

“Source of inspiration for us and a reflection of our finest aspirations”

2022 Princess of Asturias Awards

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USPA NEWS - The capital of the Principality of Asturias, Oviedo (Northern Spain), hosted this Friday, October 28, the ceremony for the delivery of the Princess of Asturias Awards at the Campoamor theater, closed last year due to the Covid pandemic. The theater recovered its splendor this year at a gala presided over by the King and Queen of Spain, Felipe VI and Letizia; the princess of Asturias, Leonor de Borbón, and the infanta Sofía. Also the queen emerita, Sofia of Greece, attended the ceremony.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Literature was for the writer Juan Mayorga. He published his first play, 'Seven good men', in 1989, which earned him the Marqués de Bradomin Runner-up Prize from the Spanish Youth Institute. He has taught Playwriting and Philosophy at the Royal School of Dramatic Art in Madrid and directed the seminar 'Memory and Thought in Contemporary Theatre' at the Spanish National Research Council's Institute of Philosophy.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities was for the Polish journalist Adam Michnik. He is one of the best known and most prominent defenders of human rights in Poland and is considered one of the key figures in the recovery of democracy in the country, as well as an outstanding journalist.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Concord was for Shigeru Ban. Considered the foremost activist of architecture by the specialized press, Shigeru Ban has achieved international prestige for being able to provide shelters and temporary housing as a rapid, effective response to extreme and devastating situations caused mostly by natural disasters.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for International Cooperation was for Ellen MacArthur. Born in Whatstandwell (Derbyshire, England) on July 8, 1976, Ellen Patricia MacArthur is a professional yachtswoman. She made history in 2005 by completing the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe done by any sailor. In 2003, she founded the Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust, which helps young people with cancer overcome their problems through sailing. In 2010, she created the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to change the production and consumption habits of the world economy and accelerate the transition to what is known as circular economy.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences was for Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. A scholar and promoter of the Mexican pre-Columbian world, as well as a leading communicator in this field of knowledge, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma has carried out his fieldwork in archaeological sites such as Comalcalco, Tepeapulco, Bonampak, Teotihuacan, Cholula, Tula, Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan, among others.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts was for Carmen Linares and María Pagés. Having become two of the most important figures of flamenco in recent decades, Carmen Linares and María Pagés unify the spirit of several generations that, from a sense of respect for tradition and the depth of the roots of flamenco, have managed to modernize and adapt its essence to the contemporary world, elevating it even more so to the category of universal art. With their work, both have opened paths with artistic as well as social ramifications and have become an example of hard work, talent and dedication for future generations.

The 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Technical & Scientific Research was for Geoffrey Hinton, Yann Lecun, Yoshua Bengio and Demis Hassabis. Geoffrey Hinton, Yann LeCun and Yoshua Bengio are considered the 'godfathers' of an essential technique in artificial intelligence, called 'deep learning', which is based on the use of neural networks for voice recognition, computer vision and natural language processing, and has enabled advances in fields as diverse as object perception and machine translation. For his part, Demis Hassabis is CEO and co-founder of DeepMind, one of the largest artificial intelligence research companies in the world, founded in 2011 and acquired in 2014 by Google (2008 Prince of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities). At DeepMind, Hassabis has created a neural network model that combines the capabilities of an artificial neural network with the algorithmic power of a programmable computer.

And finally, the 2022 Princess of Asturias Award for Sports was for the Olympic Refugee Foundation and IOC Refugee Olympic Team. In the words of IOC President Thomas Bach, the Olympic Refugee Foundation and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, created in 2017

and 2015, respectively, by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) –1991 Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation–, aim to serve as “a symbol of hope for all the world's refugees”.

Their work spurs everyone to keep learning

“In a few days I will be 17 years old. And I assure you that discovering the work of our Laureates helps me better understand the world around us. Their work spurs me –spurs everyone really– to keep learning. I have read about each one of them and I am impressed with what they have achieved. I care and am interested because I know that your work, your efforts, look to the future while influencing the present,” said the Princess of Asturias, Leonor de Borbón. “We young people are aware that the current situation is not easy, that the world has changed and continues to change, and that the best way to move forward is to maintain the enthusiasm to learn, to equip ourselves with a sense of responsibility and a capacity for effort; to learn from those who know, those who do what they do impeccably, often silently. For this reason, on days like today, listening to, admiring and recognizing the excellence of our Laureates makes us feel that things can always change for the better,” she added.

The King of Spain, Felipe VI, explained that “every year, an occasion like this affords us the magnificent opportunity to continue to discover stories of effort and excellence, of hope and enthusiasm, through the work and careers of those who really shine light on these Awards. It also allows us to continue discovering the beauty of this land, and the soul and generous heart of the people of Asturias. We are accordingly grateful for your affection, your welcome and your hospitality.” And added: “We return to Asturias once again to participate in this ceremony of recognition and generosity, of culture and gratitude. And the Queen and I do so ?as do our daughters, Princess Leonor and Infanta Sofía? renewing the feelings that, from their inception, have forged the reason for these Awards.”

“The values that over the 42 years that the Awards have now been held return to this stage today, embodied by our Laureates; values we have defended and honoured: solidarity, harmony, cooperation, the continuous desire to improve, the love for freedom, the defence of Human Rights. And in doing so, we thank those who generously help and support us to make all this possible,” the King said. “The Laureates are an unceasing source of inspiration for us and a reflection of our finest aspirations, and I would now like to address my words to them, because this ceremony is theirs, this moment is theirs and theirs, therefore, is the merit recognized via these Awards.”

“The war in Ukraine is destroying lives, as well as future projects, prospects and hopes, personal feelings and emotions. The victim in this –as in any war– is all that enriches us as human beings and constitutes a legacy handed down from generation to generation. The war is destroying libraries, schools, music, museums, science, art. Culture is thus a victim of war. But war will never destroy Culture, nor the values it represents, nor the freedom and dignity of human beings, all of which lie at the heart of these Awards and our Foundation. Values that Europe also represents,” he remembered.

Putin is not Russia

For his part, the Polish Journalist Adam Michnik explained that “throughout all these years, we have sought to defend two essential values of democracy: freedom and truth. Today, these values are once again threatened by the criminal aggression carried out by Putin's regime against Ukraine. The war that Putin's regime has unleashed against Ukraine is actually a war against the democratic world as a whole. Every day we are faced with horrific images of looting, rape, torture and murder perpetrated by Putin's army in Ukraine.”

“But Putin is not Russia,” he added. “That is why we wish to recognize those Russians who oppose this barbarity of war and openly express their opposition. They are the ones who defend Russia's honour, as Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn did in their day; as Thomas Mann defended Germany's honour during the years of the Nazi apocalypse. We must respect them for it.”

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