

Press Release

14 December 2017

Akademie der Künste to award Heinrich Mann Prize 2018 to Christian Bommarius

The Akademie der Künste is awarding the Heinrich Mann Prize 2018 to Berlin author, journalist and lawyer Christian Bommarius. This decision was made by the jurors Steffen Martus, Gustav Seibt and last year's winner, Gisela von Wysocki. The prize for essay writing, endowed with €8,000, shall be presented at the Akademie building at Pariser Platz on 27 March 2018.

The **reasoning of the jury** stated that "Christian Bommarius' essayistic energy is directed against the seductive power of simple diagnoses and seemingly axiomatic solutions, as well as against those aggressive polemics that threaten controversy. His comments, made with the cool gaze of the legally savvy observer, have a sobering effect on hysterical debates and at the same time raise objections to a lack of compassion. (...) With his 'biography' of the Basic Law, Bommarius reminds of the 'Copernican revolution', which was introduced by the first constitutional article, and of how many years passed before German society came to accept the full meaning of this Basic Law. The reconstruction of the *Ermordung Manga Bells in Kamerun 1914* [the murder of Manga Bell in Cameroon in 1914] offers a dark counterpart to this bright history. The case of a 'good German', who insisted on the observance of contracts and laws by the colonial government and was executed for doing so, leads into the dark heart of German colonialism. When Manga Bell was writing his intervention, Heinrich Mann was working on *Der Untertan* (*The Loyal Subject/Man of Straw/The Patrioteer*). Bommarius notes that Bell 'is part of the German history of freedom'. In the spirit of this tradition, Christian Bommarius makes clear with intellectual urbanity how unlikely and precarious civil order is."

Christian Bommarius was born in Frankfurt/Main in 1958, grew up in Bonn and lives in Berlin. He is a journalist and lawyer, and also worked as a commentator for Frankfurter Rundschau and the Berliner Zeitung, among others, until the end of 2017. Since then, he has been writing as a freelance author.

Book publications: *Wir kriminellen Deutschen* (Berlin, 2004), *Das Grundgesetz: Eine Biographie* (Berlin, 2009), *Der gute Deutsche. Die Ermordung Manga Bells in Kamerun 1914* (Berlin, 2015), *Der Fürstentrust. Kaiser, Adel, Spekulanten* (Berlin, 2017).

Recent winners include Gisela von Wysocki (2017), Gunnar Decker (2016) and Adam Zagajewski (2015). The **award ceremony** will take place on Tuesday, 27 March 2018, Heinrich Mann's birthday, at 7 p.m. at the Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4.

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