

## PRESS RELEASE

### Cindy Sherman is awarded the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography for 1999

The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation has selected the American artist Cindy Sherman to receive the 1999 Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography. The prizegiving ceremony will be held in Göteborg, Sweden on 4 March 2000 and a new exhibition of Cindy Sherman's work, curated and organized by the Hasselblad Center (and accompanied by a substantial publication) will open.

The Jury for the 1999 Award, which submitted the proposal to the Board of Directors of the Foundation, consisted of: Tove Thage (chairperson), curator of the Museum of Frederiksborg, Hillerød, Danmark, Sarah Greenough, curator of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Jan Kaila, artist, Helsinki, Finland, and Daniela Mrázková, editor and curator, Prague, Czech Republic.

The Foundation's decision to award the 1999 prize to Cindy Sherman was motivated by the belief that:

"Cindy Sherman set a new agenda for contemporary photography in the 1970s. By her use of staged photography, and her positioning of herself as the central character within a complex set of scenarios, Cindy Sherman has explored and challenged important cultural, critical and social preconceptions.

Much of her work has been concerned with the position of women in a consumerist and media-driven society, and with the ironies and contradictions of contemporary women's lives.

She can also be seen as a significant "re-inventor" of two important traditions in photographic art - photo surrealism of the 1930s and the photo-based conceptual art of the 1960s. Cindy Sherman's influence on successive generations of artists and photographers has been, and continues to be, immense."

Cindy Sherman was born in New Jersey, USA in 1954. She grew up in Long Island, and studied art at New York State University College, Buffalo, graduating in 1976. In 1977, she moved to New York City. In 1980, her 1977-1980 photographic series **Untitled Film Stills** was exhibited at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and subsequently at Metro Pictures in New York. Speaking in the early Eighties, she remarked that: "I had recently seen some publicity stills for old movies and actually didn't know if they were indeed from movies or were stage photographs for a magazine, and I wanted to recreate that look by staging this action just for the photograph. I was also interested in the image, and would purposely make the photographs more grainy or sometimes out of focus, sometimes very contrasty, or under or over exposed, because I wanted to have that cheap quality that goes along with a lot of these kind of photographs."

**Untitled Film Stills**, together with the untitled images from a 1980-81 series (rear screen projection) and many of Sherman's subsequent series of the Eighties, became seminal works of postmodernism.

Throughout the 1980s, Cindy Sherman extended the parameters of photographic art. She was commissioned throughout the Eighties and early Nineties, by an increasingly self-ironizing fashion industry, to make photographs which inevitably challenged notions of glamour and female sexuality.

From her **Untitled series** (fairy tales) of 1985 to her 1989-90 **History Portraits**, Cindy Sherman has continued to explore the territory between the real and the imagined making cogent comments about the position of women within history and society. Her sex pictures series, (made in 1992 as a challenge to increasingly severe censorship in the USA) and other important works of the early to late 1990s, return to issues of sexuality and its representation.

Cindy Sherman's work is central to our understanding of Western visual culture during the Eighties and Nineties. One of the first (and the few) of the postmodernists to site politics and gender issues at the center of her work, she also produced large-scale, impressive works of photography which became icons of contemporary art, and which now form the heart of many prestigious museum collections in Europe and the USA. The emergence of her work coincided with the rise of photo-theory and a new academic interest in photography in the 1980s, demonstrating that photography could yet again be at the forefront of the new.

Publications on Cindy Sherman include; *Untitled Film Stills* (1990), *Cindy Sherman: History Portraits* (1991), *Cindy Sherman 1975-1993* (1993) and *Cindy Sherman - Retrospective* (1997). Her works can be found in numerous international collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Australian National Gallery, Canberra; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan. Cindy Sherman has also received a number of awards, including the National Endowments for the Arts (1977), John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1983), MacArthur Fellowship (1995) and the Wolfgang-Hahn-Preis (1997).

#### **The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation**

The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation was instituted by a substantial bequest from Erna and Victor Hasselblad. The purpose of the Foundation is to promote scientific education and research in the natural sciences and photography. A number of projects are granted funds annually amounting to approximately SEK 14 million.

In accordance with the statutes of the Foundation, an International Award in Photography is granted annually to a photographer of outstanding merit.

In 1989 the Foundation opened the Erna and Victor Hasselblad Photographic Center in Göteborg, Sweden. The Center maintains an ongoing exhibition and lecture program. In January 1996 the Hasselblad Center moved to new premises at the Göteborg Museum of Art. A photographic research and reference library, open to researchers and students, is in the process of being established, as is a collection of photographs by Hasselblad Award winners and others.

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