



Manchester's Whitworth gallery announces internationally renowned new Director

The Whitworth, which is part of The University of Manchester, has today announced Sook-Kyung Lee as its new Director.

Lee will join the Whitworth from London's Tate Modern, where she is a Senior Curator of International Art. Since 2019 she has led the 'Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational', a major research initiative in partnership with Hyundai Motor, exploring new perspectives on global art histories. In 2021 she was also appointed Artistic Director of South Korea's 14th Gwangju Biennale, which opened in April 2023.

During her tenure at Tate Modern, Lee curated several major exhibitions and displays including *Richard Bell: Embassy* (2023), *A Year in Art: Australia 1992* (2021-23), and *Nam June Paik* (2019-20), which went on to tour to Europe, USA and Asia. She also played an invaluable role in shaping Tate's international art collection strategy by leading such initiatives as Asia Pacific Acquisitions Committee and the co-acquisition programme with Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, in partnership with the Qantas Foundation.

She will take up her role at the Whitworth in August 2023 and will become Honorary Professor of Transcultural Curating at the University.

Speaking about her forthcoming role as the Whitworth's Director, Sook-Kyung Lee said: "It is a huge honour for me to take up the role of Director at the Whitworth, one of the most innovative and audience-focused art institutions in the UK and internationally. I have admired the Whitworth's commitment to work with local communities and to use art for positive social change. I would like to further develop the gallery in its artistic rigour and social impacts and to widen its global connections, along with the gallery's dedicated staff and The University of Manchester."

The Whitworth operates as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. It was founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" and continues this mission today in new contexts.

the Whitworth

Nalin Thakkar, Vice-President for Social Responsibility at The University of Manchester said: “I am delighted that Sook-Kyung Lee is joining us as the new Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery and will take up the position as Honorary Professor of Transcultural Curating. There is a fantastic opportunity to build on the Whitworth’s international renown as a leading cultural institution, whilst working closely with the University, the city of Manchester, our community partners and other stakeholders to strengthen its current focus and explore new exciting directions for the future.”

In 2015 the gallery undertook a £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA, which doubled the public space, creating new facilities to house the collection of over 65,000 works of art, textiles, and wallpaper. Along with expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and collections care centre, the gallery reconnected with its park, with communal gardens and outdoor programmes.

The Whitworth is home to exhibitions and projects which often represent and explore the experiences of our local and global communities. Currently the *(Un)Defining Queer* exhibition delves into the Whitworth’s collection to examine how we can use a queer lens to define what the term ‘queer’ means, co-led by an intersectional group of people who self-identify as LGBTQIA+.

Later this month, the gallery will showcase new project and exhibition *Economics the Blockbuster* presented as part of Manchester International Festival 2023. *Economics the Blockbuster* will explore how art and artists are shaping the economy and will include works by artists and artist groups based in the UK and internationally.

The gallery is driven by a mission to work with communities to use art for positive social change, and actively address what matters most in people’s lives. This new vision has been developed as part of an international dialogue about how to evolve and adapt museums to a constantly changing world. This work is underpinned by three key concepts: learning together through making and doing; creating a place of care, consideration, and community; taking action.

www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

Gallery opening times:

Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm.

The University of Manchester

The University of Manchester is recognised globally for its pioneering research, outstanding teaching and learning, and commitment to social responsibility. The Russell Group institution is ranked the 6th best university in the UK and 38th in the world (Academic Ranking of World Universities).

A truly international university, its community includes more than 44,000 students, 12,000 staff, and 550,000 alumni from 190 countries. Together, they are tackling the world’s biggest challenges – the University’s [social and environmental impact is ranked in the top ten globally](#) (*Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings).

The University is a powerhouse of research and discovery; 25 Nobel laureates are among its former staff and students; and it was [ranked fifth for research power](#) – the quality and scale of research and impact – in the UK government’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

the Whitworth

The institution is the most popular in the UK for undergraduate applications (UCAS 2021 cycle), and it is the [most targeted university by the UK's leading employers](#) (The Graduate Market, 2022).

Our cultural institutions, found on campus, across Manchester and beyond, provide a universe of amazing ideas for you and your family to explore.

From [The Whitworth](#) and [John Ryland's Library](#), to [Jodrell Bank](#) and the recently reopened [Manchester Museum](#), there's something for everyone from the University's [cultural institutions](#).

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