

# Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

## Press release

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### Cindy Sherman to receive 2012 Roswitha Haftmann Prize

**The 2012 Roswitha Haftmann Prize – the best endowed art award in Europe – goes to the American artist Cindy Sherman. There is also a special prize for the filmmaker Harun Farocki.**

The Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation has awarded the 2012 Roswitha Haftmann Prize – worth CHF 150,000 – to the American artist Cindy Sherman (born 1954).

Sherman is one of the leading exponents of staged photography. She uses mostly herself – her own body – as her model; yet the concept underlying her work is anything but self-referential. She has reinvented role photography.

Her roleplay, which begins in the studio as a performance, ultimately reaches its audience in the form of a photograph. Her works transcend the boundaries of the exhibitionistic, and are all the more provocative because they are not intended to be viewed as self-portraits. Rather, through her alternating roles, Sherman parodies stereotypical representations of womanhood and explores the meaning of female identity in a male-dominated society. She investigates the processes of physical, psychological and sexual repression and the taboos that surround them, depicting them in the form of sometimes garish, overdrawn 'reproductions'.

Sherman references the techniques and forms of advertising, cinema and classical painting, but moves freely within these creative parameters. Her initial breakthrough came with a series of black and white photographs created between 1977 and 1980: the 'Untitled Film Stills' seemingly emulating images from Italian Neo-Realism and American film noir. They were followed by her first photo series in colour that dealt with the issue of sexual objectification, in which prosthetic limbs and mannequins were her preferred props. Later came the 'History Portraits' that replicated the composition of celebrated paintings easily recognizable to the viewer, as well as series on topics such as Hollywood and clowns.

Sherman draws her audience into conflict-laden situations. The individual identity that she presents is confronted with a collective sub-conscious, artificial beauty with natural brutality. Sherman's particular talent lies in her ability at once to attract and repel the viewer with works that are both profoundly unsettling and enduringly fascinating. In the opinion of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation jury, she is the leading artist of filmic and photographic self-exploration after Andy Warhol. It is in recognition of these artistic achievements that she has been awarded the Roswitha Haftmann Prize.

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#### PRIZEWINNER AND AWARD CEREMONY

Cindy Sherman was born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey in 1954. She studied painting at the State University College in Buffalo, New York and, during that time, also began working with photography. Her first important work, 'Bus Riders' (1976), was created while she was still a student. She currently lives and works in New York. Her works appear in the collections of some of the world's most prestigious art museums, not only in the US but also in Europe and, indeed, Mexico and Israel.

Cindy Sherman is the twelfth artist to receive Europe's most valuable art prize and the fourth woman to do so, after Maria Lassnig, Mona Hatoum and Vija Celmins. The award, worth CHF 150,000, will be presented on 10 May 2012 at the Kunsthhaus Zürich.

#### SPECIAL ACCOLADE FOR HARUN FAROCKI

The Prize was originally the initiative of Roswitha Haftmann (1924-1998), whose Foundation has awarded it since 2001 to a living artist who has created an oeuvre of outstanding quality. The winner is chosen by the Foundation Board, which includes the directors of the Kunstmuseum Bern, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne and the Kunsthhaus Zürich as well as other members co-opted by the Board. The deed of foundation provides for the jury to award special prizes at its discretion. It has now chosen to do so for the third time, and is bestowing on film director Harun Farocki a prize of CHF 75,000.

Author, lecturer and filmmaker Harun Farocki was born in 1944 in what is now the Czech Republic and from 1966 to 1968 studied at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin, where he now lives. He has established a reputation as a film critic and screenwriter and has completed more than 100 productions since 1966, predominantly documentaries, essay films and story films. Many of the works he has created since 2000 have been shown in exhibitions and museums ranging from the São Paulo Art Biennial to documenta 12. He curates exhibitions for art societies and museums.

For further information see: [www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com](http://www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com).

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