

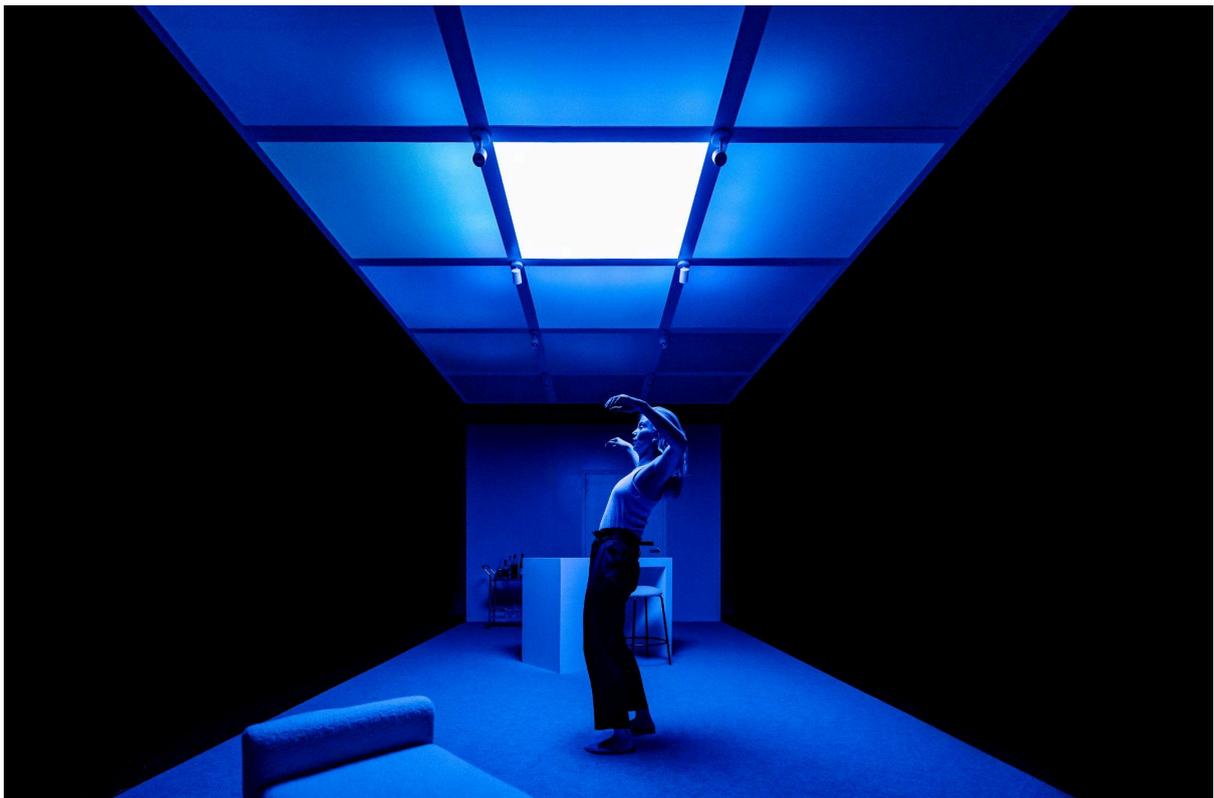
PRESS RELEASE

7 January 2026

The Arts Foundation announces the Shortlisted Artists for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026.

The twenty artists shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 have been announced across five categories: Film, Literature, Music, Theatre, and Visual Art.

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Annie Kershaw, *Girl In The Machine*, 2024. Photograph: Stece Gregson

The annual Arts Foundation Futures Awards support the UK's most promising artists and creatives at a pivotal moment in their career, providing £115,000 in unconditional grant funding, awarding five transformative £20,000 Fellowships, with all Shortlisted Artists receiving £1,000 towards the development of their practice.

The awards mark over three decades 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 Sir Wayne McGregor, Asif Kapadia, Ali Smith, Alice Oswald, Rufus Norris, Carol Morley and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

The five winning Fellows, each receiving £20,000, will be revealed at a live Award Ceremony on 2 February 2026 in London.

Mary Jane Edwards, Director of the Arts Foundation, said:

“The artists shortlisted for the 2026 Arts Foundation Futures Awards represent an extraordinary breadth of contemporary practice across film, music, literature, theatre and visual art. At a time of growing financial pressure on the UK's cultural sector, we are proud to continue our support for independent artists. Awarding unrestricted funding to artists directly is vital to sustaining creative practice and reaffirming the transformative power of art.”

Film Award Shortlist

Dorothy Allen-Pickard

Myrid Carten

Jessi Gutch

Alice Russell

The Film Award supports exceptional early-stage career filmmakers, and this year, we are highlighting emotive and inventive storytellers working in non-fiction. The independent Jury members are Asif Kapadia, Director, writer, and producer; Danny Leigh, Chief Film Critic, Financial Times; and Lindsay Poulton, Editorial Director, Film & TV and Head of Documentaries, The Guardian.

Jury member Lindsay Poulton said:

“It's been a great pleasure to join the jury of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Film. Independent documentary is a powerful artform as well as a tool for truth, empathy and dialogue, but independent filmmaking is increasingly at risk. Despite the challenging landscape, I was really encouraged by the range and extraordinary artistry of filmmakers across the UK. All the shortlisted filmmakers demonstrate a clear artistic purpose and such a confident command of their craft. Dorothy Allen-Pickard brings a remarkable clarity of vision to her filmmaking, while creating generous space for her collaborators and subjects to shape the work alongside her. Myrid Carten's moving and captivating work carries a strong sense of momentum and creative ambition. Alice Russell has found a distinctive voice through her impactful first feature, and Jessi Gutch's filmmaking style is grounded and inventive.”

Literature Award Shortlist

Fahad Al-Amoudi
Yanita Georgieva
Lucy Mercer
Camille Ralphs

The Literature Award supports inventive independent writers who are pushing the boundaries of the medium of poetry. The independent Jury members are Raymond Antrobus, Poet & Author; Imtiaz Dharker, Poet; Ted Hodgkinson, Head of Literature and Spoken Word, Southbank Centre.

Jury member Ted Hodgkinson said:

“It has been a real pleasure to be part of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards with my fellow jurors. Fahad Al-Amoudi’s work has an exceptional range and assurance, a bold, playful engagement with cultural heritage. Yanita Georgieva’s poetry is funny, subversive, and boundary-pushing, rich with cultural resonance and full of surprises. Lucy Mercer’s confident interplay of image and text marked her as a compelling voice among a strong field of poets working in this way, while Camille Ralphs’ virtuosity and emotional depth weave together striking visual elements and lyrical precision, with real brilliance. All the shortlisted poets have truly unique voices and a real command of the art form, and are marshalling their poems very purposefully. We are hugely excited to follow their respective creative paths and, no doubt, future successes.”

Music Award Shortlist

Nneka Cummins
Cassie Kinoshi
William Marsey
Sasha Scott

This year’s Music Award support exceptional early-stage career composers scoring contemporary classical works of any genre. The independent Jury members are Suzy Klein, Head of Arts and Classical Music TV, BBC; Tom Service, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster; and Rakhi Singh, Violinist, creative director and composer.

Jury member Tom Service said:

“It has been extraordinarily humbling reading about and listening to the work of musicians nationwide. The calibre of work was so high. The shortlisted artists, Nneka, Cassie, William and Sasha all share, in different ways, a sense that they are at a pivot point in their careers, asking critical questions about the essence of contemporary classical music. The wide range of voices and experiences that the whole shortlist represents is fantastic. It highlights why awards like this are so vital in the landscape today. As a jury, we are hugely excited to follow

their respective next steps.”

Theatre Award Shortlist

Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu
Annie Kershaw
Craig McCorquodale
Hannah Noone

The Theatre Award champions visionary theatre directors developing extraordinary theatrical productions across any genre. The independent Jury members are Toisin Cole, Actor; Francesca Moody, Executive Producer, Francesca Moody Productions; and Rufus Norris, Director.

Jury member Francesca Moody said:

“It’s been a real privilege to join the jury for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Theatre. All of the shortlisted artists had such a strong sense of self, distinctive aesthetic and artistic integrity. What’s striking about all the practitioners is their determination to make their mark, by hook or by crook. In this challenging funding climate, in both the public and commercial sectors, awards like this are so necessary to support those operating at a high artistic level, who know what they need to do to take their creative practice further, but unfortunately, do not have the means to do so.”

Visual Art Award Shortlist

Mark Corfield-Moore
Zein Majali
Jesse Pollock
Shaquéelle Whyte

The Visual Art Award supports groundbreaking artists working across a broad range of visual arts and interdisciplinary art form practices, including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and artist moving image. The independent Jury members are Simeon Barclay, Artist; Eva Langret, Director, Frieze London; and Sook-Kyung Lee, Professor, The University of Manchester.

Jury member Eva Langret said:

“All the artists shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Visual Art are exceptional practitioners with impressive and distinct respective trajectories to date. It’s not an easy time to be a visual artist in the UK, but all their work has a depth and urgency to it. They have such clear visions for the next stage of their growth and development of their practice, and we hope this recognition enables them all to continue to expand the scope of their ideas and production.”

You can explore the Shortlisted Artists' work on the [Arts Foundation website](#) and watch the award announcements via [Instagram Live](#) on 2 February 2026.

Press Pack & Images

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

Media Enquiries

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Notes to Editors

About The Arts Foundation

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 £2 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 provide five transformative £20,000 Fellowships, with all Shortlisted Artists receiving £1,000 towards the development of their practice.

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), Carol Morley (2003), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2006), and more recently, Simon Fujiwara (2009), Sam Lee (2011), 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 2026 are generously supported in partnership with The David Collins Foundation, The Adrian Brinkerhoff Poetry Fund of the Sidney E. Frank Foundation, and The Yoma Sasburg Estate.

www.artsfoundation.co.uk

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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.

www.davidcollins.studio/foundation/about-the-david-collins-foundation

About The Adrian Brinkerhoff Poetry Fund of the Sidney E. Frank Foundation

[The Sidney E. Frank Foundation](#) seeks to improve the lives of students, families, and the community through opportunities in art, theater, poetry, music, education, environmental conservation, and medical research and care. [The Adrian Brinkerhoff Poetry Fund](#) supports organizations that advance understanding and love of poetry and literature around the world, in collaboration with the [Adrian Brinkerhoff Poetry Foundation](#). The Adrian Brinkerhoff Foundation aims to expand access to poetry and educational poetry materials, gathering outstanding poems from across places, eras, and traditions for audiences worldwide to enjoy.

www.brinkerhoffpoetry.org

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.



The Yoma Sasburg Estate