



The awards, sponsored by "la Caixa" Foundation, distinguish the work of an artist, a gallery and a patron of the arts in promoting the Spanish art scene

The artist Asier Mendizabal, the Elba Benítez gallery and the patron of the arts Han Nefkens, winners of the 2017 Art and Patronage Awards

- "la Caixa" Foundation announces the winners in this seventh celebration of awards established to distinguish artists, galleries and patrons involved in creating and promoting art.
- The recipients of the 2017 Art and Patronage Awards in the three categories are: the Basque artist Asier Mendizabal, the Elba Benítez gallery in Madrid, and Han Nefkens, the Dutch patron of the arts resident in Barcelona.
- Worth a total of 90,000 euros, these awards are an example of how "la Caixa" Banking Foundation supports artistic creativity. Each recipient will also receive a sculpture especially created by Miquel Barceló.
- Those distinguished at previous editions of the Art and Patronage Awards include key figures in our country's art industry, including the artists Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Elena Asins, Eva Lootz, Soledad Sevilla, Antoni Miralda and Carlos León; the gallery owners Juana de Aizpuru, Soledad Lorenzo, Elvira González, Silvia Dauder, Pedro Carreras and Ignacio Múgica, and Guillermo de Osma; the collectors José Luis Várez Fisa, Helga de Alvear, Pilar Citoler, the Juan March Foundation Collection, the Sorigué Foundation and the Lafuente Archive.
- At this seventh edition, Banking Foundation "la Caixa" gave fresh impulse to the Art and Patronage Awards by opening them up to public participation. A total of 273 candidatures were submitted.



Madrid, 28 September 2017. At CaixaForum Madrid today, Elisa Durán, Assistant General Manager of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, and Ignasi Miró, Director of Culture of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, announced the recipients of the Seventh Art and Patronage Awards, established to distinguish outstanding achievement in promoting the Spanish art scene.

Since they were first launched in 2011, "la Caixa" Foundation's Art and Patronage Awards have become recognised as leading accolades given to private-sector commitment to Spanish artistic heritage. The awards illustrate the Foundation's support for the art industry and highlight the dedication and generosity of those who make a significant contribution to our country's collective artistic development.

Over the last six years, the Art and Patronage Awards have acquired ever-increasing importance at a time when the Spanish social context is changing and patrons are seen as an example of individual social responsibility, key players in ensuring the continuing development of art in all its forms.

When first launched, the awards introduced an innovative element, in that they took an inclusive approach to the chain of value of art by distinguishing, not only the work of artists, but also the dedication of gallery owners and patrons, key figures in encouraging artistic creativity.

Now, at this seventh edition, "la Caixa" Banking Foundation has given fresh impulse to the Art and Patronage Awards by opening them up to social participation, particularly to professionals and experts who form part of our country's art system. While, previously, it was the exclusive task of the jury to propose candidates, this year a total of 273 candidatures submitted by external stakeholders were also examined.

Another new development introduced this year is the extension of the category previously devoted to "Collectors". The purpose of this change is to promote the view of patrons as the instigators of disinterested actions that have positive impact on society as a whole.

This year, moreover, a single jury was established to judge all three categories. This jury was formed by: Ignasi Aballí, visual artist; Nimfa Bisbe, Head of Art



Collections at "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; José Luis Blondet, Curator of Special Projects at LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art); Pedro Carreras, gallery owner, recipient of the 2015 Art and Patronage Award; Nuria Enguita Mayo, Director of the Bombas Gens Art Centre in Valencia; Chus Martínez, curator and Director of the Art Institute at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel (Switzerland); Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, founder of the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection (CPPC); Carlos Urroz, Director of ARCOMadrid; and Juan Várez, collector.

The recipients of the 2017 awards are: the artist Asier Mendizabal; the gallery owner Elba Benítez; and the patron of the arts of Dutch origin, resident in Barcelona, Han Nefkens.

Following today's public announcement of jury's verdict, the award ceremony will take place in November, when the winners will receive a sculpture by Miquel Barceló especially commissioned by the Foundation.

The winners in the three categories of the Art and Patronage Awards at the seven editions organised to date are:

	ARTIST	GALLERY OWNER	PATRON OF THE ARTS
2011	Isidoro Valcárcel Medina	Juana de Aizpuru	José Luis Várez Fisa
2012	Elena Asins	Soledad Lorenzo	Helga de Alvear
2013	Eva Lootz	Elvira González	Juan March Foundation Collection
2014	Soledad Sevilla	Silvia Dauder	Pilar Citoler
2015	Antoni Miralda	Pedro Carreras and Ignacio Múgica	Sorigué Foundation
2016	Carlos León	Guillermo de Osma	Lafuente Archive
2017	Asier Mendizabal	Elba Benítez	Han Nefkens

ASIER MENDIZABAL

ART AND PATRONAGE AWARD. CATEGORY: ARTIST

The Art and Patronage Foundation has distinguished Asier Mendizabal as the recipient of the 2017 Art and Patronage award in the Artist category. The prize is worth 50,000 euros, including 20,000 euros to be devoted to producing an artist's book.



The previous winners in this category are Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Elena Asins, Eva Lootz, Soledad Sevilla, Antoni Miralda and Carlos León. All share in common with this year's recipient outstanding careers marked by the originality of their production and their commitment to innovation, as well as the versatility, consistent quality and great symbolic capacity of their work.

Awarding this year's accolade, the jury highlighted the "creative excellence" of Asier Mendizabal's work, which makes "an extraordinary contribution to innovation in artistic language, the result of constant investigation that fuses text, image and form".

The work of Asier Mendizabal (Ordicia, Gipuzkoa, 1973), which the jury describes as "complex and demanding", revolves around cultural and ideological traditions. In it, historical references, knowledge and aesthetic research come together to create a balance between the formal and the conceptual. Mendizabal also explores different techniques and languages, ranging from sculpture to the image, as well as writing, history, and arts and crafts.

Asier Mendizabal has forged an important international trajectory, one that began even during his formative years and has been rewarded by regular presentations of his work at museums and leading contemporary art events. His work has been shown in cities all over Spain, as well as in Portugal, France, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Austria, Ecuador, Brazil and Turkey.

The jury also remarked on Mendizabal's engagement with education: joint director at the Image Symposium at CA2M 2015 in Móstoles-Madrid; participation in the seminar *Art and Historiography. A Mimetic Constellation*, organised by Munich Academy of Art and the Haus der Kunst; and co-founder and teacher at the Kalostra experimental art school in San Sebastián, among other activities. He has also presented workshops in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Maastricht and Lisbon.

His international recognition and prestige also gained him the exceptional appointment as tenured professor at the Royal Institute of Art (KKH) in Stockholm. The Basque artist will give his course on sculpture and installation strategies at the KKH annually for the next ten years.



An event that marked Mendizabal particularly was his participation in the Bados-Badiola workshop in Arteleku in 1997. Since then, he has been an active member of an artistic community whose work focuses on self-reflection, investigation, research and exchange.

Mendizabal's relationship with art galleries began with Carreras-Música in Bilbao in 2007. After work assembling exhibitions and other jobs to earn a living, he finally found success, and a critical mass built up that enabled him to devote himself exclusively to his exigent work. ProjecteSD in Barcelona and Anthony Reynolds in London followed Carreras-Música in 2009, and the three galleries established an excellent understanding together. Asier Mendizabal has also shown work at galleries in France, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands.

GALERÍA ELBA BENÍTEZ

ART AND PATRONAGE AWARD. CATEGORY: GALLERY OWNER

The Art and Patronage Foundation has distinguished the Elba Benítez gallery as the recipient of the 2017 Art and Patronage award in the category of Gallery Owner. The award is worth 40,000 euros, to be used to fund a project that will contribute to the gallery's positioning and standing on the local and international scene. By establishing this category, "la Caixa" Banking Foundation acknowledges the key role that galleries play in the art system. Little known and under-appreciated, galleries are essential, both for the development of contemporary art and for the study and revival of heritage from all periods in art history. Galleries also play an important mediating role.

Elba Benítez joins a list of award-winners that also includes Juana de Aizpuru, Soledad Lorenzo, Elvira González, ProjecteSD, Carreras-Música and Guillermo de Osma. On making the award to her gallery, established in 1990, the jury praised "the quality of its programme, which embraces different contemporary art techniques – sculpture, photography, site-specific video installation, performance and collective actions – that illustrate the gallery's belief in the capacity of contemporary art to adapt flexibly to changing times".

Finally, the jury concludes that Elba Benítez's gallery "constantly explores different channels of artistic expression through the interaction of art with other



disciplines, such as architecture, film, tourism, urban development and the production of projects for public spaces”.

Performing excellent work as an intermediary between artists and collectors, Benítez sees the relationship between the two as a process in which transmitting knowledge is key. In this respect, the jury mentioned particularly the first-hand knowledge that Benítez has built up. She has worked with artists of different nationalities and has taken part at the leading international fairs (Frieze in London, Artbo in Bogota, Art Basel in Miami, ARCOmadrid, SP-Arte in São Paulo and Frieze in New York).

The artists that Elba Benítez works with include, among others, Ignasi Aballí, Ibon Aranberri, Miriam Bäckström, Juan Cruz, Fernanda Fragateiro, Carlos Garaicoa, David Goldblatt, Cristina Iglesias, Nicolás Paris and Francesc Torres.

HAN NEFKENS

ART AND PATRONAGE AWARD. CATEGORY: PATRON OF THE ARTS

The Art and Patronage Foundation has distinguished Han Nefkens, a patron of the arts of Dutch origin, resident in Barcelona, as the recipient of the 2017 Art and Patronage award in the category of Patron of the Arts. In making this award, the jury strongly praised the “extraordinary work that this patron of the arts performs through the Han Nefkens Foundation, both in the quality of its programmes and the way in which it implements them”.

The jury also mentioned particularly the role that Nefkens plays as a “clear reference, an exemplary figure who makes a powerful contribution to promoting a participatory, transformative model of patronage”.

The jury also praised the artistic quality of Nefkens’ collection, works from which are on long-term loan at various museums, emphasising particularly that this is a unique, innovative type of patronage: Han Nefkens acts as a catalyst, producing works, establishing networks, exchanges and alliances, and as a connector. Not in vain his motto and main source of inspiration is “Connecting People Through Art”.

Nefkens’ all-embracing interpretation of internationalisation helps him to pursue his dream of establishing Barcelona as a creative hub. His work is also strongly marked by a commitment to education through grants and partnerships with



schools. An example of this commitment in action is Visiting Professors, a programme of seminars, workshops and master classes staged, to date, at the University of Barcelona, IDEC (Pompeu Fabra University) and the Massana school, promoting exchanges of experience among artists from different backgrounds.

Han Nefkens (Rotterdam, 1954) is a writer, collector and patron of the arts. He pursues his philanthropic activities in and from Barcelona, where he has lived for more than ten years. He began to build up his international contemporary art collection in 2000 and today works from the H+F Collection are on long-term loan at various European museums.

In 2009, he established the Han Nefkens Foundation in Barcelona with the mission of encouraging artistic creation in the city. Nefkens also encourages and sponsors young artists, writers and curators through commissions, awards and grants: in Spain, through the Han Nefkens Foundation MACBA Award and the Creative Writing Grant, and in Thailand through the BACC Award for Contemporary Art, which provides support for Asian artists under the age of 40 that have produced a solid body of work but have not yet shown this work at a major institution.

Moreover, for some years, the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge initiative has organised exhibitions of different types at the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam (Netherlands), shows featuring works by both firmly-established and emerging artists from around the world. Han Nefkens is also the founder of ArtAids, a foundation that successfully uses art in the fight against Aids.

<http://hnfoundation.com/es/>

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