

Press Release

Date of issue: 30 April 2021

UK'S MUSEUMS INVITED TO APPLY FOR WORLD'S LEADING MUSEUM PRIZE



Towner Eastbourne, one of the 2020 Art Fund Museum of the Year winners. Photo credit: Marc Atkins

- **Applications open today for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021**
 - **Prize fund of £160,000**
- **Open to all UK museums who've faced the 'greatest challenge in living memory' and 'serve their communities in imaginative ways'**

More information at: <https://www.artfund.org/museum-of-the-year>
#museumoftheyear

Art Fund Museum of the Year, the world's largest museum prize, is a celebration of the UK's museums and galleries. This year it promises to reflect the resilience and imagination of museums throughout the pandemic.

At this moment of museums re-opening and starting their recovery, the 2021 prize will highlight and reward the extraordinary ways in which museums have, over the past year, served and connected with their communities. It will showcase their spirit and determination, even when most have been forced to close their doors, some for the entire year.

Jenny Waldman, Art Fund director and Art Fund Museum of the Year chair of judges, said, "The pandemic has seen museums, galleries and historic houses face their greatest challenge in living memory. The doors had to close for much of the last year, but so many museums have found imaginative ways to serve their local communities, connect with new audiences and share their collections digitally. It is nothing short of heroic. I would encourage all museums to tell us what has been achieved against the odds, so that we can reward, celebrate and share this incredible work with everyone."

Art Fund is encouraging applications from any museum, gallery or historic house, whatever their scale, and from wherever they are located in the UK, including those who have been forced to close their physical spaces throughout 2020/21. Applicants will be asked to answer three questions:

- What did you do in the last year that showed imagination and determination?
- How do you think this made a difference?
- How will you build on this in the future?

The 2021 judging panel, chaired by Art Fund director Jenny Waldman, will include: Maria Balshaw, director of Tate and chair of the National Museum Directors' Council; Katrina Brown, director of The Common Guild and Art Fund trustee; Suhair Khan, strategic projects lead at Google; and artist Thomas J Price.

This year's winner will receive £100,000 and each of the four other finalists will receive £15,000 – an increase of £5,000 on previous years to give museums additional funds when they are most needed.

The closing date for applications will be 1 June. A shortlist of five museums will be announced in mid-July and the winner revealed in the autumn.

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

There are around 2,500 museums in the UK, many of them free, including national museums, local authority museums, university museums, independent museums, historic properties and heritage sites.

Art Fund Museum of the Year complements Art Fund's charitable programme in support of museums at this time, which comprises its ongoing programme of grant giving, support and partnerships.

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.

Media enquiries

Jane Quinn/Dennis Chang, Bolton & Quinn +44 (0) 20 7221 5000, dennis@boltonquinn.com or jq@boltonquinn.com

Ruth Findlay, Art Fund +44 (0) 20 7225 4840, rfindlay@artfund.org

For downloadable press images, please go to:

<https://bibli.artfund.org/web/56a0ccf2ccb79764/art-fund-museum-of-the-year/>

Notes to editors:

About 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

2020 - 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 £2 million in adapted 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.