

## Press Release

21 December 2016

### **Käthe Kollwitz Prize 2017 of the Akademie der Künste awarded to Katharina Sieverding**

Katharina Sieverding will receive the Käthe Kollwitz Prize in 2017. With this award the Akademie der Künste is honouring a German artist, who has been a pioneer in an age of large-scale photo art since the 1960s. An underlying theme in her work that has evolved from the period she spent as a student of Joseph Beuys is concerned with “identity as individuality and individualism as a collective individual”. Sieverding made film and photography a main focus of her work from the beginning: Close-ups and en face portraits, such as the *Stauffenbergblock*, 1969, or *Maton*, 1969-72, large-scale colour photographs (especially at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf as of 1975 and at the Museum Folkwang in Essen as of 1977) and since 1973 the extensive *Transformer* project. The latter consists of monumental, site-specific, multi-channel projections or photograph series, based on male and female Ektachrome portraits from the work *Motorkamera*, 1973-74, that the artist re-photographed and arranged atop of one another to create multilayered images. The jurors and Akademie members Jochen Gerz, Karin Sander and Klaus Staeck place particular emphasis on the fact that Katharina Sieverding poses fundamental questions about artistic, political and social conditions with regard to production processes and the reception of art. In her oeuvre she unites aspects of archiving and of cultural memory, self-reflection, politics, provocation, the analytical, as well as the influence of mass media and recent technologies on the individual. Her creative approach to political subjects – not just quoting or using them, but rather originating “politically motivated works” – distinguishes her as the recipient of the Käthe-Kollwitz-Preis in 2017.

**Katharina Sieverding** was born in Prague. She lives and works in Düsseldorf. After prematurely cutting short her studies in medicine, she studied initially in Hamburg at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, while working in parallel as Fritz Kortner’s assistant at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus. After switching to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, she attended Teo Otto’s stage design class from 1964-67, then changed to Joseph Beuys’ class until 1971, and completed her studies in 1974 in Ole John Poulsen’s film class. Sieverding was associated with a feminist art scene, yet steadily expanded on “difference-based” feminism with transgender issues that are important to her. She took on a clearly unique position and emphasised a “media construction of the artistic imago”. From 1992-2010, Sieverding was committed to a course of studies that she founded at the Berlin University of the Arts (Universität der Künste Berlin), Visual Culture Studies, which she co-taught with Klaus Biesenbach, Sabeth Buchmann and Katja Diefenbach. In the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1997, Sieverding presented a

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statement that she had prepared especially for this context in the discourse on “biopolitics”: *Steigbilder I-IX*, 1997. Her participation in international exhibitions include the Paris Biennale (1965, 1973), documenta 5, 6, 7 (1972, 1977, 1982) in Kassel, the Venice Biennale (1976, 1980, 1995, 1997, 1999), the Biennale of Sydney (1982), the Shanghai Biennale (2002) and the Busan Biennale in South Korea (2016). In 2006 she was represented at 40 jahrevideokunst.de at the Kunsthalle Bremen. And Sieverding was awarded the Goslaer Kaiserring in 2004, a prestigious international prize for contemporary art.

The **Käthe Kollwitz Prize**, endowed with € 12,000, will be awarded in Berlin on 11 July 2017. In conjunction with the award ceremony, the Akademie will show an **exhibition** of selected works by Katharina Sieverding that the artist has made since the late 1960s.

The **Käthe Kollwitz Prize** is awarded annually to a visual artist. Previous prizewinners include Edmund Kuppel (2016), Bernard Frize (2015), Corinne Wasmuht (2014), Eran Schaerf (2013), Douglas Gordon (2012), Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller (2011), Mona Hatoum (2010) and Ulrike Grossarth (2009).

For the past 25 years, the prize, the exhibition and the catalogue have been co-financed by the Cologne savings bank Kreissparkasse Köln, the founding sponsor of the Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln. To commemorate this anniversary and the 150th birthday of the artist for whom the prize is named, on 8 July 2017, in cooperation with Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln the Akademie der Künste will show the exhibition *Käthe Kollwitz – weiterdenken* in Cologne. Opening at the museum on 28 September 2017, it showcases a selection of works by former prizewinners from 1960 to the present.

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