

PRESS RELEASE

Beaumont Street
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ELIZABETH PRICE: A RESTORATION

THE CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY AWARD

18 March–15 May 2016



Elizabeth Price at the Contemporary Art Society Awards, 2013

Elizabeth Price, winner of the 2013 Contemporary Art Society Award, has created a new work in response to the collections and archives of the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers museums, in partnership with the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford, where Price teaches. The new commission is a fifteen-minute, two-screen digital video which employs the museums' photographic and graphic archives. It is a fiction, set to melody and percussion, which is narrated by a 'chorus' of museum administrators. The film opens with the records of Arthur Evans's excavation of the Cretan city of Knossos. The administrators use Evans's extraordinary documents and photographs to figuratively reconstruct the Knossos Labyrinth within the museum's computer server. They then imagine its involuted space as a virtual chamber through which a wide range of artefacts from the two museums digitally flow, clatter and cascade.

Elizabeth Price says: 'It has been a great pleasure and privilege to work with the museums, to have such

a unique opportunity to delve into their archives and draw upon the knowledge and expertise of their staff. In my film I have tried to reflect upon the objects that the two museums hold and exhibit, through the history of their repeated depiction in photographs, prints and drawings. In this history of images and interpretations we see the objects change – and this is the basis for the story I have imagined.'

Turner Prize winner, Elizabeth Price, is an artist who uses images, text and music to explore archives and collections. While her work is informed by mainstream cinema and experimental film, it is mostly concerned with the medium of digital video and its comparative ubiquity in today's culture. Through judicious editing Price composes the material into narratives which shift between different archives and collections seeking to expose the links between materials that have very different histories.

Born in Bradford in 1966, Elizabeth Price lives and works in London. She was educated at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford and the Royal College of Art, London, and she gained a PhD in Fine Art from the University of Leeds in 1999. She has exhibited in group exhibitions across the globe, and has had solo

exhibitions at Tate, Whitechapel Gallery, and the British Film Institute, London; the New Museum, New York; and the Musée d'art Contemporain, Montréal. In 2012 she was the winner of the Turner Prize with her work, THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979, described by veteran art critic Richard Dorment in the Telegraph as, '20 of the most exhilarating minutes I've ever spent in an art gallery.'

Caroline Douglas, Director of the Contemporary Art Society, says: 'This has been an exemplary collaboration between artist and institution, and one where both have gained significantly from the experience of working together. Elizabeth Price is an artist of rare intelligence who has brought an invigorating new approach to understanding the world class collections of the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums. We anticipate that this commission will prove a benchmark for many years to come.'

Dr Alexander Sturgis, Director of the Ashmolean Museum, says: 'This award has created an extraordinary opportunity for two of the world's oldest museums to work with one of the most innovative and exciting contemporary artists, Elizabeth Price. We are profoundly grateful to the Contemporary Art Society and to Elizabeth. Her work will be the first digital artwork to enter the Ashmolean's collection and breaks new ground for the Museum's programme of contemporary art.'

Exhibition: ELIZABETH PRICE: A RESTORATION
Dates: 18 March–15 May 2016
Venue: Gallery 33, Ashmolean Museum
Press View: Thursday 17 March 2016
Admission: Free


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▪ **FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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▪ **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The Contemporary Art Society

The Contemporary Art Society champions the collecting of outstanding contemporary art and craft in the UK. Since 1910 the charity has donated thousands of works by living artists to museums, from Picasso, Bacon, Hepworth and Moore in their day, through to the influential artists of our times. Sitting at the heart of cultural life in the UK, the Contemporary Art Society brokers philanthropic support for the benefit of museums and their audiences across the entire country. Their work ensures that the story of art continues to be told now and for future generations. www.contemporaryartsociety.org

The Contemporary Art Society Award

One of the highest value contemporary art prizes in the country, the Contemporary Art Society Annual Award for Museums supports a UK-based museum or public gallery to work with an artist of their choice to commission a new work that, once completed, will remain within the museum's permanent collection.

The £40,000 prize has a major impact on both the winning museum and their chosen artist: for the winning museum,

the award allows the acquisition of an ambitious work of contemporary art of national importance, and for the winning artist (who may be showing widely nationally and internationally but whose work is not represented in collections in this country), the award is a stepping stone to greater visibility and provides access to national and international audiences.

Previous recipients of the award include: The Graves Art Gallery, Museums Sheffield (with artist Kateřina Šedá) in 2009; the Hepworth Wakefield and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (with Turner Prize nominated artist Luke Fowler) in 2010; Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery (with artist Christina Mackie) in 2011; The Collection & Usher Gallery, Lincoln (with artist Oliver Laric) 2012; Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in partnership with the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art (with artist Elizabeth Price) in 2013 and last year's winners: Harris Museum and Art Gallery (with artist Nathaniel Mellors).

About the 2013 Award:

Shortlisted artists and museums were:

Elizabeth Price for the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in partnership with the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art
Jess Flood-Paddock for Birmingham Museums
Des Hughes for the Hepworth Wakefield
Lucy McKenzie for Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

2013 judging panel:

Brian Griffiths, artist
Charlotte Higgins, Chief Arts Writer, the Guardian
Elizabeth Neilson, Director, Zabłudowicz Collection
Kirsty Ogg, Curator, Whitechapel Gallery

Elizabeth Price at the Pitt Rivers Museum:

A PROCESSION

18 March–29 May 2016

A PROCESSION is a series of photographs, etchings and screen prints made in response to the Pitt Rivers Museum's collection of photography. The installation focuses in particular upon a series of albums devised and assembled by Henry Balfour (1863–1939), first curator of the museum, using a typological index which groups artefacts from different cultures and contexts under categories such as 'clothing', 'music and games', 'magic, religion and ceremonies'.

The prints are composed as a frieze - narrow and long - and this format is used to imagine the archive as a kind of figurative space through which a formal procession or a sombre dance could be made. The original photographs have been reprinted and manually manipulated as physical objects: folded and creased in order to create shallow reliefs and free-standing constructions. Re-photographed and printed as etchings, these act as a notional 'set' for the procession and also to derive a score for its choreography.

The Ashmolean Museum

Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean Museum is the most significant museum of art and archaeology in the heart of Britain and the finest university museum in the world. Its collections are large, rich and unusually diverse, ranging from archaeology to fine and decorative arts, and from numismatics to casts of classical sculpture from the great museums of Europe. The Ashmolean is home to the best collection of Predynastic Egyptian material in Europe; the only great collection of Minoan antiquities outside Greece; the largest and most important group of Raphael drawings in the world; the greatest Anglo-Saxon collections outside the British Museum; a world-renowned collection of coins and medals; and outstanding holdings of Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Islamic art. The works and objects in these remarkable collections tell the story of civilisation and the aspirations of mankind from Nineveh and ancient Egypt, to the Renaissance, right up to the triumphs of twentieth century Europe. Admission to the Museum is free.

Open: Tuesday–Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 10am–5pm
Closed: Mondays, 24, 25 and 26 December

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