

Gilbert
Bayes

AWARD

For early career **sculptors**

**2024
Winners' Exhibition**

Royal Society of Sculptors, 1 February to 22 March 2025

The Art House, Wakefield, 3 May to 7 June 2025

About the Gilbert Bayes Award for Early Career Sculptors

The Gilbert Bayes Award is designed to recognise emerging talent and provide invaluable support on the journey from study to professional practice.

Vitality, it is open to any applicant working in three dimensions, regardless of age, nationality or background. The Royal Society of Sculptors is here to champion contemporary sculpture and the artists who create it. We support artists at all stages of their career and that includes nurturing the next generation.

The Gilbert Bayes Award bestows serious recognition, a platform for the winners' work and two public exhibitions. The group show opens at Dora House before travelling to the Art House in Wakefield. In addition, the winners have benefited from a year of development - a unique programme which prepares them for life in the professional sphere, including learning how to photograph sculpture and work with curators.

We extend our warmest thanks to the Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trust for making this award possible.

Supporting New Talent in Sculpture

Becoming an artist can feel like an impossibility when you are just starting out and sculpture, in particular, can be very demanding in terms of how much time, space, materials and equipment that it takes up. This is why an opportunity like the Gilbert Bayes Award can be so valuable.

It offers the opportunity to build networks with other artists, to gain technical knowledge, to acquire insights into other artists' professional practice and to share the experience of making, with all its highs and lows.

Artists learn the most from each other, even if our work and interests are very diverse. And so being in this kind of environment which builds confidence and develops conversations helps enable us to find ourselves and our language.

Laura Ford PRSS
President, Royal Society of Sculptors

About the Royal Society of Sculptors

The Royal Society of Sculptors champions contemporary sculpture and the artists who create it. We are an artist-led, membership organisation, supporting and connecting sculptors throughout their careers. And we lead the conversation about sculpture today through exhibitions and events for all.

We are based in London's South Kensington, a few minutes' walk from its great museums, in beautiful Dora House. Our recently restored, Grade II listed home sits at the heart of our community. It's a uniquely creative space, where sculptors, painters, photographers, architects and designers have lived and worked. Today it continues to be a place where the creative congregate.

Join us for exhibitions, artists' talks and creative workshops. We invite you to view the world from a different perspective, to dig deep into the practice of individual sculptors and to challenge the way you think.

For professionals, our membership opens up a supportive network of fellow artists. Our members share knowledge and expand connections as well as accessing expert advice, training, bursaries, residencies and awards.

sculptors.org.uk

The Gilbert Bayes Award Winners 2024

The winners were selected by the sculptor members of the Society's board and guest judges Clemency Cooke and Charlotte Latham, founders of Cooke Latham Gallery.

Click a name to read about the work in the words of the individual artist:

- > [Chris Thompson](#)
- > [Elinor Haynes](#)
- > [Euphrosyne Andrews](#)
- > [Jack Evans](#)
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Chris Thompson GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Untitled (Shredder), 2024

There was a large-scale sculpture I made several years ago, supported by the Gilbert Bayes Trust, that emulated a massive broken industrial shredding machine. I enjoy the metaphor of a thing threatening to rip to shreds and consume anything that touches it, now rendered impotent.

I think about my own labour and what I make, either for money or for myself, in relation to systems that consume me/it/them. I think about this idea a lot in relation to post-industrial economies and what happens to people and areas afterwards. On one hand, bridge and shipbuilding offered pride, purpose and a wage, and on the other it was brutal, with often terrible working conditions and an often-unacknowledged colonial legacy.

My impotent shredder lives on in the form of its mangled remnants adorned with eagles of suspect lineage, waiting for a purpose beyond an empty threat and a glorious past.

Elinor Haynes

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Release for 2, 2025

Also exhibiting: *Drowning, 2024*

Together, the two works explore the transition from restraint to release, emphasizing the sensuality of the physical experience. They challenge the ideals of the self-contained body, instead highlighting its fluidity and motion. Each piece responds to the other, with the material either emerging from or submerged within the transient glass structure.

Drowning evokes a visceral response to overwhelming containment—submerged, never hermetic. In *Release for 2*, the wooden form escapes in dynamic movement, letting go in a material manifestation of fluidity. Intertwined.





Euphrosyne Andrews GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Hemmed with Green, 2024

A manicured lawn or clipped box hedge, an abundant hedgerow or parkland path. *Hemmed with Green* presents a sickle-shaped crescent of hypothetical textile samplers or aerial planting plans.

The printing plate displays its floral motives, shaped by their process of production. Its presence in the work prevents its ability to produce multiple identical forms, instead allowing a pause for consideration. Of our strive for perfection, of boundaries, artwork and product, consumer and viewer, and of the point at which we meet nature, and the hand meets the machine.

Jack Evans

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Vanitas 1.0, 2024

Also exhibiting: *Infernal Basin I*

Working in cast aluminum, Jack Evans' material choice references a modern, industrial aesthetic whilst tying into the themes of mass production and the societal consequences of industrial and technological excess.

Vanitas 1.0 is modelled after traditional Dutch vanitas paintings, which originally served to remind viewers of the transience of life. In this reinterpretation, the artwork uses cast aluminum to represent these themes, bringing a modern twist to the classic genre by integrating elements that suggest the contemporary world's focus on technological advancement and aesthetic.

Infernal Basin I takes inspiration from the historical design of a Temperance basin, reimagined here as part of a futuristic, neoclassical vision. The basin's design incorporates detailed motifs and symbols that reflect on themes of excess and degradation, set against the backdrop of a world shaped by human neglect and apathy.



Kishwar Kiani

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Chadar, 2024

Also exhibiting: *Tumbleweed, 2024*

Chadar means 'veil' in Urdu and captures the overwhelming weight of societal expectations. With twisted, bent, and broken scaffolds, ladders and bars, the work evokes the oppressive structures that confine individuals. The wall of scaffolding, seemingly torn, leans towards the viewer, symbolising the strain of rigid societal norms on personal freedom. This work serves as a metaphor for the emotional conflict between personal convictions and societal demands.

Tumbleweed leverages the imperfections of poorly welded joints as a deliberate design choice, mirroring the natural, irregular connections of tumbleweed branches. While structurally robust and securely welded internally, the external appearance of the joints is made to resemble the organic aesthetic of the tumbleweed. Encased within a box, the work symbolises restriction and control, juxtaposing the tumbleweed's inherent imperfections with a personal narrative of freedom, self-expression, and the challenges faced by marginalised Muslims navigating the confines of conservative households that stifle their growth and individuality.





Laura Hills

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Cornered, 2024

Also exhibiting: *Verge, 2024*

Cornered collages different elements to draw viewers into the corner space, around and behind the work. Overlapping and translucency create an awareness of internal space and the relationship between the outer skin and the wall behind.

Verge marks the transition between the two architecturally different areas of the exhibition space at Dora House. In its current form, it is situated in the corridor between the two spaces but will go through a process of adaptation when the exhibition travels to The Art House, Wakefield in response to the new space.

Laura Ni Fhlaibhin

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Stirrer, 2024

Also exhibiting: *Pearls are dripping from their furry hole, 2024*

The works of Laura Ní Fhlaibhín cite her maternal ancestors. In *Stirrer* a gift from her dearly departed grandmother and great aunt, from Wexford, Ireland, is cast in bronze, becoming an amulet of care, strength and protection.

Laura wills an ecstatic, multi-species afterlife for her ancestors in *Pearls are dripping from their furry hole*. The engraved tablet of Irish beeswax, held with stainless steel surgical seekers, depicts an animal spirit in a realm of wild orgasmic pleasure.



Maria Positano

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Inside Out, 2024

Also exhibiting: *Root Cord, 2024*

Inside Out evokes the sensation of inner layers of the body seeping from the painting and emerging into view. The piece plays with contrasts between geometry repetition and raw, organic textures. The seed-like patterns mimic germinal forms or the layers beneath the skin, while the tactile surfaces resemble the textures of flesh, skin, even scarring. The combination of forms and materials suggest a visceral narrative of transformation, vulnerability, and exposure. It is both a metaphorical and a literal peeling back of surfaces, inviting the viewer to contemplate what lies beneath.

Root Cord draws a connection between the physical and the symbolic, blending organic forms with architectural and decorative motifs. It evokes the image of an umbilical cord. A lifeline tying flesh to its origins, nourishment, and roots. The suspended cord and ceramic forms suggest the pulsing connection of the body to its life-source, while the architectural patterns reference decorative structures. By juxtaposing raw, organic materials with structured ornamentation, a dialogue is created between the primal and the constructed. The textures and forms call to mind the enduring strength of roots, suggesting connection-to, survival-from, and transformation-into.





Melania Toma

GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Door I, 2024

Door II, 2024

Door III, 2024

From the Doors for the Kagneji House, 2024

This group of sculptures was born during my time at Thread Residency in Sinthian, Senegal, where I had the chance to spend time observing small millipedes. Known as Kagneji in Pulaar, these insects emerge between the rainy and dry seasons. Unlike other millipedes, they are community oriented.

These creatures constantly merge and divide, forming extraordinary shapes.

Local people use them to nourish their cows; when the cows consume these insects, they stay unified and don't get lost in the bushes, moving as one harmonious being.

They speak about wholeness.

The Kagneji appear and disappear very fast, as if they were dreamlike entities travelling towards different realities. *Doors of the Kagneji House* is a series of works in a dialogue with their ability of creating and dismantling images. I am showing a series of wooden tablets in response to the specific liminal character of these insects.

Rong Bao GILBERT BAYES AWARD WINNER 2024

Swaying Flower, 2024

Swaying Flower is a dynamic installation artwork which is full of life. The piece takes the form of a large white flower, with a yellow centre cradling three expressive faces, resembling lives nurtured within its core.

As the petals gently sway with the movement of the installation, the ping-pong balls suspended on long wires graze the ground, creating friction sounds that mimic the whispers of nature.

Through its dynamic visual effects and interactive sound, the artwork creates a mysterious and poetic atmosphere. It symbolizes the fragility and rhythm of life, revealing the subtle resonance between nature and humanity.



On the sculpture terrace

Ally Rosenberg

SELECTED BY CLEMENCY COOK AND CHARLOTTE LATHAM OF COOKE LATHAM GALLERY.

Personal Growth, 2025

Ally is interested in describing the intricacies of human cognition, influenced by his background in neuroscience. He often invokes his own experiences in a traditional, religious family and formative experiences with sexual identity, using the mythology of memory as an unreliable narrative blueprint for how we navigate a sense of self. Consciousness as an emergent property of physical matter runs through all of his work. Employing slicing, casting and modelling techniques with mediums that reveal structural qualities on their surface, he crafts a visual language that explores the convergence of archetypal imagery and materiality. The interplay between familiar materials and bodily forms serves as a means to articulate conflicting insights into the complexities of consciousness and experience.

Personal Growth is a confusion of hardness and softness, fragility and aggression; creation and destruction. Upholstered bubblewrap panels, cast into hard lumps, become an armoured surface and sprung doorstoppers protrude like detonator prongs on a mine. The testicular form takes ironic influence from the voluptuous, fertile curves of the Willendorf Venus - a pocket-sized, prehistoric fertility sculpture.



The Gilbert Bayes Award 2024 Winners' Exhibition

Essay by Clemency Cooke of Cooke Latham Gallery

Clemency Cooke and Charlotte Latham, founders of Cooke Latham Gallery, helped select the 2024 winners of the Gilbert Bayes Award and curated the exhibition.

Upon entering the exhibition, Chris Thompson's sculpture holds a totemic industrial presence at odds with the domestic interior of Dora House, the strapwork panelling and parquet floors. The artist has described his past work as needing to operate both as 'threat and comedic prop'. In a similar way, *Untitled (Shredder)*, a freestanding scenic recreation of a broken industrial shredder part, has a pseudo-comic quality. Perhaps a tongue in cheek metaphor for the art world and its shredder like propensities, it speaks more broadly to Thompson's ongoing concern with post-industrial economies and their complex legacies.

The embossed circle of eagles on Thompson's shredder is echoed in the embossed skulls that loop the rim of Jack Evan's *Infernal Basin I*. Whereas the eagles speak to power, the skulls pay homage to the vanitas tradition. Both artists flirt with concepts of recreation and imitation, their works avoiding categorisation and instead addressing the semiotics by which we read them. Evans examines the existential threat, albeit environmental or geopolitical, that is synonymous with today's world. His faux antiquities operate in a similar way to Shelley's *Ozymandias*, mocking the comfort of perceived permanence.

Laura Ní Fhlaibhín creates intricate sculptural works that contain an inherent material dichotomy. In *Stirrer*, stainless steel and medical props are juxtaposed with beeswax traces and the cast of a bronze amulet (gifted to the artist by her great Aunt Bridie). The language of contemporary medicine sits cheek by jowl with the trappings of folklore and witchery. Likewise, *Pearls are dripping from their furry hole* is an engraved beeswax tablet, its organic materiality belied by the fact it is cast from a surgical tray. Carefully walking this visual tightrope Ni Fhlaibhín creates ritual artefacts that investigate care as a site of memory, myth and medical intervention.

Another artist to investigate the discomfort of our own corporeality is Elinor Haynes. Like Ní Fhlaibhín she interrogates ideas of selfhood against the backdrop of a science and technology-driven society. Her work hinges on the disconnect between our lived experience – the fluids we excrete, our messy emotions – and a societal projection of clinical perfection. In the diversity of the materials she uses, including glass, clay, found objects, saliva, human breast milk and bones, there lies a celebration of our chaotic interiority.

In two unexpected locations within Dora House hang the contour hugging works of Laura Hills. Site-specific, they are made of wax, frames, tissue paper and sewing patterns. These beguiling materials nod perhaps to the works of Heidi Bucher, however their structure reveals Hills as both a musician and composer. There is a rhythm and fluency to the compositions; a musical preoccupation with infinite possible arrangements emerging from basic units. The ghosts of the sewing patterns from which they are made have the feel of architectural or industrial blueprints, underlining the artist's preoccupation with space; her desire to play with the perception, orientation and experience of the viewer.

Juxtaposed with Hills' work is the large, wall-based, architectural form of Kishwar Kiani's *Chadar*. Similarly comprised of multiple elements, Kiani's work exudes a formal, structural, rigidity. *Chadar* means 'veil' in Urdu and presents a torturous scaffolding of broken or deteriorating components that examine the negative impact of a rigid religious doctrine upon the belief systems of individuals. The work lists off the wall creating a vertiginous feeling of incipient collapse. Elsewhere in the building is sited *Tumbleweed*, purposefully adrift from the larger sculpture. Its form conjures the free-wheeling spirit of the plant it is named after; however, its growth is confined to the shape of a box, reflecting Kiani's experience of growing up within the confines of a conservative Muslim environment.

At the other end of the room a semi-circle of sentinel sculptures form Euphrosyne Andrews's *Hemmed with Green*. A punctured wall, their arrangement is testament to the artist's interest in soft boundaries and the political lines drawn between public and private space. Dora House provides the perfect foil to the work; a domestic space given over to communal use. Andrews adapts old printing plates combining traditional and industrial printmaking processes. Well versed in the history of the decorative arts she generates new imagery using the data from native, self-seeding perennial species. Essentially 'samples' for domestic interiors, the works draw attention to this method of corralling nature and questions the ways in which colonial plant collections have historically been woven into decorative motifs.

In *Inside Out* and *Root Cord* Maria Positano also enjoys the frisson between natural forms and decorative motifs, geometric repetition in juxtaposition with organic gesture. In *Inside Out* the formality of the seed-like motifs is belied by the puckered fleshy daubs of pulped paper that sit within them. While in *Root Cord*, a rigid tile-like motif is backdrop to looping bodily cords. In both works, there is a sense of vulnerability and exposure, of an interiority tuned inside out.

Hung to one side of this sculpture are three wall mounted works by Melania Toma. Purposefully positioned as counterfoil to Andrew's work these similarly scaled modular paintings are densely textured and gestural. Like Andrews, Toma interrogates colonial histories while seeking alternatives and succour through natural forms. Her paintings have evolved from giant tufted and sewn 'organic' sculptures and this genesis in materiality is reflected in her current canvases, where thread-like mark making is contrasted with sweeping biological shapes.

A far more literal rendering of the natural world, Rong Bao's giant *Swaying Flower* sits, like some exaggerated hothouse specimen in the centre of the studio space. At once highly synthetic and utterly recognisable, the work makes concrete the artist's desire to engage with the familiar in unfamiliar ways. At the centre of the flower are cradled three animated faces, and from beneath the petals, a constellation of absurdist ping-pong balls emerges on attenuated wires. A kinetic sculpture, the work is in constant gentle motion, the ping pong balls kissing the ground to mimic the whispers of the natural world. At once absurd and tender it speaks to our relationship with the environment, encouraging perhaps a moment of heightened awareness and listening.



Royal Society of
SCULPTORS

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The Art House

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