



THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS ANNOUNCES THE CHARLES WOLLASTON AWARD WINNER 2021

The prestigious £25,000 Charles Wollaston Award has been won by Naomi Wanjiku Gakunga for *Wetereire – Waiting* in the Royal Academy's 253rd Summer Exhibition (open until 2 January 2022). Established in 1978 and presented to the 'most distinguished work' in the exhibition, it is one of the most significant art prizes awarded in the UK.

Naomi Wanjiku Gakunga's sculpture is informed by her upbringing amongst the Kikuyu people of Kenya. Working primarily with metal and wire, her unique works are created by combining traditional techniques with contemporary processes in a meditation upon the progression from past to present. Galvanized sheet metal - known as *mabati* - is intertwined with Gakunga's childhood memories when grass thatch roofs on Kenyan homes were eventually replaced by *mabati*. Gakunga's abstract, wall-based sculpture, *Wetereire – Waiting*, is made using the dying, weaving and oxidation techniques that the artist frequently employs in her practice. These processes transform the raw sheet metal producing a range of chromatic effects. The resulting work references memory and experience whilst reflecting upon wider issues such as the passing of time and the movement of peoples.

The judges for this year's award were Sarah Howe, David Remfry RA and Professor Carol Tulloch. Previous winners: Joe Tilson RA (2019), Mike Nelson RA (2018), Isaac Julien RA (2017), David Nash RA (2016), Rose Wylie RA (2015), Wolfgang Tillmans RA (2014), El Anatsui Hon RA (2013), Anselm Kiefer Hon RA (2012), Alison Wilding RA (2011) and Yinka Shonibare RA (2010).

Naomi Wanjiku Gakunga Biography

Gakunga studied and lectured in design at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, before continuing her graduate work at the University of California, Los Angeles, USA. She has been included in exhibitions in the USA, UK, France, Brazil and Poland. In 2013, October Gallery presented her first UK solo exhibition *Ituika - Transformation*. In 2016, she was shortlisted for the Financial Times/Oppenheimer Funds Emerging Voices Awards and in 2017, her sculpture *Mūgogo - The Crossing* was exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts' Summer Exhibition, London, UK. She lives and works in San Antonio, Texas, USA.

Prizes 2021

Each year the Royal Academy of Arts presents a number of prizes for outstanding works within the Summer Exhibition. This year the following have been awarded:

The Jack Goldhill Award for Sculpture £10,000 for a sculpture:

1242 – Off IC3, Emmanuel Awuni

The British Institution Awards for Students Two prizes of £5,000 and £3,000 for work across a comprehensive range of creative disciplines from painting to architecture:

£5,000 – 506 – *Lockdown: A Self Portrait*, Mary Whitlock

£3,000 – 762 – *Anchor*, Pam Evelyn

The Hugh Casson Drawing Prize £5,000 for an original work on paper in any medium, where the emphasis is clearly on drawing. The prize will be shared:

1303 – *Experiencing British Art History*, Nelly Dimitranova

301 – *The Final Assembly*, David Winthrop

The Arts Club Award £2,500 awarded to an artist aged 35 or under for a work in any medium except architecture:

326 – *“Dis Wan Na Clone”*, Ofunne Azinge

Sunny Dupree Family Award for a Woman Artist £4,000:

373 – *Loop (Yellow)*, Angela de la Cruz

Notes to Editors

Summer Exhibition 2021

Wednesday 22 September 2021 – Sunday 2 January 2022

10am – 6pm Tuesday to Sunday (last admission 5.30pm)

Summer Exhibition 2021 online

Many of the works in the Summer Exhibition 2021 are available to browse and buy online through the [Summer Exhibition Explorer](#).

Social Media

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

Facebook /royalacademy

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Twitter @royalacademy

#RASummer

About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy is an independent charity. It does not receive revenue funding from the government so is reliant upon the support of its visitors, donors, sponsors, patrons and loyal Friends.

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Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD

For further press information, please contact Annabel Potter on 020 7300 5615 or annabel.potter@royalacademy.org.uk

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