

Whitworth Art Gallery  
Strategic Plan 2012-15

## Contextual analysis

The Whitworth Art Gallery, with its sister institution the Manchester Museum, is one of the cultural assets of the University of Manchester, managed by the University's Deputy President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. They both receive core funding from the University, and from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Together they form part of the Strategic Partnership between Manchester City Council and the University of Manchester. The Manchester Partnership, which is in receipt of Major Partner Museums (MPM) funding from Arts Council England (ACE), and brings together three organisations – Manchester City Galleries, the Whitworth Art Gallery and the Manchester Museum. The Whitworth Art Gallery and Manchester City Galleries share a Director, who coordinates the artistic and strategic direction of both galleries for the benefit of the city and region – a unique arrangement in the UK. All three institutions work together, across governance structures, to deliver the objectives of the University of Manchester, Manchester City Council and Arts Council England, and promote Manchester as a centre of knowledge, creativity and culture.

We will bring about a step-change in how we engage people with art and with our collections through our unique partnership, working beyond governance structures to share programming around key priority audiences such as early years, schools, young people and the elderly, arts and health and volunteering and building our resilience by sharing resources around communications, fundraising and commercial activities.

## Whitworth Art Gallery 2011

179,131 visitors

Our visitors enjoyed:

13 exhibitions

279 Family workshops

16 Artist and Curator led lectures

1 Children's takeover day

22 Concerts

12 After Hours social events

Learning sessions:

9,168 primary and secondary school students experienced workshops

4,878 higher education students worked with the collections

175 individual research activities based on our collections, including many researchers from overseas, working in the Study Rooms and stores.

Other facts:

The Whitworth won the 2011 Lever Prize for best cultural organisation in the North West

30,000 adults have participated in organized events at the gallery

2,200 people have attended the Tuesday Artists Talks

In 2011 staff gave papers at conferences in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Australia as well as the UK, totalling 24 presentations on subjects ranging from British collectors of Greek textiles at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, 1920s wallpapers and late Roman and Byzantine textiles to sustainable displays and exhibitions and culture's role in sustainable development.

During the past year the Gallery has lent a total of 89 works from its collections to 25 different institutions nationally and internationally

99% of the Gallery's collection is digitized and 90% is on-line. There were 724,706 page-views on the Gallery's website

Over the next five years the Whitworth Art Gallery aims to be recognised by its peers as a leading art gallery in the UK and as one of the leading institutions of its kind in the world. This document sets out the strategy for this vision.

## The Whitworth summarized...

The Whitworth: Manchester's university art gallery.

The Whitworth is a public art gallery, founded in 1889 as the first English gallery in a park. It became part of the University of Manchester in 1958. We aim to make our internationally important fine art, textiles and wallpapers accessible to a wide range of visitors who come to experience our collections and enjoy the art, the building and the green space surrounding us.

Academic research, especially from our campus, is made accessible through exhibitions and displays that invite our visitors to think about the contemporary relevance of our collections. Past and present are held together as part of a lively debate about culture today. Learning is at the heart of this, in the special environment a gallery can offer.

Not a classroom but a creative laboratory.

Eclectic juxtapositions, from a Flintstones wallpaper to Picasso's *Poverty* characterize the Whitworth's collections. Contemporary art comes into the collection and sparks new ways of seeing old and new.

International in outlook, but rooted in Manchester's history: what matters are the ideas that bring our works to life and the discussions about art we have with our visitors.

We want to be thought provoking and irreverent, a gallery that is informed by its rich history but which is excited about the culture around us in Manchester today. We are a green oasis at the heart of our city; open to people, ideas and conversation. Serious in intent, playful in execution.

A place where good, odd things happen.

Uniquely British, internationally renowned, historically informed, original modern.

# Mission

To fully realize the potential of the Whitworth Art Gallery as one of the world's premier university art galleries.

# Core Purpose

To hold in trust for future generations our collections and our building.

To deliver excellence in collections care, acquisition, curatorship, research, learning, interpretation and access, ensuring the needs of our visitors are at the heart of this work.

To contribute toward the academic and cultural life of the University of Manchester and the city of Manchester as a world leading university in a world class city.

To model the distinctive role of the university art gallery as a public and intellectual resource.

# Goals

We aspire to be:

- A valued and integrated university art gallery
- A research institution
- A values-led organization

We aspire to have:

- A risk taking, internationally significant exhibition programme
- Diverse audiences that reflect our city and region
- Excellent collections-based teaching and learning
- Exemplary collections care: exemplary access to the collections for visitors
- Dialogue and engagement with our many visitors
- An iconic building that meets the needs of our audiences

We aspire to make:

- An internationally significant contribution to visual culture

# Our brand

There is no other art gallery like us. Our history, the collections, our building and the park, our people and our relationship with the University of Manchester all distinguish us from other institutions, and help define the way we work.

We can help all our audiences understand more about us – what we offer and why; the special Whitworth way we do things – by being clear and consistent in our communications. Whether speaking with a group of school kids or a major benefactor, how we look and how we talk makes an important contribution to how we are seen.

Our civility and the respect we show our audiences help earn their trust. Our enthusiasm and the fun we have are infectious. Together we can help each visitor, colleague or partner to have a personal and memorable experience with us.

The values that underpin this personality are about being

accessible

confident

intelligent

quirky & fun

and we strive for a personal connection with our many visitors.