

PRESS RELEASE

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THE HEPWORTH WAKEFIELD'S FIRST SCULPTURE PRIZE OPENS
AS GALLERY PRESENTS ITS MOST AMBITIOUS SHOW EVER



An exhibition by the four artists shortlisted for the inaugural Hepworth Prize for Sculpture - **Phyllida Barlow, Steven Claydon, Helen Marten and David Medalla** – opens at The Hepworth Wakefield on 21 October 2016.

The show, which includes new and recent work, is the most ambitious ever mounted by the gallery. The winner of the £30,000 prize will be announced at an award dinner at The Hepworth Wakefield on 17 November 2016.

Sculpture is the art form of the moment – and this new Prize aims to demystify contemporary sculpture. Visitors to the exhibition will be encouraged to experience, debate and judge the Prize for themselves. The shortlist is multi-generational and covers the widest range of work in the medium.

The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture recognises a British or UK-based artist of any age, at any stage in their career, who has made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary sculpture. The shortlist reflects the wide range of sculptural practice taking place in the UK today.

The Prize was created to celebrate the gallery's 5th anniversary during 2016. Significantly, it is named after Barbara Hepworth, one of Britain's greatest sculptors and arguably its most celebrated female artist, who was born and brought up in Wakefield. The Hepworth Wakefield has the largest number of works by the artist on permanent display anywhere in the UK.

Sophie Bowness, art historian and granddaughter of Barbara Hepworth, said: "The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture is a fitting legacy to Barbara Hepworth, one of Britain's greatest sculptors, whose career was enhanced through a variety of awards from early in her professional life."

The Hepworth Wakefield's Director, Simon Wallis said: "Britain is home to a long line of great sculptors from Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Anthony Caro and beyond. We are living in an exceptionally rich and exciting time for experiencing sculpture in this country and yet there was no significant Prize to recognise this art form. We launched the UK's first major art prize to celebrate sculpture in its broadest sense and to promote wider engagement with this art form. It's an art form reflective of our time, our physical environment and that's why sculpture remains our most significant and dominant form of artistic expression and why it deserves to be celebrated."

The judging panel of five leading international commentators within the field of visual arts have been brought together. The panel comprises: **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, Director of Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea and GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino; **David Chipperfield**: architect and designer of The Hepworth Wakefield; **Sheikha Hoor al-Qasimi**, President Sharjah Art Foundation; **Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**, President of The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, collector and patron of the arts and **Alastair Sooke**, art critic and broadcaster.

Phyllida Barlow has made new work for the show and adapted existing sculptures constructed from simple everyday materials, with which her work has become synonymous. A monumental sculpture titled *screestage* dominates the gallery space, creating a heightened awareness among the visitor of their surroundings. Wall-mounted sculptures include the newly made *untitled: blackcoils2016* and *untitled: toletsigns2016* which make reference to structures encountered in urban environments.

Barlow cites among her important influences artists such as Germaine Richier or Barbara Hepworth, her sculptures however replace their solid volumes and carving with ragged, raw materials to create large-scale structures that often encroach upon the viewer's space. When considering the process of making her art works, Barlow has said, 'Maybe I don't think enough about beauty in my work because I'm so curious about other qualities, abstract qualities of time, weight, balance, rhythm; collapse and fatigue versus the more upright dynamic notions.'

Steven Claydon describes "sound as sculpture" and approaches this medium through the senses - combining light, smell and sound with solid materials to produce artworks that are often not what they might seem on first encounter. The six sculptures and site-specific interventions activate the space around them and engage with the architecture of the gallery, such as *Re-de-extinction Table, 2016*, where seemingly inanimate objects create a low-level ambient sound.

A collector of cultural artefacts, Claydon repurposes objects and data into sculptures that are full of intentional contradictions. His work invites the viewer to become the excavator as objects

from the past are re-conjured with contemporary materials and new technologies. *Re-de-extinction Table*, 2016 – presents a pair of antiquity heads recast in resin sat atop a table with a gold-plated copper surface embedded with impressions of old £10 bank notes.

Oppositional forces of attraction and repulsion are also at play in Claydon's work. Industrial yellow curtains are imbued with the scent of citronella, designed to repel mosquitos, a series of wall mounted lights used in *Like Shooting Sparrows in the Dark 3 (deterrent lure)*, 2016 contain blue LED lightbulbs similar to those used to attract squid in deep-sea fishing and *Magnate (obelisk)*, 2016 features a large wall covered in rubberised magnetic sheeting holding pennies tight to the material surface.

Helen Marten presents seven recent works that fold familiar images and objects from our everyday surroundings into intricately crafted installations. Dense accumulations of handcrafted objects made from a huge variety of materials - wood, ceramic, metal, leather, plastic and fabrics - draw the viewer in and play with the relationship between two and three dimensions, making us question our understanding of what sculpture is or can be.

Four screenprints from the series *Part offering*, 2014 hang on the gallery walls, featuring painted cat motifs paired with a range of appendages that contain and are made from unexpected materials such as straw, leather, fired clay, shell, coffee beans, cherry stones, milk cartons and cigarettes. Unlike many of Marten's works on show, whose details invites a closer inspection, the large-scale *White Cotton is so platonic, or something*, 2014, installation requires the viewer to step back, and only then does the line drawing of a shirt blowing in the breeze, transcribed into three-dimensions truly reveal itself.

David Medalla considers himself a 'citizen of the world'. His work over the last 70 years is inspired by places and people. Informed by complex combinations of memories and evolving relationships, his work often reflects rhythms and systems found in the natural world. Medalla says: "Art, for me, begins as a simple idea, like a seed that grows into a tree. The idea becomes 'full grown', sometimes, 'expanding' and taking on different manifestations, like trees that become a forest."

His practice incorporates painting, participatory work, performance and kinetic sculpture, including the pioneering 'auto-creative' sculptures that he first made in the 1960s. Medalla has made two new auto-creative sculptures for his presentation at The Hepworth Wakefield – a new version of his seminal work *Cloud Canyons*, 1964-2016, and *Sand Machine, Bahagari*, 1963-2016, a moving work comprising sand, shell, necklace and bamboo. These works are put in a constant state of movement and flux, giving, in the words of the artist, 'tangible form to invisible forces'.

A new iteration of Medalla's hugely popular and ongoing, participatory piece *A Stitch in Time* will also be presented. Conceived in 1967 as a pair of simple handkerchiefs that the artist gave to two of his ex-lovers at Heathrow Airport to wish them happy travels, the series explores themes of time, circulation and chance encounters. Spools of coloured thread dangle over an octagonal cloth and visitors are invited to stitch in words, pictures or attach small, light-weight objects to the cloth.

Join the debate on Twitter and Instagram: #HepworthPrize

The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture is supported by the following individuals:
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For further details please contact:

Erica Bolton
Bolton & Quinn Ltd
T: +44 (0)20 7221 5000
M: +44 (0)7711 698186
E: erica@boltonquinn.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Phyllida Barlow was born in Newcastle in 1944 and now lives and works in London. She studied at Chelsea College of Arts and the Slade School of Fine Art before becoming an influential art teacher at the Slade School of Fine Art. She has exhibited internationally, including solo exhibitions at Tate Britain in 2014, The Nasher Sculpture Centre, Texas in 2015, and Kunsthau Zurich 2016. Barlow was honoured with a CBE for her contribution to the arts in 2015, and will represent Britain at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

Steven Claydon was born in London in 1969 and studied at the Chelsea College of Arts and Central Saint Martins. From 1997 to 2003 he was a member of the electronica band *Add N to (x)* while also practicing as an artist. In 2015 Claydon had major solo exhibitions *The Fictional Pixel and The Ancient Set* at Bergen Kunsthall in Norway and *Analogues, Methods, Monsters, Machines* at the Centre D'Art Contemporain, Geneva. He currently lives and works in London.

Helen Marten was born in 1985 in Macclesfield. She studied at the Ruskin School of Fine Art, University of London and at Central Saint Martins in London. Marten's recent solo exhibitions include *Parrot Problems* in Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (2014) and *Plank Salad* at the Chisenhale Gallery in London (2012), and her work was included in the 2015 Venice Biennale. Marten has been shortlisted for the 2016 Turner Prize, and currently lives and works in London.

David Medalla was born in the Philippines in 1942. In the 1960s he co-ran the influential Signals Gallery in London, and was the chairman of the global organisation 'Artists for Democracy' from 1974 to 1977, which gave support to liberation movements. In 1994 he founded the Mondrian Fan Club with Adam Nankervis, with whom he also founded the London Biennale. Medalla's works have been shown internationally including in DOCUMENTA 5, Kassel, in 1972 and at the Venice Biennale in 2015.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

In association with Yorkshire Post

Visitors are encouraged to judge for themselves and vote in the People's Choice Award. Vote in the gallery or after your visit at hepworthwakefield.org/prize.

The winner will be announced near to the end of the exhibition.

IN CONVERSATION

Discover more about the shortlisted artists as they discuss their careers, work and thoughts on sculpture in a series of *In Conversation* events.

STEVEN CLAYDON

Wed 16 Nov 2016, 6 – 7.30pm

HELEN MARTEN

Wed 25 Jan 2017, 6 – 7.30pm

PHYLLIDA BARLOW

Wed 30 Nov 2016, 6 – 7.30pm

DAVID MEDALLA

Thurs 2 Feb 2017, 6 – 7.30pm

Each talk costs £10 / Members £7.50 / Students £5

Book your tickets online at hepworthwakefield.org/inconversation

The Hepworth Wakefield, Gallery Walk, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WFI 5AW.

Tel: +44 (0)1924 247360.

Free Admission

Opening Hours: 10am - 5pm Tuesday – Sunday

Closed Mondays (except local school holidays and bank holidays)

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