

Press Release, 16 February 2015

The Whitworth welcomes nearly 18,000 visitors during re-opening weekend

The Whitworth, which reopened at 10am on Saturday 14 February following a £15 million transformation of the gallery by architects MUMA (McInnes Usher McKnight Architects), was visited by 17,938 people by 6pm on Sunday evening. Highlights from the weekend included:

- The gallery welcomed over 17,938 visitors during the weekend - 2,000 more visitors than the gallery would record in an average month prior to closing
- Opening weekend events included a live performance by the Hallé Youth Choir, talks with Jeanette Winterson and Cornelia Parker, and a collaborative performance by Italian artist Nico Vascellari and French musician, Ghédalia Tazartès
- The gallery opened with Brass Baby, an interactive art and music experience for young visitors and their families
- On Friday night guests experienced the first cultural use of graphene; *Blakean Abstract*, a new 'meteor shower' firework display which was created by artist Cornelia Parker and Nobel Prize winning scientist Kostya Novoselov

The redevelopment, which has been supported by a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant, The University of Manchester, Arts Council England and other funders, has doubled public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities including expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. Leading with a major solo exhibition from one of Britain's most acclaimed contemporary artists, Cornelia Parker, the opening programme celebrates the Whitworth's eclectic and extensive collection of historical and contemporary fine art, textiles and wallpapers. Gallery displays include:

- A gallery papered with Sarah Lucas' *Tits in Space* (2000) wallpaper, in which multiple pairs of cigarette-encrusted orbs float against a pitch black background. The wallpaper forms the backdrop to a selection of sculptures by the internationally renowned British artist.
- Johnnie Shand Kydd displays never-before-seen photographs of YBAs (Young British Artists) during the 1990s on the Greek Island of Hydra.
- Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang has created a large reflective water pool in the new Landscape Gallery for his gunpowder installation, *Unmanned Nature* (2008).
- An installation of *Low Tide Wandering*, by leading German artist Thomas Schütte, whose daily etchings are suspended just above head height from taut wires encompassing the whole gallery.

Dr Maria Balshaw, Director of the Whitworth commented: *'The Whitworth's founding was that it be for the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester. Watching nearly 18,000 people enjoy the new gallery this weekend showed just how special this place is. The support from the local community has been overwhelming and we hope that they will continue to enjoy the Whitworth for the next 126 years.'*

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