



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TUESDAY 29 JANUARY 2019

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**THE 5<sup>TH</sup> JOHN RUSKIN PRIZE CALLS FOR *AGENTS OF CHANGE* IN BICENTENARY YEAR**

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**CALL FOR ENTRIES | THE JOHN RUSKIN PRIZE 2019: *AGENT OF CHANGE***

**Highlights:**

- Prize organisers, visual literacy charity *The Big Draw*, together with Prize founders *The Guild of St George* announce the nationwide call for entries for The John Ruskin Prize 2019 inviting entries from artists, designers and makers to respond to the theme: *Agent of Change*
  - Artists Barbara Walker MBE, Hew Locke and Jessie Brennan announced among the selectors on prize panel
  - There are three prizes available: 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: £3000, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize £1000 and a Student Prize of £1000
  - Entries open on John Ruskin's birthday 8 February 2019, coinciding with events taking place across the UK and internationally marking the bicentenary of John Ruskin's birth
  - The nationwide call for entries will close on 12 May 2019 followed by shortlist selection, an exhibition exploring the theme *Agent of Change* at The Holden Gallery at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University featuring 25 artists and designers selected from the entries.
  - The preview and prizegiving announcing the 3 winners will take place at The Holden Gallery on 11 July 2019, the exhibition continues until 24 August 2019
  - A complimentary programme will take place at venues throughout the summer in Manchester as part of The Festival of Ruskin in Manchester and *Ruskin200*
  - Partners include: The Guild of St George, The Holden Gallery, Manchester Metropolitan University, MMU Special Collections and The Festival of Ruskin in Manchester.
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Visual literacy charity *The Big Draw*, organisers of The John Ruskin Prize, together with the Prize founders and core sponsors *the Guild of St George*, announce the nationwide call for entries for The John Ruskin Prize 2019. The prize returns following the critically acclaimed prize exhibition '*Master of All Trades*' held in Sheffield in 2017 attracting an audience of over 44,000 visitors.





The prize organisers welcome entries from artists, designers, architects and makers, at all stages of their careers, currently resident in the UK.

This year's prize coincides with the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth. Joining organisations, academic institutions, and charities the world over, to explore the impact and increasing relevance of Ruskin's legacy as part of *Ruskin200*.

Now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year, *The John Ruskin Prize 2019* aims to uphold Ruskin's beliefs whilst challenging the nation's creatives to consider their role as catalysts of change, critics, social and political commentators and material innovators. Open to a broad range of interpretations, the prize organisers are inviting entries from a range of creative practitioners in response to the theme: '*Agent of Change*'.

John Ruskin, an impassioned and influential critic of art, society and life, believed that art has the power to expose universal truths. Ruskin was a writer, artist, social critic, polymath and aesthete who fiercely opposed the social, political and environmental injustices of his day. These injustices – the 'haves' and the 'have nots, social and economic uncertainty, rapid environmental change and a complex ever shifting political landscape remain issues that are as pertinent today as they were in Ruskin's day.

The Prize also embraces Ruskin's polymathic sensibilities, focusing on the strengths of multidisciplinary practice and inviting submissions from creatives whose work defies easy categorisation. In this bicentenary year, the Prize organisers are encouraging submissions that address change through observation, innovation, protest and that force us to see old problems in a new light.

"...the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something...To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion – all in one". John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3.

Of the prize entries a shortlist of 25 will feature at an exhibition this summer at The Holden Gallery, at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, accompanied by a programme exploring Ruskin's teachings and the role of artists and makers as: *Agents of Change* – societal changemakers, observers, political and environmental commentators and innovators.

The John Ruskin Prize selection panel includes artists whose socially and politically engaged practice addresses issues of identity, race, social class, the urban environment and gentrification. Experts on architecture, psychogeography and John Ruskin's life and legacy complete this year's panel, they are:

Hew Locke, Artist; Barbara walker MBE, Artist; Jessie Brennan, Artist; Dr Rachel Dickinson, Director of Education, Guild of St George and Principal Lecturer Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University; Dr Jonathan Foyle, Architectural Historian, Broadcaster & Artist, Professor; Tim Brennan, Artist & Head of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University and Kate Mason, Director, The Big Draw.

**ENDS**



**RUSKINPRIZE.CO.UK**  
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**THE HOLDEN GALLERY**

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART





## CONTACT

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

**The John Ruskin Prize** was inaugurated in 2012 by The Guild of St. George and The Big Draw (formerly the Campaign for Drawing). The John Ruskin Prize is the fastest growing multi-disciplinary art prize in the UK. The Prize aims to uphold John Ruskin's beliefs whilst challenging the nation's artists to respond to challenging themes. The resulting exhibitions have attracted diverse audiences and received wide critical acclaim.

The 5<sup>th</sup> John Ruskin Prize: *Agent of Change* opens for entries on 8 February 2019. Deadline is Sunday 12 May 2019.

For further information on past winners, prizes, programme, eligibility, submission and exhibition dates please visit: [ruskinprize.co.uk](http://ruskinprize.co.uk)

### Ruskin200

Ruskin200 is worldwide celebration and gathering of the many people, places and enterprises devoted to Ruskin and his work to mark the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth (8 February 1819). For a selection of upcoming activities as part of Ruskin200 please visit: [ruskin200.com](http://ruskin200.com)

### John Ruskin

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a polymath. As a writer, he commanded international respect. He was an art critic and an art patron, a skilled draughtsman and talented watercolourist, and a fierce critic of prevailing social and political norms. He wrote about nature and architecture, craftsmanship, geology, botany, Greek myth, education. Driven by his deep faith in social justice, he established the Guild of St. George in the 1870s to right some of the social wrongs of the day and make England a happier and more beautiful place in which to live and work. (The Guild of St George, 2016).

*"Without mingling of heart-passion with hand-power, no art is possible. The highest art unites both in their intensest degrees: the action of the hand at its finest, with that of the heart at its fullest."* John Ruskin

### The Guild of St George

The Guild is an educational charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy, founded by John Ruskin in 1871. Today, with more than 270 Companions, it continues to promote Ruskin's values in the modern world. As well as its Ruskin Collection, cared for by Museums Sheffield, the Guild owns land in the Wyre Forest and elsewhere, and funds public engagement projects throughout the UK, together with conferences, publications, lectures and symposiums, all designed to encourage the use of Ruskin's ideas to make the world a better place to live in.





In 2000 the Guild founded The Campaign for Drawing. This grew into the modern, independent charity, The Big Draw, to which the Guild still makes an annual donation. In 2012, the Guild founded The John Ruskin Prize with The Big Draw. Like many of the Guild's activities, the Prize aims to encourage people to explore Ruskinian values and ideas in the context of contemporary life. [guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://guildofstgeorge.org.uk)

## The Big Draw

The Big Draw is a visual literacy charity promoting the universal language of drawing as a tool for thought, creativity, social and cultural engagement. The Big Draw (formerly the Campaign for Drawing) was launched in 2000 by The Guild of St George, - the charity founded by John Ruskin in 1871 - becoming an independent arts education charity in 2006. In addition to running The John Ruskin Prize and a visual literacy programme, the charity is the founder and driving force behind the world's biggest celebration of drawing, The Big Draw Festival: [thebigdraw.org](http://thebigdraw.org)

## Ruskin and Manchester

Ruskin gave some of his most important lectures in Manchester and the people of Manchester responded positively to him, changing lives. Some of the city's most influential people were inspired by his teaching and Mancunians formed the first Ruskin Society and exhibition dedicated to him (1904). A number of the city's institutions are collaborating to present events and displays to mark his bicentenary including: 'Ruskin's Manchester: from 'Devils Dark to Beacon City' an exhibition at Manchester Metropolitan University's Special Collections and The John Ruskin Prize 2019 Exhibition: *Agent of Change* at The Holden Gallery. Visit: [ruskinprize.co.uk/ruskin200](http://ruskinprize.co.uk/ruskin200) for more information.

The Guild of St. George's Director of Education and John Ruskin Prize Panellist 2019, **Dr. Rachel Dickinson** comments:

*"Although he never lived here and actually hated the 'Devil's Dark' pollution and unfair labour of industrial Manchester, bringing the prize here feels like bringing it home. In 1859 Ruskin gave a lecture on the 'Unity of Art' at the Manchester School of Art, now part of Manchester Metropolitan University, and he presented a little watercolour that's now in Man Met's Special Collections. The very first Ruskin Society was formed here and in 1904 Manchester put on the first exhibition dedicated entirely to Ruskin. The ideas he promoted in his writings, his lectures and his charity (the Guild of St George) about how art, craft, education, localism, sustainability can come together to bring about change and make happier people and healthier communities inspired Manchester in the years surrounding his death, and resonate with Manchester's resurgence now with its vibrant cultural scene and the local empowerment of Devolution. Hosting the Ruskin Prize in Manchester during his bicentenary year means so much".*

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