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EDINBURGH ART FESTIVAL 2015 COMMISSIONS PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

FESTIVAL DATES: 30 JULY – 30 AUGUST 2015

Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF) is delighted to announce details of its 2015 commissions programme, presenting new work by leading Scottish and international emerging and established contemporary artists, and revealing details of the newly launched open call for submissions programme. The UK's largest annual festival of visual art, EAF will unite some of the most innovative artists from across the globe, including Charles Avery, Marvin Gaye Chetwynd and Ariel Guzik, to create work under the theme of *The Improbable City* - a response to the unique fairy-tale architecture and setting of Edinburgh, and unlocking many of the city's forgotten and unusual spaces to be part of the festival.

This year's commissions programme, titled *The Improbable City*, takes its name from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*; a series of 55 short prose poems where the Italian writer conjures a multitude of imaginary cities, explored through the eyes of the 17th century explorer, Marco Polo. Speaking of his process for creating these imagined spaces, Polo talks of his struggle to balance the probable with the exceptional, so as not to achieve cities 'too probable to be real'. This year's commissions programme celebrates the work of visual artists who vividly conjure imaginary worlds in their work, creating highly fictional landscapes that invite reflection on real experience. Featuring new work by established and emerging Scottish and international artists, *The Improbable City* considers how it is the improbable that brings us closer to the real. Situated principally in public spaces across Edinburgh, the works find a resonant context in the city once described as a 'mad god's dream'.

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#EAFcommissions

Highlights include:

- New commissions across the city include a large-scale sculpture by acclaimed Scottish artist **Charles Avery**, exhibited in tandem with his solo exhibition at Ingleby Gallery. This site-specific work, to be exhibited at Edinburgh's historic Waverley Station, is based on his ongoing project, *The Islanders*.
- British artist **Marvin Gaye Chetwynd** (based in Glasgow and nominated for the Turner Prize in 2012) will present a performative installation, to be sited within the debating chamber of the Old Royal High School.
- This year's commissions programme has a particularly strong focus on international talent, bringing 3 artists to exhibit in the UK for the very first time.
- Acclaimed Mexican artist **Ariel Guzik** exhibits the first prototype of an underwater ship designed to facilitate communication with dolphins and whales.
- South African artist **Kemang Wa Lehulere** presents a new large-scale wall drawing in chalk, to be erased at the end of the festival.
- Quebecois performance, installation and video artist, **Julie Favreau** will exhibit a new work at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, coming out of a Royal Over-Seas League residency at Hospitalfield in Arbroath.
- Continuing to support emerging artists, EAF 2015 sees new commissions by young international artists, including Finnish-English artist, composer and vocalist **Hanna Tuulikki** and Irish video artist **Emma Finn**.
- New for 2015, following an **open call to early career artists**, Ben Callaghan, Ross Frew, Jessica Ramm and Antonia Bañados have been selected by a panel including artists Christine Borland and Craig Coulthard, to present new work for the festival.

Sorcha Carey, Director of Edinburgh Art Festival, said:

'The Improbable City' explores the work of artists who conjure alternative worlds in their work. Even without the fairytale topography of Edinburgh, a festival offers a natural home for the improbable – a moment when we are instinctively more open to discovery and experimentation. We are delighted to continue to expand the ambitions of our commissioning programme, with seven new projects by leading and emerging artists, including some of the very best practitioners from Scotland and several international artists showing in the UK for the very first time.

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs, said:

This year's commissions show the depth of talent in Scotland and the appeal of the Edinburgh Art Festival to internationally renowned artists. Through the support of the Festivals Expo Fund, each year the commissions programme has helped transform the city and raised the profile of visual arts across Scotland whilst also supporting emerging artists. Edinburgh in the summer is the perfect time and place to explore the ideas of 'The Improbable City' and celebrate Scottish creativity.

Lloyd Anderson, Director of British Council Scotland, said:

We are very pleased to support the international programme at this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, encouraging a creative dialogue and flow of ideas that keeps the Scottish and UK arts scenes vibrant, progressive and outward looking. In supporting artists from Canada and South Africa, we see a tangible legacy of relationships developed with the Commonwealth last year, and with Mexico, the current year of cultural exchange is strengthened. The Edinburgh Art Festival grows ever stronger and more thought provoking, and we are delighted to be associated with it.

Mike Cantlay, Chairman of VisitScotland said:

Scotland's arts scene forms a crucial component of our events industry with the Edinburgh Art Festival sitting proudly as one of our most significant cultural assets. Through investment from our EventScotland team we are supporting international commissions, which will further cement the credibility and appeal of the festival to visitors from all over the world. Events and Festivals are a key part of our tourism offering, with Edinburgh in particular renowned as the international market leader with an enviable cultural portfolio. There is also a significant impact on the economy with figures indicating an average of 511m tourist visits to art galleries in Scotland each year, with an associated spend of £204m.

Adam Wilkinson, Director of Edinburgh World Heritage said:

We are delighted to support the Edinburgh Art Festival, particularly as their projects are deeply rooted in the city, exploring the different layers of its meaning. Just as the city's remarkable built heritage provides inspiration, the works of art in return challenge and change how we value the city's historical spaces. Edinburgh World Heritage has worked with the festival to help conserve neglected places and spaces such as Regent Bridge and the watchtower in New Calton Burying Ground, as appropriate settings for art installations. This innovative collaboration between heritage and art has not only inspired excellent artists such as Callum Innes, but also regenerated neglected areas of the city and helped alleviate anti-social behaviour. The festival has an impressive track record of programming interesting and influential work, and is building a lasting legacy for Edinburgh.

The Improbable City | EAF 2015 Commissions

EAF 2015 is delighted to announce a new commission for Edinburgh's historic Waverley Station by renowned Scottish artist **Charles Avery**, commissioned in partnership with Parasol Unit London. For *The Improbable City*, Avery has developed a five-metre tall bronze tree, expanding on his evolving project *The Islanders*, where the artist continues to describe the inhabitants, flora and fauna of a fictional island, recording in precise detail the customs, myths, religions and rituals of these imaginary islanders. Ripe with strange fruit, the tree draws entirely on mathematical equations - including the square root of two as well as the Fibonacci sequence - for its design. Avery's sculptures are viewed by the artist as souvenirs from the fictional island, brought back to our world by an unnamed visitor. Situated within Waverley Station, Edinburgh's major railway station and the only station in the world to be named after a novel (Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*), the tree finds a suitably fictional home. It will offer a point for meeting and reflection during the festival.

Also for this year's programme, **Marvin Gaye Chetwynd** has chosen the site of the debating chamber within the Old Royal High School on Calton Hill for her new commission, *The King Must Die*. This sumptuous and theatrical installation places the epic action from Mary Renault's novel 'The King Must Die' within an operatic setting referencing the legendary Czech stage scenographer, Josef Svoboda. Immersive and sumptuous, Chetwynd's installation invites us to lose ourselves in an exuberant celebration of pagan desire.

For the last 10 years, the artist, musician, illustrator and inventor **Ariel Guzik** has searched for a way to communicate with whales and dolphins. Guzik's extraordinary vision is to build a manned underwater ship – 'the Narcisa' - with the intention of enabling communication with these creatures, whom the artists views as a independent civilisation on a par with humankind. Commissioned in partnership with The Arts Catalyst, Guzik, who represented Mexico at the 2013 Venice Biennale, will present *Holoturian*. Designed to temporarily send a living plant and a string instrument into the depths of the sea, this prototype for his underwater ship has instrumentation, which expresses life, space, harmony and brightness as primary messages, and is dedicated to sperm whales and other deep ocean creatures. The installation will be displayed at Edinburgh's gothic kirk Trinity Apse, opened to the public once again by the festival, and will be accompanied by some of Guzik's fantastical drawings from the past 10 years.

Showing in the UK for the first time, South African artist **Kemang Wa Lehulere** (born and based in Cape Town) will create a new large-scale wall drawing in chalk to be erased at the end of the festival. Winner of the prestigious 2015 Standard Bank Young Artist award, the artist's ambiguous language invites the audience to construct their own meaning. Wa Lehulere's works are explorative projects into moments in history - some still present, some yet to be recorded. Often working in the medium of chalk, Wa Lehulere presents a history which can be erased, re-written, or interpreted in multiple ways.

French-Canadian artist **Julie Favreau** will present a new work, entitled *She Century*, in partnership with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art for the EAF 2015 commissions programme, coming out of her recent Royal Over-Seas League residency at Hospitalfield in Arbroath, north east Scotland. Favreau, winner of the prestigious Pierre Ayot prize, and nominated for the Sobey Art Award in 2012, incorporates sculpture, film and choreography in multi-layered installations. Often referring to her works as 'opening a door', Favreau plays with the tropes of architecture in *She Century*. Walls move mysteriously in the garden while the lone female figure, frequently seen in her work, traces an invisible architecture with her hands.

Continuing to support early-career artists, EAF 2015 sees new commissions by Scottish and international artists Hanna Tuulikki and Emma Finn. For *The Improbable City*, **Hanna Tuulikki**, an English-Finnish artist, composer and vocalist based in Edinburgh will present *SING SIGN: A Close Duet*, a series of site-specific performances during the festival period that explore the architecture and acoustics of Edinburgh's historic 'closes' - the network of alleyways, lanes and courtyards that lie behind Edinburgh's Royal Mile - playing with the physical and emotional closeness of these spaces. Performed live within these 'closes' at various times during the festival, Tuulikki's new commission is rooted in 'hocketing', a 13th century musical form where a single melody is alternated between two or more voices. Tuulikki's performances will be accompanied by a two screen film installation. Full details of performances as part of EAF will be announced in July.

Emma Finn, an Irish artist based in Edinburgh, will exhibit *Double Mountain* a new video installation. All of Finn's work begins with 'the Marks' – drawings which she views as independent forms created with their own stories to tell. Transporting the viewer to uncomfortable places that sit somewhere between reality and invention, Finn's new work is situated in the mountains where the 'Marks' struggle to escape from cable cars and fold paper airplanes. Finn's work is exhibited in the suitably improbable context of a shopping centre, St. James Centre, which offers a pop up venue for the festival in 2015.

The Open Call Submissions Programme

For the first time in 2015, Edinburgh Art Festival introduces a new dedicated annual exhibition for early career artists, *Platform: 2015*. With the aim of providing support and opportunity to artists at the beginning of their career, artists Christine Borland and Craig Coulthard working with director Sorcha Carey, have chosen four artists from an open call to exhibit as part of the 2015 festival. The artists selected are Chilean ECA postgraduate Antonia Bañados; Edinburgh-based Irish artist Ben Callaghan, who explores the use of objects as props in philosophical debate; Isle of North Uist draftsman Ross Hamilton Frew; and sculpture, performance and installation artist Jessica Ramm, currently based in Aberdeen. This new opportunity launched for the 2015 festival is supported by the Saltire Society.

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Notes to Editors

- Founded in 2004, **Edinburgh Art Festival** is the UK's largest annual festival of visual art, offering the chance to experience the best contemporary Scottish, UK and international artists in the context of exhibitions of some of the most important artists and movements of the 20th Century and historical periods. Attracting nearly 300,000 attendances in 2014, Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF) brings together the capital's leading galleries, museums and artist-run spaces, alongside new public art commissions by established and emerging artists and an innovative programme of special events. Edinburgh Art Festival is a charitable organization supported by Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council.
- **The Scottish Government Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund** recognises the exceptional creative talent that exists in Scotland and gives it an international platform on which to excel. It is available to all 12 festivals to support the development of Scottish-based work. This year's commissions programme is supported by £160,000 from the Scottish Government's Expo Fund, taking the amount awarded to the Edinburgh Art Festival, through the Expo Fund, to £1,075,000 since the Expo Fund began in 2008/09.
- **Creative Scotland** is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit www.creativescotland.com. Follow us @creativescots and www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland
- **Event Scotland** is working to make Scotland the perfect stage for events. By developing an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events EventScotland is helping to raise Scotland's international profile and boost the economy by attracting more visitors. EventScotland is part of VisitScotland, the national tourism organisation which markets Scotland as a tourism destination across the world, gives support to the tourism industry and brings sustainable tourism growth to Scotland. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit www.eventscotland.org. Follow EventScotland on Twitter @EventScotNews.
- **Edinburgh World Heritage** (EWH) is a charity with the role of conserving, enhancing and promoting the city's World Heritage Site. EWH administers a Conservation Funding Programme, with funding provided by Historic Scotland, which acts as a catalyst encouraging others to invest in the city's built heritage. Last year £179,384 was awarded through the programme, which attracted a further £792,179 of expenditure on the city's historic buildings and streets. In other words, for every £1 EWH receives from the public, a further £5 is leveraged from other sources.
- **Baillie Gifford Investment Managers** are Project Sponsors for the installation of Charles Avery's new commission. Over the past three years, Baillie Gifford have played a vital role in enabling EAF to reimagine overlooked parts of the city through its commissions programme, supporting Callum Innes to create his first light-based work, The Regent Bridge, now permanently installed in a formerly dark tunnel on Regent Road; and funding the restoration of the burnt-out watchtower in New Calton Burial Ground for Christine Borland and Brody Condon's 2013 commission Daughters of Decayed Tradesmen.
- **Parasol Unit Foundation** for contemporary art, founded in 2004, is a registered educational charity and a non-profit institution which operates purely for public benefit. Internationally acclaimed for its forward-thinking and challenging exhibition programme, Parasol unit has introduced to London a host of international contemporary artists working in various media. The foundation also engages the public and neighbouring communities with a full programme of educational events for children, young people and adults. For more information, please

visit: www.parasol-unit.org. Follow us: Facebook:
www.facebook.com/Parasolunitfoundationforcontemporaryart Twitter @Parasolunit and
Instagram @parasolunit

- **The Arts Catalyst** works with exceptional contemporary artists and scientists, commissioning extraordinary art projects that spark dynamic conversations about our changing world. It seeks new ways to involve artists, scientists and the wider public in a discourse about the impact of science in society and through its exhibitions and events enables people to have distinctive, thought-provoking experiences.
- **British Council's** mission is to build long-term international relationships and trust between the people of Scotland and other countries through the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information in the arts and education. British Council's involvement in the arts arena stretches back to 1947 when we helped to found the Edinburgh International Festival and every year we continue to work on new and exciting cultural projects connecting Scotland and the world. For further information please visit scotland.britishcouncil.org or follow on Twitter @BCScotland
- **The SA Season in the UK** is a programme which is designed to showcase SA artists in the UK and to forge stronger relations and create platforms to foster mutual understanding through the arts. It falls under the umbrella of the SA-UK Seasons 2014 & 2015 which is a cultural exchange partnership facilitated by South Africa's Department of Arts and Culture and the United Kingdom's British Council. This Season is aimed at building a lasting legacy of collaboration in the performing, visual and creative arts between the two countries. Already in 2014, as part of this Season, a number of South African artists and groups performed at Ekhaya during the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and at 6 Edinburgh Festivals. So far more than 250 South African artists (both established and up and coming) have participated in the 2014 SA Seasons' related activities in the United Kingdom and more than 300,000 people have witnessed these programmes. Website: <http://southafrica-unitedkingdom.com/>
- 2015 was declared as the **Year of Mexico in the UK and of the UK in Mexico** seeking to deepen the good relationship that already exists between the two countries and to support initiatives and innovative projects, in order to build a legacy that will underpin a more solid basis for mutual collaboration in the future. The **Government of Mexico**, together with multiple counterparts, has prepared a programme of cultural and educational activities showcasing the diversity of the cultural heritage of Mexico, its rich history and strong traditions, whilst at the same time championing its economic and commercial dynamism as an exceptional location for trade, investment and tourism. <http://mexicouk2015.mx>
Ariel Guzik's work is supported by the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (SRE) through the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), the **National Council for Culture and the Arts** (CONACULTA), and the **National Institute of Fine Arts** (INBA), of Mexico.
- **The Royal Over-Seas League** (ROSL) and Hospitalfield based in Arbroath, in partnership with the Edinburgh Art Festival, have selected Canadian artist Julie Favreau to come to the UK on a ROSL Visual Arts Scholarship. Since 2000, ROSL ARTS has offered annual scholarships to artists from the Commonwealth to take part in residencies at Hospitalfield Arts in Arbroath, Scotland. For more information about ROSL Visual Arts Scholarships and the Royal Over-Seas League, please contact George Harwood Smith, Visual Arts Coordinator: gharwoodsmith@rosl.org.uk. For more information, please visit www.rosl.org.uk or www.hospitalfield.org.uk
- **The Saltire Society** seeks to encourage everything that might improve the quality of life in Scotland. It works to preserve all that is best in Scottish traditions and to encourage new developments which can strengthen and enrich the country's cultural life. It acts as a catalyst, celebrant and commentator through an annual programme of awards, lectures, debates and projects. Founded in 1936, Saltire Society is a non-political independent charity with membership branches throughout Scotland. Membership of the Saltire Society is open to all individuals and organisations that support the aims of the Society.

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