

News release

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Alistair Hudson appointed as new Director for Manchester Art Gallery and The University of Manchester's Whitworth

The University of Manchester and Manchester City Council have today announced that Alistair Hudson, currently Director of the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima), will be the new Director of Manchester Art Gallery and the Whitworth.

Alistair will take up his role in the New Year. He succeeds Maria Balshaw at the Whitworth and Manchester Art Gallery following her appointment as Director of Tate earlier this year.

He brings with him a wealth of experience at the forefront of the culture sector and a strong record of championing art as a tool for social change and education. During the last three years as Director at mima, he set out the institution's vision as a 'Useful Museum', successfully engaging its local communities and responding to the town's industrial heritage, as well as placing it amongst the most prestigious galleries in the UK.

Alistair began his career at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London (1994-2000), before joining The Government Art Collection (2000-04) where, as Projects Curator, he devised a public art strategy for the new Home Office building with Liam Gillick.

As Deputy Director of Grizedale Arts (2004-14) in the Lake District, he helped the institution gain critical acclaim for its radical approaches to working with artists and communities, based on the idea that art should be useful and not just an object of contemplation.

Outside of these roles he is also Chair of Culture Forum North, an open network of partnerships between Higher Education and the cultural sector across the North and co-director of the Asociación de Arte Útil with Tania Bruguera. He was a 2015 jury member for the Turner Prize.

Alistair said: "I am completely thrilled to be taking up this post in Manchester. The city's cultural scene is one of the most dynamic and diverse in the country and Manchester Art Gallery and the Whitworth are at the heart of this. Maria Balshaw and her teams have established both institutions at the forefront of the democratisation of art, working for all of society. I look forward to driving this mission forward and working across the region in projects that have real impact in people's lives."

The dual Directorship role reflects the unique partnership over the last five years between The University of Manchester and Manchester City Council that has brought the two institutions and Manchester's historic and modern art collections into complementary alliance.

Retaining their separate governance arrangements and their distinctive personalities, the two galleries have evolved complementary programmes and joint exhibition projects that build on the strength of the city collections.

The Whitworth re-opened in 2015 after a £17 million transformation. Following the renovation, which doubled its former size and added a new glass wing overlooking Whitworth Park, the gallery has welcomed over 900,000 visitors, more than doubled its previous annual records and won numerous prizes, including the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2015.

Professor James Thompson, Vice-President for Social Responsibility at The University of Manchester, said: "The Whitworth is a hugely important cultural asset for the University and for the many thousands of visitors from the local community and further afield who use it every year.

"Alistair is dedicated to the idea of cultural institutions as a force for promoting social change, and this fits precisely with the mission of the Whitworth. We are delighted that he will be leading the gallery into the next phase of its development."

Designed by Sir Charles Barry, Manchester Art Gallery opened in 1835 to showcase the best art and ideas from around the world. A £35m four year expansion project, completed in 2002, transformed the gallery by connecting it to the adjacent Athenaeum Theatre building – also designed by Barry – and significantly expanded its exhibition space and facilities. As well as having a collection of works spanning six centuries, and an outstanding collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the gallery also has a strong reputation for staging new work.

Councillor Luthfur Rahman, Executive Member Schools Culture and Leisure, Manchester City Council, said: "Manchester already has an unrivalled reputation for culture and the arts that is acknowledged not just nationally but also internationally.

"However we're determined that more Manchester residents will benefit from and enjoy the amazing cultural facilities right on their doorstep.

"This makes Alistair's very welcome appointment as Director not just of one but two of the country's leading galleries - both of which happen to be based here in Manchester - a hugely significant moment in terms of our future aspirations for the galleries themselves and for the city."

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Notes to Editors**About the Whitworth**

The Whitworth is part of The University of Manchester. It is home to internationally renowned collections of modern art, textiles, watercolours, prints, drawings and sculpture. Created in 1889 as the first English gallery in a park, the Whitworth has developed a new vision for the role of a university gallery. A creative laboratory within an ambitious university, the Whitworth is a place where good, unusual things happen.

The Whitworth re-opened to the public on 14 February 2015 after a major £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA. The Whitworth has welcomed over 900,000 since re-opening, and more than doubled its previous annual records. The redevelopment 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. The gallery was crowned Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe. The Whitworth is supported by official paint sponsor Little Green. www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

About Manchester Art Gallery

Manchester Art Gallery dates to 1835. Originally established to showcase the best art and ideas from across the world, today the gallery's 45,000-strong collection spans six centuries of fine art, design, craft, photography and fashion.

It is particularly rich in 19th century art, including an outstanding collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It also has a reputation for staging new work by some of the most compelling artists working today, among them Turner Prize winning artist Jeremy Deller, Joana Vasconcelos, Matthew Darbyshire and Raqib Shaw.

Alongside its exhibitions run events that range from feminist 'takeovers' to wellbeing sessions, political debate and creative workshops, via award-winning family, community and schools programmes. Part of Manchester City Council, Manchester Art Gallery is one of the country's most popular, with over half a million visitors every year. www.manchesterartgallery.org

About The University of Manchester

The University of Manchester, a member of the prestigious Russell Group, is the UK's largest single-site university with 38,600 students and is consistently ranked among the world's elite for graduate employability.

The University is also one of the country's major research institutions, rated fifth in the UK in terms of 'research power' (REF 2014). World class research is carried out across a diverse range of fields including cancer, advanced materials, addressing global inequalities, energy and industrial biotechnology.

No fewer than 25 Nobel laureates have either worked or studied here.

It is the only UK university to have social responsibility among its core strategic objectives, with staff and students alike dedicated to making a positive difference in communities around the world.

Visit www.manchester.ac.uk for further information.

Facts and figures: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/facts-figures/>

Research Beacons: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/beacons/>

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