

Notice of Motion - Council - 14 December 2020

Councillor Boulton

That Council -

- (i) notes with great Civic Pride that Aberdeen Art Gallery was a winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020; and
- (ii) congratulates Christine Rew and the Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums team in winning this highly prestigious award. The redevelopment of Aberdeen Art Gallery has been a transformational project not just for the building, but also for the city. In November last year we experienced the powerful affection with which visitors reconnected with the building and their favourite artworks - transformed, but reassuringly familiar. To see the ambition and success we wanted to achieve at the art gallery recognised by a panel of experts is the icing on the cake.

The judging panel said:

Aberdeen Art Gallery is responsible for an exceptional collection of art and heritage, rightly celebrated as among the finest in the UK. 2019 marked the culmination of the most ambitious redevelopment project in the museum's 135 years history, completely re-imagining the gallery so its extraordinary treasures, and the stories they tell can be celebrated, shared and better understood. The judges were impressed with the scale and ambition of this project, which increased the number of works on show from 370 to 1080, the beautifully executed restoration, and the commitment to involve the people of the City in the future of this rediscovered jewel on their doorstep. They look forward to seeing what the next 100 years would bring.

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.

Winning this prestigious prize will not only raise the profile of the gallery around the World but will benefit local artists. Local artists will benefit from Aberdeen Art Gallery's success as Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020, the Gallery's share of the £200,000 prize, which this year is split equally between five winners in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, will be used to support a series of small-scale commissions.

Creative practitioners (artists, makers, musicians, dancers, designers, writers and performers) living in AB postcode areas will be invited to submit proposals for a series of small-scale commissions. With these 'micro-commissions' creative practitioners are being asked to respond to the Aberdeen's outstanding collection of art and history through the creation of new work which explores the themes of identity, intersectionality and representation.

Key to the success of the commissioning process will be the appointment of an Artist Facilitator, for which expressions of interest are now being invited from creative practitioners and those with experience of facilitating projects and conversations. The Artist Facilitator will use their networks and excellent understanding of the creative sector in Aberdeen to guide both the Art Gallery and awardees through the process, supporting conversations between staff, volunteers, audiences and the creative community.

Commissioned artists will have access to the Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums' collections and specialist curatorial expertise, as well as opportunities to share their work through the public programme of talks, events, performances, workshops and displays.

The micro-commissions will be offered in two rounds, each with two commissions of £3,000 and four commissions of £850. The finished works might be small-scale, and the time spent developing and producing need not be long and drawn-out. The commissions may become part of Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums' collections and organisers are keen to discuss how this might work with non-traditional artforms.