



Northumbria University graduate Bethan Williams

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Northumbria University graduate revealed as 2019's Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor winner

Bethan Williams, a Fine Art graduate from Northumbria University, has been revealed as the winner of the Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor Award (GDNEYS) 2019.

Born in Cambridge, Bethan was attracted to Northumbria by its Fine Art degree offering, but also the city of Newcastle itself, as well as the people. Bethan will continue her study at Northumbria University following her

graduation from the BA (Hons) Fine Art programme, to undertake a PGCE. Her ambition is to work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them to connect with life through creative practice.

Bethan's proposal, 'Beatrix and Her Friends on Tour', will consist of a variety of brightly painted wheeled boxes placed around [Cheeseburn sculpture gardens in Northumberland](#). The location of each box will change for each open weekend, encouraging visitors to engage in a scavenger hunt to find and interact with the installation.

Through her interactive installation, 21-year-old Bethan hopes to encourage audience participation and to break down some of the perceived barriers surrounding contemporary art installations. By defying traditional rules, Bethan aims to create an experience that both children and adults can remember.

"I want to break down the barrier in art which says, 'you can't touch that', or demands you to look at art in a certain way," explains Bethan.

Inspired by her own experience engaging with art, Bethan recalls the exhibitions she remembers from her childhood. "The only exhibitions I remember as a child are the ones I could interact with along with my family," says Bethan. "I wanted to create an exhibition where I could give that to other people so that kids and families can have a moment of bonding through art. I feel like that has become somewhat forgotten at the moment, and I want to get that back."

Adds Bethan, "to me, winning this award is more than just a painting on a wall or a box with wheels on it, it's allowing people of all ages to discover art, and discover something different about art."

"The opportunity to win a significant award, through year-long mentorship and the commissioning of new work for public audiences, for a graduating student is fantastic. Cheeseburn's support of contemporary art through sculpture makes a statement for the North East and makes it a valuable resource and asset to arts education in the region," says [Charles Danby, Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Northumbria University](#). "Bethan's work will mobilise new conversations around colour, form, painted surfaces and above all the experience, moving, handling, and camera phone photos of the works. With wheels and eleven acres of gardens, where exactly the works are is not

necessarily where they will be found, and that's exciting for everyone."

Williams was chosen as the winner of GDNEYS 2019, by a panel at Cheeseburn, consisting of artist, Joseph Hillier; director of Cheeseburn Sculpture, Joanna Riddell; curator at Cheeseburn, Matthew Jarratt, and trustee for The Gillian Dickinson Trust, Piers Dickinson, as well as taking into account votes made by the public in-person at Cheeseburn.

Over the last four years, the partnership between Cheeseburn and the Gillian Dickinson Trust has seen young artists applying to be shortlisted for [GDNEYS](#) – an accolade that awards them £300 to develop a proposal in reaction to the unique environment at Cheeseburn. Shortlisted artists are then invited to explore Cheeseburn and are supported to develop their proposal.

As the winner of GDNEYS 2019, Williams has been awarded £6500 to develop her proposal into an installation, which will be sited at Cheeseburn Sculpture in May 2020.

"The job of mentoring our finalists each year is always fascinating and this year brings a new creative challenge as Bethan's proposal aims to create a sculpture which can be moved around the gardens at Cheeseburn," says Matthew Jarratt, curator at Cheeseburn Sculpture. "Over 2000 visitors saw our exhibition of proposals, and the project is becoming a great showcase for new creative talent from our North East Universities."

"I am delighted that Bethan has been selected as the 2019 Young Sculptor and will be excited to see how our visitors interact with her exquisitely painted colourful cubes that can be moved around the gardens, says Joanna Riddell, director of Cheeseburn Sculpture. "To watch people's emotions and behaviour as they come across these sculptures will be fascinating. I foresee some will be protective about them, some eager to re-site them and play with them, there might be a sense of ownership and empowerment; in all cases, it will be a unique experience for each person. A constantly moving and changing installation, which I feel sure will be enormously popular."

Williams' winning proposal follows on from Clare Townley's 'Nostalgie de la boue: Plastic Friend' in 2018 and Peter Hanmer's 'Plato's Lair' in 2017.

“It was wonderful to be part of the judging panel for the 2019 Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor Award. There were ten fantastic presentations, and it was incredibly difficult to select a winner,” says Piers Dickenson, a Gillian Dickinson trustee who sat on the 2019 GDNEYS judging panel. “Bethan Williams’ submission has the potential to create a very stunning piece of sculpture that will embody creative talent and originality. Good luck to Bethan in working towards her exhibition at Cheeseburn in 2020.”

As well as awarding £6,500 to Bethan, the Gillian Dickinson Trust is awarding £2,000 to runner up Amelia Grey, who graduated with a BA in Fine Art from the University of Sunderland in 2018. The £2000 award will help Amelia to develop her proposal for a sculpture featuring optical fibres.

Williams’ sculpture will appear at Cheeseburn in spring 2020. Meanwhile, Cheeseburn’s programme continues through a series of special open weekends across the summer, where visitors can encounter ‘Nostalgie de la boue: Plastic Friend’ by the 2018 North East Young Sculptor of the Year winner, Clare Townley, as well as over 70 sculptures by regional and international artists in the grounds of Cheeseburn Grange. Cheeseburn is next open to visitors on Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 June, with special performances in the grounds by dancer Lizzie Klotz.

Bethan's work will be on show during Northumbria University's annual REVEAL exhibition, taking place across the University's city centre campus from Thursday 20 June to Saturday 29 June. Find out more about REVEAL 2019 [here](#).

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk