

Beat: Arts

British historian Winifred Mary Beard wins the 2016 Princess of Asturias Award

Of Social Sciences

Madrid, 25.05.2016, 17:11 Time

USPA NEWS - British historian Winifred Mary Beard has been bestowed with the 2016 Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences, as made public Wednesday in Oviedo by the Jury responsible for conferring said Award.

The Jury has decided to grant the 2016 Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences to Mary Beard for "her outstanding contribution to the study of Ancient Greco-Roman culture, politics and society." Professor at the University of Cambridge, Mary Beard is "one of the most influential European intellectuals of today, enjoying widespread recognition within both academia and society at large," said the Jury.

The Jury has especially prized "the ability of the laureate to integrate the legacy of classical antiquity in our experience of the present. The award thus highlights the heritage of the classical tradition and recognizes the humanities as a source of inspiration for social debate and contemporary politics. Mary Beard's work demonstrates her extraordinary talent for making specialized knowledge both accessible and relevant to the general public."

Winifred Mary Beard (Much Wenlock, UK, 1955), Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Newnham College, is one of the leading experts on antiquity and one of the most influential British intellectuals. After graduating with a BA (Hons) from Newnham College, Cambridge, she received her PhD in 1982 with a thesis entitled 'The State Religion in the Late Roman Republic: A Study Based on the Works of Cicero.'

Noting that many men in the university questioned the academic potential of women, Beard felt even more motivated to succeed, adopting a feminist point of view which, as she has stated, has been hugely important in her life, because, in her own words, "I actually can't understand what it would be to be a woman without being a feminist." Beard lectured at King's College London (1979-1983) and returned to Cambridge in 1984, where she became Professor of Classics in 2004.

Visiting Professor at the University of Berkeley (2008), the series of six Sather lectures she gave there were published in 2014 under the title 'Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling and Cracking Up' (Sather Classical Lectures). Mary Beard has been Classics editor of The Times Literary Supplement since 1992 and writes the blog 'A Don's Life' published by The Times newspaper.

Author of works such as 'The Roman Triumph' (2008) and 'Pompeii' (2009), in the words of Professor Stephen Halliwell at the University of Saint Andrews, "no other classicist alive today has so effectively combined professional excellence in the study of ancient Greek and Roman culture with a pre-eminent ability to communicate the interest and importance of such research to a wider audience. In doing so, Mary Beard has developed a unique voice and style which characterise all her work "" more than a dozen books, extensive journalism, popular television documentaries, and a long-running and high-profile blog."

She has written and presented a number of documentary series for television: 'Pompeii: Life and Death in a Roman Town' (2010), 'Meet the Romans with Mary Beard' (2012) and 'Pompeii: New Secrets Revealed with Mary Beard' (2016). She is also a regular contributor to radio. In addition to those already mentioned, her major works include 'Rome in the Late Republic' (1985, revised 1999), 'Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World' (1990), 'The Parthenon' (2002), 'Confronting the Classics: Traditions, Adventures and Innovations' (2013) and 'SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome' (2016).

Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians (2005) and of the British Academy (2010), she was elected Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2011. She received the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2013 and is currently Royal Academy of Arts Professor of Ancient Literature. In 2008, she received the Wolfson History Prize (UK) for 'Pompeii' and, in 2013, the Classical Association Prize (UK) for her "significant contribution to the public understanding of Classics". She is holder of the Bodley Medal (2016).

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-8061/british-historian-winifred-mary-beard-wins-the-2016-princess-of-asturias-award.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jose A. Martin

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619