

Press Release

The Hague, 4 September 2008

Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development

Eleven 2008 Prince Claus Award Recipients Announced: This year's focus: The Human Body

The human body can be an inspiration, model, canvas or tool box, a medium for the expression of beliefs and ideas. The body provides the fundamental materials for metaphor and symbolism, and much more! By selecting Culture and the Human Body as the theme of the 2008 Awards, the Prince Claus Fund celebrates ingenuity in forms of expression that touch on the human body, particularly by individuals, groups and organisations that are positively engaged with their surroundings and society.

2008 Principal Prince Claus Award to Indian writer, Indira Goswami

Indian writer Indira Goswami (1942, Guwahati, Assam) will be presented with this year's Principal Prince Claus Award of €100,000 on Wednesday, 3 December 2008, in the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ in Amsterdam.

Goswami, in the judgement of the Prince Claus Award jury, is an outstanding writer who reveals the lived experience of ordinary people. Through powerful graphic descriptions and haunting images she shows how central the body is in human affairs, how political, religious and cultural systems are codified through the body; and how life process, gender, age, poverty and conflict are defined physically.

Indira Goswami is a scholar of Assamese and Ramayana literature, a former professor and Head of Modern Indian Languages and Literature at Delhi University. She works together with others to translate her works into English, to make English literature available in Assamese and vice versa.

She is a courageous public intellectual, speaking in defence of disadvantaged groups. Through her mediation of recent peace talks in Assam, she has worked hard in trying to help resolve a conflict that has caused 10,000 deaths.

A woman of remarkable insight and conviction, Indira Goswami (Mamoni Roisom Goswami as she is popularly known) is honoured for the unique quality of her writing, for identifying and expressing the inscription of cultural norms in the body, and for her influential social and cultural activism through literature.

The Prince Claus Fund is a platform for intercultural exchange. Working with individuals and organisations that are mainly located in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Fund organises activities and publications on contemporary themes in the field of culture and development. The Prince Claus Awards form part of this policy.

Prince Claus Fund
Hoge Nieuwstraat 30
2514 EL The Hague
The Netherlands

tel +31 (0)70.427.4303
fax +31 (0)70.427.4277
info@princeclausfund.nl
www.princeclausfund.org



Indira Goswami

The ten 2008 Prince Claus Awards of €25,000

Laureates working in the fields of visual arts

Li Xianting (b. 1949, Jilin Province, China) Curator and critic, Li Xianting is a pillar of modern Chinese art. At a turning point in his country's history, he recognised and encouraged emerging talent, promoted new trends and organised ground-breaking exhibitions. He edited and wrote for fine arts publications, bringing contemporary Chinese artists to national and international attention. He challenged the authorities, opened space for experimentation and fought for reform of the national arts system. A lifeline for many independent artists, he continues this work as director of the Songzhuang Art Museum. Li Xianting is honoured for his lifetime dedication to the development of contemporary art in China, for his rigorous analytical thought and for championing individuality and freedom of spirit.

Venerable Purevbat (b. 1960s, Tov Aimag, Mongolia) Venerable Purevbat, an outstanding artist and teacher of the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, brings scholarly discipline in Buddhist aesthetics to his art. He is also a great innovator, adding modern influences to create a dynamic and distinctive style. Purevbat founded a school to train artists and teachers in many fast-disappearing traditional Buddhist arts and established the Zanabazar Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art, which mounts exhibitions, documents historical sites and undertakes restoration projects. His inspirational activities and dissemination of knowledge have created a renaissance in Mongolian cultural identity. Venerable Purevbat is honoured for the rigorous authenticity of his methods and techniques, for re-establishing an important 'un-modern' aesthetic practice, for his dedication in fostering future generations, and for nurturing local identity through artistic tradition and culture.

Ousmane Sow (b. 1935, Dakar, Senegal) Sculptor extraordinaire of the human body, Ousmane Sow infuses his creations with potent life force and raw energy. Inspired by Leni Riefenstahl's photos of the Nuba of Sudan, in 1984 he created *The Nuba*, a group of muscular and larger-than-life wrestlers. He abandoned his career as a physiotherapist and invented special techniques and materials. Monumental representations of *The Masai* and *The Zulus* followed, and in 1992 his work was selected for Documenta IX. Moving beyond Africa, he created a massive tableau of the 1876 *Battle of Little Big Horn*, in which Sioux and Cheyenne Indians defeated American troops under General Custer. The series of 35 pieces, astonishing in their scale, powerful physicality and frozen motion drew more than three million visitors to the exhibition at Pont des Arts in Paris and led to international commissions. Sow's figures are realistic and audacious in size, awesome in their human presence. Both figurative and narrative, his sculptures represent the body without qualms and carry a message of tolerance and humanity. Following a monumental statue honouring Victor Hugo, Sow is currently working on a series of great men who have marked his life. Ousmane Sow is honoured for his powerful sculptures of the human body, for new perspectives on the body in Africa that challenge the international world of figurative art, and for his positive influence on young generations of African artists.

Laureates working in the fields of photography and film

Dayanita Singh (b. 1961, New Delhi, India) Dayanita Singh is a master photographer who offers an acute vision of contemporary Indian realities that have been hidden or ignored. Her diverse works range from the daily routine of a girl in a Benares ashram to the rising wealthy class, as well as the fading old elite of Goa. The photo-book *Myself Mona Ahmed* (2001), broke new ground, combining photos gathered over 13 years in the life of an Indian eunuch with the subject's own descriptive texts.

The quality and control of her compositions and the intellectual insight and subtle social commentary in her portrayals of the private and the interior, have won international recognition and influenced a new generation of local photographers.

Dayanita Singh is awarded for the outstanding quality of her images, for providing a complex and well-articulated view of contemporary India, and for introducing a new aesthetic into Indian photography.

Elia Suleiman (b. 1960, Nazareth, Palestine) Elia Suleiman is one of the most important international filmmakers to come out of the Middle East. In 1994, after 13 years in New York, he moved to Jerusalem and was asked to set up a film and media department at Birzeit University in Ramallah. His own semi-biographical work draws on his experience being a Palestinian in Israel. As a writer, director and actor, he deals with heavy issues. His work is political, with sharp commentary, yet avoids anger and bitterness. Suleiman wraps his subject in a lively narrative graced with humour, visual surprises, poetic moments, silences and sound effects. In his tragi-comedy, *Divine Intervention*, Suleiman appears in sketches that combine delightfully bizarre humour with piercing insight into life in occupied Palestine. The film won both the Cannes Jury Prize and the International Critics Prize in 2002. He is currently working on his third feature film, *The Time That Remains*.

Elia Suleiman is awarded for the creative structure, innovative vocabulary and superb quality of his films, for his use of humour in examining universal humanitarian issues, and for his commitment to peace and justice for Palestine.

James Iroha Uchechukwu (b. 1972, Enugu, Nigeria) James Iroha Uchechukwu is the leading light of a new generation of Nigerian photographers. Fusing the documentation of everyday reality with the creative language of imagery, he is expanding the possibilities of photography in the local context. His high quality images reflect the diverse realities of people who form the mix of cultures and influences in the megacity that is Lagos. *Fire, Flesh and Blood*, a body of work depicting open-air abattoirs, won the Elan Prize at African Photography Encounters (2005) in Mali. While documentary in inspiration, the series plunges the viewer into a chaos of colour, smoke and close-ups, capturing intense moments that are at once harsh, powerful and poetic.

Uchechukwu was a founding member of the Depth of Field (DOF) collective of talented young photographers that have created strong exhibitions in Nigeria and abroad.

Uchechukwu also mentors young photographers through workshops and seminars.

James Iroha Uchechukwu is awarded for his striking photographic work, for his stimulation of photography as a contemporary Nigerian art form, and for his energetic support of young artists.

Laureates working in the fields of performance, fashion and dance

Tania Bruguera (b. 1968, Havana, Cuba) Using the human body in powerfully evocative performance art, Tania Bruguera has concentrated her research on how to work on the political body, going from the personal to the social. Bruguera's artworks induce a visceral response that breaks down the rationalising distance of the viewer. In the complex context of Cuba, Bruguera maintains her independence by addressing the universal in the local. She exhibits internationally and teaches in Italy, United States of America and Cuba. In 2002, she founded the first performance studies programme in Latin America, inviting international artists for exchanges and debates.

Tania Bruguera is awarded for the outstanding quality of her artwork, for clearly demonstrating the role of the body as a political site, for re-introducing performance art in the cultures of the Caribbean and Latin America and for her inspirational role in Cuban arts.

Ma Ke (b. 1971, Changchun, China) A bold voice in contemporary fashion design, Ma Ke asserts the cultural and social dimensions of clothing the human body. While studying, Ma Ke found that unique designs incorporating local cultural value, using sustainable materials and skilled craftsmanship, were considered 'wu yong' (useless). She defied the clothing and fashion industries, producing simple, organic and locally inspired casual wear. Her 'Wu Yong' collection of powerful, sculpted forms draws on China's rich history and demonstrates highly creative conceptual design. It is a strong statement against both the superficiality of international fashion and the cheap, highly industrial production of clothing.

Ma Ke is honoured for the superb craftsmanship and aesthetic quality of her work, for highlighting the complex interactions of clothing, culture and the body, and for promoting socially, culturally and environmentally sensitive design and production.

Jeanguy Saintus (b. 1964, Port au Prince, Haiti) Visionary choreographer, dancer and educator, Jeanguy Saintus expresses through the body the rich fusion of Caribbean culture and contemporary life. With Ayikodans, a group he co-founded 20 years ago, Saintus continuously pushes the limits of modern dance. Folk performance, free improvisation, voodoo religious culture and varied African, indigenous Indian and French influences can be found in his work. His experimentation has significantly developed Caribbean dance, rooting it in the region's history while exploring subjects such as the experience of people dying of Aids, the long journey to freedom, and tensions between ancestral forces and contemporary rituals.

Saintus runs an annual workshop called "Dansepyenu" or Barefoot Dance for talented youth who can't afford tuition. He organises cultural exchanges, invites guest artists to Ayikodans and works internationally.

Jeanguy Saintus is awarded for his exciting contemporary work that connects the spiritual and the physical and honours the human body, for expanding the possibilities of dance and fostering young talent, and for inspiring pride in the strength, beauty and richness of Haitian identity.

Laureates working in the field of journalism and social memory

Carlos Henríquez Consalvi (El Salvador, b. 1947 Venezuela) Carlos Henríquez Consalvi is the founder and director of the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (Museum of the Word and the Image), which is committed to the investigation, preservation and public exhibition of elements of El Salvador's culture and history. A journalist and broadcaster, Consalvi was born in Venezuela and spent part of his youth in exile in Mexico and Costa Rica. During the 1970s he worked in Nicaragua, doing historical research and writing editorials promoting human rights. He moved to El Salvador in 1980 to set up Radio Venceremos, an underground broadcasting network to counterbalance decades of dictatorship. Despite extremely difficult war conditions, Consalvi's work preserved an area of freedom of speech. Following peace agreements in 1992, Consalvi motivated people to document their experiences, establishing the Museum of the Word and the Image in 1996 as a public platform for this unique collection of testimonies, historical film & photos, and civil war items. Through its activities, the museum calls attention to the role of memory and non-official histories in promoting human rights, social justice and peace. Carlos Henríquez Consalvi is awarded for his outstanding work as a journalist, for creating spaces of freedom, and for his commitment to the promotion of memory and its active role in the reconstruction of Salvadoran society.

For more information about the 2008 Prince Claus laureates, the selection committee, as well as the background and theme of the Awards please see our website:
www.princeclausfund.org

or contact The Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development
Phone: +31 70 311.54.53 or +31 70 427.43.03
Sebas van der Sangen, s.vandersangen@princeclausfund.nl
Mette Gratama van Andel, m.gratama@princeclausfund.nl