Artists Union England
c/o GFTU
86 Wood Lane,
Quorn,
Loughborough
LE12 8DB
info@artistsunionengland.org.uk

4th March 2022

President and Vice Chancellor, University of Manchester
The University of Manchester
Oxford Rd
Manchester
M13 9PL
UK

Dear Nancy Rothwell,

Artists Union England represents visual artists living and working in England. We are horrified by the behaviour of the University of Manchester's effort to pressure Alistair Hudson to resign from his role as Director at The Whitworth Art Gallery. Coercion from UK Lawyers For Israel (UKLFI) on the University in response to the statement of solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle exhibited by Forensic Architecture during their exhibition 'Cloud Studies' at the gallery in 2021 is a direct attack on academic and artistic freedom.
We strongly oppose the punitive action by the University in stifling debate and reducing the space for artists to work and explore challenging questions.

The University has a responsibility for maintaining the integrity of a public gallery and there is an expectation the University will respect the voice of the artist.
The behaviour by the University undermines this integrity and demonstrates lack of respect for the staff working at the Whitworth and the artists exhibiting at the gallery.
There has been complete lack of failure to operate standards expected to safeguard the role and function of arts in society.
The University has lost its integrity as an independent body.

We therefore call on the University to reinstate and apologise to Alistair Hudson.
We call for an apology to the city of Manchester residents and the arts community.
We call for an apology to the global arts community.
Finally, we call for training for university decision makers around their role in running an art gallery.

Kind Regards

AUE National Executive Committee
Co-chairs Zita Holbourne & Loraine Monk
Manchester AUE Rep Ekua Bayunu
Northern Regional Organiser Theresa Easton