

Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

Media release

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Roswitha Haftmann Prize goes to Cildo Meireles

Cildo Meireles receives Europe's best-endowed art award, worth CHF 150,000.

The Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation is pleased to announce that the Roswitha Haftmann Prize 2023 is being awarded to the Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles (b. Rio de Janeiro, 1948). With a value of CHF 150,000, the Roswitha Haftmann Prize is Europe's best-endowed art award and has been presented since 2001 by a jury chaired by the Director of the Kunsthaus Zürich. Meireles is one of Brazil's most important artists. His multi-layered work is poetic and conceptual but also critical and socially relevant. It covers a range of genres, including sculptures, installations and performance. One of the younger members of a generation that transformed Brazilian art in the late 1960s, along with Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, he adopted a direct and sensual approach to his audience. He is especially known for his highly sensory, immersive installations, many of which express opposition to political repression, (colonial) exploitation and the unethical extraction of resources. His work sharpens physical perception through senses other than sight (tactile, aural and taste sensations), and gains meaning through interaction with visitors, viewers and other participants. Meireles's works serve as visual metaphors for a range of political, philosophical, existential and scientific issues, and attest to his ability to stimulate critical thinking. 'The jury was impressed by the artist's exceptional talent for involving his audience both intellectually and emotionally with politically charged and aesthetically fascinating works', says Yilmaz Dziewior, member of the Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation.

CV AND AWARDS

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948, Cildo Meireles began studying under the Peruvian artist Félix Barrenechea in Brasilia in 1963. In 1965, while still a student, he took part in the 2nd Modern Art Salon of the Federal District. His first solo exhibition was held in 1967 at the Modern Art Museum of Bahia. Annual group shows followed, before he moved to the US. At a 1970 exhibition at MoMA in New York, Meireles presented for the first time the now iconic works 'Insertions in Ideological Circuits: Cédula Project' and 'Insertions in Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project'. Both explore the notion of production, circulation and control of information. In 1973 he left New York and moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he lives and works to this day. In a career spanning more than 60 years, he has attracted the attention of the world's leading museums, including Tate Modern, which devoted an exhibition to him in 2008, and the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, which accorded him the same honour in 2013. He has been invited to appear at the Venice Biennale on no less than four occasions, and has also shown his work at biennials in Sydney, Johannesburg, Lyon, Istanbul and São Paulo as well as Documenta in Kassel.

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Cildo Meireles's works have been acquired by renowned institutions including Kiasma in Helsinki, the Fundación La Caixa in Barcelona, S.M.A.K. in Ghent, the Daros Collection Switzerland, the Instituto Inhotim in Brumadinho, Belo Horizonte, and Tate Modern in London. He received an honorary doctorate in San Francisco in 2005. France has appointed him an Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. The Velázquez Award presented to him in 2008 honours his life's work and his contribution to relations between Spain and South America.

FOUNDATION, PRESENTATION AT THE KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

With a value of CHF 150,000, the Roswitha Haftmann Prize is Europe's best-endowed art award. The winners can use the prize money as they see fit, for example to engage in new artistic activities or to document and preserve their inventory or studio. First and foremost, the Prize honours and foregrounds the winner's life's work; it does not give rise to any further commitments. The Prize was originally the initiative of Roswitha Haftmann (1924–1998), a language teacher who worked as a model for various US photographic agencies and married the art historian Werner Haftmann. She ran a gallery in Zurich until her death in 1998. Born in St. Gallen, she loved social events and converted her not inconsiderable wealth into a fund which supports the Roswitha Haftmann Prize. Her Foundation has awarded the Prize 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 Kunsthaus Zürich. Additional members are co-opted by the Board. Cildo Meireles is the 21st recipient of the award. Previous winners include Walter De Maria, Maria Lassnig, Robert Ryman, Cindy Sherman, Robert Frank and VALIE EXPORT. The Prize is to be presented on 22 September 2023 before an invited audience at the Kunsthaus Zürich.

For further information see: www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com

Press contact for further information, illustrations and interviews with the award winner:

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