



Zanele Muholi 2026 Hasselblad Award Laureate

Press Release
Gothenburg
March 6, 2026

The Hasselblad Foundation is delighted to announce that Zanele Muholi is the 2026 Hasselblad Award laureate – the world’s largest photography award, consisting of SEK 2,000,000, a gold medal, and a Hasselblad camera. The laureate is honoured with a solo exhibition at the Hasselblad Center from 10 October 2026 until 4 April 2027, along with a series of events during Hasselblad Award Week in Gothenburg, including a seminar in collaboration with the County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland; a concert with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra; an exhibition opening; a book launch; a formal award ceremony on 9 October and an artist talk at Moderna Museet in Stockholm on 13 October.

The Hasselblad Foundation’s citation regarding the Hasselblad Award laureate 2026, Zanele Muholi:

Zanele Muholi stands as one of the most influential contemporary photographers, with an impact that reaches far beyond the art world. They use portraiture to articulate and celebrate the presence, depth, and dignity of the Black LGBTQIA+ community in South Africa and the rest of the world. Born in 1972 during the apartheid regime, they are highly aware of the power of narration in the face of systematic violence. Muholi’s photographs are formally compelling, employing composition, colour, greyscale, and lighting to create an adept visual language that holds both strength and vulnerability. The portraits foreground individuals with a direct and dignified gaze, challenging prejudice and discrimination while creating alternative visual histories. Activism and community work is an integral part of their practice, which combines political urgency and formal mastery, making Muholi a central figure in global queer visual culture.

Zanele Muholi: “This prize is not mine alone. I carry it with the many faces, names, and histories that have trusted me with their stories. From Umlazi to every space where Black LGBTQIA+ people continue to fight to exist freely, this recognition affirms that our lives are worthy of being seen – not as statistics, not as shadows, but as full human beings. For years, my work has been about visibility and resistance. It has been about creating an archive so that no one can say, ‘We did not know.’ When this honour comes, I receive it on behalf of my community; those who have been erased, those who are still here, and those who are yet to see themselves reflected with dignity.”

The Hasselblad Foundation promotes education and research in photography and the natural sciences, fostering photographic advancement through its international award, exhibitions and scholarly initiatives.

Kalle Sanner, CEO of the Hasselblad Foundation: “It is with great pleasure that we award Zanele Muholi the 46th Hasselblad Award. In their artistic practice, Muholi combines photography with activism, creating powerful and significant works in which human rights are central. We look forward to presenting an extensive selection of their work this autumn at the Hasselblad Center.”



About Zanele Muholi

Zanele Muholi has paved new ground in their use of photography in visual activism, first and foremost in a relentless fight for claiming visibility, dignity and respect for Black queer subjects. Their practice is a fearless confrontation of the silencing and discrimination particularly in their native South-Africa. Their long-term portrait series *Faces and Phases* (2006–), was conceived as an act of resistance against systemic violence. The project has entered its 20th year and is now considered a seminal body of work in contemporary photography. Other works include the early *Only half the Picture* (2003-4) which documented lesbian lives and hate-crime survivors, and *Brave Beauties* (2014–) that honours trans women. In the ongoing self-portrait series *Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness)* (2018–) Muholi uses the visual languages of classical portraiture, fashion, domestic labour, and ethnographic imagery, to challenge stereotypes and historical representation of Black bodies in visual culture. These bold self-portraits have redefined visual strategies around identity and empowerment.

As an integral part of their artistic practice, Muholi is committed to collective empowerment and knowledge-building. Inkanyiso was founded 2009 as a forum dedicated to queer and visual activist media, and The Muholi Art Institute (founded 2022) aims to support and develop emerging artists across diverse disciplines. Muholi's work is central to contemporary debates on race, representation, activism, and human rights. They have been foundational for a new generation of queer and Black photographers and inspire emerging artists to work politically, ethically, and with community engagement.

Zanele Muholi (she/they) was born 1972 in Umlazi, Durban and currently lives and works between Johannesburg and Cape Town. They studied Advanced Photography at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg and completed an MFA in Documentary Media at Ryerson University, Toronto, in 2009. Muholi's work has been exhibited at leading institutions worldwide, including at the Venice Biennale, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, Tate Modern, London, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires and Serralves Museum in Porto. Previous solo exhibitions in Sweden include Fotografiska (2018) and Bildmuseet (2021). They have received numerous awards such as the ICP Spotlights Award (2022), the Spectrum International Prize for Photography (2020), the Lucie Award for Humanitarian Photography (2019), and the Rees Visionary Award by Amref Health Africa (2019).

Muholi is represented by Yancey Richardson Gallery in New York and Southern Guild Gallery in Cape Town and New York.



The exhibition at the Hasselblad Center is on view from 10 October 2026 – 4 April 2027.

Curators: Louise Wolthers and Dragana Vujanović Östlind from the Hasselblad Foundation, with Lufuno Ramadwa from the Muholi Art Institute.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Hasselblad Foundation is collaborating with the Gothenburg-based camera company Hasselblad, which honours this year's award recipient by including a new camera as part of the prize.

The Hasselblad Award Jury 2026

The jury which submitted its proposal to the Hasselblad Foundation's Board of Directors this year consisted of:

Anna Planas, Jury Chair

Artistic Director, Paris Photo, Paris

Johan Sjöström

Curator, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg

Oluremi C. Onabanjo

The Peter Schub Curator,
Department of Photography,
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Raquel Villar-Pérez

Independent researcher, writer,
and curator. PhD candidate at the
Edinburgh College of Art, University
of Edinburgh, Edinburgh

Shoair Mavlian

Director, Photographers' Gallery,
London

Tawanda Appiah

Curator, Skånes konstförening,
Malmö

About the Hasselblad Foundation

The Hasselblad Foundation was established in 1979 in accordance with Erna and Victor Hasselblad's will after they sold the Hasselblad camera company. The purpose of the foundation is to promote scientific education and research in photography and the natural sciences. The annual, international Hasselblad Award has been presented since 1980 and is the world's largest award in photography.

The foundation holds a photography collection focusing on Hasselblad Award winners and Nordic photographers. The Hasselblad Center is the foundation's exhibition space, situated in the Gothenburg Museum of Art. Stipends for photographic advancement are awarded annually, and the foundation itself is engaged in the field of academic and artistic research through the publication of books, symposiums, and collaborations with Swedish and international universities.

**Hasselblad Award Laureates****2026 Zanele Muholi**

2025 Sophie Ristelhueber
2024 Ingrid Pollard
2023 Carrie Mae Weems
2022 Dayanita Singh
2021 No prize awarded
2020 Alfredo Jaar
2019 Daido Moriyama
2018 Oscar Muñoz
2017 Rineke Dijkstra
2016 Stan Douglas
2015 Wolfgang Tillmans
2014 Ishiuchi Miyako
2013 Joan Fontcuberta
2012 Paul Graham
2011 Walid Raad
2010 Sophie Calle
2009 Robert Adams
2008 Graciela Iturbide
2007 Nan Goldin
2006 David Goldblatt
2005 Lee Friedlander
2004 Bernd & Hilla Becher
2003 Malick Sidibé

2002 Jeff Wall
2001 Hiroshi Sugimoto
2000 Boris Mikhailov
1999 Cindy Sherman
1998 William Eggleston
1997 Christer Strömholm
1996 Robert Frank
1995 Robert Häusser
1994 Susan Meiselas
1993 Sune Jonsson
1992 Josef Koudelka
1991 Richard Avedon
1990 William Klein
1989 Sebastião Salgado
1988 Edouard Boubat
1987 Hiroshi Hamaya
1986 Ernst Haas
1985 Irving Penn
1984 Manuel Alvarez Bravo
1983 No prize awarded
1982 Henri Cartier-Bresson
1981 Ansel Adams
1980 Lennart Nilsson



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