

The Art House

The Art House in Wakefield is awarded The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Award for Civic Arts Organisations 2022



Wednesday 23 March 2022: The Art House in Wakefield is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Award for Civic Arts Organisations 2022. The second edition of this prestigious annual Award, founded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), in partnership with King's College London, received more than 200 applications from across the UK and The Art House will receive £100,000 for its agility in responding to the needs of the local community and putting co-creation at the centre of its work during the pandemic.

The Art House is one of the UK's most dynamic, entrepreneurial, and experimental arts organisations, with a deep-rooted commitment to generating transformational creative opportunities with and for artists and its local communities. Established in 1994 by a group of disabled and non-disabled artists in response to the lack of accessible art studios in the region, The Art House was founded on the principle of breaking down barriers around access to creative opportunities. Over the past three decades, and under the

leadership of Sydney Thornbury since 2017, this commitment - most notably to those artists and communities who have been traditionally marginalised and overlooked - has not only continued but has flourished.

During the pandemic, The Art House delivered a far-reaching, holistic – and above all, creative – response to support the myriad, often urgent, needs of artists and members of its local communities. This included: providing grants and commissions totalling more than £300,000 to locally-based artists and creative businesses who were unable to access government-led schemes; repurposing its interim-use spaces for food distribution; partnering with three local charities to house an emergency mental health drop-in service and NHS peri-natal mental health sessions; creating and distributing 1000 handmade activity boxes for local families; as well as planting 1000 sunflowers to cheer up passers-by.



Sydney Thornbury, CEO and Artistic Director of The Art House: *“At The Art House we believe that creativity can empower people and transform communities, and that it is everyone’s birth right to have access to it. Arts organisations have more power to create social impact than maybe they realise. We sit at the centre of our communities and can create a space where people from quite disparate backgrounds can come together and join in a shared experience. That matters. Our leaders and workforce are bright, entrepreneurial, lateral thinkers who can bring a fresh approach to entrenched problems. That matters too. And I have seen the positive changes that engagement with the arts can make to people’s lives and wellbeing, which might be the thing that matters most of all. The work that arts organisations do in the community is not the icing on the cake, it is the cake. The Art House is deeply honoured to be the main awardee of the 2021 Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Award for Civic Arts Organisations. It is a great validation of the work The Art House is doing and a tribute to all of the amazing people who engage with us and whom we consider part of our extended family. Thank you. The Art House is a home for us all, and together we will continue to create community, as well as art.”*

The Art House brings together Wakefield’s largest collection of artists under one roof and is the only purpose-built accessible studio space in West Yorkshire. Home to 50 artist studios, a gallery, an event space, three makers spaces, a café and shop, it is open seven days a week and offers a **vibrant year-round exhibition and events programme** featuring

international and homegrown visual artists. 2022 highlights include: a revisited retrospective from acclaimed sculptor and installation artist, Perminder Kaur (3 September to 13 November 2022), a solo exhibition debut from recent Leeds University Fine Art graduate, Hang Zhang (30 November 2022 to 5 February 2023) and *Dreamland* (30 March to 5 June 2022), the most comprehensive solo exhibition to date from the Iranian-born-now-UK-based artist and Paralympic runner, Mohammad Barrangi.

The Art House is the **UK's first Studio of Sanctuary**, and in 2017 Mohammad Barrangi was one of the first beneficiaries of this trailblazing residency programme that offers time, space and bespoke support to professional artists and creatives from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to rebuild their portfolios, develop their practice and establish professional networks as new arrivals to the UK and to the city of Wakefield. Over the past five years, Barrangi has exhibited in London – including at Tate Modern's Tate Exchange – as well as internationally, scooped numerous awards and had two works acquired by the British Museum. His upcoming exhibition at The Art House will feature large-scale murals alongside his first-ever sculptural works, developed using ground-breaking 3D-printing technology with the support of XPLOR, the Wakefield-based state-of-the-art research and innovation centre for entertainment technology and production.

Artistic expression is for all generations, and in 2021 **The Art House adopted a local school, Lawfield Lane Primary**. Once a week, children aged 9 to 11 take part in free ceramics, textiles and printmaking classes as part of the school's progressive arts curriculum in The Art House's professional makers spaces. These classes give the children a hands-on experience of what artists do, an opportunity to develop their creative thinking skills - skills that can be applied in all areas of their lives - as well as the confidence to know that culture is for them. Building on the success of this partnership, and thanks to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Award, The Art House intends to launch a brand-new pay-what-you-can Saturday Creativity School for children and young people across the community.

Creativity extends far beyond the walls of the arts centre and a 7-minute stroll away, The Art House runs a one-of-a-kind creative and community-focused businesses initiative, in partnership with and based at The Ridings Shopping Centre. **Makey Wakey** brings empty spaces in the shopping centre vibrantly back to life by providing free access to these vacant commercial lots to artists, arts organisations, charities, community groups and social enterprises and supporting them – through tailored business, mentoring and partnership support - to realise their creative and entrepreneurial ambitions. First launched in January 2019, today Makey Wakey comprises of more than 20 spaces in The Ridings employing 23 people. All are signposted under its vibrant yellow visual branding - including a children's theatre company, a baby clothes exchange shop, The Real Junk

Food Project, a ceramics club and a craft recycling social enterprise. Makey Wakey is an initiative that responds directly to an urgent nationwide need to reinvigorate high streets up and down the country, by encouraging landlords, artists and social enterprises to work together to benefit the wider community, provide employment, and boost the local economy; plans are already underway to grow its footprint beyond Wakefield.



NOTES TO EDITORS'

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[CLICK HERE](#) for accompanying press images

About The Art House: The Art House provides time, space and support for artists, makers and creative businesses to develop their practice. It is a place where artists and audiences of all kinds are welcome to experience contemporary visual art and learn about the practice of being an artist through a year-round programme of exhibitions and events. Established in 1994 by a group of disabled and non-disabled artists, The Art House is both a visual arts development agency and registered charity. Alongside a programme of training, mentoring, residencies and commissions, The Art House develops a range of projects designed to engage audiences in the artistic process and contribute to an essential discourse around diversity in contemporary visual arts practice. The Art House is an NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) with Arts Council England and is the main recipient of The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Award for Civic Arts Organisations 2022. It manages the Wakefield Artwalk on behalf of the city's cultural organisations, Makey Wakey - an ongoing partnership with The Ridings Shopping Centre to repurpose meanwhile retail spaces and is the UK's first Studio of Sanctuary, a role which sees them engage Wakefield's asylum seeker, refugee, and settled communities in creative projects.

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