



National Centre for Writing

****Embargoed until 00:01 GMT on Friday 27th September****

NEW HORIZONS FOR DESMOND ELLIOTT PRIZE AS FLAGSHIP FOR EARLY CAREER AWARDS AT NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING

Submissions for the 2020 Desmond Elliott Prize are now open and should be directed to awards@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) is to take on the running of the Desmond Elliott Prize (“the UK’s most prestigious award for first-time novelists” – *The Telegraph*) it was announced today, Friday 27th September.

The Desmond Elliott Prize will be the flagship in a portfolio of Early Career Awards being launched by NCW to support new writers. In addition NCW is working with the University of East Anglia and the Laura Kinsella Foundation on the creation of two new awards for early career writers which will be announced and opened for applications later this year.

The Early Career Awards represent a new model for literary prizes combining the power of a private trust with the unique year-round programme of NCW. Arts Council England (ACE) will increase the impact of the awards by contributing towards an early career digital programme providing resources, professional development and industry advice as a free public resource for new writers. The ACE support will also enable a tailored early career programme for the winning writers which will include residency opportunities, mentoring and industry support to help them build a sustainable career.

NCW launched in June 2018 in Norwich, England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. Patrons include Margaret Atwood, Elif Shafak, Kei Miller and Ali Smith. It exists to support a vibrant and diverse literary environment in the UK. Since opening it has pioneered projects such as the International Literature Showcase with Val McDermid’s spotlight on LGBTQI+ writers and Elif Shafak’s focus on women writers.

Chris Gribble, Chief Executive of the National Centre for Writing said:

“Through embedding the Desmond Elliott Prize in our portfolio and launching the Early Career Awards we are looking to contribute to an alliance between writers, publishers, the trade, libraries and readers to boost the environment for literary fiction and writers at the critical early stages of their career.

“The market for literary fiction is tough and getting tougher and we want to help find innovative ways to increase collaboration in the sector. We are delighted to be the custodians of such a prestigious prize and to have found a sustainable way to support its future. We thank the Desmond Elliott Charitable Trust, the University of East Anglia and the Laura Kinsella Foundation for their confidence and investment in us. Huge thanks also to Arts Council England for recognising the opportunity to increase the impact of prize culture.”

The winner of The Desmond Elliott Prize will receive £10,000 and, new to this year, a programme of support to help them towards a second novel and a sustainable career in writing. Past winners of the prize include Eimear McBride for *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing*, Claire Fuller for *Our Endless Numbered Days*, and Preti Taneja for *We That Are Young*. The 2019 Prize – chosen by judges Man Booker Prize-winning author, Alan Hollinghurst; Literary Editor of *The Times*, Robbie Millen; and managing director of the Booksellers Association, Meryl Halls – was awarded to Claire Adam for her “electrifying” debut *Golden Child*.

Dallas Manderson, Chairman, Desmond Elliott Charitable Trust said:

“The Desmond Elliott Prize has so far given a significant financial boost and vote of confidence to twelve wonderfully talented writers just starting out in their careers, whilst also bringing attention and praise to the wider longlist of 10 titles selected each year. We are fortunate and excited to have found an organisation as vibrant and dynamic as the National Centre for Writing, whose values align closely with our own, to continue the work that we have started. The NCW approached us with an inspiring model that saw our remaining funds matched by the Arts Council and various other partners, and will make a greater impact than we could have had alone with what remained to the Trust. We are confident that Desmond’s Prize could not be in better hands and look forward to celebrating the future recipients of the Early Career Awards with the NCW, UEA and Laura Kinsella Foundation.”

Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England said:

“The Desmond Elliott Prize has long played a critical role in bringing debut novelists to wider audiences. I’m delighted that Arts Council England is able to support the National Centre for Writing to continue the delivery of the prize - and to test an innovative approach in which awards are

complemented by professional development, mentoring opportunities, resources and advice, helping new writers to build sustainable careers in an increasingly challenging landscape.”

Submissions for the Desmond Elliott Prize 2020 are now open until 29 November 2019. For further details see www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk. All first novels written in English by authors permanently resident in the UK and Ireland and published there between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 are eligible for the Prize.

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For further information, please contact Emily Souders at Riot Communications:
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Notes to editors:

About the National Centre for Writing

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) is a place of discovery, exchange, ideas and learning for writers, literary translators and readers. It champions artistic experimentation, cross-sector collaboration and literary translation to support a vibrant and diverse literary environment in the UK.

Based in the restored and extended 15th century Dragon Hall in the heart of Norwich England’s first UNESCO City of Literature, it explores how writing can inspire and change the world we live in. Its year round programme of events, festivals and courses reaches over 14,000 people a year with an additional 110,000 engaged online. Through its learning and participation programme it supports 20,000 young people a year and has a commitment to working with those in the most disadvantaged areas. NCW’s patrons include Margaret Atwood, JM Coetzee, Kei Miller and Elif Shafak.
www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

About the Desmond Elliott Prize

The Desmond Elliott Prize is an annual award for a first novel written in English and published in the UK. Worth £10,000 to the winner, the Prize is named after the literary agent and publisher, Desmond Elliott. For information about the 2020 Prize, criteria for entry and the submissions process, please visit www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk] For more information about the history of the Prize please visit: www.desmondelliottprize.org.uk

The Desmond Elliott Charitable Trust, which created the Prize in Desmond Elliott’s name and which has managed it to date, is chaired by Dallas Manderson. Together with co-trustees, Christine Berry and Liz Thomson, and literary director, Emma Manderson, the Trust appointed a judging panel each year to select the winning author.

About Desmond Elliott

Desmond Elliott's own story began in an Irish orphanage. In 1947, aged 16 and with just two pounds in his pocket, he left for England, to start his publishing career at Macmillan. Thereafter he set up as a literary agent. Among his early clients was Tim Rice, who Elliott subsequently introduced to Andrew Lloyd-Webber, changing the face of musical theatre for ever.

In 1960, Elliott went on to establish his own publishing company, Arlington Books with offices just off Saville Row, in Mayfair. From there, Elliott master-minded the careers of numerous household-name authors, including Jilly Cooper, Anthony Horowitz and Penny Vincenzi, while also spotting and nurturing new writers to whom he offered three-book contracts to support them while they established their careers. Elliott had an infallible nose for best-sellers and an ability that was second-to-none to read the market.

Charismatic, witty and waspish, Elliott lived in London and New York, commuted regularly on Concorde, drank only champagne and had Fortnum & Mason as his local grocer. He died in August 2003 at the age of 73.