

Report from the 2016 Prince Claus Awards Committee May 2016

The Prince Claus Awards

The Prince Claus Awards honour outstanding achievements in the field of culture and development. The awards are presented annually to individuals, groups and organisations whose cultural actions have a positive impact on the development of their societies.

In keeping with the Prince Claus Fund's guiding principle that 'culture is a basic need', the awards highlight significant contributions in regions where resources or opportunities for cultural expression, creative production and preservation of cultural heritage are limited.

Procedures

The Fund invites cultural experts from its global network to nominate candidates for the awards. Research is carried out by the Fund's Bureau and second opinions sourced for all nominations.

The Prince Claus Awards Committee meets twice a year to consider the information about the nominated candidates and presents its recommendations to the Board of the Prince Claus Fund.

In December each year, the Principal Prince Claus Award is presented to the Principal Laureate and further Laureates in a ceremony at the Royal Palace Amsterdam in the presence of members of the Royal Family and an international audience.

The Prince Claus Awards are also presented to the recipients at ceremonies in their respective countries by the Dutch Ambassadors.

2016 Prince Claus Awards Committee

Emile Fallaux (Chair), Filmmaker and Journalist, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, Curator and Visual Artist, Sharjah, Emirate of Sharjah

Dinh Q Lê, Visual Artist, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

Neo Muyanga, Composer and Musician, Cape Town, South Africa

Manuel de Rivero, Architect and Urbanist, Lima, Peru

Suely Rolnik, Cultural Critic and Psychoanalyst, São Paulo, Brazil

Fariba Derakhshani is Coordinator of the Awards Programme and Secretary to the Awards Committee

Special Awards Format for the 20th Anniversary of the Fund

Traditionally, the Prince Claus Fund presents one Principal Prince Claus Award and ten additional Prince Claus Awards. In 2016, in celebration of its 20th anniversary, the Prince Claus Fund is taking a different approach. This year, the Fund is concentrating on a smaller number of Laureates in a way that enhances their creative impact: one Principal Laureate and five additional Laureates. The five selected Laureates will not only receive a Prince Claus Award in recognition of their excellence and contribution to culture and development, they also will each be given the opportunity to support a project that they feel expands and enhances creativity in their environment.

2016 Data

For the 2016 Prince Claus Awards, 350 people were invited to make nominations. A total of 85 nominations was received and researched by the Bureau. The Prince Claus Awards Committee met on 3-4 December 2015 and drew up a shortlist for further research and second opinions from experts and advisors. During their second meeting on 19-21 May 2016, the Awards Committee conducted in-depth assessments of the 37 shortlisted candidates and, in line with the new Awards format for the 20th anniversary of the Fund, selected six recipients of the 2016 Prince Claus Awards. The Awards Committee's recommendations were presented to the Board of the Prince Claus Fund in June 2016.

Policy and Criteria

The Prince Claus Fund maintains a broad view of culture open to all artistic and intellectual disciplines.

The Prince Claus Awards are presented to artists and intellectuals in recognition of both the excellent quality of their work and their significant impact on the development of their society.

The Awards are given to individuals, groups and organisations based mainly in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Outstanding quality is a *sine qua non* for a Prince Claus Award. The quality of a laureate's work is assessed in professional and personal contexts and for its positive influence on cultural and social fields. The Prince Claus Awards recognise artistic and intellectual qualities, experimentation and innovation, audacity and tenacity. They seek to foster inspirational leadership and to enhance the positive impact of cultural expression on societies.

Recommendations for the 2016 Prince Claus Awards

2016 Principal Prince Claus Award

Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Thailand

Film/Audio Visual

Apichatpong Weerasethakul (1970, Khon Kaen) is a filmmaker and artist whose mesmerising, viscerally affective and aesthetically and intellectually powerful films show us a different way of being in the world. Through his evocative use of light, sound and image, he creates an animist apprehension of the world as a profoundly interconnected pulsating whole – an awareness of our condition as living beings that has been anaesthetised by the rationalist subject paradigm and consumerism. Radically rejecting dramatic formulas and Hollywood conventions, Weerasethakul enables viewers to experience a larger and deeper sensory world.

He examines universal questions through the everyday realities of Thailand, subtly conveying complex meanings in his astonishing imagery and non-linear sequencing. His remarkable body of work – six feature films and more than 30 shorts – is imbued with a powerful sense of nature, time and place. It is centered on the embodied experience of history and poetic exploration of situations and characters whose restrained gestures resonate with vital emotions and have the power to evoke this kind of awareness in the viewers. *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010) concerns living and dying, bodily memory, and the presence of the past in daily life. The frailty of the human body, illness and hospitals are recurring metaphors for a nation's imbalances, divisions and authoritarianism. *Cemetery of Splendor* (2015) explores fear of truth, autocracy and escapism through a gentle story of human connection and the gradual awakening of the optimistic and patriotic protagonist to the malevolence around her.

Although they receive accolades internationally, Weerasethakul's films and artworks are subject to restrictions in Thailand. He works independently of the Thai commercial film industry, refuses to self-

ensor or cut his films, is committed to promoting experimental and independent filmmaking through his company Kick the Machine Films, and founded the Free Thai Cinema Movement. When harsh government censorship was ordered on *Syndromes and a Century* (2006), he initially refused to alter it and then released an ostentatiously cut version, inserting stretches of black film in place of the deleted sections and directing viewers to YouTube to see what was missing. His films are circulated underground in his homeland by people convinced of the political and aesthetic importance of his work for local audiences.

Not limited to one form of art, Weerasethakul also express his thoughts through installations and physical performance. Set at night in the Sala Keoku Temple with pulsing flashes animating fragments of deities, hybrid humans and animals, *Fireworks (Archives)* concerns political memories, different states of being, and light as a means of understanding the world. His performance *Fever Room* premiered in South Korea in 2015 as a work-in-progress and captured the audience at the 2016 Kunstenfestival-desarts in Brussels.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul is awarded for the visual richness, spiritual lyricism and intellectual depth of his provocative works; for his subtle yet powerful examination of Thai realities that resonates beyond his own society; for inventing an original cinematic language that evokes a live experience of the animist sense of being, reinstating a way of connecting paralysed by western mechanisms that disrupt the body's ability to evaluate what is good for life and what isn't; for transforming filmmaking into something far more complex and far-reaching, clearly demonstrating that artistic excellence creates experience and is inseparable from the social and political; and for inspiring others by remaining uncompromisingly true to his own vision and principles.

Further 2016 Prince Claus Awards

Kamal Mouzawak

Lebanon

Culture & Development

Kamal Mouzawak (1969, Beirut) is a chef and a food activist whose passion for Lebanese cuisine and sustainable food production has become a dynamic agency for human well-being and social development.

Travelling throughout Lebanon as a food writer and macrobiotic teacher, Mouzawak gained a deep appreciation for rural communities' culinary knowledge and skills and a critical insight into the difficulties faced by small-scale farmers, particularly their lack of access to buyers. In 2004 he founded Souk El Tayeb ('The Market of the Good'), Beirut's first organic farmers' market, which offers delicious, ethically produced, local foodstuffs at fair and affordable prices. Its lively, hospitable atmosphere attracts people of all ages from all sections of Lebanese society regardless of politics, class, religion or ethnicity.

Working closely with the farmers and producers to ensure high quality and environmentally friendly production, Mouzawak provides training in food preparation, storage, packaging and marketing, and advice on product improvement and organic certification. He has established a Farmers Exchange Programme to strengthen links between producers and assisted formation of a representative body for farmers' rights and interests.

In 2009, Mouzawak opened Tawlet ('Table'), a co-operative restaurant where every day a different member of the Souk El Tayeb community presents authentic dishes of their region. Many of the chefs are rural women who have sustained Lebanon's culinary heritage in cooking for their families, passing down knowledge from generation to generation. Tawlet also runs cookery classes and health and environmental campaigns, and now has branches in the Bekaa Valley, the Chouf Mountains and Batroun.

Other Souk El Tayeb initiatives include health and ecology programmes in schools, a co-operative shop, Food and Feast festivals around the country celebrating local specialties, cookery training projects with Syrian and Palestinian refugees, and a network of restaurants where chefs commit to featuring a

traditional dish from each region to showcase Lebanon's diversity.

Kamal Mouzawak is awarded for inspiring reconciliation and respect between disparate communities, bridging ethnic, religious, political and social divisions through the shared human need and enjoyment of food; for preserving and promoting the rich Lebanese culinary heritage for future generations; for revitalising and fostering local food economies and sustainable organic farming in Lebanon; for emphasising the importance of rural communities and the need to develop them equally; for highlighting the need worldwide for alternatives to the globalised large-scale food supply system that causes environmental degradation and public health and socio-cultural problems; and for demonstrating that what we choose to eat as our daily food has potent positive or negative impact on our lives, local communities and the environment.

PeaceNiche | The Second Floor (T2F)

Pakistan

Culture & Development

The Second Floor (2007, Karachi) is an interdisciplinary space committed to social change and conflict resolution through dialogue and cultural engagement. It is a welcoming venue where people can gather, talk and laugh, listen to music and poetry, discuss politics in English, Urdu and other vernacular languages, and drink coffee. This apparently normal place is rare, a source of 'social oxygen' in a context where public space is shrinking and recent laws encroach on freedom of expression.

Comprising a café, bookshop and multi-purpose area, The Second Floor (T2F) encompasses low and high culture and its doors are open to all. Its activities include art exhibitions, scientific lectures, forums on human rights and new laws, meet-ups with writers, theatre, film screenings, open mic nights and stand-up comedy. It hosts numerous music events from traditional qawwali mehfil and tabla classes to jam sessions and experimental electronic performances. As well as organising the popular Creative Karachi Festival, T2F runs emotional well-being programmes for schools, training courses on mental health, and recently convened the city's first civic hackathon where Karachiites came together to brainstorm about technology-based solutions to urban problems.

Attracting a truly diverse audience, T2F bridges divides of age and class, addresses the concerns of minorities and marginalised groups, and is a hub for intellectuals, social workers and artists. It is an independent platform for participation, dissent and collaboration, giving young people the confidence to enter public space, perform, experiment, question and join current debates. In 2015, T2F had 100 visitors a day and it has inspired similar efforts in Islamabad and Lahore.

The flagship project of PeaceNiche, a Karachi-based non-profit organisation, T2F was founded by the late Sabeen Mahmud, a prominent Pakistani social and human rights activist who was gunned down following an open discussion at T2F on the situation in Baluchistan. In the face of this great loss, friends and supporters of T2F immediately rallied and the centre's crucial activities, now under the leadership of Marvi Mazhar, continue to energise Karachi's cultural landscape.

T2F is awarded for its courageous continuation of what should be normal civic activities; for promoting and enabling democratic discourse, progressive thought and critical debate in an increasingly polarised society; for creating a haven for tolerance, welcoming all shades of opinion within an overall framework of peace and secularism; for stimulating artistic expression in a broad spectrum of disciplines and encouraging experimentation that challenges local conventions; for mentoring and providing a supportive platform for younger generations to exercise their talents and opinions.

Bahia Shehab

Egypt/Lebanon

Design

Bahia Shehab (1977, Beirut) is a graphic designer, historian, teacher, artist and activist who brings a deep

knowledge of Arabic visual culture to all these fields. Her major ongoing project is compiling historical examples of Arabic calligraphy for an encyclopaedia of the Arabic script. The richness of the encyclopaedia of calligraphy aims to empower designers, reconnect them with their heritage and inspire innovation.

Based on her research, the 7x3.5m artwork entitled *A Thousand Times No* (2010) displays the complex mutations of the two letters – *lam* and *alif* – stitched, molded, engraved and cast over the past 1,400 years on vases, tombstones, manuscripts and walls in locations from Spain to the borders of China. During the Arab Spring this archaeology of visual language was transformed into practical activism. Highlighting the role of the visual in the protests, Shehab spray-painted and stenciled the word ‘no’ on the streets of Cairo in conjunction with political statements such as ‘no to violence’ and ‘no to military rule’. These were more than common slogans as they were connected to specific cases of abuse. Among her other graffiti is the iconic ‘blue bra’, referencing the young woman stripped and beaten by Egyptian policemen, which prompted mass public response.

Combining Islamic art history with current Arab politics and feminist discourse, Shehab’s sophisticated contemporary art practice ranges from street interventions based on Arabic literature to *Azaan*, an installation comprising painted minarets from different parts of the Islamic world and a soundscape of the call to prayer performed by a woman. She also designs and curates exhibitions and community-based creative projects in Cairo.

Associate Professor in the Department of the Arts at the American University in Cairo (AUC), she developed and launched AUC’s graphic design programme featuring specialised courses on Arab civilisation, particularly calligraphy – a first in the Arab world. Committed to increasing the value of arts education in Egypt, she encourages the design of new digital fonts for the many-lettered Arabic language and is an active role model for students in her development of new fonts and Arabic designs utilized in her street artwork.

Bahia Shehab is awarded for transforming her unique study of Arabic calligraphy into material for social and political activism, contemporary artworks and commercial use; for expanding knowledge of historical Arab visual culture and demonstrating it is a rich source for today’s avant-garde designers; for teaching, mentoring and being a transnational female role model for younger generations; for bridging divides between history and modernity, academia and the commercial world, the streets and the galleries, east and west, art and revolution.

La Silla Vacía **Colombia** **Media/Journalism**

La Silla Vacía (LSV) – The Empty Chair (2009, Bogota) is an interactive online portal that maintains the highest journalistic standards and is respected as a trustworthy authoritative voice. It focuses on information and stories that describe the way power is exercised in Colombia, the strategies and interests that underlie important decisions taken in the country.

Founded by Juanita León (Director) and operated by a small team, LSV is a genuinely independent voice in a context where the mainstream media is privately owned, working with political or economic agendas. In recent years, mainstream media has had an active role in the construction of coups d’état in many South American countries, so press initiatives not aligned to that agenda are increasingly important. Neither an ‘alternative’ activist press nor part of the establishment, LSV’s material is strictly based on research data and facts from diverse sources. Its rigorous analysis provides reasoned debate on issues that others are unwilling to touch, such as the links between politicians, paramilitary groups and corruption scandals.

Constantly experimenting with digital strategies to engage the public, LSV excels in journalistic innovation, often involving artists, musicians and designers, and employing maps, graphics and visual narratives to convey information in clear and interesting ways. It enables users to interview politicians in

real time without the mediation of journalists, hosts interactive video conferences, and offers a section where opinion leaders answer the 'question of the week' directly online. Using Facebook to solicit new sources, set up forums and share debates, LSV builds accessible topic-specific databases, covers live events via Twitter and U-stream, and gains extra credibility by publishing raw information and Freedom of Information Act material so users can reach their own conclusions.

LSV also runs multi-layered long-term projects that provide visibility for major social issues, such as Proyecto Rosa which presents the stories of victims of forced land evictions. It makes a special effort to cover regional stories, and offers training and seminars on investigative journalism throughout South and Central America. Attracting an average of 400,000 unique visitors and 1,200,000 page views per month, and frequently cited by other media and respected columnists, LSV is a regional model for digital media.

LSV is awarded for its remarkable contributions to citizenship and democracy in Colombia; for working with integrity, generating trust and changing local journalistic culture by providing a rigorous analytical approach in a complex context; for probing Colombia's power structures and helping people to deconstruct the disinformation and power games broadcast through mainstream media; and for stimulating citizen participation in national discourse, giving everybody a voice and building an informed community.

Vo Trong Nghia Vietnam Architecture

Vo Trong Nghia (1976, Quang Binh Province) is an architect whose green, sustainable 21st-century designs are transforming urban spaces and attitudes in Vietnam. Working with a team of innovative architects, engineers and craftsmen at Vo Trong Nghia Architects (established 2006), he is implementing solutions to counteract the neoliberal paradigm turning cities into concrete deserts.

The key to Vo's projects, which range from large public structures and university facilities to restaurants and homes, is using natural elements to create functional buildings that are rooted in local culture and suit tropical conditions. At Binh Duong School, façades of louvres and perforated screens allow natural light and airflow, eliminating the need for costly and environmentally damaging air conditioning. Countering the loss of gardens to rapid urbanisation, at Farming Kindergarten children grow flowers and vegetables on a roof that slopes down to join green play areas, while solar power heats water and waste water is recycled to irrigate plants and flush toilets.

Influenced by the local tradition of cultivating potted plants on every available surface, and built on the typical 'tube house' plot, 20 metres deep but only 4 metres wide which results in dark, damp interiors in monsoon season, Stacking Green has a roof garden and front and back façades constructed of layers of planters that provide natural lighting, cross ventilation, sun filtering and privacy while reducing noise and purifying the air. Similar solutions are applied for mass housing, with a roof garden linking tower blocks fronted by bamboo-lined balconies. In contrast, the concept for House for Trees is the house as a series of giant pots planted with trees which change over the years to become a green canopy.

Vo actively advocates a mandatory 50 percent green roof requirement for new developments. Initiating debate on all aspects of the built environment through television appearances, seminars and events, Vo is working on a prototype for affordable low-cost housing and on an urban masterplan for Ho Chi Minh City.

Vo Trong Nghia is awarded for his striking, environmentally friendly architecture that is reviving the urban landscape of Vietnam; for pioneering a Vietnam-specific 'green' programme of common-sense spatial practices that balance culture and nature and are good for life and community; for presenting viable, sustainable, built alternatives, demonstrating to residents, officials and developers that such change is possible; for raising awareness and influencing public perceptions on the need to improve living

conditions for the millions of city dwellers; and for promoting architecture as a form of activism for social change and moving it forward to a greener future.