

the Whitworth

PRESS RELEASE

Monday 02 February 2026

The Manifold of Memory: Detail Within Detail Bagri Commission

20 November 2026 – May 2027



*Gulnur Mukazhanova, The Shadows of Hope 2024, Courtesy of Aspan Gallery
Photo by Anvar Rakishev*

The Whitworth and Bagri Foundation announce major new partnership with Bagri Commission 2026

The Whitworth and the Bagri Foundation announce a major new partnership. The Bagri Commission will support contemporary artists working in dialogue with Asian cultural histories, launching with a major exhibition at the Whitworth by Gulnur Mukazhanova (born 1984, Semipalatinsk), opening on 20 November 2026.

For 'The Manifold of Memory: Detail Within Detail' Mukazhanova will transform items from the gallery's historic textile collection into an ambitious, room-sized installation that connects the material and cultural histories of Central Asia with contemporary artistic practice.

Working between Germany and Kazakhstan, Mukazhanova is internationally recognised for her experimental use of felt — a material deeply embedded in the nomadic cultures of the Central Asian steppe, where it has been used for centuries to construct dwellings, clothing and everyday objects.

Mukazhanova's practice aligns closely with the Whitworth's long-standing commitment to innovation in textile research and its mission to explore how materials shape our

the Whitworth

understanding of the world. Realised through the Bagri Commission, the project supports the artist's research-led practice from Asia, cultivating space for excellent work that fosters global artistic dialogue through close collaboration.

The Bagri Commission

The exhibition marks the first Bagri Commission to be realised at the Whitworth, developed in partnership with the Bagri Foundation. The commission supports contemporary artists working in dialogue with Asian cultural histories and is rooted in close collaboration between the Foundation and partner institutions.

For Bagri Commission 2026, the Whitworth and the Bagri Foundation have worked together to develop a research-led project focused on textiles, craft and material knowledge, reflecting a shared commitment to excellence, learning and global artistic exchange.

Sook-Kyung Lee, Director of the Whitworth and Professor of Curatorial Practices at The University of Manchester, said:

“The Bagri Commission represents an important new partnership for the Whitworth and Gulnur Mukazhanova’s work speaks directly to our aspiration to cultivate transcultural dialogue through contemporary art. Her practice draws deeply on the material knowledge of the Central Asian steppe, while addressing broader questions of place, memory and identity. In dialogue with our textile collection, her work opens new ways of understanding how objects move, change and generate connections across time and geography. We are delighted to bring her distinctive voice to UK audiences as part of our expanding global programme.”

Chelsea Pettitt, Director of Bagri Foundation, said:

“We are excited to see the Bagri Commission come to life within the beautiful gallery spaces of the Whitworth. With their unparalleled textile collection, a commission that comes from craft and fabric, felt like a natural pairing. Gulnur Mukazhanova’s exquisite works, influenced by Kazakh textile traditions, expand our understanding of wool, silk and felt, and unveils new meanings and memories held within these universal materials.

Gulnur Mukazhanova, the artist, said:

“The shape and colour of my work emerge in relation to the site. I am transformed to a state of tension, full of sensations and feelings. I take in the exhibition site all at once, in one moment, and during this moment a contact is established with my past, the ancestral roots. I think of this as activation of subconscious patterns. For me felt as material is not simply a medium, but a whole language in contemporary art. Textile generally is inscribed with archetypal qualities of a certain era”

Valentin Diakonov, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, the Whitworth, said:

“Mukazhanova treats the past as a living code. A silk fragment turns into a felt sculpture: a transformation that inspires us to think with the materials and textures and invent new ways to contemplate the past – not as a finished, self-contained entity, but as a DNA sequence, ready to be reborn on a new stage of its evolution.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

For all press information, images and interview requests please contact, Emily Gates, Rees and Co via email Emily.Gates@reesandco.com or mobile: 0782777 9170, and Rakhi Sinha Jones, Senior Audiences & Communications Manager at the Whitworth: whitworthpress@manchester.ac.uk

Listings information

The Manifold of Memory: Detail Within Detail

Bagri Commission

20 November 2026 - May 2027

The Whitworth, The University of Manchester

Free entry

www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/bagri-commission-2026

About the artist

Gulnur Mukazhanova is a Kazakh artist whose work explores identity, memory and tradition through the medium of felt. She is internationally recognised for pushing the boundaries of this material, connecting its deep cultural history with contemporary forms and ideas.

About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for “the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester” it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

About the Bagri Foundation

The Bagri Foundation, established in 1990, is a family foundation driven by curiosity. Through grants and strategic partnerships, the Foundation champions unique ideas that weave the traditional and the contemporary of Asian culture. Recent projects include *Myths, Dreams and New Realities* featuring 13 emerging Asian artists co-curated with the Saatchi Gallery; a co-production, *Thikra: Night of Remembering*, by Akram Khan Company; and the first retrospective outside of India of Arpita Singh’s work at the Serpentine Gallery, London. Additionally, the family continue to support education, relief work, development and healthcare.