

European Young Heritage Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2025

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Introduction

European Historic Houses is proud to announce the 2025 edition of the European Young Heritage Entrepreneur of the Year Award. This prestigious award celebrates young leaders who are driving innovation and sustainability in privately-owned historic houses, gardens, and parks and awards the winner with 5,000€.

The award also fosters connections with professionals in private wealth, property management, and art preservation, creating a dynamic network of heritage innovators across Europe.

Eligible participants include individuals under 45 who are actively involved in a heritage project within a privately-owned property. Projects can range from commercial and educational ventures to community-focused initiatives and large-scale restorations. Applicants must be members of one of EHH's affiliated associations. Join us in celebrating the next generation of entrepreneurs committed to safeguarding Europe's rich cultural legacy.

The Jury

Karin Zumtobel, President
Chairperson of the Board
Zumtobel Group AG

Angélique Martzel
Rothschild & Co
Expert en Gestion de Patrimoine

Ménélik Plojoux
Patrice Besse
Directeur régional Rhône provençal
& Languedoc

Justin Green
Owner of Ballyvolane House, Ireland
Chair of Historic Houses of Ireland

Nicoline Schaub
EHH Vice President
and EHH NextGen President



The Finalists

This year, the jury selected four projects.
One finalist (EUR 5,000), one second place
and a shared third place.

Winner:

Thibault le Marié
Château de la Mazure (France)

2nd Place:

Thomas Emmet
Altidore Castle (Ireland)

Shared 3rd Place

Montague Cholmeley
Easton Walled Gardens (United Kingdom)

Luca Bizzozero
Château de Marnand (Switzerland)





Winner: Thibault le Marié

Château de la Mazure, La Demeure Historique

Describe your project:

As the Château and outbuildings are now restored and the language training activity we have on the estate is working well, we can extend our activity to friends' estates. We have partnered with the Château de Varambon (close to Beaujolais) where our concept is being implemented and contributes to the maintenance of the estate.

On our estate, we have an old bleachery that was the nicest in France in the late 18th century. The building was about to collapse, so we had to restore it before it completely fell apart! As a result, we launched BLANC BLANC BLANC, which will host both a training centre and a workshop on upcycled textiles.

From a place with no electricity and no water, it will become a 20-room pocket hotel focused on welcoming people who are considering professional retraining.

Concerning the restauration, we had to make some tough choices to bring more light into the building. As we had to open many windows, we reused the textile logic by placing white stripes on each side of the windows on the outside. The stripes have the same width as the sheets originally manufactured on the site. We reused many elements of the former roof/ceiling and floors to keep the identity of the place. Furthermore, the landscaping will display many floating sheets referring to the drying sheets from the 18th century.

Concerning the activities on site, I wanted to refer to the founder of the bleachery, Jean René Pierre de la Jubertiére, who was very innovative. Either in technics (he improved a lot the way to bleach textile) or in management (he wrote about some methods for his workers to have some « cœur à l'ouvrage »). So we created « La manufacture du blanc, » a small foundation to keep this spirit alive and show that innovation can also come from historic monuments!



La Manufacture du Blanc will offer many opportunities: a shared workshop for locals to work on textiles (confection, taint, block printing...). We will organise international residencies for craft practitioners to bring worldwide expertise to our local community.

Another main point will be the experimentation of a new way of working called « Équilibre vie pro/vie pro ». The goal is to find a long-term balance between a desk job and a manual job. The HEC Business School will conduct a study of the project, and it will be sponsored by many companies (Schneider Electric, ENGIE...)



Impressions:

- 1 – Before the Renovation
- 2 – During the Renovation
- 3 – After the Renovation
- 4 – Château de la Mazure
- 5 – Thibault le Marié





2nd Place: Thomas Emmet

Altidore Castle, Historic Houses of Ireland

Describe your project:

Altidore Castle was built in 1730 and bought by the Emmet family in 1944 to create a new home in Ireland. The two hundred acre estate has been organic since 1994. It was a national finalist in the Royal Dublin Society Woodland Conservation Award 2024 alongside other nominations. It has a twenty hectare glen that contains ancient or long established woodland with unusual bryophytes such as Dumortier's Liverwort. The river running through this woodland has been designated a Blue Dot River, the highest designation in Irish river preservation.

There are also three newly planted native woodlands as well as "discovered" trees from the Americas that were planted in the nineteenth century. The house is open to the public and we regularly have biodiversity walks to guide people about creating and preserving natural habitats. I am in the process of taking over from my parents and right now we share responsibility for the house.

One of our biggest projects and my first project to be in charge of was our pond restoration.

In front of the house is a pond that can be dated back to the late 1700s in written records but could actually be original to the house. When my great grandparents came to Altidore they had the pond dug out by hand by their team of gardeners to recreate its original glory, the idea was that it would be done every ten years. During Covid we noticed that the pond was completely blocked, having never been dug out since the 1940s. It was backing up onto the garden behind it and flooding it. This was destroying the nature in the garden as well as creating a mess.

We decided the only way to deal with this was to dig out the years of silt in the pond and restore it to its original glory where it could support wildlife and be an attractive feature for visitors when open to the public. It took a year of planning and execution.

A lot of the work I did before taking on Altidore was around social justice and I try to maintain my family's heritage in that way by focusing on the community in our events, holding charity days and championing education around nature and biodiversity.

What lasting impact has the project had?

The effects were almost immediate and certainly were evident within six months. The water in the pond no longer floods the garden. It is a clear pond rather than a mucky and tangled mess and counterintuitively supports a much wider range of wildlife. For the first time in years there is frogspawn back on the pond and ducks as well as heron and other birds have been spotted there. There is a wider range of flies and invertebrates according to our local wildlife group. For the first time we spotted a lizard at Altidore. The pond is also now a visitor feature, we regularly see people going down to look at it before or after a house tour whereas before it was hidden. The local community benefits from the wider range of wildlife and in the lessons we have been able to impart on water heritage with a training day we had with the local rivers trust. We have also given advice to other estates on pond preservation, including government owned properties with much larger bodies of water to be cleared and maintained.



Impressions:

1 – Renovation of the pond, 2 – The pond after the renovation, 3 – Altidore Castle



Shared 3rd Place: Montague Cholmeley Easton Walled Gardens, UK Historic Houses Association

Describe your project:

I studied zoology at university, and then spent several years pursuing a career in London as a fine furniture maker. I moved back to the Walled Gardens two years ago and tried several projects. Last year in October I decided to listen to what our visitors are already interested in, and picking up on how many people come to sketch in the gardens, decided to open up a curated, fine art materials shop. I have always drawn, painted and sculpted, and I felt an artists' supply shop was the perfect fit for the gardens as so many of the existing images we have left of Easton Hall (demolished) are not photographs, but artists' renderings. Art and heritage go hand in hand.

In a disused section of the clock tower, one of the few remaining parts of Easton Hall that sits within Easton Walled Gardens, open to the public, I have created a small artists materials shop. I source paints and brushes from all over Europe and have put

a lot of time into finding paintmakers who really care, handmaking paint and sourcing pigments from original historical sources, and using old formulas for colours that would have been used in the past, rather than the synthetic substitutes many of the more common brands use to save money in production. I run the shop and serve customers 5 days a week, and going forward I am organising courses and group workshops to help people to integrate their art with visiting our gardens.

Art is about care, and at the core of any heritage is a line of people who care. My family have lived in Easton since 1561 and we still live here because of the decisions of the past. In the current landscape that historic properties face, it is so important that the wider public understand that these spaces are worth maintaining, and a crucial part of that is making sure that they benefit.



By opening the gardens to the public, thousands of people a year visit us and enjoy the buildings, trees and landscaping put in place by my ancestors. My sincere hope is that by offering artists' materials and classes, I can encourage more people to slow down and recognise the care and dedication that goes into heritage properties, and encourage them to spend more time visiting historic houses and gardens in general, hopefully with brush in hand!

What lesson have you learned?

Find your personal strengths and interests and build a business that reflects them. Historic properties hold so much value because of the time, effort and money that has gone into making them beautiful, with each generation adding their own contribution. In order to make your contribution worth preserving, it needs to be something that is driven by more than just business sense. It should have aspects of your personal tastes and, in doing so, you will put more effort and time and your project will be much better for it.

Additionally, look closely at your local customer base: what works in one place may not work in another, but there is almost certainly a variant that you can tailor to match the people who are likely to visit you. For example, my research in London artists shops only applies to a certain extent as most of our customers are rural pensioners, not students and professionals as you would find in central London.

Impressions:

- 1 – Montague at his shop “Griffin of Easton”
- 2 – Easton Walled Gardens
- 3 – Fine stationery and artists' materials



Shared 3rd Place: Luca Bizzozero

Château de Marnand, Domus Antiqua Helvetica (Switzerland)

Describe your project:

We began to write the story of the house (Château de Marnand) or even Domaine de Marnand in September 2020. We fell in love with the proportions of the house - perfect for antique dealers like us! There are three buildings: château, châtelet and farm house, and 9-hectare for some animals and couple of tomatoes. Our specialisation is buying, restoring and selling pieces from the 18th century (starting from Louis XV) and beginning of the 19th century (French Empire). We are able to restore furniture, so we tried to restore our house with many elements of the 18th century and couple of the 19th century.

Our project is pretty ambitious, but we want to live in harmony with the initial purposes of the all three buildings in the comfort of the 21st century. A beautiful mix of culture and agriculture.

Today, we have on the domain:

- Our art gallery (100 m2)
- Microfarm of 8 hectares (animals suitable for our climate zone and we are also replanting typical fruit trees from our region trying to follow Pro Specie Rara terms)
- Finalising BnB - but the exact form should be still determined (some events mixing art de vivre and cuisine are planned)

We are passionate about the Domaine de Marnand because we are recreating everything from zero - it is not a light renovation, but there is a lot of archeology appropriate for buildings. In the château, we recreated the original volumes (many rooms were cut in 2 or even 5 pieces), the façade got its original color of 1800. The châtelet got its original roof volume. The farm should be used mainly for animals, but we have also instored an art restoration workshop in the part that was supposed to be an apartment for a farmer.

The lasting impact - sustainable mix of culture and agriculture: our three restored houses are enjoyable for people who live in the village and for tourists, because the domain can be seen from a long distance. We produce in the way of a sustainable agriculture (microfarm) that produces enough for a couple of families who live on the domain of Marnand. Sustainable things (we restore beautiful and historical things that were created many, many years ago and they are still useful!) and sustainable agriculture (a lots of respect to nature and all the living organisms).

The norms of today are the most complicated barriers to overcome - you realise (every day actually) that your house (château) is not a "norm" and the restoration norms are made for modern built houses. Your microfarm with 10 pigs, 4 cows, 10 sheep, 9 geese, 20 ducks and 20 chickens is not welcome in the world of industrial production.

What lesson have you learned?

Dream and be courageous to fight for your dreams!

Impressions:

1, 2, 3 – Château de Marnand
4 – Renovation of the châtelet



The Award Ceremony

The 2025 Award Ceremony is taking place at Château Saint Trys, close to Villefranche-sur-Saône, Beaujolais.

Thank you for your commitment to European cultural heritage and our private historic houses!



