

CLARISSA LUARD AWARD

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Shortlist for independent publishing award announced

Communication is top of the list for the four shortlisted publishers of the **Clarissa Luard Award for Independent Publishers**. Eclectic in their scope, these independent publishers champion diversity, niche areas and under-served markets in the publishing industry, and top of their list is their desire to create new channels to reach their public direct.

The shortlist for the **Clarissa Luard Award for Independent Publishers** is:

Lantana Publishing
Little Toller Books
Peepal Tree Press
Penned in the Margins

All four have already forged ahead by way of content, approach, and presentation. In their independence, each retains a proudly singular identity: Lantana Publishing works towards diversity in the children's market; the remit of Peepal Tree Press is the Caribbean nation wherever it is in the world and Black British writing; Little Toller Books specialises in writing about nature, landscape and place; and Penned in the Margins in experimentalism, performance and poetry.

The chance to win a £10,000 prize revealed future aspirations: innovation within new media is one focus, but the foremost desire is to reach markets and books buyers direct, across race, age and origin.

The inspired and inspiring proposals put forward by these publishers include a landmark journal (both print and online), an outreach and mentorship programme to the marginalised BAME market, a fortnightly radio-style programme delivered as a podcast, and a strategy to develop new audiences online with innovative trailers, podcasts and performances. Building legacies whilst investing in the future are central to plans.

The award has been judged by the writer **Jenn Ashworth**, literary editor and publisher **Sharmaine Lovegrove**, arts professional **Gary McKeone**, and bookseller **Helen Stanton**.

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Gary McKeone, programme director of St George's House and former literature director at Arts Council England, said:

"It has been hugely encouraging to see the breadth of creativity and innovation among the contenders for the Clarissa Luard Award. Independent publishers throughout the UK and Ireland are clearly focused on bringing the very best of contemporary writing to as many readers as possible. The range is wide, featuring literature from across the globe, poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction, work for adults and children. Common to all the contenders is a genuine commitment to getting work to readers and audiences, sometimes via traditional routes, often through imaginative use of technology. The Clarissa Luard Award will, I hope, shine a spotlight on these publishers and highlight the contribution they make to the cultural life of these islands."

Sharmaine Lovegrove, literary editor at *Elle* and publisher of Dialogue Books at Little, Brown Book Group, said:

"It's been an absolute honour to judge a prize that celebrates the work of independent publishers.

All companies that submitted are an asset to the UK arts scene and I was thoroughly impressed by the range of activities, verve, passion and integrity each publisher gave to their books, authors and readers."

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said: "Opening our doors to submissions from independent publishers has been an incredibly welcome and enjoyable experience. Independent publishers are adventurous, innovative and daring, and they continue to build wonderful lists that make a vital contribution to the publishing landscape. We're delighted to showcase the four shortlisted publishers and to be doing so in memory of Clarissa Luard, herself a determined and dedicated supported of independents."

The award is given to a literary publisher with an annual turnover of less than £1 million. The Clarissa Luard Award was founded in 2005 by Arts Council England, in memory of a much-loved literature officer. New Writing North manages the award, which is applied for by open submission.

The winner will be announced alongside the David Cohen Prize for Literature at a ceremony in London on 8th November 2017.

Ends

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Notes to editor

New Writing North is the literature development agency for the North of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Northern Writers' Awards, Cuckoo Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

Judges' biographies:

Jenn Ashworth was born in 1982 in Preston. She studied English at Cambridge and since then has gained an MA from Manchester University, trained as a librarian and run a prison library in Lancashire. She now lectures in Creative Writing at the University of Lancaster. Her first novel, *A Kind of Intimacy*, was published in 2009 and won a Betty Trask Award. In 2011 her second, *Cold Light*, was published by Sceptre and she was chosen by BBC's *The Culture Show* as one of the twelve Best New British Novelists. In 2013 her third novel, *The Friday Gospels*, was published to resounding critical acclaim and *Fell* was published in 2016. She lives in Lancaster with her husband, son and daughter.

Sharmaine Lovegrove is a Publisher, Film and Television Scout and Literary Editor. She is co-founder and director of Dialogue Scouting, the UK's first book to film & TV scouting agency as well as being *ELLE's* Literary Editor. In May 2017, Little, Brown Book Group launched a new stand-alone imprint dedicated to inclusivity called Dialogue Books. The new imprint is spearheaded by Sharmaine as publisher. Prior to setting up Dialogue Scouting she set up her own bookshop & creative consultancy in Berlin and has worked in PR, bookselling, event management and digital consultancy.

Gary McKeone is currently Programme Director at St George's House, Windsor Castle. A former Literature Director at Arts Council England, he worked closely with Clarissa Luard. Gary has also worked in theatre with Field Day Theatre Company in Ireland and at the Royal Festival Hall where he worked on the literature programme with poet Maura Dooley. He has previously written for radio and stage and has published a number of pieces in the *Guardian* and Independent newspapers.

Helen Stanton has spent most of her working life in the book trade. She worked for Waterstones for many years, before working in publishing at Headline, Canongate, Birlinn and Polygon. In 2011 Helen took over the independent bookshop, Forum Books, in Corbridge, and opened a second shop, Forum Books Kids, in 2014.

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About the shortlisted publishers:

Lantana Publishing was set up in London in 2014. A young, female-led outfit, Lantana Publishing produces diverse and inclusive award-winning picture books for children. Their mission is to select outstanding writing from around the world, working with prize-winning authors and illustrators from many countries, while at the same time nurturing new writing talent from neglected communities. Their commitment is to achieve a more diverse and inclusive children's book landscape for the next generation of young readers.

Recently published titles include:

Chicken in the Kitchen by Nnedi Okrafor & Merhdokht Amini

Dragon Dancer by Joyce Chng and Jérémy Pailler

The Jasmine Sneeze by Nadine Kaadan

www.lantanapublishing.com

Director of Lantana Publishing, Dr Katrina Gutierrez, PhD said:

"We are deeply honoured to be considered for a prize that recognises the vibrant contribution of small publishers to society, and that supports our passion for a more diverse and inclusive representation in children's books."

Little Toller Books was set up in Dorset in 2008 as an imprint of the Dovecote Press, a family-run publishing company that specialised in books about rural life and local history since 1974. Little Toller was started to revive forgotten and classic books about nature and rural life in the British Isles. The success of their Nature Classics enabled it to grow into an independent publisher in its own right: it specialises in new books on similar subjects by writers and artists who seek inventive ways to reconnect readers with the natural world and to celebrate the places we live in.

Recently published titles include:

Snow by Marcus Sedgwick

Orison for a Curlew by Horatio Clare

On the Marshes by Carol Donaldson

www.littletoller.co.uk

Gracie Cooper of Little Toller said:

"We're so happy that we've been shortlisted for the Clarissa Luard Award – this prize for innovation is really important for small publishers who often have many creative ideas, but need additional resource to see them reach their full potential. Little Toller has always prided itself on this spirit of creative enterprise – recently we crowdfunded our forthcoming book *My House of Sky*, the first ever biography of J A Baker, author of *The Peregrine*."

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Peepal Tree Press was founded in Leeds in 1985. Their aim is to publish the best of international writing from the Caribbean, its diasporas and the UK, as well as Black British fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Part of the founding ethos was a commitment to literary excellence and anti-racism, social justice and equality, with a goal is to extend the appreciation of cultural diversity as an essential element of national life.

Recently published titles include:

Wife by Tiphonie Yanique

Kingdom of Gravity by Nick Makoha

The Repenters by Kevin Hosein

www.peepaltreepress.com

Jeremy Poynting, Founder and Managing Editor at Peepal Tree Press said:

"I'm sure we share with other independent publishers much the same motivations for why we do it – which is that we want to enable good and important writing to emerge despite a wider publishing climate where the market marginalises what it doesn't think it can sell – and we do it because we enjoy the processes of publishing, such as our engagement with authors who often become our friends, and the response of readers who have been searching for images of themselves and find it in the books we publish. ... So the decision of New Writing North to award the Clarissa Luard prize for publishers struck a welcome note."

Penned in the Margins was set up in London in 2004. A literary arts company, it produces new work live, in print and online. They blend publishing and production and publish across poetry, experimental fiction and literary non-fiction.

Recently published titles include:

Cain by Luke Kennard

Sunshine by Melissa Lee-Houghton

The Shipwrecked House by Claire Trevien

Midland by Honor Gavin

www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk

Tom Chivers, Director of Penned in the Margins said:

"This is such an exciting prize to be shortlisted for - a prize for *us*: the indie publishers, the little guys beaver away behind the scenes, glimpsed from beyond a magic curtain. Independence is in our blood. For us, it means taking risks, following gut feelings and fiercely protecting our artistic vision."

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