

PRESS RELEASE

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European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award 2026 for Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation, Madrid, Spain

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The [European Commission](#) and [Europa Nostra](#) have announced the 2026 winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, which are co-funded by the [Creative Europe](#) Programme of the EU. This year, Europe's most prestigious awards for heritage go to **30 exemplary projects and champions from 18 countries** throughout the continent (*see the full list below*).

Among this year's laureates is **Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation**, based in Madrid, Spain, awarded in the category **Heritage Champions**.

Heritage supporters and enthusiasts are now encouraged to **discover the winners and [vote online](#) to decide who will win the Public Choice Award 2026**, which is entitled to receive €10,000. Votes can be cast until 12 May.

The winners were selected by the [Awards' Jury](#), composed of ten heritage experts from across Europe, upon evaluation of all applications by five [Selection Committees](#). A total of 261 eligible applications to this year's Awards were submitted by organisations and individuals from 40 European countries.

The winners will be celebrated at the [European Heritage Awards Ceremony 2026](#) on **28 May** at the Municipal Theatre of **Nicosia, Cyprus**. This high-profile event will be hosted by European Commissioner **Glenn Micallef**, and Europa Nostra's Executive President, Prof. Dr. **Hermann Parzinger**. H.E. the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. **Nikos Christodoulides**, will honour the ceremony with his attendance, as the highest representative of the country which holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Deputy Minister of Culture of Cyprus, Dr. **Vasiliki Kassianidou**, and other distinguished guests will also attend. **During the ceremony, the Grand Prix laureates and the Public Choice Award winner — chosen from among this year's winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards and entitled to receive €10,000 each — will be announced. The Awards Ceremony will be live streamed via the [Europa Nostra website](#).**

The ceremony will be a highlight of the [European Cultural Heritage Summit 2026](#), taking place **from 26 to 30 May** in the **capital city of Cyprus**. Under the motto "Heritage as the Soul of Mare Nostrum", the Summit in Nicosia will highlight the (geo)political, societal and environmental relevance of heritage for Europe and the wider Mediterranean region. The Summit, organised by Europa Nostra with the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Nicosia, is held under the **patronage of the [Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU](#)**, and is supported by the **European Union**.

Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation, Madrid, SPAIN

Founded in 2009 by Adam Lowe (OBE), Factum Foundation works at the intersection of digital recording, technological innovation, scientific research, and material reproduction. As a not-for-profit organisation, it develops technologies and methodologies for the preservation, study, and dissemination of cultural heritage. Its work spans the high-resolution digital recording of cultural artefacts, the design of scanners and software, and the rematerialisation of objects and sites for conservation and display. It also leads educational programmes, supports the transfer of skills to local communities, curates exhibitions, advocates for preservation practices to be challenged and rethought, builds digital archives, and establishes centres dedicated to preservation and innovation.

Over the past decade, Factum Foundation has played a leading role in establishing high-resolution, non-contact recording as a central component of heritage practice. It has developed and deployed systems such as the Lucida 3D Laser Scanner, capable of recording relief surfaces at close to 100-micron accuracy, and the Selene Photometric Stereo System, designed to capture surface texture and colour through the analysis of reflected light. These technologies have been applied across a wide range of contexts, from panel paintings and low-relief surfaces to manuscripts, inscriptions, and architectural environments, often revealing information that cannot be perceived through conventional photography or direct observation.

In Europe, Factum Foundation has undertaken sustained collaborations with major institutions, building on a lineage of work that predates its formal establishment, initiated by its sister company Factum Arte. In 2006, a defining precedent is the high-resolution recording and facsimile of *The Wedding at Cana* by Paolo Veronese, carried out at the Louvre Museum and installed in its original architectural context at the San Giorgio Maggiore, in collaboration with the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. The project demonstrated that a facsimile, derived from rigorous recording, can restore not only the image but the spatial, historical, and perceptual coherence of a work displaced from its original setting, raising fundamental questions about authenticity, location, and the status of the original. This approach has informed subsequent collaborations across Europe. The Foundation has worked with institutions including the Bodleian Libraries (ARCHiOx), the Museo del Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum, the Musée du Quai Branly, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, the Musei Vaticani, the Galleria Borghese, the Pinacoteca di Brera, the SMK – National Gallery of Denmark, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and the Mauritshuis, among many others.

These collaborations span the recording of paintings, manuscripts, low-relief surfaces, and architectural elements, generating high-resolution datasets used for conservation analysis, research, and display. More broadly, the Foundation builds centre dedicated to preservation and technology, such as its collaboration with the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford, developed through the ARCHiOx initiative. This has introduced advanced workflows combining photometric stereo and 3D scanning to digitise fragile collections, enabling the study of surface detail—tool marks, inscriptions, and material transformations—with a level of precision previously inaccessible. Across these projects, Factum Foundation has established a methodology in which recording, analysis, and material output form a continuous process, allowing institutions to reduce handling of original works, reconstruct lost or displaced contexts, and expand access while maintaining rigorous standards of accuracy.

One of the most widely recognised applications of its methodology is the facsimile of the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62) in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. Produced using high-resolution recording of the wall surfaces and installed near the original tomb, the facsimile offers a viable alternative for visitors, significantly reducing the physical impact of tourism on the fragile original while maintaining a high level of visual and spatial accuracy. This project has become a reference point for the role of facsimiles in

heritage preservation, demonstrating how recording and reproduction can be integrated into site management strategies.

Factum Foundation has also worked extensively in contexts where heritage is at risk due to conflict, environmental conditions, or structural fragility. Recording campaigns in Brazil and the Middle East have focused on documenting architectural surfaces, inscriptions, and archaeological remains, contributing to long-term archives that can support research, conservation, and, where appropriate, reconstruction. In parallel, the Foundation has collaborated with institutions and authorities to develop methodologies that can be deployed locally, ensuring that recording and preservation are not dependent on external intervention alone.

A central aspect of the Foundation's work is the use of facsimiles not as replicas in a traditional sense, but as precise material outputs derived from high-resolution data. These facsimiles are used in museums and heritage sites to reconstruct the appearance of works that are too fragile, dispersed, or inaccessible to be displayed, and to allow close study without risk to the original. This approach has been applied to paintings, sculptural reliefs, and complex surfaces, often requiring the integration of multiple recording techniques and advanced fabrication processes. By shifting attention from the uniqueness of the object to the accuracy of its recorded surface, Factum Foundation has contributed to redefining the role of the facsimile within both conservation and exhibition contexts.

Alongside its technical work, the Foundation places strong emphasis on research and knowledge transfer. It collaborates with universities, museums, and conservation professionals to develop new methodologies for recording and analysing cultural heritage, and runs training initiatives aimed at building local capacity in digital documentation. These activities ensure that the tools and approaches developed can be adopted and adapted by institutions internationally, rather than remaining confined to individual projects.

Through its work, Factum Foundation has consistently argued for a shift in how cultural heritage is understood and managed: from the static object to the dynamic dataset; from preservation as passive protection to preservation as an active, knowledge-driven process; and from access defined by physical proximity to access enabled through high-fidelity recording and material reproduction. Its projects demonstrate that rigorous documentation, when combined with material expertise, can both safeguard cultural heritage and expand the ways in which it is studied, experienced, and shared.

Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, said: *"The 2026 European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards celebrate the remarkable power of heritage to inspire, connect, and transform. In a rapidly changing world, this year's winners demonstrate how our shared cultural legacy can drive sustainability, foster innovation, and strengthen the bonds that unite us. My warmest congratulations to all the winners, your extraordinary work lights the way forward. From pioneering AI-based risk prevention to hands-on training in traditional building techniques, these projects show that heritage is not just about the past, it is a living force for progress. Whether reviving traditional crafts with modern skills, adapting historic sites for future challenges, or engaging young people as active participants of our heritage guardians, they prove that culture is at the heart of Europe's future."*

Cecilia Bartoli, the world-renowned mezzo-soprano and President of Europa Nostra, stated: *"My heartfelt congratulations to the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2026 on their highly-deserved recognition. The projects and people honoured this year demonstrate how heritage can inspire new generations, strengthen community life and support local economies. In a world marked by conflicts, geopolitical tensions and technological change, the need to champion what unites us has become more urgent and important than ever. Cultural heritage connects people across generations and borders and is a key bridge for shaping more inclusive, sustainable and democratic societies in Europe and beyond."*

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Winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2026

Category Heritage Champions

[Din l-Art Helwa - The National Trust for Malta, Valletta, MALTA](#)

[Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation, Madrid, SPAIN](#)

[Museum Open for Renovation NGO, Kyiv, UKRAINE](#)

[Maryna Hrytsenko †, Chernihiv, UKRAINE](#) (*Posthumous Award*)

Category Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

[Hungarian State Opera House, Budapest, HUNGARY](#)

[Polirone Monastic Complex, San Benedetto Po, ITALY](#)

[Multifunctional Urban District of Bologna - DumBO, ITALY](#)

[Garden of Nikolai Astrup - Astruptunet, Vassenden, NORWAY](#)

[Bánffy Castle, Râșcruci, ROMANIA](#)

[Dome of the Church of Escuelas Pias of Valencia, SPAIN](#)

[Salinas de La Concepción, Menorca, SPAIN](#)

Category Research

[The Cypriot Fiddler, CYPRUS](#)

[National Historical Archive of Italian Restorers - ASRI, ITALY](#)

[FENIX Project, Seville, SPAIN](#)

Category Education, Training & Skills

[Heritage Craft School, ICELAND](#)

[Improving the Energy Performance of Heritage Properties in State Care Initiative, Dublin, IRELAND](#)

[International Summer School on Historic Masonry Structures - HIMASS, ITALY / SPAIN](#)

[Cita Rīga's Initiative 'Co-creating Urban Heritage with Children', LATVIA](#)

[Safeguarding the Dobrota Lace Tradition - Pacijenca Project, Kotor, MONTENEGRO](#)

[School of Renovation, Skofja Loka, SLOVENIA](#)

Category Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising

[Croatian Coral Center Zlarin, CROATIA](#)

[Sector 2: Nicosia – The Green Line Project, CYPRUS](#)

[Gardens of Peace Project, FRANCE](#)

[14 Henrietta Street - Social History Museum of Dublin Life, IRELAND](#)

[Intorno a Minerva Project, Breno, Brescia, ITALY](#)

[Gothic Route Initiative, SLOVAKIA](#)

[Preserving the Art and Memory of Polina Raiko, Kherson, UKRAINE](#)

Winners of the Europa Nostra Awards 2026

Three of this year's winners come from third countries which do not take part in the [Creative Europe](#) Programme of the European Union, namely the United Kingdom and Türkiye. These winners receive the Europa Nostra Awards – which are not funded by the EU – reflecting the organisation's commitment to recognising heritage excellence in all countries of the Council of Europe.

[Elizabeth Tower – Big Ben, London, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse)

[Rochdale Town Hall, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse)

[Assessing Earthquake Damage to Cultural Heritage Sites, TÜRKIYE](#) (Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-Raising)

Showcasing heritage-related excellence in Europe since 2002

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. For 24 years, the Awards have been a key instrument to recognise and promote the multiple values of heritage for Europe's culture, society, economy, and environment.

Supported under the European Union's Creative Europe programme, the Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices in Europe, encouraged the cross-border exchange of knowledge, and connected heritage stakeholders in wider networks. The Awards have brought major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, additional funding and increased visitor numbers. In addition, the Awards have championed a greater care for our shared heritage among Europe's citizens. For additional facts and figures about the Awards, please visit the [Awards website](#).

The Call for Entries for the 2027 edition of the Awards is open. Visit www.europeanheritageawards.eu for more information and submit your application online by 7 September 2026.

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TO FIND OUT MORE

[Press release in various languages](#)

About each Award winner:

[Information and Jury's comments](#)

[Videos](#) (in high resolution)

[Photos and visuals](#) (in high resolution)

[Creative Europe website](#)

Background information

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. It is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, covering over 40 countries. It is the most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Europa Nostra celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2023.

Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered Programme](#). It celebrates and disseminates excellence through the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#). Europa Nostra contributes to the definition and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the European Heritage Alliance. It is also a partner of the New European Bauhaus initiative developed by the European Commission, and a European member and supporter of the Climate Heritage Network.

Since 2023, Europa Nostra has led the European consortium selected by the European Commission to run the [European Heritage Hub](#) project.

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the European Union's flagship programme to support the cultural and creative sectors, including cultural heritage, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe's society, economy and living environment. With a budget of over €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations from various cultural and creative sectors such as heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, and cultural and audiovisual professionals.