

PRESS RELEASE

Francis Alÿs Receives the Wolfgang Hahn Prize 2023

On 17 November 2023, Francis Alÿs (b. 1959 in Antwerp) will be awarded the 29th Wolfgang Hahn Prize of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst.

As is customary, the prize entails the acquisition of a work for the collection of the Museum Ludwig. Francis Alÿs's untitled two-part work is part of the so-called *Sign Painting Project* (1993–1997). Over a period of four years, Alÿs created a series of paintings depicting the same figure of a man in a suit in the style of the enamel advertising signs (Spanish: *rotulos*) of the sign painters in Mexico City. The *rotulistas* were a defining part of urban life in Mexico at the time the series was created. The works reflect Alÿs's discomfort with supposedly art-immanent values, such as the concept of originality and the value chains associated with this.

Beginning in 1993, he painted the male figure in various positions with different objects on small-format canvases and commissioned the sign painters Juan García, Emilio Rivera, and Enrique Huerta to copy, enlarge and interpret his images on enamel panels. From these, he in turn sometimes produced painterly variations, likening the process to the children's game of Chinese Whispers.

The work will be shown in a small presentation at the Museum Ludwig from 18 November 2023 to 7 April 2024, together with the introductory artist's video *Set Theory* (1997, Mexico-City, 13:01 min.) on the *Sign Painter Project* and with loans from the same series from a private collector and member of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst.

This year's guest juror of the Wolfgang Hahn Prize and director of the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau München, Matthias Mühling, explains the uniqueness of the artistic position and the artist's special ability to observe our society with great sensitivity: 'From the study of social practice, a body of work has emerged that develops its very own poetry of the political and is borne by an engagement with public space and the idea of community.'

'Naturally, I feel very honoured; and in these polarising times, the award of such a prize is significant and invigorating, because it gives me the feeling that my own concerns and those of the public coincide, and that a dialogue is possible', said Francis Alÿs on receiving the news of his nomination.

'We consider ourselves very fortunate to have nominated Francis Alÿs from among the many world-class proposals submitted by our members. In a time of upheaval and uncertainty, his socially critical art can provide us with impulses that convey particular values for our coexistence. In an almost light-hearted way, his work explores the possibilities of capturing seemingly everyday scenes and actions in challenging circumstances. For his photographic and video works, paintings and drawings, Alÿs ventures into regions of smouldering conflict, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the Strait of Gibraltar, Jerusalem, and his adopted hometown of Mexico City', says Mayen Beckmann, Chairwoman of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst.

Yilmaz Dziewior, Director of the Museum Ludwig: 'Francis Alÿs works across media boundaries. In his works, his unique artistic position is manifested in the way he observes our society. Alÿs's investigations and actions, especially when he himself appears as a protagonist in his works, include themes such as migration, the drawing of borders, and the

consequences of globalisation, and are the source of his entire artistic oeuvre. Despite numerous exhibitions, his work in Germany is mainly represented in private collections. The fact that the collection of the Museum Ludwig will receive an important work by the artist through the acquisition for the Wolfgang Hahn Prize 2023 is a great enrichment for our museum.'

Francis Aljys (b. 1959 in Antwerp) lives and works in Mexico. Trained as an architect and urbanist, he moved to Mexico in 1986 to work with local NGOs. He has been active in the visual arts since 1990. Francis Aljys represented Belgium at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. Exhibitions (selection): WIELS Brussels, 2023; Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne, 2021–22; Tai Kwun – Centre for Heritage & Arts, Hong Kong; Rockbund Art Museum (RAM), Shanghai, 2018; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 2018; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2017; *DOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel, Kabul; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2013; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2011; Tate Modern, London, 2010; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 2005; Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2003; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, 1997. He received the Blue Orange Prize in 2004, the Vincent Award in 2008, the BACA Laureate Prize in 2010, the EYE Art & Film Prize in 2018, and the Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon Award and the Rolf Schock Prize in Visual Arts in 2020.

The catalogue *Francis Aljys. Wolfgang Hahn Prize 2023*, edited by Pia Gamon, with a foreword by Mayen Beckmann and Yilmaz Dziewior and texts by Francis Aljys, Nestor García Canclini, Yilmaz Dziewior, and Matthias Mühling, will be published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König in mid-November (18 euros in bookshops).

Award ceremony and opening: Friday, 17 November 2023, 6:30 pm

Exhibition: 18 November 2023 – 7 April 2024

About the Wolfgang Hahn Prize

The Wolfgang Hahn Prize is awarded annually by the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig—in 2023, for the 29th time. The prize is primarily intended to honour contemporary artists who have already made a name for themselves in the artworld with an internationally recognised oeuvre, but who are not yet as well known in Germany as they deserve to be. The prize money of up to 100,000 euros comes from the members' contributions and is used to purchase a work or group of works by the prize-winner for the collection of the Museum Ludwig. The prize includes an exhibition of the acquired work at the Museum Ludwig and an accompanying publication.

The name of the prize honours the memory of the passionate Cologne collector and painting conservator Wolfgang Hahn (1924–1987), who was committed in many ways to the art of the European and American avant-garde in Cologne. The Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst feels indebted to his exemplary work as a collector, as a founding member of the Gesellschaft, and as head of the restoration workshops of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum and the Museum Ludwig.

The previous prize-winners are:

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| 2022 | Frank Bowling |
| 2021 | Marcel Odenbach |
| 2020 | Betye Saar |
| 2019 | Jac Leirner |
| 2018 | Haegue Yang |
| 2017 | Trisha Donnelly |
| 2016 | Huang Yong Ping |
| 2015 | Michael Krebber / R.H. Quaytman |
| 2014 | Kerry James Marshall |

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| 2013 | Andrea Fraser |
| 2012 | Henrik Olesen |
| 2011 | John Miller |
| 2010 | Peter Fischli, David Weiss |
| 2009 | Christopher Wool |
| 2008 | Peter Doig |
| 2006 | Mike Kelley |
| 2005 | Richard Artschwager |
| 2004 | Rosemarie Trockel |
| 2003 | Niele Toroni |
| 2002 | Isa Genzken |
| 2001 | Raymond Pettibon |
| 2000 | Hubert Kiecol |
| 1999 | Pipilotti Rist |
| 1998 | Franz West |
| 1997 | Cindy Sherman |
| 1996 | Günther Förg |
| 1995 | Lawrence Weiner |
| 1994 | James Lee Byars |

About BAUWENS and RSM EBNER STOLZ: Sponsors of the evening of the award ceremony, the presentation, and the publication

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BAUWENS and RSM EBNER STOLZ have been supporting the evening of the award ceremony, the presentation, and the publication of the Wolfgang Hahn Award since 2016.

Further information is available at www.bauwens.de and www.ebnerstolz.de.