

GUERNICA COPY IS GALLERY HIGHLIGHT

Picasso the big draw at Whitechapel

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IN 1939, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* came to the Whitechapel Gallery—the first and only UK visit for the Spanish Civil War masterpiece.

Its powerful depiction of the German bombing of the Spanish city prompted hundreds of East End working men who saw it to sign up to fight the fascists.

Now the work is making a return of sorts. A tapestry copy, created in collaboration with Picasso, will form the centrepiece of a major exhibition at the gallery when it reopens on 5 April after a £13m refurbishment.

The life-sized woven version was commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in 1955

and, since 1985, has hung outside UN headquarters in New York, never leaving the United States.

But now it has been shipped to London for a year-long visit to the East End.

A spokeswoman said: "It has been a really delicate operation to have the work shipped over and it is such a coup for us. The Whitechapel

played host to the first and only visit of *Guernica* in

1939 and it's now doing the same with the tapestry, 70 years on."

The power and symbolism of the anti-war work remains strong today. In 2003, the tapestry was famously covered up for TV cameras when ex-US secretary of state Colin Powell gave press conferences in front of it about the Iraq war.

The tapestry is a key part of an exhibition by Turner-nominated artist Goshka Macuga, focusing on the 1939 visit as a seminal moment in Whitechapel's history.

That first visit was to raise awareness of the war. The price of entry, as stipulated by Picasso, was a pair of boots, to be shipped to the Republican soldiers on the front line.



ANTI-WAR | Picasso





JAS LEHAL

HELL ON EARTH | The Guernica tapestry now hanging at the Whitechapel

