

PRESS RELEASE
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Five finalists announced for £100,000 Art Fund Museum of the Year 2017

Art Fund this evening announced the five museums which have been selected as finalists for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2017, the world's largest and most prestigious prize for museums.

The museums are: The Lapworth Museum of Geology, Birmingham; The National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art, Newmarket; Sir John Soane's Museum, London; Tate Modern, London; and The Hepworth Wakefield.

The announcement was made by Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund's Director, at an event at the British Museum. It was followed by a discussion about the role of museums with Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, member of the 2017 jury; Tristram Hunt, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2016; and Sarah Munro, Director of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

This year's jury, chaired by Dr Stephen Deuchar CBE, comprises: Professor Richard Deacon CBE; Dr Hartwig Fischer; Munira Mirza; and Jo Whiley.

The winning museum, which will receive £100,000, will be announced at a ceremony at the British Museum on Wednesday 5 July 2017. In addition, for the first time this year, the other shortlisted museums will receive £10,000 each in recognition of their achievements.

Speaking on behalf of the jury, Stephen Deuchar said: 'Each of these museums has had a remarkable year, reaching - in a range of ways - new heights in their efforts to serve and inspire their visitors. Whether unveiling new buildings, galleries, displays or public programmes, all the finalists have shown a real commitment to innovation and experimentation, offering fresh perspectives and new ways of seeing and understanding their collections.'

This year Art Fund is asking visitors to the five finalists to share their best museum stories, reviews, photos, memories and moments using @artfund #museumoftheyear

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Notes to Editors:

The shortlisted museums

The Lapworth Museum of Geology, Birmingham

Dating back to 1880, The Lapworth Museum of Geology is one of the leading geological museums in the UK, with the largest collection of its kind in the Midlands. The museum re-opened in June 2016 after a £2.7 million redevelopment and expansion which transformed an academic university museum into a major new public attraction for Birmingham and beyond. It has helped bring to life internationally-significant scientific collections of over 250,000 specimens, ranging from dinosaur skeletons to volcanic rocks. The Museum's core is now restored to its original 1920s grandeur and three new galleries have been unveiled, while beautifully designed, interactive displays and new visitor facilities have been created, including a state-of-the-art education room. Since re-opening, the museum has expanded its volunteer programme, diversified its audiences and education offering, and doubled visitor numbers.

The National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art, Newmarket

This centre combines three attractions in one: the National Horseracing Museum, the Fred Packard Museum and Galleries of British Sporting Art, and a flagship yard for the Retraining of Racehorses charity. 2016 was an exceptional year for the National Heritage Centre, seeing the completion and formal opening by their Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, in November. The project has created a cultural hub in the heart of Newmarket which combines the history, science, art and culture of horseracing with the finest examples of British sporting art, together with an opportunity for visitors to meet former racehorses in the restored stables and newly-built arena. The redevelopment project, which has brought the royal palace and stables originally built for Charles II back to life, also involved an imaginative public engagement programme which aimed to place the museum at the heart of the local community in the town and surrounding areas.

Sir John Soane's Museum, London

This magical museum in Lincoln Inn Fields was designed by the great neo-classical architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837) to house his outstanding collection of art and artefacts. Given to the nation upon his death and preserved in accordance with his wishes as an 'academy of the arts' for the inspiration and education of all, it has been welcoming visitors, for free, for over two centuries. 2016 saw the completion of a £7million restoration of 'lost' Soane interiors so that, for the first time in 160

years, the Museum looks as it did when Soane died. A third more space is open to the public, 10% of the art collection has been put back on display and the entirety of his collection of 40,000 items is now available online. For the first time, there is full step-free access to all public areas of the Museum, and the launch of Explore Soane has allowed people from around the world to visit from the comfort of their own homes thanks to the latest 3D scanning technology. Exhibitions last year included celebrations of the lives of Shakespeare and Charlotte Bronte, an examination on the work of Robert Adam, and Sarah Lucas: Power in Woman saw Sarah Lucas exhibit work from her British Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale within the Museum's Georgian interiors.

Tate Modern, London

Opened in 2000, Tate Modern is the national gallery of modern and contemporary art. Last year the Switch House opened, a new ten-storey building designed by Herzog & de Meuron, which welcomed 143,000 visitors in the first three days and 6 million in total since then. Displays in the Switch House range from sculpture and installation to performance and collaborative work, reflecting the radical evolution of Tate's collection. In the original Boiler House, completely new displays offer four different approaches to the last 100 years of art history, emphasising international perspectives and showcasing many more women artists. In the past year a wide range of major exhibitions has included: Robert Rauschenberg, The EY Exhibition: Wifredo Lam, The Radical Eye: Modernist Photography from the Sir Elton John Collection, Mona Hatoum, Bhupen Khakhar and Georgia O'Keeffe. 2016 also saw the launch of Tate Exchange on level 5 of the Switch House, providing a platform for other organisations from around the country to programme activities, and allowing visitors to participate in the creative process of the gallery and discuss art and its value to society.

The Hepworth Wakefield

Set in a David Chipperfield designed building overlooking the River Calder, The Hepworth Wakefield is an art gallery, museum and creative space as unique as the artist who inspired it – Barbara Hepworth (1903-75). 2016 saw an ambitious programme to celebrate their fifth birthday. Visitors increased by 21% and 26,000 people took part in learning and outreach programmes. The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture was launched to ignite debate and engagement with contemporary sculpture and reaffirm Yorkshire's position as the home of modern British sculpture, with Helen Marten winning the £30,000 prize. An acclaimed programme of exhibitions included major retrospectives of both Martin Parr and Stanley Spencer, and an installation by contemporary artist Anthea Hamilton. In the last year art collector Tim Sayer has gifted 50 works to the gallery and also bequeathed his entire collection and London townhouse. The Hepworth Wakefield also announced their plans to create an inspiring, free public garden designed by leading international designer, Tom Stuart-Smith.

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 works with over 700 museums and galleries across the UK and helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including ARTIST ROOMS, 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 123,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 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 Museum of the Year, a publications programme and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

The 2017 judging panel

Dr Stephen Deuchar CBE (Chair)

Art Fund director since 2010, Stephen Deuchar has chaired the judging panel since 2013. Before joining Art Fund, Stephen was the first director of Tate Britain (1998 – 2010), having previously spent 12 years as a curator then exhibitions director at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Professor Richard Deacon CBE

Leading sculptor Richard Deacon was the subject of a large-scale exhibition at Tate Britain in 2014, while a ten-year survey of his work – 'On The Other Side' – toured to museums in Switzerland, Azerbaijan and Germany in 2015 – 16. A collection of his writings, 'So, If, And, But' was published in 2014. He has recently completed commissions in Beijing and Tokyo and is currently building a bridge in Belgrade. In 2015 he retired from his post as professor at the Kunstakademie Dusseldorf, ending 38 years of teaching at art schools in the UK and other countries. He has been an Art Fund trustee since 2015.

Dr Hartwig Fischer

Director of the British Museum since early 2016, Hartwig Fischer began his career at the Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland, before becoming director of the Folkwang Museum, Essen, in 2006, where he oversaw a major building project with David Chipperfield architects. In 2012 he was appointed director general of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden (State Art Collections, Dresden), with responsibility for 14 museums and associated libraries, archives and research centres. Here he led on the development of significant international exhibitions and research projects and oversaw several major building projects and renovations to the State Art Collection's estate.

Munira Mirza

Arts and philanthropy advisor Munira Mirza was deputy mayor for Culture and Education at London's City Hall for eight years. Here she oversaw the city's cultural programme for the Olympics, Paralympics and Diamond Jubilee, and initiated a wide range of projects, events and funding programmes to support London's creative life. She has previously worked for a range of arts and research organisations, including the Royal Society of Arts, Tate and Policy Exchange. She has written and broadcast extensively on cultural policy and is currently chair of the Royal Opera House's Learning and Participation Committee.

Jo Whiley

Radio DJ and television presenter, Jo Whiley presents an evening show on BBC Radio 2. Previously she worked at BBC Radio 1 – which she joined in 1993 – hosting shows including The Evening Session with Steve Lamacq and The Jo Whiley Show. Throughout her career she has also presented coverage of the Glastonbury

Festival on Radio 1, Channel 4 and BBC TV, and in July 2009 she published her autobiography, 'My World in Motion'. She is passionate about museums and galleries and for BBC Radio 2 visited organisations shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year, reporting on the MAC in Belfast in 2015 and on Jupiter Artland in 2016.

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 best met 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 in exceptional ways – engaging, inspiring and extending public understanding
- Delivered an innovative programme of audience development, learning or outreach
- Clearly won the support and enthusiasm of its visitors and users.

Winners over the past six years were the V&A (2016), The Whitworth (2015), Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2014), William Morris Gallery (2013), Royal Albert Memorial Museum (2012) and the British Museum (2011).