

Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

Press release

Zurich, 26 November 2014

Lawrence Weiner receives 2015 Roswitha Haftmann Prize

The Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation has awarded Europe's best endowed art prize, worth CHF 150,000, to the American artist Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942). Weiner is considered an especially independent-minded practitioner of Conceptual Art, which grew out of Minimalism in the 1960s.

Lawrence Weiner, who currently divides his time between his native New York and Amsterdam, gave up studying literature and philosophy to become an artist. At his first solo show in 1964 he presented Shaped Canvases, experiments with materials, and performances. In the second half of the 1960s he was attracted to Conceptualism; the idea became the starting point for his art, and language as a medium for conveying it has been central to his work ever since.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Weiner deploys language not as a way of reflecting on art but as an art form in its own right: one that triggers sensations, memories and conceptions in the viewer. Unmistakeable in their graphic quality, his elliptical phrases, mostly without subject or predicate, have appeared in museums, galleries and public spaces. As he puts it, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership. This interactive act of communication about an object in a language not previously used is the distinguishing feature of Weiner's oeuvre. The works, produced using a multiplicity of techniques including printing, painting, hand-drawn sketches, artist's books, video works and films, need not even necessarily be executed by the artist himself. For Weiner, what matters is that the idea is implemented as he had conceived it.

The award by the jury of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation recognizes that Lawrence Weiner's distinctive practice has given rise to a whole new form of art and also a new audience. His works have received worldwide acclaim. He has exhibited several times at documenta in Kassel as well as the Biennials in Venice (most recently in 2013) and São Paulo (2006), and has been the subject of solo shows at institutions including the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He also took part in Harald Szeemann's legendary exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form' at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969. Following on from earlier accolades such as the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1976/1983) the Guggenheim Fellowship (1994) and awards including the Wolfgang Hahn Prize (1995) and the Skowhegan Medal for Conceptual Art (1999), Lawrence Weiner now receives the 2015 Roswitha Haftmann Prize.

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FOUNDATION, PRIZE AND AWARD CEREMONY

Lawrence Weiner is the fifteenth artist to receive Europe's best endowed art award. The award ceremony will take place on 21 May 2015 in the Kunsthaus Zürich. 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 Kunsthaus Zürich as well as other members co-opted by the Board.

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

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