

# Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

## Media release

Zurich, 9 October 2025

### Cecilia Vicuña receives the Roswitha Haftmann Prize 2025

#### The Chilean artist is honored for her politically poetic life's work.

The Roswitha Haftmann Prize, worth CHF 150,000, will be awarded in 2025 to Chilean-born artist, activist, and poet Cecilia Vicuña. With this decision, the Foundation Board honors a body of work that has, for decades, combined artistic radicality with poetic force and political engagement. Vicuña is the 23rd recipient of Europe's most highly endowed art prize. Previous laureates include Maria Lassnig, Robert Frank, Cindy Sherman, VALIE EXPORT, Cildo Meireles, Zarina Bhimji, Robert Ryman, and Walter De Maria. The award ceremony will take place on Friday, 21 November 2025, at the Kunsthhaus Zürich.

#### CECILIA VICUÑA – WEAVING POETRY AND POLITICS

Cecilia Vicuña (\*1948, Santiago de Chile) is one of Latin America's most influential artists. Her practice spans painting, poetry, installation, performance, film, and activism – always with a clear focus on social justice, indigenous cultures, ecological concerns, and the transformative power of language. She is internationally recognized for her large-scale installations made of raw materials such as wool, threads, or found objects – fragile yet powerful works that touch both collective memory and personal remembrance.

Since the 1960s, Vicuña has combined artistic creation with political action. Exiled after the Chilean military coup in 1973, she consistently developed her approach further: interdisciplinary, feminist, and anti-colonial. Her oeuvre is a passionate plea for poetry as a way of life.

This year's laudatory speech will be delivered by Dr. Yilmaz Dziewior, Director of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne and member of the Foundation Board. He emphasizes:

'I am truly delighted that we are honoring Cecilia Vicuña, an artist whose work possesses great visual power while addressing highly topical issues. Over the past decades, she has engaged intensively with the role of women in society, both in Latin America and more broadly. Equally urgently, she draws attention to the economic and ecological exploitation of our planet and repeatedly intervenes in current debates. There are very few artists who manage to do this with such poetic and enduring consistency as Cecilia Vicuña.'

#### INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION – LATE VISIBILITY

For many years, Vicuña's work remained under the radar of the established art market – today it is being received with ever greater intensity. After her widely acclaimed participation in documenta 14 (2017), solo exhibitions followed at the Tate Modern in London, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago de Chile, and in 2025 at the Irish Museum of Modern

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Art in Dublin. In 2022, she was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale. Her works are held in major collections including Tate London, the MoMA, New York, the Museo Reina Sofía, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

## ABOUT THE PRIZE

The Roswitha Haftmann Prize was established in 2000 by the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation. Born in St. Gallen, gallerist and patron Roswitha Haftmann (1924–1998) stipulated that her estate be used to support outstanding living artists. The prize is awarded by the Foundation Board, which, according to the statutes, includes the directors of the Kunstmuseum Bern (Dr. Nina Zimmer), the Kunstmuseum Basel (Elena Filipovic), and the Museum Ludwig in Cologne (Dr. Yilmaz Dziewior), chaired by the director of the Kunsthaus Zürich (Ann Demeester). Additional members appointed by the Board include art critic and journalist Prof. Thomas Wagner, Karola Kraus (former director Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien), and Prof. Dr. Bernhart Schwenk (Curator of Contemporary Art, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich).

The prize money may be freely used by the laureate – for new artistic projects, or for documenting and securing their oeuvre. Apart from personally attending the award ceremony, no further obligations are associated with the prize.

## CECILIA VICUÑA AT THE KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

After studying in London, the artist emigrated to Colombia in 1975, at that time one of the few countries in South America without a military dictatorship. She spent several years in Bogotá, where she produced the film 'What Is Poetry to You?' (1980). In it, she asks passers-by, children, sex workers, police officers, poets and a biology professor the seemingly simple question, 'What is poetry to you?' The spontaneous answers offer a multi-layered insight into the dreams, concerns and hopes of people in this particular context. The result is a kind of portrait of a collective consciousness in which poetry can be experienced as an emotional and social force.

This film is part of the Kunsthau collection and will be shown in the film room of the Chipperfield building from 21 November 2025 until 22 March 2026.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com](http://www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com)

[www.ceciliavicuna.com](http://www.ceciliavicuna.com)

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