CAOILINN HUGHES ANNOUNCED AS WINNER OF THE 2021 ENCORE AWARD FOR THE WILD LAUGHTER

The Royal Society of Literature (RSL), the voice for the value of literature in the UK, has today announced Caoilinn Hughes as the winner of the 2021 Encore Award for The Wild Laughter (Oneworld, 2020), an exhilarating, anarchic look at contemporary Ireland. This is an annual Award of £10,000 celebrating outstanding achievements in second novels.

Caoilinn Hughes said: “The trail between the first and second novel is rough terrain. We all have bruises or IOUs to point at! But the readership a writer finds through her second novel is the more enduring readership. The Encore Award is a crucial recognition of its stakes. This award helped to bring Irish writer heroes like Dermot Healy, Anne Enright and Colm Tóibín to the fore, not to mention Sally Rooney and Lisa McInerney more recently. Other UK writers I so admire like Ali Smith and A L Kennedy were also championed early on by this award. To be following this lineage is strange and glorious.”
This year’s judges, Sian Cain, Nikita Lalwani and Paul Muldoon, found Caoilinn Hughes’ The Wild Laughter to be “a grand feat of comic ingenuity, mischievous and insightful, and full of resonance for the way we live now”, adding: “the voice of Caoilinn's doomed narrator, Doherty ‘Hart’ Black, is so original and vibrant, with a very particular poetic vernacular. This is a story of modern Ireland, set in the crash post Celtic Tiger, but it also feels timeless in many ways, with Biblical myth simmering under the surface. The Wild Laughter is a real page-turner, in spite of its literary heart, and a joy to read. We all look forward to reading more from Caoilinn Hughes in the years to come.”

Caoilinn Hughes’ first novel, Orchid & the Wasp, won the Collyer Bristow Prize 2019 and was shortlisted for the Hearst Big Book Awards. The Wild Laughter was longlisted for the 2021 Dylan Thomas Prize. She holds a PhD from Victoria University of Wellington and is currently the Oscar Wilde Centre Writer Fellow at Trinity College Dublin.

The Encore Award was first presented in 1990 to celebrate the achievement of outstanding second novels. The Award fills a niche in the catalogue of literary prizes. The RSL has administrated the award since 2016.

The Encore Award is one of nine annual awards and prizes presented by the RSL which bring the widest possible community of writers and readers together in celebration of the breadth of UK literature. From debut works and unpublished short stories through to the notoriously challenging second novel and outstanding contributions to literature, the RSL’s awards and prizes celebrate the value of the written word in all its forms, whilst supporting emerging and established writers at some of the most challenging moments of their careers. The RSL’s other annual awards and prizes are: Sky Arts RSL Writers Awards, RSL International Writers awards, RSL Ondaatje Prize, RSL Christopher Bland Prize, RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction, RSL Literature Matters Awards, the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize and The Benson Medal.

For further information and press enquiries relating to the Encore Award, please contact Clair Chamberlain at Bread and Butter PR clair@breadandbutterpr.uk | 07957 272 534

Notes to Editors

The Royal Society of Literature (RSL)
Founded in 1820, the RSL acts as a voice for the value of literature, honouring and supporting emerging and established writers whilst creating a bridge between authors and audiences to engage as many people as possible with the breadth of UK literature. https://rsliterature.org/

The Encore Award is an annual award of £10,000 for best second novel of the year and each of the other four books on the shortlist are awarded £500.

The shortlist for the 2021 Encore award also included:

Piranesi by Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury)
Should We Fall Behind by Sharon Duggal (Bluemoose Books)
The Blind Light by Stuart Evers (Picador)
The First Woman by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (One World)

Encore Award Past Winners

2020  Patrick McGuinness *Throw Me to the Wolves*
2019  Sally Rooney *Normal People*
2018*  Andrew Michael Hurley *Devil's Day*
        Lisa McInerney *The Blood Miracles*
2017  Ian McGuire *The North Water*
2015  Sunjeev Sahota *The Year of the Runaways*
2014  Neel Mukherjee *The Lives of Others*
2013  Evie Wyld *All the Birds, Singing*
2012  Ned Beauman *The Teleportation Accident*
2011  Joe Dunthorne *Wild Abandon*
2010  Adam Foulds *The Quickening Maze*
2009  Julia Leigh *Disquiet*
2007  M.J. Hyland *Carry Me Down*
2005  Nadeem Aslam *Maps for Lost Lovers*
2004  Michelle de Kretser *The Hamilton Case*
2003  Jeremy Gavron *The Book of Israel*
2002  Ali Smith *Hotel World*
2001  Anne Enright *What Are You Like?*
2000*  John Burnside *The Mercy Boys*
        Claire Messud *The Last Life*
        Matt Thorne *Eight Minutes Idle*
        Phil Whitaker *Triangulation*
1999  Christina Koning *Undiscovered Country*
1998*  Alan Warner *These Demented Lands*
        Timothy O'Grady *I Could Read the Sky*
1997  David Flusfeder *Like Plastic*
1996  A.L. Kennedy *So I Am Glad*
1995  Dermot Healy *A Goat's Song*
1994  Amit Chaudhuri *Afternoon Raag*
1993  Colm Tóibín *The Heather Blazing*
1992  Iain Sinclair *Downriver*
1991  Carey Harrison *Richard's Feet*
1990*  Paul Watkins *Calm at Sunset, Calm at Dawn*
        Peter Benson *A Lesser Dependency*