Roswitha Haftmann Stiftung

Heimo Zobernig receives 2016 Roswitha Haftmann Prize

Heimo Zobernig (b. 1958) receives Europe's best endowed art award, worth CHF 150,000, from the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation.

At its meeting at the end of October, the Board of the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation decided to award the Roswitha Haftmann Prize to Heimo Zobernig in recognition of his sustained and diverse production and compelling body of work. The Austrian artist works in a variety of media including sculpture, painting, video and performance. Starting from geometric abstraction, he offers his own take on Minimal Art's central dictum, 'you get what you see'. At first glance, his early black sculptures resemble heavy, industrially manufactured architectural elements; on closer inspection, they reveal themselves to be handcrafted, lacquered cardboard sculptures. The pared-down formal language engages with Russian Constructivism, the Dutch 'De Stijl' movement, and the Zurich Concrete Artists. He employs simple materials such as cardboard, particle board and expanded polystyrene, fashioning them into three-dimensional, simple objects that enter into a relationship with strongly coloured abstract paintings, often including characters and individual words, to create complex spatial installations. Yet the overall message of his assemblages is not abstract. Zobernig views art as a system of communication that references phenomena beyond itself and permeates the lived reality of those who view it.

After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna from 1977 to 1980 and the University of Applied Arts Vienna from 1980 to 1983, Zobernig taught at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg and the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. He has been Professor of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna since 2000. He designed the Austrian pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, which closes its doors on 22 November.

FOUNDATION, PRIZE AND AWARD CEREMONY

Heimo Zobernig is the sixteenth artist to receive Europe's best endowed art award. The award ceremony will take place on 12 May 2016 in the Kunsthaus Zürich. The Prize was originally the initiative of gallery owner 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-stiftung.com.

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