

Radical watercolours win top prizes in The John Ruskin Prize 2019

The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Winners Announced

For immediate release

The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Shortlist Exhibition: *Agent of Change*

12th July – 24 August 2019

The Holden Gallery

Manchester Metropolitan University, Grosvenor Building, Manchester, M15 6BR



1st Prize Winner
Juliette Losq
Proscenium (2018)
Ink and watercolour on paper



2nd Prize Winner:
Shanti Panchal
Brexit (2018)
Watercolour on paper



Student Prize Winner
Chao Wang
Walk With Me (2019)
Digital video

On Thursday 11 June 2019 at the preview of The 5th John Ruskin Prize shortlist exhibition; *Agent of Change* held at The Holden Gallery, Manchester School of Art, the prize organisers, visual literacy charity The Big Draw announced the 3 winners of The John Ruskin Prize 2019 where they were presented with their share of this year's £5000 prize fund.

The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Prize Winners:

1st Prize (£3000): Juliette Losq, **2nd Prize (£1000):** Shanti Panchal, **Student / Recent Graduate Prize (£1000):** Chao Wang

Following a challenging winner selection for the 2019 panel, artist **Juliette Losq** was selected by the panel as the 1st Prize Winner for her hand painted 3D installation '*Proscenium*' - an immersive installation based on a 'Teleorama' optical device. Measuring an impressive 3 metres in height and width the intricately layered work defies belief as the restrictive boundaries of watercolour are boldly rejected. The 2019 selection panel were taken by the form and content of the work, the elegant brushwork at odds with the brutality of urban decay brought full circle as nature reclaims its rightful place.

Losq Comments:

"I share with John Ruskin an interest in both ruins and watercolour as a medium. My work focuses on marginal areas within cities and towns - those areas awaiting redevelopment, including post industrial remnants and waste ground. Unlike the ruins of previous eras these sites are considered



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unworthy of preservation. By recreating the experience of such locations on a large scale I aim to elevate their status and, in a sense, preserve them as havens from the progress of both time and industrial development.

By working on large scale and building up the complexity of the image I aim to challenge the notion of watercolour as a sketching medium or one to deployed on a small scale. Like Ruskin I am interested in the intricacy of nature and using draughtsmanship and craft to explore this.

The John Ruskin Prize provided me with an opportunity to show my installation, Proscenium, to a new audience in the prestigious and unique setting of the Holden Gallery”.

On Losq’s Prize Winning piece ‘Proscenium’, Tim Brennan; Head of Art, Manchester Art School and member of the 2019 selection panel comments:

“Ruskin would’ve admired this work, both formally and in its content. Its urban pastoral post humans would’ve resonated with him. In spite of humans, the theatre of nature prevails. It’s an extremely thoughtful piece”.

Awarded the 2nd Prize is painter **Shanti Panchal** for his powerful watercolour ‘Brexit’. The prize panellists were struck by the artist’s control of the medium, simultaneously bold and affecting. On an issue (Brexit) where everyone has an opinion, this piece tells the story of the people who have made the UK their home and been unapologetically rejected by the nation. A place they believed to be an integral part of their identity.

On his piece ‘Brexit’ Panchal comments:

“Brexit has gone on for such a long time that it has now become so toxic. It has divided opinions and touched almost every person one way or the other in this country. I was compelled to work on this intuitively and its only with the collective voice of the this country that we stand any hope of re-uniting a broken nation.

I am delighted to have been awarded this prize - especially this year as I was compelled by the theme: 'Agent of Change' - most appropriate in this rapidly changing world which will have a huge impact on every one of us.”

The Student Prize winner **Chao Wang**’s memorising digital video ‘Walk with Me’ is an exquisite display of the poetic potential of digital art. The work alludes to a post-apocalyptic world, void of colour and navigated by the viewer as if taking a relaxing stroll in the countryside. It warns of a world, where nature is a distant memory, the calmness of the stroller in this world of tar at odds with the viewer’s fear of such a place.

In his prize acceptance speech Wang commented:

“Its such an honour to win this prestigious award, especially as in my home country being an artist is an impossibility. Being part of The John Ruskin Prize exhibition ‘Agent of Change’ and indeed winning this incredible accolade is an honour – this is a show that criticises power, the impact of human action and the devastating consequences of human inaction”.

The shortlist and exhibition:

In response to a nationwide call for artists, designers and makers, The John Ruskin Prize 2019 saw a record number of entries. Responding to this year’s prize theme: *Agent of Change*, 41 artists and designers, working across a broad range of disciplines, were selected from over 1260 entries for The John



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Ruskin Prize 2019. The 2019 selection panel considered over 3000 artworks by artists at all stages of their careers.

The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Prize Finalists are:

Balal Aquil, Omid Asadi, Lucy Burscough, Tracey Bush, Duncan Cameron, Faye Claridge, Judy Clarkson, Wayne Clough, Connor Coulston, Sarah Craske, Smout Allen Design Research, Sarah Duncan, Lisa Earley, Kate Genever, Nigel Goldsmith, Evagelia Hagikalfa, Martin Hearne, Michelle Heron, Harriet Mena Hill, Marguerite Horner, Benedict Hughes, Juliette Losq, Pinkie Maclure, Farwa Moledina, Julie Moss, Fronc Ng, Kazuki Nishinaga, Shanti Panchal, Lucy Pass, Lee John Phillips, Hilary Powell, Mike S Redmond & Faye Coral Johnson, Gabrielle Roberts-Dalton, Conor Rogers, Katrin Spranger, Emilia Symis, Kathy Taylor, Danny Treacy, Chao Wang, Pip Woolf and Colin Yates.

The 2019 shortlist was selected by:

Hew Locke, Artist; **Barbara walker MBE**, Artist; **Jessie Brennan**, Artist; **Dr Rachel Dickinson**, Director of Education, Guild of St George and Principal Lecturer Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University; **Dr Jonathan Foyle**, Architectural Historian, Broadcaster & Artist, **Professor Tim Brennan**, Artist & Head of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University and **Kate Mason**, Director, The Big Draw

The shortlist exhibition 'Agent of Change' is curated by: Rachel Price and Zoe Watson

On this year's exhibition the Prize's Managing-Director, Rachel Price comments:

"With the values of the radical Victorian polymath and social reformer John Ruskin at its core, and with his legacy in the spotlight in the bicentenary year of his birth, we are proud that the often challenging themes explored through The John Ruskin Prize resonate so strongly with contemporary artists and designers across the nation.

The overwhelming response to this year's theme 'Agent of Change' highlights the active role of artists as perception shifters and catalysts of positive change in our society. The selected artists' concerns are as diverse as their material approaches with works that are teeming with passion, dedication and wit. As Ruskin did some 150 years ago, the selected artists shed new light and innovative perspectives on societal, political and environmental issues - the collective voice from the 2019 shortlist is a refreshing antidote to apathy - with a stark and sometimes satirical reminder that sitting on the fence never changed a thing".

As John Ruskin once said:

"What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do."

For this year's shortlist the theme: 'Agent of Change' is explored through painstaking projects, in depth research, tongue in cheek criticisms, and unapologetic protest. The shortlist have created a collective sense of urgency as capitalism, consumer culture, toxic debt, climate change, class and cultural divides; issues both global and closer to home are top of the agenda.



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The Prize

The John Ruskin Prize is now in its 5th year and in a nationwide call invited entries from established and emerging artists and designers aged 18 or over living, working or studying in the United Kingdom. The Award is £5000 with £3000 going to the Winner, and £1000 going to both the Second Prize winner and Student Prize Winners.

The shortlist exhibition, ***Agent of Change***, will be on display from 12th July – 24th August 2019. The exhibition is free and open to all.

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CONTACT

For quotes, images and interviews, please contact Rachel Price on 0203 758 4118 or email press@thebigdraw.org.

NOTES TO EDITOR

The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Shortlist Exhibition: ***Agent of Change***

The Holden Gallery, Manchester Metropolitan University, Grosvenor Building, Cavendish St, Manchester M15 6BR

Preview & Prize Giving: 6 – 8.30pm, Thursday 11th July 2019

Shortlist Exhibition: 12th July – 24th August 2019

Open Wednesday – Saturday 12 – 6pm (late on Thursdays until 7pm), Free entry.

Supporters: The John Ruskin Prize 2019 has been made possible with the generous support of Prize Founders, Ruskin's own charity the Guild of St George and our 2019 Prize partners: The Holden Gallery, Manchester School of Art and Manchester Metropolitan University.

The John Ruskin Prize was inaugurated in 2012 by The Guild of St. George and The Big Draw (formerly the Campaign for Drawing). The John Ruskin Prize is the fastest growing multi-disciplinary art prize in the UK. The Prize aims to uphold John Ruskin's beliefs whilst challenging the nation's artists to respond to challenging themes. The resulting exhibitions have attracted diverse audiences and received wide critical acclaim. For further information please visit: ruskinprize.co.uk

The Big Draw is a visual literacy charity promoting the universal language of drawing as a tool for thought, creativity, social and cultural engagement. The Big Draw (formerly the Campaign for Drawing) was launched in 2000 by The Guild of St George, - the charity founded by John Ruskin in 1871 - becoming an independent arts education charity in 2006. In addition to running The John Ruskin Prize and a visual literacy programme, the charity is the founder and driving force behind the world's biggest celebration of drawing, The Big Draw Festival: thebigdraw.org

The Holden Gallery is situated at the centre of Manchester School of Art, housed in the original building which was built in 1880. The gallery space has remained an exhibition space since its initial purpose as the Textile Court, and retains many of its original architectural features.



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The Holden Gallery has a fully curated exhibitions programme that focuses exclusively on recent developments in international contemporary visual art, exploring thematic ideas through the work of key established and mid-career artists. Admission to the Holden Gallery is free for everyone.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a polymath. As a writer, he commanded international respect. He was an art critic and an art patron, a skilled draughtsman and talented watercolourist, and a fierce critic of prevailing social and political norms. He wrote about nature and architecture, craftsmanship, geology, botany, Greek myth, education. Driven by his deep faith in social justice, he established the Guild of St. George in the 1870s to right some of the social wrongs of the day and make England a happier and more beautiful place in which to live and work.

The Guild of St George is an educational charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy, founded by John Ruskin in 1871. Today, with more than 270 Companions, it continues to promote Ruskin's values in the modern world. As well as its Ruskin Collection, cared for by Museums Sheffield, the Guild owns land in the Wyre Forest and elsewhere, and funds public engagement projects throughout the UK, together with conferences, publications, lectures and symposiums, all designed to encourage the use of Ruskin's ideas to make the world a better place to live in.

In 2000 the Guild founded The Campaign for Drawing. This grew into the modern, independent charity, The Big Draw, to which the Guild still makes an annual donation. In 2012, the Guild founded The John Ruskin Prize with The Big Draw. Like many of the Guild's activities, the Prize aims to encourage people to explore Ruskinian values and ideas in the context of contemporary life. Visit guildofstgeorge.org.uk for more information.

Ruskin200 is worldwide celebration and gathering of the many people, places and enterprises devoted to Ruskin and his work to mark the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth (8 February 1819). For a selection of upcoming activities as part of Ruskin200 please visit: ruskin200.com

This summer, **Ruskin in Manchester** celebrates the legacy of John Ruskin (1819-1900) in Manchester, in the year that marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of this visionary thinker, with a programme of public

events taking place across summer 2019. As an artist, writer, social reformer, philanthropist and ecologist, Ruskin's is a legacy that shapes our world and lives in so many ways. Whilst Ruskin was troubled by the pollution and poor working conditions he found in 19th century Manchester, he would come to have a strong association with the city and influence the changes that took place to address such issues. Supported by the Guild of St George (the education charity founded by Ruskin in 1871) and Manchester Metropolitan University, Ruskin in Manchester will see cultural organisations across the city partnering to explore the world of Ruskin through exhibitions, talks and activities. For events please visit: ruskinprize.co.uk/manchester

For further information please contact:

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