

MGKSiegen

Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen
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Press Release
University City of Siegen and Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen

Wilhelm Sasnal to receive the 15th Rubens Prize from the City of Siegen

Wilhelm Sasnal will be awarded the 15th Rubens Prize from the City of Siegen in November 2027. Every five years since 1957, the Rubens Prize has been awarded to an artist living in Europe in recognition of their complete work in the fields of painting and graphic art. The prestigious art prize is endowed with € 25,000 and also includes a publication and an exhibition at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen. A jury of experts has selected Wilhelm Sasnal—born in Tarnów, Poland, in 1972—as the new prize winner.

The jury comprising Prof. Kerstin Brätsch (artist and professor of painting and drawing, University of Fine Arts Hamburg), Prof. Dr. Georg Imdahl (independent art critic and professor of art and the public, Münster Art Academy), Dr. Matthias Mühling (director, Lenbachhaus Munich), Prof. Dr. Annette Tietenberg (professor of art sciences, Braunschweig University of Art), and Dr. Theodora Vischer (chief curator, Fondation Beyeler Basel), justified their decision as follows:

“In his painting, Wilhelm Sasnal brings together aspects of his own life with images from collective experience and memory, creating a highly expressive kaleidoscope of the present day. Private, political, and historical observations are intertwined in his work. The paintings draw upon chosen art-historical motifs, media imagery, and the artist’s own photographs. Thus, a fleeting glimpse of his everyday surroundings may become a subject as readily as excursions to former German concentration camps in Poland—sites located near to where he has lived since childhood; more recently, he has also painted works based on current imagery from the devastated Gaza Strip or nuclear facilities in Iran. Sasnal reflects analogue as well as digital realities with masterful artistic autonomy. Doing so, he refines contemporary painting with a visual language that appears casual despite being complex and dense—a language whose syntax is composed of figurative as well as abstract elements.”

Wilhelm Sasnal has been one of the most widely acclaimed and influential artistic voices in Europe for many years now. Born in Tarnów, Poland, in 1972, Sasnal first studied architecture at Kraków University of Technology – starting in 1992 – before turning to painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, from which he graduated in 1999. During this period, Sasnal co-founded the influential Polish painters’ collective Grupa Ładnie (“Pretty Group”).

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Since the 1990s, his work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (2024), the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (2021), the Kistefos Museet in Oslo (2018), Haus der Kunst in Munich (2012), Whitechapel Gallery in London (2011), K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf (2009), Zachęta National Gallery of Art (2007), the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (2006), and Kunsthalle Zürich (2003). Sasnal has also participated in major biennials, such as the São Paulo Biennial (2004 and 2014), the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh (2008), the Prague Biennale (2005), the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea (2002), and, currently, Manifesta 16 Ruhr. Throughout his career, Sasnal has made films in parallel to his painting—starting with short video works and advancing to produce feature films in collaboration with Anka Sasnal. His work is represented in significant international museum collections.

Wilhelm Sasnal lives and works in Kraków, Poland.

The Rubens Prize of the City of Siegen

The Rubens Prize of the City of Siegen, established in 1955, is one of the most prestigious international art prizes. It is awarded every five years to a painter or graphic artist who has distinguished himself or herself in European art with a pioneering life's work. The Rubens Prize commemorates the painter Peter Paul Rubens, who was born in Siegen and who, as a leading master of European Baroque painting, set the artistic standards to which the award has been committed since 1957.

To date, the Rubens Prize of the City of Siegen has been awarded to Hans Hartung (1957), Giorgio Morandi (1962), Francis Bacon (1967), Antoni Tápies (1972), Fritz Winter (1977), Emil Schumacher (1982), Cy Twombly (1987), Rupprecht Geiger (1992), Lucian Freud (1997), Maria Lassnig (2002), Sigmar Polke (2007), Bridget Riley (2012), Niele Toroni (2017) and Miriam Cahn (2022).

The Lambrecht-Schadeberg Collection, currently owned by the Museum für Gegenwartkunst Siegen, comprises important and extensive groups of works by all the Rubens Prize winners. Currently amounting to over 300 exhibits, the collection offers an excellent overview of work by the first thirteen Rubens Prize winners. Works by the new prize winner will supplement this collection in future.

Press Images



Wilhelm Sasnal, 2026, Photo: Paweł Gardynik



Wilhelm Sasnal, First of January (side), 2021, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Untitled (Rita in Pool), 2024, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Nuclear Facility in Iran, 2021, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Kiss, 2018, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Patmos, 2017, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Lynch, 2021, Courtesy the artist



Wilhelm Sasnal, Meatloaf after Roy Lichtenstein, 2016, Courtesy the artist



The members of the 15th Rubens Prize jury (from left to right):
City Councilman Adrian Viteritti (Deputy Mayor for Culture of the City of Siegen), Thomas Thiel (moderator, Director of MGKSiegen), Prof. Dr. Georg Imdahl, Dr. Theodora Vischer, Prof. Dr. Annette Tietenberg, Prof. Kerstin Brätsch, Dr. Matthias Mühling, Photo: MGKSiegen/Carsten Schmale

The press photos have been approved for press purposes and are free of charge. They are available in printable resolution from the press section of our homepage www.mgksiegen.de/en/presse.

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