

*Young, Central St. Martins trained Portuguese artist wins VIA Arts Prize 2018*

Hugo Brazão and Graham Guy-Robinson, winners of the VIA Arts Prize 2018 (UK's leading Ibero-American visual arts prize), were announced by a panel of judges at an award ceremony at the Embassy of Brazil on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Choosing from an immensely varied group of works, the panel of judges, formed by renowned professionals of the arts, chose a winner and a runner-up who they felt truly embodied and best elaborated upon this year's theme 'Dialogues', whilst incorporating elements inspired by Latin American and Iberian culture, which the prize seeks to promote.

Portuguese artist Hugo Brazão won with his piece *HIATO*, which drew inspiration from a 3.9km tunnel connecting two areas of Madeira Island, Portugal. The large, multi-coloured tapestry advocates the creation of links and promotion of dialogues through the occupation of spaces. Carrying a rather timely statement in the current political scenario of post-truth, the piece highlights the importance of embracing complexity and connecting disparate ideas instead of avoiding problematisation, disguising conflicts and postponing the addressing of imminent problems.

Hugo Brazão's work deals with the opposition between fiction and reality, and the importance of materiality in a world that is increasingly digital, virtual world. By repositioning or appropriating contemporary myths and fabricated realities, Brazão freely comments on themes such as hyperreality, contemporary politics, science scepticism, social contingencies and the present-day reliance on commodity.

The judges said of their reasons for selecting Brazão as the VIA Arts Prize 2018 winner:

"The artist questions a world where the boundaries between what is real and what is hyperreal are more blurred than ever. This quality, rooted in literary tradition in Latin culture, can be considered as unique in contemporary art practice."

The second prize was awarded to Graham Guy-Robinson for his sculpture *Social Structures*. In 1965, collaborating with a samba group from the favela, Helio Oiticica performed his iconic *Parangolé*. Guy-Robinson's work is inspired by Oiticica's *Parangolés*, which combined material objects with the moving body, using the actions of making to confront boundaries, reimagine private and public space, and make the marginalised visible. Like Oiticica's work, *Social Structure* uses sheet material and the moving body to explore boundaries, visibility, private and public space. It is based on the orange perforated barriers used on construction sites. Made from mirror polished steel and hazard paint, *Social Structure's* surfaces interact with the surrounding moving bodies and reinvent our perception of space and the materials which represent urban life.

Hugo Brazão receives £5,000 as the 1<sup>st</sup> prize winner and Graham Guy Robinson receives £2,000 as runner up. The money is generously donated by VIA Arts Prize sponsors Itaú. This is the fourth year that Latin American bank Itaú has sponsored VIA in its various guises. Being able to do so in London, where their international business is based, further strengthens the link between Europe, Brazil and Latin America that is so important to their business and their long-term commitment to supporting the dissemination and appreciation of Brazilian and Latin American art and culture, both within and outwith that region.

*Raízes do Brasil*, a striking sculpture by Brazilian artist Sabrina Collares was named as the jury's special commendation. Collares's piece is a 18th-century Baroque dress inspired by a painting of Carlota Joaquina, the Princess of Spain and Queen of Portugal (1785), by the Spanish artist Mariano Salvador Maella. The artist covered the dress in thousands of small pieces of MDF, and made it to scale to fit a 10-year-old child: the same age that Carlota got married to Dom João VI. The dress is attached to the plinth

by roots which contaminate the whole space. These roots represent the conservatism and reactionary ideas that sink into the ground rather than trying to reach new horizons.

The VIA Arts Prize 2018 panel was comprised of seven respected art practitioners:

- James Nicholls, managing director of Maddox Gallery
- Will Sorrell, Managing Director London Design Biennale
- Sumantro Ghose, Cultural Advisor
- Irene Due, curator and head of communications at Acute Art
- Ting-Tong Chang, artist and winner of VIA Arts Prize 2016
- Paulina Korobkiewicz, artist and gallery director at Bermondsey Project Space
- Kiki Mazzucchelli, writer and curator

An exhibition of the top 30 shortlisted works will run alongside the exhibition *Constructed Geometries*, a series of sculptures and prints that draw on the iconic Brazilian neo-concrete movement by the winner of the VIA Arts Prize 2017, Susan Phillips.

There is also a People's Choice Award for the visiting public's favourite artwork. Visitors can vote in situ and results will be revealed at the end of the exhibition.

Notes to Editors

The VIA Arts Prize is curated as a partnership between the Embassy of Brazil, the cultural association ACALASP (the Association of Cultural Attachés of Latin America, Spain and Portugal), and the arts charity People's Palace Projects from Queen Mary University of London, and is sponsored by Itaú. The exhibition is also supported by Instituto Cervantes.

Hugo Brazão graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2015 and has had a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum of Madeira; his new show will open in 2019 at Las Palmas Projects in Lisbon. In 2017, Brazão was one of the Venice Arte Laguna Art Prize finalists.

Graham Guy Robinson won the National Sculpture Prize in 2010 and his work has been exhibited internationally. Robinson's work was included in the RA Summer Exhibition and one of his pieces was exhibited at Spitalfields market and sponsored by Arts Council.

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