



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Dean Whiteside
Literature & Translation Manager
Goethe-Institut New York
212-439-8700 ext. 2
dean.whiteside@goethe.de

GOETHE-INSTITUT NEW YORK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2026 TRANSLATOR'S PRIZES

New York, NY (May 15, 2026)—The Goethe-Institut New York is pleased to announce that **Max Lawton** is the winner of the 2026 Helen & Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize for his translation of Michael Lentz's *Schattenfroh*, published by Deep Vellum. **Sylvia Cunningham** is the winner of the 2026 Gutekunst Prize of the Friends of Goethe New York for her translation of an excerpt from Maren Wurster's novel *Hier bleiben können wir auch nicht* (Berlin Verlag, 2025).

The winner of this year's Wolff prize was determined by a jury of three with an expertise in German literature and translation, consisting of Shelley Frisch (Chair), Philip Boehm, and Elisabeth Lauffer. The winner was selected from the twenty-six German-to-English translations that were submitted for consideration this year. In their statement, the jury said:

“The formidable text, written in “flinty though extravagant German” (*NYRB*), is by turns illusive, allusive, and elusive, and Lawton's sure-footed translation is creative in the truest sense, “untranslatable” terms and imagery giving rise to neologisms and metaphors that are no less assertive for their abstruseness. The task of the translator in tracking down countless references, from the familiar (Kafka) to the obscure (Harsdörffer), and deciphering arcana is enormous, yet Lawton manages the task with aplomb—and evident pleasure. [...] Max Lawton's Promethean translation brings Lentz's extraordinary literary experiment to life for readers of English the world over.”

This year's Wolff Prize winner, **Max Lawton** is a Los Angeles-based writer, musician, and translator. He is currently working in close collaboration with Vladimir Sorokin to publish his untranslated works in English. Max is also currently working on or has plans to translate works by Antonio Moresco, Stefano D'Arrigo, Alberto Laiseca, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Eduard Limonov, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Hans Henny Jahnn, and Miquel de Palol. His first novel, *Progress*, is coming out with Verso in 2027. His translations have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *n+1*, *Harper's*, *The Baffler*, *The White Review*, and *Joyland*.

Since 1996, the Helen & Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize has been awarded annually to honor an outstanding literary translation from German into English published in the USA or Canada the previous year. The recipient of the winning translation receives US \$5,000 and a fully funded trip to the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

The jury of the Gutekunst Prize of the Friends of Goethe New York, awarded annually to an emerging translator of German literature into English, was comprised of translators Tess Lewis, Alta L. Price, and editor Jeremy Davies. In their statement, the jury:

“Enthusiastically commends Sylvia Cunningham for a bold, inventive, and highly engaging translation of a passage from Maren Wurster’s novel *Hier bleiben können wir auch nicht* ("We can’t stay here either"). Cunningham’s sample stood out for its intuitive grasp of Wurster’s style and its deft rendering of the novel’s striking imagery. [...] Equally remarkable is Cunningham’s sure-footed grasp of dialogue, most particularly the voice of a young girl. [...] Cunningham’s supple translation convincingly captures the shifts in tone as the narrator swings from hope for her child’s future to grief and worry about the difficult conditions they must navigate. Evident throughout the translation is Cunningham’s flair for language, and her skillful solutions to some of the thorniest sentences are impressive indeed.”

This year’s Gutekunst Prize winner, **Sylvia Cunningham**, is a freelance journalist based in Berlin. After a Fulbright journalism grant brought her from New York City to the German capital in 2017, she began working as a reporter at the English-language radio station KCRW Berlin. She’s hosted and produced several podcasts, including for the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and the Goethe-Institut Washington. Sylvia now works at Germany’s international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle, where she produces, translates, and voices documentary films.

A public translation award ceremony will take place at the Goethe-Institut New York on **June 10th at 6:30pm**. To attend, please register [here](#).

The Helen & Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize and the Gutekunst Prize are generously funded by Friends of Goethe New York with additional support from the Frankfurter Buchmesse and the German Consulate General New York.

For more information, visit www.goethe.de/us/helenandkurtwolffprize
and www.goethe.de/us/gutekunstprize

The **Goethe-Institut** is Germany’s cultural institute and is active worldwide with seven institutes in the USA. Since 1969, the Goethe-Institut New York has promoted knowledge of the German language and fostered intercultural dialogue between the USA and Germany. With its translation grant program, two annual translator prizes, and a German language library open to the public, the Goethe-Institut New York facilitates German-American cultural exchange.