

News Release

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FIVE MUSEUMS ACROSS THE UK SHORTLISTED FOR ART FUND MUSEUM OF THE YEAR 2021

WINNER OF £100,000 PRIZE ANNOUNCED IN SEPTEMBER 2021



High-res images available for download via: <https://bit.ly/2V0ew0K>

Art Fund, the national charity for art, today announced the five museums which have been selected as finalists for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021, the world's largest museum prize.

The shortlisted museums are:

Centre for Contemporary Art Derry~Londonderry (Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland)

Experience Barnsley (Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England)

Firstsite (Colchester, Essex, England)

Thackray Museum of Medicine (Leeds, West Yorkshire, England)

Timespan (Helmsdale, Sutherland, Scotland)

Art Fund annually shortlists five outstanding museums for the Museum of the Year prize. The 2021 edition reflects the resilience and imagination of museums throughout the pandemic. At this moment of museums re-opening and starting their recovery, the 2021 prize highlights and rewards the extraordinary and innovative ways in which museums have, over the past year, served and connected with their communities, even when they have had to close their physical spaces.

The winning museum will be announced at a ceremony in the week commencing 20 September and will receive £100,000. The other four shortlisted museums will each receive £15,000 in recognition of their achievements.

The members of this year's judging panel, chaired by Art Fund Director Jenny Waldman, are: Maria Balshaw, director of Tate and chair of the National Museum Directors' Council; Edith Bowman, broadcaster; Katrina Brown, director of The Common Guild and Art Fund trustee; Suhair Khan, strategic projects lead at Google; and artist Thomas J Price. The judges will visit each of the finalists to help inform their decision-making, while each museum will make the most of being shortlisted over the summer through special events and activities for both new and current visitors.

Speaking on behalf of the judges, Jenny Waldman, director, Art Fund said, 'Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 attracted a flood of applications and it has been incredible to see what museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK have achieved, overcoming the challenges of the past year. Their resilience is nothing short of heroic. Our five finalists are all deeply embedded in their communities and alive to the possibilities of reaching far beyond their locality digitally. They have each shown extraordinary innovation and resolve. I would encourage everyone to visit them if they possibly can – in person or online – or make a beeline to a museum close to you this summer.'

Art Fund Museum of the Year continues its collaboration with the BBC in 2021, with coverage to be announced in due course.

#museumoftheyear

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Notes to Editors:

THE SHORTLISTED MUSEUMS

Centre for Contemporary Art Derry~Londonderry

The Centre for Contemporary Art has been exhibiting emerging artists from Northern Ireland alongside international peers since 1992. Today CCA creates opportunities for audiences to experience ambitious, experimental and engaging contemporary art and supports the development of artists through commissions, solo and group exhibitions, public programmes, artist residencies, alongside its own publishing programme. In the past year, it has supported 65 artists with paid for opportunities including social media takeovers, as well as developing its *CCA Supports* programme. This includes an online platform providing artists with information on emergency support through Government schemes and initiatives, crit groups, surgeries along with a series of Roundtable podcasts. Moreover, CCA has continued to engage with the community by displaying artwork in its windows. It presented the biennial exhibition *URGENCIES 2021* in spaces across the city such as in shop windows, theatres and a shopping centre, and delivered activity packs to hundreds of schoolchildren, essential in an area of social deprivation.

Experience Barnsley

Since opening in 2013, the collection at Experience Barnsley traces the known history of the borough from pre-historic times to the 21st century. Located in the iconic Town Hall and one of five Barnsley Museums sites, it is supported by thousands of local people who have shared their precious memories and objects, making up the displays in the Barnsley Story Gallery. As well as this there are spaces dedicated to changing, community created (temporary) exhibitions, such as the recent story of the Barnsley Canister Company as well as learning spaces and an archives centre. Experience Barnsley's recent digital activities, such as an online festival of archaeology, the daily digital jigsaw, and working with Ian McMillan, their Poet in Lockdown, has inspired local audiences to write poems, submit sketches and get creative, demonstrating how culture can make a difference to the local community with the increased digital reach to 17 million and an engagement of 942,000 across social media. In addition, thousands of care packages were sent to schools, care homes and local families through their partnerships, virtual trips to the pub kept communities connected and IT provision was catered for vulnerable groups.

Firstsite

Firstsite is a public contemporary art gallery in Colchester, making and showing exceptional art and culture that celebrates the diverse and radical people of East Anglia in order to empower all communities to be creative together and lead healthier and happier lives. In 2021, Firstsite is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its spectacular crescent-shaped building, designed by award-winning Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly, with a year of celebration projects and commissions – which kicked off with The Great Big Art Exhibition. Over the last ten years Firstsite has gained a strong, critical reputation, presenting ambitious work to be enjoyed by all in a fun and inclusive environment. Throughout the pandemic, Firstsite launched *Art is where the home is* – a series of free activity packs featuring over fifty artists that was downloaded by 92,00 households and quickly mobilised support to distribute welfare packs to shielded communities. In response to Black Lives Matter they commissioned Elsa James to make a downloadable work in solidarity and continued the Super Black festival celebrating black culture in Essex. Other significant campaigns have included *My Name is Not refugee*, an arts council collection curated by clients of Refugee Action Colchester and *Art For Life*, an exhibition commissioned by the NHS with key workers to aid understanding of the impact of Covid 19 on mental health.

Thackray Museum of Medicine

The Thackray Museum of Medicine is the UK's leading independent medical museum located between Europe's largest teaching hospital and some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in West Yorkshire. The museum building first opened in 1861 as the purpose-built Leeds Union Workhouse. New buildings were gradually added to the workhouse complex including a separate infirmary, later to be renamed St James's Hospital. By the 1990s, the old Leeds Union Workhouse building was considered unfit for modern medicine and Parliament gave permission for it to house the museum. It now has a reimagined immersive visitor experience and, through a redisplay of the collections, eleven new galleries showing how people have triumphed over disease. It became the first museum in the pandemic to host a vaccination centre delivering 50,000 Pfizer vaccines. Tackling a range of medical subjects and enterprising outreach projects, the Thackray Museum has worked with schools to generate content to reinforce the science behind handwashing, created the online exhibition *Mothers in Lockdown*, and it became a locus for food distribution and converted an ambulance to carry out outreach projects around the city.

Timespan

Located in the Scottish Highlands, Timespan comprises a local history museum, contemporary art programme, geology and herb gardens, shop, bakery and café. Timespan responds to urgent contemporary issues that are rooted in the local context of remote, rural Scotland, with a global and multi-disciplinary perspective to produce four projects a year, each aligned with broader social movements, alongside a programme of artist residencies. Timespan has operated as a social hub for the community during the pandemic and demonstrated a clear ambition for art and heritage. In the past year, the exhibition *Real Rights* reframed local history with the intersection of climate change and colonialism, the YASS (Youth Actions Social Squad) activity packs were sent to homes of local village children that tackled themes of social justice in creative ways, a consequence of which was the formation of a young gardeners' association, and the online cooking show *Recipes for a Disaster* provide popular with the feature of local produce and producers.

THE 2021 JUDGING PANEL

Jenny Waldman (Chair)

Formerly director of 14-18 NOW, the UK's official arts programme for the First World War Centenary, Jenny joined Art Fund as director in May 2020. At 14-18 NOW she oversaw a programme of commissions of over 100 new works from leading UK and international contemporary artists including Jeremy Deller, Peter Jackson, John Akomfrah, William Kentridge, Susan Philipsz, Yinka Shonibare CBE and Rachel Whiteread. Prior to this she was Creative Producer of the London 2012 Festival and Public Programmes Consultant to Somerset House Trust. Jenny is Chair of Trustees of Artangel and a member of the Barbican Centre Board. She was awarded a CBE in the 2017 New Year Honours for services to the arts.

Maria Balshaw

Maria Balshaw is director of Tate, a role she has held since June 2017. She has overall responsibility for Tate's strategic direction and day-to-day operations. She has worked to reframe the context and perspective of this long-established institution to engage with sensitive times, furthering the mission of inclusiveness and equality to connect with a wider audience. As director, Maria is also the Accounting Officer appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Previously, Maria was director of the Whitworth, University of Manchester; director of Manchester City Galleries; and director of Culture for Manchester City Council.

Edith Bowman

Edith Bowman is an award-winning radio broadcaster, podcast host and television presenter. From 2003 to 2014 Edith was one of Radio 1's lead presenters, starting out co-hosting the Colin And Edith Show with Colin Murray, then her own solo weekday afternoon show and on to the Weekend Breakfast Show. Her BBC Radio 1 Review Show won a Sony Gold Award. Her radio career continues and spans both BBC and commercial stations. A huge movie fan and respected film presenter, Edith launched her podcast 'Soundtracking' in 2016 and also presents 'Life Cinematic' for BBC4 exploring film-making with guests such as Sam Mendes and Sofia Coppola.

Katrina Brown

Founding director of The Common Guild, a highly respected visual arts organisation based in Glasgow and an experienced curator working with artists both local and international. Previously Curator and Deputy director of Dundee Contemporary Arts, Katrina began her career as a committee member at Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (1992 - 1994).

Suhair Khan

Currently based in London, Suhair works on strategy at Google. Last year she founded Open/Ended Design, a new platform for conversations in design, tech and culture. Her work in technology has been at the intersection of creativity, culture and design. Over the last decade at Google she has been involved in the development of Google's self-driving car, Waymo; building a new data-driven sustainability platform for the global fashion industry; and leading numerous successful global initiatives and partnerships at Google Arts & Culture.

Thomas J Price

Born in London in 1981, Price studied at Chelsea College of Art, followed by the Royal College of Art and is a previous recipient of the Arts Council England Helen Chadwick Fellowship. Price has recently been selected to create an ambitious public artwork to be unveiled in 2022 commemorating the Windrush generation in Hackney. Selected solo exhibitions have been held at prestigious institutions including The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, (Canada) the National Portrait Gallery (London), Royal Academy of Arts (London), Mac Birmingham (UK), Royal College of Art (London), Harewood House (UK) and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (UK).

Art Fund Museum of the Year

Art Fund has supported Museum of the Year since 2008. Its forerunner was the Prize for Museums and Galleries, administered by the Museum Prize Trust and sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation from 2003-2007. The prize champions what museums do, encourages more people to visit and gets to the heart of what makes a truly outstanding museum. The judges present the prize to the museum or gallery that has shown how their achievements of the preceding year stand out, demonstrated what makes their work innovative, and the impact it has had on audiences.

Winners 2008 - 2020:

2008 - The Lightbox, Woking
2009 - Wedgwood Museum, Stoke-on-Trent
2010 - Ulster Museum, Belfast
2011 - British Museum
2012 - Royal Albert Memorial Museum
2013 - William Morris Gallery, London
2014 - Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield
2015 - Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
2016 - Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London
2017 - The Hepworth, Wakefield
2018 - Tate St Ives
2019 - St Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff

In a unique edition of the prize in 2020, Art Fund responded to the unprecedented challenges that all museums faced by sharing the prize money equally between five winners: Aberdeen Art Gallery; Gairloch Museum; Science Museum; South London Gallery; and Towner Eastbourne.

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund has made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. www.artfund.org