



The Arts Foundation Futures Awards

PRESS RELEASE

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The Arts Foundation Announce 2023 Futures Awards
£65,000 prizes awarded at ceremony in partnership with Leeds 2023: Year of Culture

Images and press kits: <https://tinyurl.com/AF2023Winners>

The Arts Foundation announce the five recipients of The Arts Foundation Futures Awards
£10,000 Fellowships as:

Louise Lenborg Skajem, Bio Design Fellow
Akeim Toussaint Buck, Dance Theatre Fellow
Emily Mulenga, Digital Art Fellow
Iceboy Violet, Electronic Music Fellow
Gaia Holmes, Place Writing Fellow

The five winning Fellows were revealed at an Award Ceremony on 23 February 2023,
presented in partnership with Leeds 2023: Year of Culture, at the Howard Assembly Room,
Opera North, featuring a special welcome address from British visual artist, [Claudette
Johnson MBE](#).



The annual Arts Foundation Futures Awards support the UK's most promising artists and creatives at a pivotal moment in their career, providing £65,000 in unconditional grant funding, awarding five transformative £10,000 Fellowships, with all Shortlisted Artists receiving £1,000 towards the development of their practice.

The awards mark 30 years of the Arts Foundation's support for independent artists in the UK since it was founded in 1993, and whose alumni include eminent artistic practitioners, such as Wayne McGregor, Asif Kapadia, Ali Smith, Rufus Norris and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

Mary Jane Edwards, Director of The Arts Foundation said:

“The ingenuity and breadth of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023 Fellows and Shortlisted Artists is hugely energising. Unfortunately, we are still navigating a difficult period for our cultural sector, most keenly felt by our independent artists and freelancers. Now, more than ever the opportunity afforded by the Arts Foundation Futures Awards in recognising and financially supporting the livelihoods of artists and creatives feels so vital and urgent. We have no doubt all the artists’ respective work will have a significant impact in their respective cultural fields, and it is a privilege to support their artistic practice and career trajectories.”

Bio Design Fellow: Louise Lenborg Skajem

The Bio Design Award was presented by Sarah Wigglesworth, Founder of Sarah Wigglesworth Architects, who said:

“The winning Fellow, Louise Lenborg Skajem stood out for the quality of her practice and original ideas, which have a practical application to a societal issue. While being visionary, one of her projects, ‘Resting Reef’ was also eminently realisable and a beautiful solution that regenerates ecologies. It was also superbly communicated.”

[Louise Lenborg Skajem](#) is an interdisciplinary designer who uses material exploration and biomimicry as methods to design innovations that tackle climate change. Louise's creative journey started after she completed a foundation year in Paris, graduated with a BA in Design from Goldsmiths University and a MA/MSc in Global Innovation Design at The Royal College of Art and Imperial College London. As a designer, Louise enjoys mixing scientific research and innovative thinking to create novel sustainable ideas for the real world. Her most recent project [Resting Reef](#) is an eco-burial service that uses crushed oyster shells and bone ash to build reef structures that enhance marine growth. After being shortlisted for the prestigious Terra Carta Design Lab, Louise and her co-founder Aura Murillo decided to pursue their ambition to make Resting Reef a reality.

The UK funeral services industry in the UK is estimated to be worth nearly £3 billion, and the average cost of dying in the UK is £9,200 (SunLife, 2023). Resting Reef aims to redirect this money away from polluting, outdated practices towards impactful restoration projects while

providing meaningful legacies. The project is currently in a start-up development phase, with plans to launch its first product in Spring 2023.

The Bio Design Award is supported by The David Collins Foundation and the independent jury members were; Leonie Bell, Director of V&A Dundee; Sarah Wigglesworth, Founder of Sarah Wigglesworth Architects and Natsai Audrey Chieza, Founder and CEO of Faber Futures who added:

“Louise Lenborg Skajem succeeds in bridging sensitive matters of life and death with a novel material intervention that is rooted in ecosystems study and practices of care for the living world.”

Dance Theatre Fellow: Akeim Toussaint Buck

The Dance Theatre Award was presented by Toni Racklin, Head of Theatre and Dance at The Barbican, who said:

“Our heads were turned by Akeim Toussaint Buck, the winning Fellow of the award, whose clearly-drawn plans on inspired ways to develop their practice were innovative and exciting. A massive talent who is thoroughly deserving of this award.”

[Akeim Toussaint Buck](#) is a Leeds-based performer and maker, born in Jamaica and raised in England. After graduating from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in 2014, Akeim has been immersed in many cross-disciplinary projects working with various artists and communities from around the world. His focus as a maker and collaborator is to combine expressive skills such as: dance, poetry, beat-box, singing and acting through performance and storytelling that reach beyond existing dance audiences. His work aims to challenge, enlighten, and entertain the spectator or participant. Audiences are not just observers; they are implicit in the experience. Akeim’s work reflects on our reality, looking at ongoing socio-political situations with a humanitarian intention. Akeim’s choreography and performance work includes: Snakebox’s PLAY, Windows of Displacement, Reckoning, Sib Y Osis, Beatmotion and Souls & Cells. Akeim will be participating in the [Sharjah Biennial 15](#) in 2023.

The Dance Theatre Award is supported by The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund, and the independent jury members were Artist, Florence Peake; Head of Theatre and Dance at The Barbican, Toni Racklin; and Cassa Pancho MBE, CEO & Artistic Director of Ballet Black who added:

"I was really excited by Akeim Toussaint Buck's work. He has a clear and articulate vision for his practice, and I really look forward to following his career as it develops. This kind of award is vital to those who aren't supported by a well-funded organisational infrastructure to get the time and space mentally and financially to be able to focus on their art."

Digital Art Fellow: Emily Mulenga

The Digital Art Award was presented by Birmingham-based Artist & Curator, Antonio Roberts who said:

“Emily Mulenga is an extraordinary artist whose practice exemplifies artists working digitally today. Her video work explores the many areas and complexities of digital identities, which they do playfully and with a deep knowledge of internet culture. I am excited to see how their practice evolves, particularly by embracing code and generative practices.”

[Emily Mulenga](#) is a multimedia artist whose practice spans video, digital collage, sculpture and live coded music. Using visuals and sound that draw upon video games, cartoons and the internet, her practice explores themes of capitalism, feminism, technology, millennial nostalgia, love and existential anxieties. Emily’s output reflects a ravenous consumption of digital media, where gloss and escapism meet humour and unease, spanning past, present and future. Emily has exhibited internationally and led projects at Tate Britain, Firstsite and Camden Art Centre. She holds an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts, funded by the Frank Bowling Scholarship.

Emily’s work was recently displayed at the [Southbank Centre](#), and she is currently part of the group show, The Advantages Of Being Boneless And Incomplete at [Banner Repeater](#), until 1 April 2023.

The Digital Art Award is supported by The Yoma Sasburg Estate, and the independent jury members were; Stephanie Hankey, Executive Director and Co-founder of Tactical Tech; Mark Leckey, Artist; and Artist & Curator, Antonio Roberts.

Electronic Music Fellow: Iceboy Violet

The Electronic Music Award was presented by Nemone Metaxas, DJ & Broadcaster and Music Artist Fink (Fin Greenall), who said:

“Iceboy Violet was a contender for the award from the first bars that blast out at you from the more alternative spaces of Electronic Pop. Their continued fire and presence in a scene that has frankly been decimated by Covid showed such grit and determination, such vision and such singular focus.”

[Iceboy Violet](#) is a Manchester-based producer, vocalist and DJ. Their sound combines dark melancholic electronics with a powerfully raw vocal delivery. Their lyrics are honest and vulnerable, inspired by the energy and resistance of Grime music in particular and MC music in general, dancing between genres with an aim to erode the boundaries we face collectively.

Iceboy Violet recently performed at CTM festival in Berlin and is giving a [CDR Artist Talk at Soup Kitchen in Manchester](#) on 29 March 2023.

The independent jury members were Artist, Gaika; Music Artist, Producer and Founder of R'COUP'D Records, Fink; and Nemone Metaxas, DJ & Broadcaster, who added:

“I loved hearing Iceboy Violet’s sound whilst learning more about their desire to connect at more emotional depth with their audience. It feels vital that their voice continues to be heard, not only in expressing their own vulnerability but in encouraging others to express theirs. They are a huge talent thoroughly deserving of this award.”

Place Writing Fellow: Gaia Holmes

The Place Writing Award was presented by Author Eric Ngalle Charles, who said:

“I was drawn to Gaia Holmes’s work because I admire writers who weave in and out different genres. I was intrigued by what informs her practice, and she added meaning to place I never knew existed. I can see her father in the flimsy caravan and hear the tears of Halifax as it is being torn. I look forward to seeing how she uses and develops these materials into what she says she feels - is a great vantage point from which to gauge a true perspective of the world.”

[Gaia Holmes](#) is a Halifax-based writer and author of three poetry collections, Dr James Graham’s Celestial Bed, Lifting The Piano With One Hand and Where The Road Runs Out.

[Where The Road Runs Out](#) charts the story of Gaia’s journey to Orkney to provide emotional and palliative care for her father. It transports the reader to the edge of things: to remote, treeless islands, to dark, unfathomable mines, to the gaping maw of grief. Gaia has been a gallery attendant, a cleaner, a lecturer, a lollipop lady and a busker and has lived in churches, caves, deserted beach houses, tall terraces and caravans. Now she is a creative writing tutor and pet/house sitter and lives in Halifax in a tiny flat above the tree line on the top floor of a ramshackle Georgian mansion that Dorothy and William Wordsworth used to visit.

Gaia is currently working on her debut collection of short stories entitled, He Used To Do Dangerous Things.

The independent jury members were: Eric Ngalle Charles, Author and PhD. Researcher at King's College London and trustee of Literature Wales; Anita Sethi, Writer, Broadcaster, and Journalist; and Claire Armitstead, Author and Associate editor, culture of The Guardian who added:

“In Gaia Holmes, I believe we have found a writer who is in the process of enlarging her territory, and is doing so with a sensitivity, thoughtfulness and eloquence that are exciting to see. I was moved by the physicality of her evocation of the death of her father in a caravan on an island next to the restoration project that was his life's work. I look forward to seeing her bring this sensibility to bear on her own environment in Halifax, as she further explores the margins between poetry and prose, fiction and nonfiction.”

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023 Shortlisted Artists included: Bio Design: Jesse Adler, Thora Arnardottir, Malu Luecking; Dance Theatre: Mele Broomes, Maiya Leeke and Krystal S. Lowe; Digital Art: Uma Breakdown, GLORIA and Nye Thompson; Electronic Music: Elizabeth Bernholz (Gazelle Twin), Kate Carr and Gwen Siôn; Place Writing: Phoebe Boswell, Aida Edemariam and Saira Niazi.

You can explore the work of all the Fellows and the Shortlisted Artists on The Arts Foundation website: artsfoundation.co.uk

Press Pack & Images

The Press Pack and Artist Images can be viewed [here](#).

Media Enquiries

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Notes to Editors

The Arts Foundation is a registered charity that supports individual artists and creatives in the UK with unconditional financial fellowships through the Arts Foundation Futures Awards.

Since 1993 the Arts Foundation has awarded over £1.8 million to the most promising artists in the UK at a pivotal moment in their careers to enable them to concentrate on their creative development, experiment, and realise their artistic potential.

The annual Arts Foundation Futures Awards provides five transformative £10,000 fellowships, with all shortlisted artists receiving £1,000 towards the development of their artistic practice. Each year the awards focus on broad and innovative art forms across Craft, Design, Film, Literature, Music, New Media, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts.

The vital contribution of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards to the arts in the UK is demonstrated by its past Fellows, many of whom are regarded as contemporary pioneers and have gone on to become leaders in their respective art forms, including: Wayne McGregor (1994), Alice Oswald (1996), Sarah Kane (1998), Asif Kapadia (2001), Ali Smith (2001), Rufus Norris (2002), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2006), and more recently, Simon Fujiwara (2009), Alice Birch (2014), Hollie McNish (2015), Evan Ifekoya (2017), Holly Hendry (2019), Onyeka Igwe (2020), Klein (2020), and Bethany Williams (2020).

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023 are supported in partnership with: The David Collins Foundation, The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund and The Yoma Sasburg Estate. The Awards Ceremony was presented in partnership with Leeds 2023: Year of Culture.

www.artsfoundation.co.uk

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About Claudette Johnson

Claudette Johnson MBE (b. 1959, Manchester, UK) started her career as part of the newly formed BLK Art Group, which she joined in 1981 while she was a student at Wolverhampton University. In the 1980s Johnson showed her work in a number of significant shows including Five Black Women, Africa Centre, London, (1983); Black Women Time Now, Battersea Arts Centre, London, (1984); The Thin Black Line, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, (1985), and In This Skin: Drawings by Claudette Johnson, Black Art Gallery, London, (1992).

In March 2023, Johnson will present her first solo exhibition in the US at Ortuzar Projects, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Still Here, Hollybush Gardens, London (2021); Claudette Johnson: I Came to Dance, Modern Art Oxford, (2019), and Claudette Johnson, Hollybush Gardens, London, (2017). Her work is held in numerous public collections, including Tate, British Council Collection, Arts Council Collection, Manchester Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Rugby Museum, and Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

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About The David Collins Foundation

The David Collins Foundation was set up in memory of the late designer David Collins to honour his legacy and celebrate his love of the Arts. Since its creation in 2016, the Foundation has partnered with the Arts Foundation to support artists across multiple disciplines, including furniture design, poetry and animation.

<https://www.davidcollins.studio/foundation/about-the-david-collins-foundation>

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About The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund

The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund was set up to honour the brilliant theatre, ballet and opera designer Maria Björnson who died in 2002. Her best-known design was for the Phantom of the Opera for which she received a plethora of awards, although she designed for many other organisations including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, the Royal Opera, the Royal Ballet, Glyndebourne Opera, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Sydney Opera, La Scala, in the West End and on Broadway. The fund also supports artistic enterprises, arts-related activities and individual artists in the UK.

www.mbmf.org.uk/

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About The Yoma Sasburg Estate

Born in Amsterdam Yoma Sasburg was a professional ballet dancer. She married the prolific film composer Edward Clifton Parker and later trained as a sculptor under David Weekes becoming a founder member of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen. Gifted by her daughter Roselyn in 2010, the Yoma Sasburg legacy has supported a variety of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards Fellowships for sculpture, installation art, live performance art and visual art.

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About LEEDS 2023

LEEDS 2023's ambition is to deliver a transformational year of creative experiences connecting and benefiting people now and into the future.

The planned programme will celebrate and transform the City's identity locally, nationally and internationally – creating a lasting legacy of economic and social impact.

LEEDS 2023 is run by the [Leeds Culture Trust](#), an independent charity set up in 2019 by Leeds City Council as part of its Culture Strategy and as a response to the cancellation of the UK's participation in the [European Capital of Culture](#) competition.

Leeds City Council recognises in a number of its key strategies the difference culture and creativity can make to a city and its citizens, and is the principal funder of LEEDS 2023. www.leeds2023.co.uk

LEEDS 2023 is supported by [Arts Council England](#) and [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#).

