



PRESS RELEASE

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**ARTISTS AND MUSEUM WORLD LUMINARIES  
GATHER IN LONDON TO CELEBRATE WINNER OF  
ART FUND MUSEUM OF THE YEAR 2016  
ANNOUNCED BY  
HRH THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE**

**The Victoria and Albert Museum was announced as the £100,000 winner of the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2016 by HRH The Duchess of Cambridge at a dinner and ceremony at the Natural History Museum, London, this evening.**

Among the 370 guests at the dinner hosted by Art Fund director Stephen Deuchar, were: artists Antony Gormley, Grayson Perry, Michael Craig-Martin, Cornelia Parker, Mat Collishaw, Gavin Turk, Yinka Shonibare; museum directors, Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery; Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate; Martin Roth, Director, V&A; Sir Michael Dixon, Director, Natural History Museum; Charles Saumarez-Smith, Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Arts; Axel Rüger, Director, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Ed Vaizey, Minister of State for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries.

Art Fund awards the Museum of the Year prize annually to one outstanding museum, which, in the opinion of the judges, has shown exceptional imagination, innovation and achievement across the preceding 12 months. It is the biggest museum prize in the world and the largest arts award in Britain, recognising that despite the current challenges of funding and uncertain political climate, the UK museums sector is thriving.

Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund director and chair of the judges, said: 'The V&A experience is an unforgettable one. Its recent exhibitions from Alexander McQueen to The Fabric of India, and the opening of its new Europe 1600 – 1815 galleries, were all exceptional accomplishments - at once entertaining and challenging, rooted in contemporary

scholarship, and designed to reach and affect the lives of a large and diverse national audience. It was already one of the best-loved museums in the country: this year it has indisputably become one of the best museums in the world.”

The winner was chosen from five finalists: Arnolfini (Bristol), Bethlem Museum of the Mind (London), Jupiter Artland (Edinburgh), and York Art Gallery (Yorkshire).

2015 saw a remarkable transformation for the V&A. It attracted nearly 3.9 million visitors to V&A sites, 14.5 million visitors online and 90,000 V&A Members, the highest in the Museum’s 164-year history. December 2015 saw the ‘Europe 1600-1815’ galleries opening to great acclaim. This major gallery restoration project transformed seven prominent galleries and redisplayed and reinterpreted this world-renowned collection of 17th and 18th century art and design. 2015 also heralded one of their most popular exhibition programmes. ‘Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty’ became the V&A’s most-visited exhibition, attracting a record breaking 493,043 visitors from 87 countries, while the ‘India Festival’ of exhibitions engaged visitors in the rich and varied culture of South Asia. While a major fundraising appeal reunited four angels originally created for the tomb of Cardinal Wolsey, one of the most powerful men in Tudor England.

The judges for Museum of the Year 2016 are: Gus Casely-Hayford, curator and art historian; Will Gompertz, BBC Arts Editor; Ludmilla Jordanova, Professor of History and Visual Culture, Durham University; Cornelia Parker, artist; Stephen Deuchar (chair of the judging panel), Director, Art Fund.

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Notes to Editors:

### About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including ARTIST ROOMS and the 2013-18 Aspire tour of Tate’s *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* by John Constable, and

makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators.

Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 122,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 230 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes the annual Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year (won by The Whitworth, Manchester, in 2015), a publications programme and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at [www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org)

### The Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year finalists were:

#### Arnolfini, Bristol

Marking 40 years of its presence in helping regenerate Bristol's harbourside, in 2015 Arnolfini embarked on an extensive programme of transformation. In addition to delivering solo shows by Richard Long and John Akomfrah, Arnolfini entered a new strategic partnership with the University of the West of England's Arts, Creative Industries and Education faculty, securing Arnolfini's continuing occupation of a prominent building and providing financial safeguarding. Arnolfini and UWE are working together to create a unique city campus: a new kind of learning environment and enriched opportunities for the public to engage with contemporary art.

#### Bethlem Museum of the Mind, London

2015 was a transformative year for Bethlem Museum of the Mind, during which it moved from inadequate accommodation to a newly refurbished art-deco building at the heart of Bethlem Royal Hospital (the UK's oldest psychiatric institution, founded in 1247). Formally launched in March 2015 by Turner Prize winning artist Grayson Perry, the museum has experienced a dramatic increase in visitor numbers, from 1,298 in 2014, to over 11,000 in 2015. Over 100 schools, universities and special interest groups have participated in the museum's learning programme. The museum's pro-active loans policy has enabled more than 20,000 people to access art from Bethlem's collections at other UK venues.

#### Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh

In 2015, Jupiter Artland expanded the existing gallery spaces with the opening of the Ballroom Gallery as an exhibition space to create another counterpoint to the natural environment of the outdoor landscape. The first large-scale UK presentation of American artist Tara Donovan's work *Untitled: Plastic Cups* was installed in this space, part of Jupiter Artland's all-female artist summer programme. They launched 'The Annual Programme to Support Emerging Artists' in the production of temporary outdoor works. In 2015, over 10,000 school children and participants took part in their learning programmes.

## York Art Gallery, Yorkshire

In August 2015 York Art Gallery reopened after an £8 million development which has seen it undergo a complete transformation. It now has 60% more exhibition space, including three state of the art galleries allowing significant artworks and exhibitions to be brought to the city. In the heart of the Gallery, the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) has been established, creating a beautiful space for the world's most representative collection of British Studio Ceramics. A new, larger education space lends itself to an extended learning programme, while the new Project Gallery shows work evolved from partnerships with the local community.

### About the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year

The 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 (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 best achieved some or all of the following criteria:

- Undertaken projects that will provide a lasting legacy or have a transformative effect on the museum
- Brought its collections to life for audiences – engaging, inspiring and extending public understanding
- Delivered an original audience development, learning or outreach programme
- Clearly won the support and enthusiasm of its visitors and users.

Winners over the past five years were The Whitworth (2015), Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2014), William Morris Gallery (2013), Royal Albert Memorial Museum (2012) and The British Museum (2011).