



The Royal Society of Literature

RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for first commissioned works of Non-Fiction 2018 Winners announced

This year's Awards were judged by **Iain Sinclair** (Chair), **Laura Bates**, **Aida Edemariam** and **Fiona St Aubyn**.



£10,000 - LAURENCE BLAIR - *Lost Countries of South America: Travels in a Continent's Past and Present* (The Bodley Head, 2020) will address one of South America's central issues – how to marry its past with its future – in order to shed light on themes including identity, nation and truth. The book will hold up a mirror to a range of people and places, giving a colourful picture of how South America's past is dictating its future and exploring the ever-shifting ideas of belonging and borders. **Iain Sinclair** says this 'is an ambitious and far-reaching project that successfully finds a way of integrating research into pre-Columbian remains with the contemporary experience of crossing borders as a

sharp-eyed, backpacking witness.' **Laurence Blair** is a journalist and writer. He studied colonial Latin American history at university, and since 2014 has reported from across the region for the BBC, *The Economist*, and *The Guardian*, covering subjects including narco trafficking, guerrilla groups and environmental crises. Laurence says 'I'm truly elated that the RSL will help me do justice to the cutting-edge research and pressing contemporary issues the book surveys.'



£5,000 - LILY LE BRUN - *Looking to Sea: Britain Through the Eyes of its Artists* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2020) is a cultural, social and creative history of Britain in the 20th century, spun from the ways the human imagination responds to the sea. It focuses on ten iconic works of art with a strong connection to the coast, each made by different British artists in consecutive decades of the past century. For **Aida Edemariam**, 'this history of twentieth-century Britain, refracted through ten artistic responses to the sea, is beautifully written — authoritative and questioning; scholarly, but also vividly insightful about bodies, private lives, feelings, the often-overlooked quotidian.' **Lily Le Brun** is a graduate

of University of Edinburgh and the Courtauld Institute of Art. She has written on art for magazines and newspapers including *Art Quarterly*, *Apollo*, the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, and now manages a major private collection of 20th century British art. Lily says 'this award means a huge amount to me. Not only is the judges' belief in the book wonderfully reassuring, but it has given me more time; a valuable and expansive gift for any writer.'



Judges' Special Commendation - awarded to **Paul Craddock** for his work in progress ***Dragon in a Suitcase: A Cultural History of the Art of Transplant*** (Fig Tree, 2020). **Laura Bates** commented that the book is 'a fascinating exploration of science and medical history with a truly moving journey into people's deepest fears, hopes, and desires: in short, everything that makes us human.' **Paul Craddock** is Honorary Senior Research Associate at UCL Medical School in London. Paul says 'It's incredibly valuable to receive encouragement at this stage of the book's life, and of my career.'

Notes to Editors

The authors were presented with their Awards on Wednesday 28 November 2018 at an event held at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W1.

History of the Prize

The Royal Society of Literature established the annual RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for first-time writers of non-fiction – in perpetuity – thanks to a significant bequest from author and RSL Fellow **Giles St Aubyn**. These Awards build on the RSL's experience of a previous set of non-fiction awards, generously supported by **Jerwood Charitable Foundation** from 2004 to 2016.

The Hon. Giles Rowan St Aubyn LVO FRSL

(1925-2015) was the author of 14 works of non-fiction, on subjects including Lord Macaulay, Edward VII, Queen Victoria, religion, science and 19th century poisoners.

In leaving his bequest to the RSL, Giles St Aubyn wrote:

“I wish to help aspiring authors to get their works published, particularly authors of works of non-fiction which require a good deal of preliminary research. The sort of authors I have in mind would be those who have not already been published and who are struggling to get their feet on the first rung of the ladder.”



Winners of the inaugural 2017 RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards:

- **£10,000 DAVID FARRIER** - *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (4th Estate, 2019)
- **£5,000 LISA WOOLLETT** - *Scavenging* (John Murray, 2019)
- **Judges' Special Commendation - JOANNA JOLLY** - *Red River Girl: The Life and Death of Tina Fontaine* (Virago, 2019).

The Royal Society of Literature

Founded in 1820, the RSL is Britain's national charity for the advancement of literature. We act as a voice for the value of literature, engage people in appreciating literature, and encourage and honour writers. In addition to the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards, the RSL awards annually the new RSL Christopher Bland Prize for debut writers over 50, the RSL Ondaatje Prize for books best evoking the spirit of a place, the Encore Award for best second novel of the year, the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize and the RSL Literature Matters Awards to reward and enable literary excellence and innovation.

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