

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation arts award recognises outstanding community engagement work in £150,000 fund

Arts organisations working on dementia, social care and refugee integration are recipients of the 2023 Award

A theatre company working exclusively with veterans and the elderly through Life Story Arts, a social care charity in Canterbury examining the role of care in our lives through 'Care Labs', and an art gallery in Belfast using contemporary art to support women and asylum seekers have all been selected as recipients of the £150,000 Award for Civic Arts Organisations, one of the largest prizes for arts in the UK.

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations - awarded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and now in its third year - recognises organisations helping to transform communities through art. This year's recipients share a focus on creating local impact, and giving marginalised communities voices by placing them at the heart of their work. Their methods vary, but uniting them all is the potential to improve wellbeing, drive forward life-changing conversations and forge tight-knit networks within their local areas.

Re-Live Cardiff, the main recipient of £100,000, is a theatre company putting wellbeing and health at the centre of its storytelling. Re-Live's programmes help veterans, the elderly and those with dementia to write and perform their stories as plays. The organisation also offers training for health and social care workers. Their approach to dementia care has been recognised by NHS Wales as a model of best practice.

Karin Diamond, Artistic Director of Re-Live says, "We're so thrilled to have this recognition. This work has transformed lives amongst underrepresented communities across Wales. Exploring Life Stories through the arts has a powerful role in supporting health and wellbeing, and to have that acknowledged in this way is so important. Now we have the potential to expand our work, which has already begun to grow internationally, shape policy and improve lives in Wales and beyond".

Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast received one of two £25,000 prizes. The gallery was recognised for building strong community spaces that welcome asylum seekers and help women connect and share skills. Through a series of workshops in partnership with the Anak Collective and the WOW Foundation, the gallery and the women involved in their

network created 'Welcome to Belfast' information packs, available in Arabic and Farsi, providing top tips to help other migrant women integrate in Northern Ireland.

Golden Thread's recent exhibition 'How Did We Get To: We Are Here?' sampled work from workshop participants, alongside films from the 'Songs from a Forgotten Past' programme by writer Tendai John Mutambu, which explores themes including national identity and marginality.

Sarah McAvera, Deputy Director of Golden Thread says, "We've had a fantastic response to the work we have done so far: workshops; art packs for child refugees; creating an internship; and hosting talks and discussions around how the arts sector can become more inclusive in Northern Ireland. We have big plans for the future and will be creating a Process room for communities to engage with our work, as well as developing new connections with schools and groups. We are grateful to the Award panel and the Foundation for sharing our core belief of working with all communities and the importance of amplifying their voices."

People United, a Kent-based arts charity helping young refugees tell their stories, received the other prize of £25,000. Since 2006 the charity has helped many communities in need, including bringing together young people alongside the arts and social sectors to jointly explore how to radically improve social care.

Its 'Future of Care' programme has extended to collaborations with the Kent Refugee Action Network. Young refugees and asylum seekers worked with artist Jamshid Maylanchi to create a painting, 'Sea of the Unseeable', in which waves are interspersed with ideas of what the young people see as care, based on their own experiences.

"We want to thank the panel and the Foundation for this incredible opportunity. Our collaboration with the Kent Refugee Action Network brought such a valuable perspective to our work, having the resources to continue our collaboration, enabling young refugees and asylum seekers to use art to reflect on and articulate their experiences, is so exciting".
Janice McGuinness, CEO of People United said.

Baroness Deborah Bull CBE, chair of the panel said, "In the Award's third year we received more applications than ever before, reflecting the breadth, diversity and reach of the UK's cultural sector. The quality was universally high, which made selecting three from among the initial 336 a significant challenge. The organisations we chose to receive this year's award stood out for us because of the ways in which they are pioneering and embedding

Recipient announcement release

new ways of co-creating with their communities, putting people at the heart of their thinking. Each one offers an inspiring example of how arts and culture can make a meaningful difference to communities and to individuals, and we hope that this award will support them in doing even more to enhance and transform lives."

Luís Jerónimo, Director of Equity at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation adds, "We were impressed by the breadth of work shown by this year's Award applicants and shortlisted organisations. It is a testament to how much the civic arts movement is growing, and how essential culture is to society. The Foundation is committed to supporting and nurturing this movement in the UK, Portugal and beyond. We are extremely pleased to help the recipients expand their work and can't wait to see what they do next."

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

Available for interview from the recipient organisations are:

- Karin Diamond, Artistic Director of Re-Live
- Sarah McAvera, Deputy Director of Golden Thread
- Janice McGuinness, CEO of People United

As well as the judging panel:

- Baroness Bull CBE - Panel Chair, cross bench Peer and former Vice President (Communities & National Engagement) and Senior Advisory Fellow for Culture at King's College London
- Ica Headlam - Director/Founder, We Are Here Scotland
- Philipp Dietachmair - Head of Programmes, European Cultural Foundation
- Rachel Noël- Head of Programmes and Partnerships, Tate
- Saad Eddine Said - Artistic Director and CEO, New Art Exchange
- Darren Ferguson - CEO/Founder, Beyond Skin
- Rhiannon White - Co-Artistic Director, Common Wealth
- Sydney Thornbury - CEO/Artistic Director, The Art House

Additional quotes from the panel:

Darren Ferguson, the CEO and founder of Beyond Skin Belfast, said: "Seeing an organisation in Belfast receive such recognition is fantastic. I am proud to see contemporary art in Belfast embrace co-creation and centre its focus on promoting Northern Irish artists. We're excited to see what Golden Thread will be able to achieve with this funding."

Rhiannon White, Co-Artistic Director of Common Wealth said: "Re-Live have built steadily on their work in health and the arts over the years, and we hope that this funding will allow them to build on this to become real influencers in the health and arts space, not only locally in Wales, but globally too. Their community focus has the potential to impart real long-term change."

To arrange interviews, please contact:

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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's Equity programme and delivered by the 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 Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, established in 1956, is a philanthropic institution that is dedicated to the promotion of arts, charity, science, and education. It is committed to full independence and the preservation of its legacy. Its main priority is the development of a sustainable society that provides equal opportunities to all. The Foundation directs its activities from its headquarters in Lisbon and its delegations in Paris and London.

<https://gulbenkian.pt/en/>