

## **MARIA LASSNIG PRIZE 2019 and exhibition by Sheela Gowda at Lenbachhaus Munich 2020**

**Sheela Gowda Receives Major Award and Solo Exhibition at Lenbachhaus Munich, International Institutional Partner for the Second Maria Lassnig Prize.**

On June 7, 2019 the 50,000 € MARIA LASSNIG PRIZE will be awarded to the artist Sheela Gowda, born in Bhadravati, India, in 1957. In spring 2020, a solo exhibition opens at Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, supported by the Maria Lassnig Foundation.

The Maria Lassnig Prize was originally envisioned by pioneering Austrian artist Maria Lassnig before her death in 2014 at the age of 94, at height of her artistic powers. Having achieved recognition only later in life, she hoped to encourage the efforts of fellow career artists not yet familiar to the public. Each prize granted in her name will carry an award of 50,000 € and a solo exhibition organized by a designated institution that has collaborated with the Foundation and a selection committee to choose a winner.

For 2019, that institutional partner is the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, which presented an extremely successfully solo exhibition on the occasion of Lassnig's ninetieth birthday in 2010. Curator of Sheela Gowda's exhibition is Eva Huttenlauch, Head of Collection and Curator, Art after 1945 at Lenbachhaus and part of this year's jury.

The award ceremony will take place during the exhibition BODY CHECK. Martin Kippenberger – Maria Lassnig, which will be on view at Lenbachhaus from May 21 to September 15, 2019. Furthermore, the jury for the Maria Lassnig Prize 2019 consisted of Matthias Mühlhölzer and Stephanie Weber, Lenbachhaus München, and Hans Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery, London; Peter Pakesch, Chairman of the Board of the Maria Lassnig Foundation as well as the artist Katharina Grosse.

Peter Pakesch, Chairman of the Board of the Maria Lassnig Foundation comments on this year's award: "After Cathy Wilkes in 2017, we are now delighted to present the second award to Sheela Gowda, who, in her early oil painting and especially in her engagement with the difficult working conditions of women in Indian society, touches on themes that were also central to the work of Maria Lassnig.

Through cooperation with a leading international institution—after MoMA PS1 in 2017, it is now the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München—the best platform for the award winner can be ensured. We are delighted with the Lenbachhaus' commitment to the art and concerns of Maria Lassnig. With Ute Meta Bauer and Hans Ulrich Obrist, we were able to gain international colleagues with outstanding expertise in the field of contemporary art to participate in the award ceremony."

"Maria Lassnig is today viewed as a fiercely unique and significant figure in the history of modern art," said Peter Pakesch. "But her risk-taking work did not receive international attention until quite late in her life and after decades of struggle. She was always engaged in the efforts of other artists as a teacher and peer, and in her last years spoke of hoping to find some way to

acknowledge those at mid-career – longstanding artists whose work deserves broader attention and appreciation. With this in mind, the Maria Lassnig Foundation established the Maria Lassnig Prize in her spirit of encouragement. The unique structure of the prize is a key element in realizing the artist's wishes: by collaborating with a leading international institution, we are able to ensure the broadest possible platform for the prize winner.”

### **About Sheela Gowda**

Sheela Gowda lives and works in Bangalore, India. She studied Painting at the Ken School of Art in Bangalore, Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, and the Royal College of Art in London. For her sculptures and installations, Sheela Gowda uses materials that create a narrative atmosphere and unfold metaphorical power: cow dung, kumkuma powder, incense, and coconut fibers, as well as hairs, needles, and threads combine connotations of everyday use with a poetic charge. By using countryspecific materials, the artist does not primarily illustrate traditional references, but also and especially consciously criticizes socio-political circumstances as many of her materials come from the realm of work traditionally associated with women.

Before Sheela Gowda turned to installations and sculpture in a minimalist formal language in the 1990s, she worked with expressive oil painting, in which her later themes were already laid out. Early on, the everyday life of the Indian middle class, the conflicts of women in their working and private lives, and images of political and social tension conveyed through the media had already become recurring artistic preoccupations.

Sheela Gowda was represented at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2012, the Venice Biennale in 2009, documenta 12 and the Biennale de Lyon, both in 2007. Solo exhibitions were held at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 2017, Para Site, Hong Kong in 2015, the daadgalerie in Berlin, the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, the Centre international d'Art et du Paysage in Vassivière in 2014, the Lunds Konsthall in Lund, the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 2013, and the Office for Contemporary Art, Oslo in 2010. Further solo exhibitions are scheduled for 2019 at Hangar Bicocca, Milan and the Centre d'Art Bombas Gens, Valencia. Selected participations in group exhibitions include those at the Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach in 2014, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing in 2012, the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon in 2011, the Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi and the Serpentine Galleries, London in 2009, as well as at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 2008 and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in 2003. In 2014, she was a finalist of the Hugo Boss Award.

### **About Maria Lassnig**

Born in Carinthia in Southern Austria in 1919, Maria Lassnig studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in the midst of the Second World War, beginning in the winter semester 1940/1941 and graduating in 1945. In postwar Europe, she quickly moved away from the state-approved academic realism in which she had been trained, turning to Austria's own avant-garde past and finding inspiration in the coloration of Oskar Kokoschka and the expressionist figuration of Egon Schiele. She continued to develop her painting practice, moving between Vienna and Paris, where she lived from 1960 to 1968. In 1968, Lassnig moved to New York, where she lived and

worked in various studios. In 1978, she received a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and went for a year to Berlin. In 1979, Lassnig returned to New York, where she inhabited an apartment on First Avenue. Lassnig's New York era brought significant artistic growth. She created pioneering work in film, producing a series of remarkably inventive animations, before returned to Austria in 1980 at the age of 60.

In 1980, Lassnig was awarded a professorship – with a focus on painting – at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. From 1980 to 1989, she held the master class for “Gestaltungslehre – experimentelles Gestalten.” Apart from painting, she also taught animated film. In 1980, Lassnig co-represented Austria in the 39th Venice Biennale, and went on to participate in documenta 7 (1982) and documenta X (1997). Her 2014 solo exhibition at MoMA PS1, Long Island City NY, was the first major US show of the artist's work. Lassnig's art has been the subject of many other well-attended international solo exhibitions, including surveys at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1994); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (1995); and the Serpentine Gallery, London, England (2008). Her work resides in the permanent collections of institutions internationally.

### **About the Foundation**

Launched in 2015, the Maria Lassnig Foundation is dedicated to advancing the legacy of one of the most original and important artists in modern times. The Foundation's central mission is to share Lassnig's work and vision with the broadest and most diverse audiences possible, and to increase international awareness of the artist's contributions by supporting exhibitions, publications, and original scholarly research. The organization is planning a comprehensive Lassnig catalogue raisonné and in 2016 launched the biennial Maria Lassnig Prize for mid-career artists. The Maria Lassnig Foundation resides in the artist's former studio, located in Vienna's 14th district. Peter Pakesch serves as the Foundation's Chairman. The Board of Directors includes Georg Geyer, Matthias Mühling, Friedrich Petzel, Hans Werner Poschauko, Gabriele Wimmer, and Iwan Wirth. Advisory Board members are Rudi Fuchs, Kasper König, and Hans Ulrich Obrist.