

# CULTURE NEWSLETTER

four



## ALL OVER THE PLACE - IN A GOOD WAY

This month we've been celebrating culture in places from Ebbsfleet to Abu Dhabi, from the role of culture in growing the first Garden City in a decade, to the first Omani winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. Debut author Alan Rhode, an Italian living in London, celebrated the publication of his first book, a post-Brexit political thriller about a proposed alliance between France and Germany.

The culture team worked on a series of events showcasing the burgeoning world of Saudi film, from a screening at our local Rich Mix to a reception at Cannes. In south-east London we said au revoir to clubbers favourite Printworks. And May wouldn't be complete without trips to the Hay Festival and Venice Architecture Biennale!

We hope you enjoy reading about our travels, both literal and figurative!

All the best,

Truda and Matt




**الفائز بالجائزة لعام 2023**  
**The 2023 Winner**

#ArabicFiction2023 #الرواية\_العربية\_2023

## THE WATER DIVINER WINS THE 2023 ARABIC FICTION PRIZE

On Sunday 21 May, members of the culture team were in Abu Dhabi with Four MENA colleagues for the announcement of the winner of the 2023 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, supported from afar by the team in London.

*The Water Diviner* by Zahran Alqasmi was announced as this year's winning novel. The book explores the world of the *afaj* – the irrigation system inextricably linked to Omani village life. Notably, Alqasmi the first Omani winner in the prize's history. This is his fourth novel. In addition to being awarded USD \$50,000, funding will be made available by IPAF for the English translation of *The Water Diviner*, and Alqasmi can expect to see an increase in book sales and international recognition.

Chair of Judges Mohammed Achaari (Moroccan writer and novelist) celebrated the book during a ceremony at the Fairmont Hotel that was also streamed online, stating "the novel's precise structure and sensitive poetic language are the conduit for compelling characters like the water diviner, who plays an essential role in people's lives, yet simultaneously inspires their fear and revulsion". The prize was presented to Alqasmi by former IPAF Trustee Jonathan Taylor and current Trustee HE Zaki Nusselbeh.

The event was a success, with the attendance of media, VIPs and industry figures, and there was a busy schedule of interviews for Alqasmi at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair in the days following his win. The news was widely reported by multiple Arabic and English-language outlets, including [BBC World Service](#), [The National](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Gulf News](#) and [Emirates 24/7](#). 24 hours after the announcement, 85,037 people saw the winner announcement posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, whilst the shortest to winner campaign accumulated 228,636 views across social media platforms.



## CULTURE COMES TO EBBSFLEET...

This month we worked with Ebbsfleet, the first garden city in 100 years, to host a showcase event celebrating the work achieved towards cultural placemaking over the past five years. The event celebrated the launch of Ebbsfleet's Cultural Infrastructure Prospectus, which welcomes the creative sector to help make Ebbsfleet a great place to live, work and visit, outlining ambitions for spaces, infrastructure and creative programming.

Our team worked with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) to realise an event that was filmed by Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, who welcomed talks and films from a variety of creative organisations, panel discussions and shared learnings on the future of cultural placemaking in Ebbsfleet. The event also explored the importance of having a community-led cultural programme, with a selection of achievements in this area on display around the event. The event concluded with a showcase from local dance company Loop Dance, who delivered an exploratory performance focused on mental health awareness.

The team secured over 50 attendees, including a journalist from the Kent Messenger, board members and the CEO of EDC, local and national creative organisations such as Blueprint Arts, Creative Estuary, Cement Fields, Film and Video Umbrella and Cohesion Plus, as well as members of the local council.

The event was a huge success, with Sir Nicholas Serota making an impromptu speech at the end celebrating the progress that has been made over the past five years and saying that Ebbsfleet's work is a shining example of what Arts Council England would like to see all over the country.



## A FINAL FAREWELL TO OUR FAVOURITE CLUB...OR IS IT?

Last month we saw Printworks London hold its final ever weekend and the venue did not hold back on going out with a bang. After first opening its doors in February 2017, Broadwick Live transformed the vast abandoned newspaper printing press in Canada Water into London's cultural powerhouse and one of the world's top clubs, as rated by DJ Mag and Evening Standard. From its iconic electronic music series and hosting the BBC Proms, to forming the backdrop to fashion shows and appearing in the latest *The Batman* film; Printworks has demonstrated the versatility of the venue and its audiences. The Closing Weekend line-up represented the diversity and rich history of the venue and its fans, with a nod to the labels, crews, collectives, DJs, live acts, artists, and more, who have helped create this world renowned venue. The final send-off saw live performances from **Peggy Gou**, **Róisín Murphy** (Live PA), **Stephan Bodzin** and **Folamour**.

With all tickets selling out in under an hour, we knew the weekend would be a hit for press and a great opportunity for tailored features. We secured multiple press interviews with many of the faces behind the venue for the likes of **The Times** and **City AM** and broadcast outlets such as **BBC News London** and **Channel 4 News**.

All is not lost! To coincide with the final good-bye, Broadwick Live and British Land announced that Printworks London is intending on returning to its Canada Water home in 2026, following the redevelopment of the wider area. After months of speculation and extensive conversations between Broadwick Live and British Land, the future for this vital part of London and the UK's vibrant cultural scene is not over yet.



  
**Chair - Frederick Studemann**

  
**Ruth Scurr**

  
**Arifa Akbar**

  
**Andrew Haldane**

  
**Tanjil Rashid**

  
**Andrea Wulf**

**#BGPrize2023**

## THE 2023 BAILLIE GIFFORD PRIZE JUDGING PANEL IS...

This month, the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction announced the full judging panel for the 2023 award.

Chair of judges **Frederick Studemann**, Literary Editor of *Financial Times*, will be joined by award-winning author **Andrea Wulf**, theatre critic for *The Guardian* **Arifa Akbar**, the writer and historian **Ruth Scurr**, journalist and critic **Tanjil Rashid** and Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Arts **Andrew Haldane**.

The prize aims to recognise and reward the best of non-fiction and is open to authors of any nationality. It covers all non-fiction in the areas of current affairs, history, politics, science, sport, travel, biography, autobiography and the arts. The winner of the prize will be announced on 16 November 2023, following the shortlist announcement in October and longlist in September.

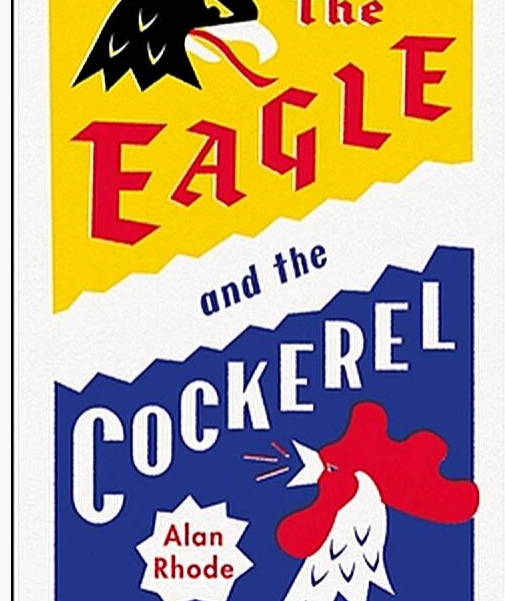


## CELEBRATING WOMEN IN FILM

As part of a Saudi Cinema Tour, we organised a screening of *Becoming*, an omnibus of five short films directed by Saudi women filmmakers, presented by Generation 2030 and Red Sea Film Festival at Rich Mix in London on 18 May. The films take a deep look into Saudi's ever-changing society and the daily lives of women in the country. Two of the directors Sara Mesfer and Jawaher Alamri were in attendance for a Q&A discussion following the screening hosted by Beth Webb from *EMPIRE*.

The series of events continued in Cannes with a Saudi film reception at the Gray d Albion hotel with UK film media in attendance to meet young filmmakers Sara Balghonaim, Maha Al-Saati and Khaled Zidan. This new edition of the Saudi Cinema Tour aims at strengthening ties between Saudi and French film talent.

Sara Balghonaim's film *Me & Aytarous* was shown at Soho House White City on 30 May with UK film industry and media in attendance to gain exposure to a rising star in the Saudi film industry.



## ALAN RHODE'S POLITICAL THRILLER COMES OUT

Alan Rhode's debut novel, *The Eagle and the Cockerel*, a political thriller set in the heart of post-Brexit Europe, was published on 18 May. As part of our work with Whitefox Publishing, the Four team have been focusing on raising Alan's profile.

To that end, we have secured coverage in [Five Books](#), where Alan discusses what you should read if you want to learn more about Italian politics. He will also be appearing on the *Europorama* podcast, which explores European science fiction.

In addition to our media work, we have created a social media campaign, organising a blog tour with book influencers and creating a bank of tweets to raise Alan's profile. We have also worked with our content marketing team on a paid social media campaign to drive people to Amazon, where they can buy the book. *The Eagle and the Cockerel* is featuring as the English Speaking Union's Book Club choice for June/July and Alan will be in conversation with Leena Norms at their home at Dartmouth House on 22 June.

