

Report from the 2019 Prince Claus Awards Committee June 2019

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 principles, 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 Prince Claus 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 are 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 Prince Claus Awards are presented to the Laureates in a ceremony at the Royal Palace in 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.

2019 Prince Claus Awards Committee

Manuel de Rivero (Chair), Architect and Urbanist, Lima, Peru

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

Sandra den Hamer, Director of the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Amar Kanwar, Visual Artist and Filmmaker, Delhi, India

Tejumola Olaniyan, Professor of African and English Languages and Literature, Madison, US

Fariba Derakhshani, Programme Coordinator of the Awards and Secretary to the Awards Committee.

2019 Data

For the 2019 Prince Claus Awards, 241 people were formally invited to make nominations. A total of 105 nominations was received and researched by the Bureau. The Prince Claus Awards Committee met on 7-8 December 2018 and drew up a shortlist for further research and second opinions from experts and advisors. During their second meeting on 28-30 May 2019, the Awards Committee conducted in-depth assessments of the 34 shortlisted candidates for the awards. The Awards Committee's recommendations were presented to the Board of the Prince Claus Fund in June 2019.

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 2019 Prince Claus Awards

Women are increasingly visible at the forefront of social movements, groundbreaking initiatives and innovations in creativity, thought, research and truth-telling. As teachers, mentors and role models, women are committed to empowering others and encouraging younger generations.

Gender inequality persists in many countries, yet more and more women are overcoming the obstacles they face and taking the lead in making important contributions to their societies. Although the Prince Claus Fund Bureau did not emphasise gender when inviting nominations this year, the candidates proposed reflect this developing and welcome trend across the world.

The 2019 Prince Claus Awards honour remarkable women doing excellent cultural work that has significant social impact. Their achievements touch not only the lives of women and girls but benefit their societies as a whole. Speaking from different zones, contexts and disciplines, they offer a multifaceted narrative on the vital role women play in culture and development.

2019 Principal Prince Claus Award

Kamala Ibrahim Ishag

Sudan

Visual Arts

Kamala Ibrahim Ishag (Omdurman, 1939) is a visual artist and teacher, a pioneering force, intellectual catalyst and inspiration in the development of modern and contemporary art in Sudan. She was among the first group of women to graduate from the College of Fine and Applied Art in Khartoum (1963) and completed postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Fine Art in London (1964-66). On her return to Khartoum, Ishag began teaching at the College of Fine and Applied Art and in time became professor and head of the painting department.

However, her London introduction to existentialism, atomic theories, feminist thought and the work of William Blake and Francis Bacon had provided her with powerful ideas about creative expression. Looking for ways to break from local conventions, in 1971 Ishag founded the Crystalist Group with a group of her students. Their *Crystalist Manifesto* published in 1976 characterised the visual world as infinite and unbounded, like the multitudes in a crystal cube with its transparencies, multiplicity of angles and reflections, and its splitting of normative white light into multiple hues. The Crystalists aspired to explore life free of any imposed ideologies, social taboos and prohibitions. They emphasised constant change and a world in a 'state of becoming', the contingency of perceptions, and the co-existence of contradictory possibilities acting as defining forces in modern art practice. Refusing to conform to a unitary vision, Ishag's ideas rejected the dominant Khartoum School's model and world view based on an imaginary Sudanese identity as well as calling for equal opportunities for women to have places in the art world in accordance with their competence and attainments.



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Constantly searching for means to realise such Crystallist ideals, Ishag has actively supported and mentored young women artists and, within her own artwork, she has focused on the intangible aspects of women's lives. Her paintings, drawings and graphic works, in which she uses distinctly personal imagery, are loosely figurative and narrative-based. They intentionally depict ambiguity and immaterial experiences, often evoking the indefinable connections within gatherings of women. The women's bodies are often confined, misshapen or distorted by structures that both unite and separate them; sometimes isolated and suspended in transparent containers; sometimes almost disembodied. In many of Ishag's works the women are linked together, for example, by embroidery in *Dinner Table*, or with swirling lines of plants and incense in *Preparation of Incense – Zār Ceremony* (1966). Inspired by William Blake's openness to spirituality and the natural world, Ishag has done field research as a participant observer, which resulted in a corpus of paintings related to Zār ritual of psychological healing that is part of Sudan's urban culture. More recently Ishag has been focusing on women's interrelationship with plants, trees and organic elements. Using forms and colours that suggest contingency, a state of 'becoming' and spontaneous unfolding, her artworks express an alternative kind of being and knowing in visual form.

Kamala Ibrahim Ishag is honoured:

- for her original, vibrant and haunting artworks that encourage viewers to see multiple layers of existence beyond objective physical appearance;
- for her deep exploration of women's experience and her creative ingenuity in forging a non-sexist metaphysical art that gives women a new image in a male-dominated society;
- for her revolutionary intellectual challenge to the established artistic paradigm of Sudan and many African and Arab countries, spearheading an approach to art that liberates the mind from demagoguery;
- for her commitment to free individual thinking and expression, creating a fertile space within Sudanese society for introspection, resistance, engagement and freedom;
- for her ground-breaking support and empowerment of women, leading the expansion of women's roles and rights within Sudanese society;
- for her immense contribution to Sudanese artistic education, teaching and mentoring several generations of young artists, and establishing the lasting legacy of a more open and universal artistic discourse; and
- for her integrity and ongoing dedication to innovative aesthetic thought and creativity despite the repressive context and succession of crises in Sudan from the 1960s onward.

2019 Prince Claus Awards

Ambulante

Mexico

Audio-visual

Ambulante (Mexico City, 2005) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting documentary films in a way that stimulates social and cultural change. Its annual travelling film festival takes documentary films and training programmes to places around Mexico where they are rarely available. It is the largest documentary festival in the country and more than 60% of its activities are free. For its 14th edition in 2019, Ambulante toured 138 films across eight of Mexico's states for three months. Screenings are held in diverse venues including multiplex cinemas, community halls,



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public parks and plazas, arts centres, university campuses, the National Cinematheque and museums. To increase awareness and engage the public in rethinking local problems, screenings are followed by discussions with the filmmakers and local NGOs, and linked to workshops, seminars, industry panels and forums connected with issues highlighted in the films.

The festival foregrounds diversity and an international and intercultural perspective. For example, the 2018 *Ambulante For Justice* section invited debate on authoritarianism and inequality through screenings of Switzerland/Russia's *The Moscow Trials*, South Africa's *The Gugulethu 7*, and the United States' *The Thin Blue Line*. Other films have included *Las visitadoras*, which looks at the lack of justice for indigenous Mexicans through the eyes of a court interpreter; *I Am Not Your Negro*; *500 years*, on indigenous resistance in Guatemala; *Un amor en rebeldía*, about a pioneering LGBTQ+ activist in Mexico; *On Her Shoulders*, about Yazidi activist Nadia Murad; *Kusama: Infinity*, a portrait of a Japanese artist; *Cassandra, the Exotico!*, a wrestler who challenges stereotypes. The festival features sections on music documentaries and experimental films, an archival programme and a children's programme, among others.

Ambulante initiates international exchanges, participates in regional film festivals and runs a film training programme, *Ambulante Beyond*, which nurtures independent filmmaking in rural areas and with indigenous communities.

Founded by Gael García Bernal, Diego Luna, Elena Fortes and Pablo Cruz, *Ambulante* is directed by Paulina Suarez Hesketh. It achieves a high level of public engagement both directly and through social media. In 2018-19, *Ambulante* contributed to socio-political action with the documentary *Hasta los dientes* ('Armed to the teeth', Alberto Arnaut, 2018) which chronicles the extra-judicial execution of two students by the Mexican army in 2010. Following more than 1000 screenings, including in the Senate, Supreme Court and a private screening with the Interior Minister, plus print, online and television debate, the Mexican State recognised its responsibility and issued a formal apology to the students' families. It was the first time in Mexican history that a documentary impacted so directly in the cause for justice.

Ambulante is honoured:

- for its dynamic and visionary commitment to documentary film as a means of raising awareness and building solutions for social issues;
- for decentralising and democratising culture, transcending established circuits to bring ideas and inspiration to people in places where access to cultural manifestations is restricted;
- for its creative production of consistently high quality, eclectic programmes presenting alternative realities, enabling Mexicans to better understand their own and other cultures;
- for its powerful, multifaceted contributions to film culture in Mexico, particularly supporting hidden talent, opening new channels of expression, generating engaged, informed and critical audiences, and promoting Mexican documentaries nationally and internationally;
- for expanding civic and social participation, strengthening communities and regenerating Mexico's social fabric through activities that build trust and confidence in community organisation and culture;
- for its energetic efforts using film to foster discussion and help people to rethink existing ideas about current issues, social problems and public policies, clearly demonstrating culture's vast potential to effect social change; and
- for pushing beyond stereotypical impressions of Mexico and helping the country to face its own identity and look to the future.

Mariam Kamara

Niger

Architecture

Mariam Kamara (Niamey, 1979) is an architect who sees architecture as a means to serve communities and improve lives. Convinced she could achieve more for people through architecture, she abandoned a Master's in Computer Science and seven-year career to study for a Master's in Architecture (University of Washington). She co-founded united4design (2013), a collaborative project team, and on her return to Niger established the architecture and research firm, Atelier Masōmī (2014).

Kamara's work is strongly rooted in the local context, responding to immediate social, economic and climatic conditions. Highly skilled in observing and communicating with communities, her primary concern is people's real needs and aspirations.

Niamey 2000 (completed 2016), Kamara's first built project, done with united4design, is a housing complex that reflects the primacy of communal life and draws inspiration from the region's organically configured precolonial cities. Designed to serve the city's expanding population, it provides innovative solutions to problems of density, economy, identity and climate. It rejects high-rise towers that damage the social fabric in favour of compact homes of two and three storeys that feature outdoor kitchens and living rooms. It provides a strong sense of privacy and intimacy but connects the dwellings with communal areas.

Kamara works closely with local engineers, masons and craftspeople to adapt local building methods and uses local materials, in particular compressed earth bricks (CEBs). Made cheaply and locally, CEBs retain cool air and repel heat, lower energy consumption and users costs, and reflect local aesthetics. Her designs incorporate sustainable environmental solutions such as passive cooling, natural ventilation, extensive planting, underground reservoirs to capture rain and drip irrigation systems. Kamara's striking Regional Market (2018) features a succession of colourful metal canopies at alternating heights to enhance air flow and provide shade and thermal protection. Work in progress includes Niger's first multi-storey CEB building and a public promenade that boldly injects a contemporary interpretation of traditional rural grain stores into an urban milieu.

Several of Kamara's projects engage with gender and secular issues in Niger's Muslim society. For the Hikma Religious and Secular Complex (2018), Kamara combined a new mosque with a literacy centre and a library in the renovated derelict mosque. This combination of diverse public facilities on a single site enables women and men to interact more freely while attending regular but usually segregated activities. Kamara has also created a new urban spatial typology, "mobile loitering" that allows women to enjoy a right to the city like their male counterparts. By inserting covered shelters in unclaimed spaces along a route to schools, the market, offices and shops, she has established freely accessible spaces where women can meet openly but avoid societal criticism because they appear to be on their way to carry out necessary tasks.

Mariam Kamara is honoured:

- for her outstanding talent in devising beautiful, imaginative, aesthetically relevant and practical designs;
- for prioritising human needs and using skilled communication with the involved communities as the foundation for genuine responses to their specific realities and aspirations;
- for her innovative spatial and material solutions that balance local requirements and cultural values with responsible economic, social and environmentally sustainable design principles;

- for her engaged and thoughtful investigations regarding gender issues in a context characterised by limited access to public spaces for women;
- for demonstrating the social impact of architecture and effecting positive social change by designing buildings and spaces that are more democratic and socially and economically empowering; and
- for her significant contribution to contemporary thinking about modernity in Africa, redefining and shaping local modernity based on local identity and life, rather than copying what is done elsewhere.

Bill Kouélany

Republic of the Congo / Congo-Brazzaville
Visual Arts

Bill Kouélany (Brazzaville, 1965) is a visual artist, writer, stage designer and a leading figure in the arts in Congo-Brazzaville. She is a synthetic thinker of a high order, bringing painting, collage, performance, spoken and written word, installation and video together in original and imaginative ways. Immensely perceptive and versatile, Kouélany responds to a wide range of issues. Some works, such as her video juxtaposing sex and football, are bold, funny and biting. In others documentation and irony add layers of social and political critique.

Kouélany's work is deeply personal, based on lived experience. It is multi-dimensional and multi-layered, often reflecting on ambiguities and ambivalence. Using materials that highlight fragility and vulnerability, and techniques of tearing, breaking, gluing and stitching, it explores themes such as loss, pain, wounds, gender, loneliness and conflict. Her long-term study of the potential violence in every human being results in intimate and critical explorations of the relationship between self and others. *Untitled*, an extensive installation exhibited at documenta 12 (2007), examines the consequences of war and violence. A monumental wall of ruin, constructed of torn and tattered handmade papier-mâché bricks and marked with words and images of political conflict and violence, it is held together with glue and expressive stitching. Two inserted videos explore the impact of architecture and violence on identity. Despite Kouélany's determined position as an artist who rejects any gender or racial labelling, it is important to note that she was the first sub-Saharan woman invited to participate in documenta.

In 2012 Kouélany founded Les Ateliers Sahm, a unique local contemporary art centre providing space, materials and tools for visual artists, rappers, dancers, writers, photographers, actors, singers, comedians and musicians to work, experiment and exchange ideas. It has a library, a writing and reading club, and is committed to gender equality, opening up possibilities for women including scholarships that provide a monthly allowance to purchase art materials. Also in 2012, Kouélany initiated the annual Rencontres Internationales d'Art Contemporain (RIAC), a month of performances, workshops and seminars by international experts on topics such as video art, slam poetry, film and art criticism, and a residency programme for invited African and international artists to work with Congolese artists on specific themes such as 'Talking body' (2018) and 'Reinventing the world...at dawn crossings' (2019). Ateliers Sahm also runs Bana'Arts, which offers weekly workshops over a period of four months to support vulnerable children, increasing their skills and confidence to integrate socially and develop careers.

Every two years Kouélany organises Congolese and neighbouring countries' participation in the Dakar Biennale's fringe programme. As a result young artists have been subsequently selected for



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the main Dak'art exhibition, won international residencies, and been invited to exhibit internationally.

Bill Kouélany is honoured:

- for her complex and expressive artworks that critique contemporary society and politics, exploring difficult and often deeply painful subjects with honesty and integrity;
- for her resilience, perseverance and indisputable excellence as an innovator, both as an artist and as a cultural activist in a tough context, turning lack and difficulty into strength and potential;
- for her generosity and energetic commitment to encouraging and empowering young generations, offering space, teaching and mentoring, and creating possibilities where there are few resources for the arts;
- for fostering cultural exchange and making significant connections between Congolese practitioners and innovative artistic developments elsewhere in Africa and internationally;
- for bravely leading the way, dissolving the boundaries between media, disciplines, spaces and people, and spearheading the expansion and diversity of contemporary culture in Congo-Brazzaville.

Djamila Ribeiro

Brazil

Philosophy

Djamila Ribeiro (Santos, 1980) is a public intellectual, activist, writer and philosopher, and a crucial voice for social inclusion and justice. She is one of the most popular and influential leaders in the Afro-Brazilian women's rights movement. For her Master's in Political Philosophy (Federal University of São Paulo, 2015), she wrote her thesis on Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir and black feminism. In 2016 she was appointed Deputy-Secretary for Human Rights and Citizenship Affairs in São Paulo's municipal government.

Ribeiro is a prolific essayist and was one of 51 authors from 25 countries invited to contribute to *The Freedom Papers* (2018). She is the author of two influential books: *Lugar de fala* ('Place of speech', 2017), which addresses the need to break institutionalised silences and give space to a multiplicity of voices, and *Quem tem medo do feminismo negro?* ('Who is afraid of black feminism?', 2018), a collection of articles on topics such as social mobilisation, racial quota policies, and the origins of black feminism Brazil and America. The latter includes an autobiographical essay that describes Ribeiro's sense, as a child, of a force preventing her from speaking or "existing fully" in some spaces.

Committed to sharing the thinking of others, among numerous actions, Ribeiro wrote the preface for the Brazilian publication (2015) of Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class*, and co-edited the writings of philosopher Sueli Carneiro. Ribeiro is head of Sueli Carneiro's Seal, an editorial initiative and of the *Feminismos Plurais* (Plural Feminisms) collection, which promotes young black authors' perspectives. She has worked as technical and script advisor for documentaries such as *It Looks Like Me* (2016), exploring the absence of black dolls in Brazil; presented a television show on politics, art, ethnic and gender issues; participated in films including *Enough with Catcalling* (2018), on the insecurity and harassment that marks women's participation in urban spaces; and played a leading role in successful campaigns against unacceptable racist and sexist practices, such as the removal of the *Sexo e as Nega* ('Sex and the Black Girls') TV show.

Formerly an online contributor to CartaCapital and Black Bloggers, Ribeiro is currently a columnist with *Folha de S. Paulo* journal and *Marie Claire* magazine. She has a huge following on social media and actively circulates feminist ideas and literature in schools, families and local communities.

Along with frequent public appearances and interviews she participates in local and international events including at Harvard, MIT and Oxford University. Her intervention at the London School of Economics in 2017, questioning Sérgio Moro on the Petrobras corruption investigation, went viral.

Djamila Ribeiro is honoured:

- for her profound intellectual and conceptual work on systems of oppression, their methodologies and consequences, and providing strong, logical opposition to the dominant racist and sexist paradigm in Brazil;
- for providing a broad debate on black feminism, combating the erasure of knowledge produced by black women, and disseminating black feminist thought in Brazil and internationally, contributing significantly to the visibility, self-esteem and empowerment of black women;
- for her incisive reflections on democracy and social participation, emphasising individual responsibility for the collective dimension, and that feminism is a fight for human rights and a just society;
- for articulating heavily politicised subjects with calm lucidity, making them accessible and enabling dialogue and critical debate not only in academic and activist circles but also on social media;
- for her generous leadership in connecting her personal experiences to the lives of others, and her energetic activism, producing materials and tools, reaching out, responding and becoming an inspiration for millions of people; and
- for consistently breaking the silence and opening paths for communication and integration.

Anocha Suwichakornpong

Thailand

Film

Anocha Suwichakornpong (Chonburi, 1976) is a filmmaker who addresses the contemporary situation in Thailand in a way that is completely experimental. She consistently challenges ways of looking, thinking and telling, pushing the boundaries of aesthetics, vocabulary and form yet staying true to the issues on the ground. Her talent was clearly revealed in *Graceland* (2006), an unusual and sensitive dip into modern sexuality that was created for her MFA thesis (Columbia University) and was the first Thai short film selected for Cannes Film Festival.

Suwichakornpong was scriptwriter, director and co-producer for *Mundane History* (2009), her first full-length feature. A meditation on patriarchy and artistic expression and a metaphor for the Thai nation, it is a family drama that probes the existence of a partially paralysed young man. Isolated in his father's house, the protagonist is suspended between past and future, plagued by anxieties and unresolved conflicts, but cared for by a male nurse and domestic staff. Due to its inclusion of male nudity and masturbation, it was the first Thai film to be given the country's most restrictive 20+ rating.

Her second full-length movie, *By the Time it Gets Dark* (2016), was inspired by Thongchai Winichakul's paper titled 'We Do Not Forget 6 October: The Commemoration of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok', which was presented at the workshop on 'Imagining the past, remembering the future' in Cebu, Philippines in 2001. Questioning memory and history, the movie follows the experiences of a young female film director researching the brutal massacre of student activists at Thamassat University that almost led to civil war in Thailand. Based on recorded footage of incidents and interviews with women and men involved, Suwichakornpong confronts the impossibility of making a historical film when 'history' is erased or falsified. The outcome is a shape-



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shifting and time-switching palimpsest of fictions within stories and characters with multiple identities that move between reality and fantasy. It is complex yet free and fluid with intertwining storylines that unfold, fragment and regenerate in surprising ways. The film resonates with current local politics and is provocative viewing for Thai and international audiences. It has won numerous awards including making Suwichakornpong the first woman to win Best Director (2017) from the Thailand National Film Association.

Suwichakornpong is actively involved in stimulating and supporting independent filmmaking in Southeast Asia. Besides making her own work and teaching locally and internationally, her company, Electric Eel Films, co-founded in 2006, produces works by emerging talents and first-time directors. She is also the co-founder (2017) and artistic director of a rare and much-needed film fund, Purin Pictures, which is committed to promoting underrepresented voices and strongly supports the growth of female filmmakers. It funds production and post-production of 8-10 independent films per year, as well as supporting distribution, research, screenings, workshops and events.

Anocha Suwichakornpong is honoured:

- for her beautiful, compelling and thought-provoking films, rich with poetic ambiguity and a multiplicity of perspectives;
- for pioneering a mode of intellectual feminist filmmaking, providing a much-needed model of feminist leadership, and inspiring and promoting a strong female voice in Southeast Asian cinema;
- for her bold choice of subject matter, refusing to stay silent about unspoken realities and socio-political problems, and stimulating a local audience for progressive and engaged cinema in a difficult context;
- for highlighting cinema's capacity to question and reimagine life, emphasising the importance of examining and coming to terms with past events that have been forgotten or suppressed, in order to improve the present and move towards a better future;
- for creating possibilities for others, teaching and mentoring younger generations, and establishing infrastructure, programmes and practical means to support independent filmmakers;
- for courageously and convincingly challenging hegemonic practices and established conventions, both in filmmaking and in society, thereby contributing significantly to artistic and social liberation in Thailand.