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Press release

Lukas Avendaño wins the SEDA – Salavisa European Dance Award 2026



Lukas Avendaño (c) Sayna Ghaderi

Lukas Avendaño receives the SEDA – Salavisa European Dance Award 2026. The award is presented for the second time this year and was established by the **Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation** in collaboration with eight other European cultural organizations. These include JOINT ADVENTURES, Dansehallerne (Denmark), Fabbrica Europa (Italy), KVS (Belgium), Maison de la Danse/Biennale de Lyon (France), Mercat de les Flors (Spain), Sadler's Wells (United Kingdom), and Tanzquartier Wien (Austria). The award honors outstanding artists from around the world whose work deserves greater visibility beyond the borders of their home countries.

The winner, who was selected from a list of five finalists by a jury of three independent experts – **River Lin, La Ribot,** and **Gurur Ertem** – receives 150,000 euros and has the opportunity to present productions on the partner institutions' stages. Other competitors for the prize included Chiara Bersani from Italy, Dan Daw from Australia, Mamela Nyamza from South Africa, and Jefta van Dinther from the Netherlands, who now lives in Berlin.

According to the jury, Lukas Avendaño's artistic practice stands out for "the singularity with which it brings together performance, choreography, ritual, social anthropology, writing, pedagogy and political action. Her work is culturally rich and layered. It is also formally open: dance, costume, text, testimony, music,

ritual structures, public intervention and communal memory coexist without being subordinated to a single disciplinary frame."
The jury also highlighted Avendaño's "exceptional ability to communicate the cultural, historical and political dimensions of her artistic practice without diminishing their complexity", noting that her work "demonstrates how performance can be, simultaneously, an artistic expression, an archive, a testimony, a ritual, a pedagogical act, a space for mourning and a means of collective survival."

Born in Oaxaca, Mexico, **Lukas Avendaño** studied Dance and Anthropology. Her artistic practice brings together performance, dance, ritual and memory to explore identity, Zapotec culture and the muxe tradition, which challenges binary notions of gender. Her work addresses questions of identity, sexuality and power, alongside activism and the denunciation of violence and enforced disappearances in Mexico, including that of her brother Bruno, to whom she dedicated the performance "Buscando a Bruno".

Avendaño's work occupies a space between disciplines, where dance becomes a means of preserving memory, ensuring survival and fostering collective imagination. Her practice has the potential to reshape how ritual, identity and activism are understood within contemporary dance internationally, opening up new approaches, perspectives and possibilities for the future of the art form.

Commenting on the award, Lukas Avendaño says: "I imagine it will contribute not only to the creation of future works, but also, in a significant way, to the education and training of new generations. I like to imagine that, in the medium or long term, many young people will have the opportunity to discover dance who might otherwise never have had that chance – and that this will be possible thanks to this award."

The award ceremony took place on November 17, 2026 at 8.30 pm (GMT) at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Grand Auditorium. The ceremony included a performance of "Dzudza" by Idio Chichava, who shared the inaugural award in 2024 with Dorothée Munyaneza. A new work by Munyaneza had also been presented at the CAM Studio on 14, 15 and 16 November as part of the 2026 Alkantara Festival.

About the Award

The SEDA – Salavisa European Dance Award was established in 2023 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in honour of Portuguese dancer, teacher and artistic director Jorge Salavisa (1939–2020). The world's most highly endowed award for contemporary dance is presented every two years to artists from around the world who demonstrate exceptional talent or outstanding artistic qualities, supporting them in building their international reputation.

About the Jury

Ilgaz Gurur Ertem
An interdisciplinary scholar, sociologist, curator and educator in the field of somatic movement and dance, Ilgaz Gurur Ertem explores the intersections of art, social theory and political thought. Her writings address contemporary

dance and performance, cultural and curatorial politics, European arts networks and the intersections of social theory, corporeal and embodied practices.

La Ribot
Emerging as an artist in the late 1980s, towards the end of Spain's transition to democracy, La Ribot has had a significant influence on contemporary dance. She challenges the frameworks and structures of spaces and freely draws on the expressive languages of theatre, visual arts, performance, cinema and video to shift the conceptual boundaries of choreography.

River Lin
Based in Paris, Taiwanese artist and curator River Lin works at the intersection of live art, dance and queer culture. His curatorial practice focuses on social engagement, the production of intra-Asian knowledge, the development of cultural infrastructures and the queering of institutional agendas.

Further information: https://gulbenkian.pt/en/salavisa-european-dance-award/

Photos of Lukas Avendaño: https://www.swisstransfer.com/dl/01a1e9a5-1c36-72e2-8cc4-1e26acb050af

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