

Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

Press Release

Zurich, 16 January 2008

Roswitha Haftmann Prize goes to video artist Douglas Gordon.

The 2008 winner of Europe's most valuable art award, the Roswitha Haftmann Prize, is the Scottish video artist Douglas Gordon. The award ceremony will take place on 8 May in Kunsthaus Zürich.

The Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation will award the 2008 Roswitha Haftmann Prize (valued at 150,000 Swiss francs) to the Scottish video artist Douglas Gordon (*1966). Having started his artistic life as a photographer, Gordon has developed a unique mode of expression using video and film installations. Gordon, like Doug Aitken and Stan Douglas, is one of the leading figures amongst the mid-generation video artists. In 1996 he was awarded the Turner Prize.

Gordon has a predilection for dissecting, splintering and doubling images, or for turning them into their own opposites. At the same time, however, doubt has been his constant companion on the road to artistic success. He often plays a double game: by undermining the credibility of images created using modern media he unsettles the viewer's faculties of perception. In his installations Gordon plays optical tricks on the viewer; existing film footage – with unexpected cuts – appears in completely new contexts and sound is used to arouse expectations that are either not fulfilled by the imagery or take on new associations. Gordon uses his art to explore themes such as temptation and fear, life and death, guilt and innocence. He draws his viewers in by demonstrating that their own lives are both volatile and contradictory.

The aesthetic brilliance and emotional impact of his work is no less memorable than that of the work he himself looks up to, in particular the films of Alfred Hitchcock – witness 'Play Dead: Real Time', where the camera circles around a trained elephant that lies down on the floor of the Gagosian Gallery in New York as though to die, or 'B-Movie' which focuses on a single fly, its legs flailing as it slowly, eventually does in fact die. Gordon's works investigate the fear of temptation, his works play with guilt and innocence, life and death. The essence of the human beings portrayed in his output is erratic and contradictory, as in the most recent example, 'Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait', a documentary focusing on the French football star Zinedine Zidane that was shown at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival.

In recognition of Gordon's outstanding artistic achievement, which is not restricted to media art and also takes him into various other genres, the Board of the Foundation has chosen him as the 2008 winner of the Roswitha Haftmann Prize.

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DOUGLAS GORDON

Douglas Gordon (born in Glasgow in 1966) lives and works in New York and Glasgow. He studied from 1984–88 at Glasgow School of Art, where he completed his Bachelor of Arts, and continued his studies as a postgraduate at the Slade School of Art in London. In 1996 he was awarded the Turner Prize. Ever since then he has had a presence through exhibitions and works in leading public art institutions in Europe, the United States, Canada and South America.

THE FOUNDATION AND ITS PRIZEWINNERS

Douglas Gordon (after Mona Hatoum) is the second UK-based winner of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation partly living and working in the United Kingdom. He is the latest in an illustrious list of prizewinners who have received this, the most generous European art prize, since it was founded not so long ago by the much-admired gallerist Roswitha Haftmann (1927–1998). The first recipient of the prize, which is financed by the returns from a trust fund, was Walter de Maria in 2001. He was followed by Maria Lassnig, Jeff Wall, Mona Hatoum, Robert Ryman, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, and Richard Artschwager.

The Foundation awards the prize every one to three years to a living artist for a body of work of outstanding importance. The prizewinners are selected by the Members of the Board, which is made up of the Directors of Kunstmuseum Bern, Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum Ludwig in Cologne and Kunsthaus Zürich. Additional members are either individuals nominated in the Foundation's constitution or co-opted by the Members of the Board. Further information on the Founder, the Selection Panel, the prize and the prizewinners is available at www.roswithahaftmann-foundation.com.

The award ceremony will take place in the presence of an invited audience on 8 May 2008 in Kunsthaus Zürich.

For further information and visual materials, please contact

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