

PRESS RELEASE

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New prize for African artists is a call for reflection and action: Henrike Grohs Art Award to be launched in Abidjan

Two years after 18 people were killed in a terrorist attack in Côte d'Ivoire, a €20.000 prize is being launched in memory of Henrike Grohs, who was one of the victims. The first recipient of the Henrike Grohs Art Award, conceived by the Goethe-Institut and the Grohs family, will be announced on 13 March in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

“The Henrike Grohs Art Award is a biennial award dedicated to artists living and working in Africa. Yet the message sent goes far beyond the continent. It is a universal address, a call for reflection and action”, said the jury members Koyo Kouoh (Artistic Director, RAW Material Company, Dakar), Laurence Bonvin (artist and representative of the Grohs family, Berlin), Raphael Chikukwa (Chief Curator, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare) and Simon Njami (Curator, Paris).

The prize recognises the lifetime achievements of the former Head of the Goethe-Institut in Abidjan, Henrike Grohs, who was killed on 13 March 2016 in a terrorist attack in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire. The award intends to continue her special commitment to support artists in Africa and make a contribution towards international dialogue.

“Henrike Grohs truly embodied the principles and values of international cultural exchange as they are understood by the Goethe-Institut”, said its Secretary General Johannes Ebert. The Grohs family stated that her “tireless engagement for cultural exchange will live on” through the award which “supports outstanding artists from the African continent, whose work enables new connections and encounters.”

The prize will be awarded biennially to an artist or an arts collective practicing in the field of visual arts. Artistic quality is the most important criteria for the award. Collaborative partnership, imparting knowledge to other artists and social engagement are decisive elements for recognition. A shortlist of three candidates will be announced on 26 February.

Website: www.goethe.de/henrike-grohs-art-award

Social media: #HenrikeGrohsArtAward

Contact: Benjamin Keuffel
Public Relations Officer, Goethe-Institut Johannesburg
+27 (0) 11 442 3232 / Benjamin.Keuffel@goethe.de

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Henrike Grohs Art Award: Mission Statement

“On 13 March 2016 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, Henrike Grohs was killed by the blindest hatred as she was spending time with friends at the beach. Two months before, a young photographer, Leila Alaoui, 32, was shot in Burkina Faso by the ‘same people’. Many more, too many more, have fallen simply because they were at the wrong place at the wrong time; simply because a handful of fundamentalists started a war of terror. We are facing troublesome times and it is our duty to refuse to surrender to fatalism. All those deaths must be transformed into something stronger than death, into something bigger than ourselves. Henrike was working for a better world. A world where, ‘a proud heart can survive a general failure because such failure does not prick its pride.’” (Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart).

The Henrike Grohs Art Award is established as an answer to all those who think that we cannot live together in a world where sharing would be the main aim. Where borders would have no meaning and where humanity would be the only matter to fight for – that is humanity as a whole, as something that cannot be destroyed and that remains untouched. The message is clear: we shall not surrender. We shall, as Henrike did, stand for what we believe in, without any compromise.

The award is dedicated to artists practicing in Africa. Yet the message that is sent is a universal address, a call for reflection and action. Art is probably the one field where no translation is needed. It is that universal language which transforms the ‘chaotic world of sensations’ that we all share, into forms of representations and relations. The Henrike Grohs Art Award aims at strengthening artists and encouraging them in their quest for a world of togetherness and dialogue. Art knows neither borders nor religion. It is the very expression of that flame that keeps us going, from North to South and East to West. It is the best expression of our unbreakable faith in our humanity.”

The Jury members

Koyo Kouoh, Laurence Bonvin, Raphael Chikukwa and Simon Njami

Henrike Grohs Art Award: video statements about the prize

Johannes Ebert (Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut, Munich):

<https://youtu.be/uAmVNxggLek>

Koyo Kouoh (Artistic Director, RAW Material Company, Dakar):

<https://youtu.be/lXnerwvJea4>

Laurence Bonvin (artist, representative of the Grohs family, Berlin):

<https://youtu.be/HHrUN1-UqsA>

Raphael Chikukwa (Chief Curator, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare):

<https://youtu.be/plzNF5waGGQ>

Simon Njami (Curator, Paris):

<https://youtu.be/wPWqYf0ETsQ>

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About Henrike Grohs

Henrike Grohs died on 13 March 2016 in a terrorist attack in Côte d'Ivoire along with seventeen other people. She studied ethnology and was Head of the Goethe-Institut in Abidjan from 2013 to her death. She co-founded the project "Next - Intercultural Projects" at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. Between 2002 and 2009, she worked as Project Manager in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's Education programme. In 2009, she was appointed Advisor on Culture and Development at the Goethe-Institut in South Africa. Henrike Grohs was 51 at the time of her passing.

About the Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. Its mandate is to promote the study of German abroad and to encourage international cultural exchange. Today it is represented in 98 countries and has some 3,300 employees. It contributes widely to the promotion of artists, ideas and works. Supporting the local cultural scenes and strengthening pan-African dialogue through the arts are part of its mission on the African continent, where it operates 19 institutes in Abidjan, Accra, Addis Ababa, Alexandria, Cairo, Casablanca, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg, Khartoum, Kigali, Lagos, Lomé, Luanda, Nairobi, Rabat, Tunis, Windhoek and Yaoundé, as well as 3 liaison offices in Algiers, Kinshasa and Ouagadougou.

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