' Files', Bryan Robertson, Director (1952-1969)

Archive catalogue number WAG/DIR/2/3

CD attached to thesis

