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Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation opens applications for £150,000 Award for Civic Arts Organisations

Cultural organisations across the United Kingdom have been invited to apply for the £150,000 Award for Civic Arts Organisations, run by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

This year's award is themed around 'Co-Creating the Future'. It spotlights organisations that are helping to transform communities, even in the most challenging of contexts – whether by igniting joy, hope, compassion and energy, improving wellbeing, forging new connections, or developing solutions.

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations began in 2020, as a response to the Covid19 pandemic. This year, many arts organisations still face difficulties: according to Arts Council Wales, the costs of staging cultural activities have risen by as much as 40 per cent. The Award offers prize funding of £150,000, one of the largest amounts for an award in the arts.

Louisa Hooper, Director of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), said: "The Award for Civic Arts Organisations is designed to support cultural projects that put community at their hearts. In difficult times, it's more important than ever that art and culture are available to everyone.

"By prioritising co-creation, this year we're looking to recognise organisations that create lasting change by working with and in communities to address their needs and concerns, deepen relationships, and use arts and creativity to enable positive change."

Previous recipients of the award include The Art House in Wakefield, which created the first studio sanctuary for asylum seekers in the UK, Project Art Works, a collective of neurodivergent artists and activists based in Hastings, and Heart n Soul and the Museum of Homelessness, both based in London.

Sydney Thornbury, CEO of The Art House in Wakefield, highlights the impact the award can have for organisations themselves: "The stability the Award provided combined with these new funding opportunities has deepened the work we were already doing and has opened up new opportunities for how we can further extend our civic impact."

Baroness Bull, chair of the Award panel, said: "The Award for Civic Arts Organisations is vitally important in encouraging and rewarding genuine engagement and co-creation with local communities. In the years since the award was founded, we've seen hundreds of entries from organisations across the UK demonstrating a commitment to changing lives through art."

The independent panel of judges are Darren Ferguson, CEO/Founder, Beyond Skin; Ica Headlam, Founder, We Are Here Scotland; Philipp Dietachmair, Head of Programmes, European Cultural Foundation; Rachel Noel, Head of Programmes and Partnerships, Tate; Rhiannon White, Co-Artistic Director, Common Wealth Theatre; Saad Eddine Said, CEO/Artistic Director, New Art Exchange; and Sydney Thornbury, CEO/Artistic Director, The Art House (main recipient of 2022 Award).

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK Branch, founded in 1956, was one of the earliest champions of community engagement in the arts. In 1959, it published the seminal report Help For The Arts, which pioneered ideas including artists and writers in residence in non-artistic institutions, and arguing for more focused and sustained funding for arts organisations outside London and the major cities.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Louisa Hooper, members of the panel and previous recipients of the award are available for quotes or interview.

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About the Award for Civic Arts Organisations

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations celebrates organisations that are rethinking relationships with the communities they serve and using the transformational power of art for individual and societal change.

This year's theme is 'Co-Creating the Future'. Open to arts organisations across the UK, the Award will recognise organisations that are unlocking the creativity of their communities to navigate today's challenges and help shape a better future. A total of £150,000 prize funding is offered to recipients.

The Award is an initiative of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), in partnership with King's College London and Culture in Flux. To find out more about the Award, the panel members, previous recipients and how to enter, visit:

<https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/our-work/the-civic-role-of-arts-organisations/the-award-for-civic-arts-organisations/>

About the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

The fundamental purpose of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is to improve the quality of life for all through art, charity, science and education. The Foundation is committed to the future, to those most vulnerable, and to the value of culture.

The UK Branch, based in London, is focused on building coalitions to tackle complex global problems. It sits at the heart of a world centre for philanthropy which enables them to deliver on the Foundation's mission using our networks, experience and way of working. They seek to look ahead, thinking globally and acting locally, to create the conditions for change by connecting across borders of all kinds – national, cultural, organisational, disciplinary and social.