

PRESS INFORMATION

Robert Häusser is awarded the Hasselblad Foundation International Photography Prize for 1995

The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation Photography Prize for 1995 has been awarded to Robert Häusser, Mannheim, Germany. The prize consists of the Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation Medal together with the sum of 265.000 Swedish crowns. The prize will be presented to Robert Häusser at a ceremony in Göteborg, Sweden, on 10 November 1995, coinciding with the opening of an exhibition at the Göteborg Museum of Art, the Exhibition Hall.

The Foundation motivates its choice of prize-winner thus: "Robert Häusser is one of the leading pictorial artists in present-day German photography. His work can be described as an extension and development of the "subjective photography" genre, which was launched and won considerable acclaim in Europe during the post-war years. His graphic and pregnant studies of landscapes and architecture combine a fine simplification of the essentials of his subjects with a quietly threatening tone. Häusser's work reveals an intricate interplay between surface and depth."

This is the fifteenth time the Hasselblad prize has been awarded. Previous prize-winners are: Lennart Nilsson, Sweden; Ansel Adams, USA; Henri Cartier-Bresson, France; Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Mexico; Irving Penn, USA; Ernst Haas, USA; Hiroshi Hamaya, Japan; Edouard Boubat, France; Sebastião Salgado, Brazil/France; William Klein, USA/France; Richard Avedon, USA; Josef Koudelka, Czechoslovakia/France; Sune Jonsson, Sweden and Susan Meiselas, USA.

To render the invisible visible

Robert Häusser was born in 1924 in Stuttgart, Germany, where he studied at the Graphische Fachschule from 1941-42. At an early stage he became fascinated by Rembrandt's paintings on account of their magical illumination, but of photography or contemporary art he knew nothing at that stage. Although he was in fact not following any particular models the pictures from this period were abstract with elements of Tachisme, Surrealism and Constructivism. After the Second World War he spent the next few years as a farmer, and in 1950 combined farming with studies at the Meisterschule für Handwerk und Kunst at Weimar. The years 1946-52, saw him photographing farmers and farm workers, and especially his first landscapes. In these photographs, with their dramatic contrasts of light and dark and their gloomy tone, his interest in firm pictorial structure and composition shows up strongly.

His first productive post-war years at Mannheim, 1953-54, reveal Häusser in his "light period". The pictures are light, often poetic and marked by simplicity, clarity and sharpness. Many of these works are landscapes in winter or under snow, with light tones frequently contrasting with black elements. The art historian Lothar Romain, in commenting on these pictures said "the light period radiates neither happiness nor warmth but rather loneliness and cold".

From 1954 Häusser's pictures regain the morose and dramatic style which characterized his early work. The picture content becomes steadily more important and the composition simpler but stricter. Those situations and objects, which effect changes in the landscape are stressed. These pictures are rich in contrast and infused with a stillness. There is often a sense of finality in the pictures' atmosphere.

Robert Häusser has been a leading and influential figure in German photography for some decades. He can be described as one of the classic photographers of present time. Ever since the early years of the Second World War he has consistently and steadily developed his pictorial language, and tended more and more towards a purely aesthetic pictorial expression. It would be difficult to find any other contemporary photographer who has so consciously and throughout such a prolonged period of time pursued his own course in shaping and developing his personal creative style.

For Häusser photography is a medium, which not only possesses its own graphic principles but also its own laws by which the photographer can explain both his own surroundings and his own personal world. He says himself. "I use photography not to try to produce an autonomous picture of reality; what interests me is an interpretation of reality. I want to use photography to reveal more than the reality; I want to render an inner condition".

Over the years, Robert Häusser has exhibited at more than 50 one-man-shows in museums and art galleries in Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, Slovenia and the USA. In addition, he has participated in many group exhibitions in Germany and in several European countries as well as in the USA. He has published numerous volumes of reproductions and a comprehensive *Werkübersicht derjahre 1941-1987 (Review of Works from 1941-1987)*. In 1985 Robert Häusser received the "Verdienstkreuz 1. Klasse des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (Distinguished Service Cross 1st Class of the Order of Distinguished Service of the Federal Republic of Germany) for his complete works and was made Professor in 1989.

Research and education

The Photography Prize was instituted by Erna and Victor Hasselblad, who donated all their assets to a foundation. According to the Foundation's statutes, a Photography Prize and the Erna and Victor Hasselblad Medal are to be awarded every year or every alternate year, as means and occasion permit, to a person of particular merit.

In addition, the Foundation is to promote scientific education and research in the natural sciences and in photography. A number of projects are granted funds each year, totaling approximately 12 million Swedish crowns.

In autumn 1989, the Foundation opened the Erna and Victor Hasselblad Photographic Center in Göteborg, Sweden. It runs a continuous exhibition and lecture programme. In a near future the Hasselblad Center will move to new premises at the Göteborg Museum of Art. A photographic research and reference library will then also be available.

Göteborg, June 29, 1995

ERNA AND VICTOR HASSELBLAD FOUNDATION

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