

# The Big Draw

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The Big Draw in partnership with The Guild of St. George and The Pilgrim Trust.

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate use: Tuesday, 9 February 2016

### The John Ruskin Prize Exhibition

Recording Britain Now: Society

26 February – 17 April 2016

**Photo call:** Thursday 25 February 2016, 5pm

**Preview:** Thursday 25 February 2016, 6-8pm

## The John Ruskin Prize 2015: Preview and Prize-giving

**On 25 February, the winners of The John Ruskin Prize 2015 will be revealed at a public awards ceremony hosted by The Big Draw at The New Art Gallery Walsall.**

The New Art Gallery Walsall is the first West Midlands venue to host the prestigious John Ruskin Prize exhibition. Now in its third year, this open exhibition invited artists, both emerging and established, from across the UK to respond to the theme, *Recording Britain Now: Society*.

From hundreds of entrants, thirty artists have been selected for the shortlist exhibition, taking place at The New Art Gallery Walsall, 26 February – 17 April 2016. A second showing at The Electrician's Shop Gallery, Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, 6 – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016, will be accompanied by a programme linking to the historic 'Recording Britain' collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The shortlisted artists are: Dominic Negus, Hilary Powell, Julian Bovis, Nathan Ford, Michelle Heron, Michael Johnson, Nettie Wakefield, Sally Cutler, Susie Hamilton, Stephanie Grainger, Joe Munro, Teresa Robertson, Julia Midgley, Graham Martin, David Borrington, Duncan Wood, Jessie Brennan, Peter Haugh, Timothy Betjeman, Tanya Wood, Anne Guest, Oliver Jones, Myles Linley, Cherry Pickles, Georgia Wisbey, Emily Vanns, Emma Wilde, Laura Oldfield Ford, Robin Sukatorn, Tony Kenyon.

### About the shortlist

Responding to the theme *Recording Britain Now: Society*, the shortlisted works reveal an abundant range of techniques and social commentary, often focusing on physical or emotional isolation, with some suggestions of hope. Julia Midgley's reportage drawings of military hospitals remind us of the impact of the Syrian air strikes vote in sharp contrast to Susie Hamilton's observations from the sidelines, which provide morphed interpretations of everyday supermarket scenes.

Portraiture is featured more heavily than in previous years. Oliver Jones presents a photorealist pastel commentary on cosmetic plastic surgery titled '*3 steps to looking younger looking skin*', while Sally Cutler's series of linocut portraits celebrates the diversity of British society. Topical depictions of the Skipchen Food Ambulance and a Jeremy Corbyn rally in Manchester are also part of the selection.

### About The John Ruskin Prize

In 2012, the Guild of St. George, the charity founded by Ruskin in 1871, renewed its links with the Campaign for Drawing (now The Big Draw) to inaugurate **The John Ruskin Prize** open to all artists over 18 working in the

UK. It aims to uphold Ruskin's belief that drawing helps us see the world more clearly – its fragility as much as its beauty and magnificence. In the same way that 75 years ago **Recording Britain** sought to map familiar townscapes and countryside under threat from World War 2 and over-development, the Prize is an invitation to engage with a society in rapid transition.

This year, with support from The Guild of St. George and The Pilgrim Trust, The John Ruskin Prize award totals £8,000, with the winner receiving £5,000, the runner-up £2,000, and a new £1,000 student prize.

The members of The John Ruskin Prize 2015 jury are **Adam Dant** (Artist), **Gill Saunders** (Senior Curator of Prints, Victoria & Albert Museum), **Stephen Snoddy** (Director, The New Art Gallery Walsall), and **Sue Grayson Ford** (Founder, The Big Draw).

## ENDS

### Contact

**Amy Clancy** (Press and Communications Officer, The Big Draw) for further information, comments, images and interviews.

E: [press@thebigdraw.org](mailto:press@thebigdraw.org); T: +44 (0) 203 758 4118; W: [www.thebigdraw.org/ruskinprize](http://www.thebigdraw.org/ruskinprize)

**Chris Wilkinson** (Press Officer, The New Art Gallery Walsall) for information about the exhibition.

E: [Chris.Wilkinson@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.Wilkinson@walsall.gov.uk); T: 01922 654416; W: <http://www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk/>

#ruskinprize

### Notes to editor

**1. Exhibition - Recording Britain Now: Society** is free and will run from 26 February – 17 April 2016 at The New Art Gallery Walsall, Gallery Square, Walsall, WS2 8LG. Open: 10am - 5pm Tuesday to Saturday, Sundays 12noon - 4pm. Closed Mondays and Bank Holidays. Train and bus stations are within 5 minutes walk. The second showing of the exhibition, at Trinity Buoy Wharf, will be accompanied by a series of talks and events linking with the V&A's 'Recording Britain' collection, and all shortlisted artists will be included in a catalogue featuring both collections.

**2. The New The New Art Gallery Walsall (NAGW)** opened in February 2000 to national acclaim. Designed by Caruso St John Architects as an inspirational piece of architecture, the Gallery houses the renowned Garman Ryan Collection and delivers a dynamic programme of contemporary exhibitions and artists' projects. Through the programme, NAGW seeks to build and develop diverse audiences for contemporary art and to provide a range of opportunities for living artists. As an art gallery of outstanding excellence, NAGW seeks to disseminate its work as widely as possible, thus drawing national and international attention to Walsall and its achievements.

**3. The Big Draw** is an arts education charity, which raises the profile of visual literacy and the value of drawing as a tool for thought, creativity, social and cultural engagement. The Big Draw 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 drawing festival, The Big Draw.

**4. In 2012, The Guild of St. George,** renewed its links with the Campaign for Drawing (now The Big Draw) to inaugurate **The John Ruskin Prize** open to all artists over 18 working in the UK. The Prize allows us to promote and give exposure to the work of emerging artists using a wide range of media and techniques. The winning artist is awarded a cash prize to help further their practice and all shortlisted artists are offered a place in an exhibition at a high profile public gallery.

**The John Ruskin Prize 2015** encouraged artists to respond to the theme, *Recording Britain Now: Society*, by focusing on prevalent contemporary social issues. Similar to the way that, 75 years ago, *Recording Britain* mapped familiar townscapes and countryside under threat, this was an invitation to engage with a society in rapid transition, and offered today's artists the opportunity to join the ranks of well-known earlier commentators on the state of the nation.

The first John Ruskin Prize exhibition, *A New Look at Nature*, was successfully shown in Brantwood, Ruskin's former Lake District home. The second, *Recording Britain Now*, was shown in Sheffield's Millennium Gallery for five months, accompanying the V&A tour of *Recording Britain*. In November 2014, it had a second showing at London's Trinity Buoy Wharf, now the home of The Big Draw.