

13 December 2018

Whitechapel Gallery Announces Winner of the 2018 NEON Curatorial Award

Whitechapel Gallery is pleased to announce **Olivia Aherne** as the winner of the 2018 NEON Curatorial Award.

For the annual NEON Curatorial Award, emerging curators are invited by the Gallery to devise an imaginary exhibition proposal drawing from the D.Daskalopoulos Collection, which includes over 500 contemporary artworks by 220 leading international and Greek artists. For this year's Award proposals were submitted by aspiring curators from Greece, as well as students and alumni from the following Masters programmes: Curating the Art Museum, Courtauld Institute of Art; Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art, and Curating, Goldsmiths College.

Olivia Aherne received the award from Dimitris Daskalopoulos for her submission proposal, *[De]Railing the System*, at a ceremony held at the Whitechapel Gallery on Thursday 13 December.

Aherne's proposed exhibition, *[De]Railing the System* at BAK in Utrecht, invites the audience to consider and critique the alienating and exploitative nature of present day social, economical and political systems.

Taking four film works from the D.Daskalopoulos Collection as its cue, *[De]Railing the System* proposes a rigorous programme of discussions, workshops and performances that address these contemporary issues during a time of increasing globalisation and presiding capitalism.

For a duration of six weeks, the exhibition would be presented across three stations at BAK: *Station #1 – Portraits of the 'Other': Homogeneity & Heterogeneity* presenting works by Kutlug Ataman and Julian Rosefeldt; *Station #2 – Exploitation Under Capitalism: De-colonising the Workforce* presenting the 2007 film *Gravesend* by Steve McQueen; *Station #3 – Police, Policy, Parley, Play* culminates with the 2007 four-channel video installation *Mock Up* by Aeroout Milk.

Through this exhibition idea, the project aims to demonstrate how collections can be used to contribute to public debate around pressing contemporary issues.

The proposed exhibition would be accompanied by a publication featuring transcripts from the discussions and an in-conversation with the four exhibiting artists.

Press Release

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Whitechapel Gallery
77–82 Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

T +44 (0)20 7522 7888

F +44 (0)20 7539 3340

whitechapelgallery.org

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The judging panel for the 2018 NEON Curatorial Award are:

Chris Fite-Wassilak, independent curator and critic (London); **Helena Papadopoulos**, curator and founding director of Radio Athènes (Athens); **Kathy Battista**, Founding Director of the MA program in Contemporary Art at Sotheby's Institute of Art, New York, and Co-Founder of Art Legacy Planning (New York); chaired by **Dr. Nayia Yiakoumaki**, Curator Archive Gallery, Head of Curatorial Studies and Project Manager of NEON Curatorial Exchange & Award.

Of the winning proposal the judging panel commented: "Olivia Aherne's proposal for the exhibition *[De]Railing the System*, imagines the curatorial process as being beyond just a staging of works, combining insightful choices from the collection with multiple forms of audience interaction. Aherne's proposal is comprehensive thought out, and her professionalism and ambition shone through."

Elina Kountouri, Director of NEON said: "During the troubling rise of hyper-consumption and increased isolationism and blinkeredness, an engagement between communities and individuals is an essential antidote. It is with pride that we grant Olivia this Award, which celebrates discursive exchange as one of its central principles and look forward to keeping track of her further curatorial endeavours."

The NEON Curatorial Award was established in 2012 to champion curatorial excellence, and is part of an ongoing partnership between the Whitechapel Gallery and NEON, a non-profit organisation in Athens. Building links between emerging curators in London and across Greece, the prize celebrates the exchange of ideas and innovations in the presentation of contemporary art.

Olivia Aherne is a curator and researcher interested in discursive frameworks, collective learning, and ways in which we can facilitate and mediate multiple understandings of the world. Her recent research explores practices that disrupt or provoke society through critical analysis and action. She holds an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art London, and received a distinction under the supervision of Dr Ben Cranfield, Kelly Large and Victoria Walsh. She has curated projects in partnership with LUX (London, UK), for Lewisham Arthouse (London, UK) and at the Onassis Cultural Centre (Athens, Greece). She is also the co-founder and curator of DRIVE-THRU, a curatorial collective that works with artists practicing at the intersection of art and technology, and regularly contributes to publications such as *thisistomorrow* and *Orlando*.

Notes to Editors

- The NEON Curatorial Award is open to curators across Greece and London, including current and alumni students from The Courtauld Institute, Goldsmiths College and the Royal College of Art. The award builds on the Whitechapel Gallery's local and international networks with academic departments of curatorial studies.
- Since the Curatorial Exchange/Award programme began in 2012, a total of 142 curators from Greece and London have participated to date.
- The NEON Curatorial Award is part of the NEON Curatorial Exchange, in which curators benefit from a four-day study trip to Athens and London, including guided tours of the Athenian and London art scene. The exchange is designed to open up networking and professional development opportunities for young curators. The programme is organised by the Whitechapel Gallery and has been devised by Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies at the Whitechapel Gallery and Project Manager of the NEON Curatorial Exchange and Award.

- Applications for next year's award will open in summer 2019.
- NEON works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. As a non-profit organisation it aims to create new conversations and a larger, informed society around the arts. It aspires to change perceptions and introduce a culturally relevant and cosmopolitan activity in Greece. Founded by art collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, and under the Directorship of Elina Kountouri, NEON breaks with the convention of a permanent space as the home of activities for a collector and instead acts on a multi-locality of initiatives, spaces, civic and social contexts, where activities are developed and public accessibility is encouraged. This constitutes a diverse and open space within society, where information is disseminated and the relationship between the city, the arts and its inhabitants is reflected.
- For over a century Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Frida Kahlo, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Walid Raad. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, art courses, dining room and bookshop there is always something free to see. The Gallery is a touchstone for modern and contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.
- For further information on NEON please visit <http://neon.org.gr>
- For further information on the D.Daskalopoulos Collection please visit <http://ddcollection.org>

Press Information

Melissa Emery at SUTTON
+44 (0)207 183 3577
melissa@suttonpr.com

Lucy Hawes at Whitechapel Gallery
+44 (0) (0)207 522 7871
lucyhawes@whitechapelgallery.org

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