



ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival | Kuopio - Finland

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Winner of the ANTI Festival International Prize For Live Art announced

Canadian artist Heather Cassils wins the inaugural 2014 prize

In an event at the ANTI Contemporary Art Festival Canadian artist Heather Cassils has been revealed as the first winner of the prestigious ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art. The artist was presented with 30,000 Euro, making the prize one of Finland's richest cultural awards.

The prize, for artists working in the field of Live Art is the first of its kind anywhere in the world and one that underlines the importance of the form, say the prize organizers at the ANTI Festival.

Announcing the winning artist at the evening ceremony the chair of the jury, Ruth Mackenzie said 'This artist creates profoundly impactful imagery... Michelangelo and all who followed would be rightly awed, as we the jury were, by this artists' ability to present the human body as art'.

On receiving the award Cassils said 'receiving The ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art is not just an incredible opportunity for me as an artist, it is a huge vote of confidence for the international art community'.

The Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, Cassils' gallery representative said: 'We are proud to represent such a groundbreaking artist'.

Heather Cassils (1975) is originally from Montreal and now lives and works in Los Angeles. An internationally renowned multidisciplinary artist, Cassils bashes through binaries, performing transgendered; not so as to simply make a point about crossing from one sex to another, but rather as a continual becoming. This process-oriented way of being works in a space of indeterminacy, spasm and slipperiness. Drawing on conceptualism, feminism, body art, and gay male aesthetics, Cassils forges a series of powerfully trained bodies for different performative purposes. She uses an exaggerated physique to intervene in various contexts in order to interrogate systems of power, control and gender. www.heathercassils.com

The 2014 jury was chaired by Ruth Mackenzie (director of the Holland Festival and the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad) and comprised artist Anssi Kasitoni and architect Juhani Pallasmaa. The prize of 30,000 Euro is split between 15,000 cash prize and a 15,000 Euro to create a new work for the 2015 edition of the ANTI Festival. The award is supported by the Saastamoinen Foundation.

More information about the ANTI International Prize for Live Art:

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Jury's statement

Presented with a shortlist of six extraordinary artists we set the terms of our discussion, an important tactic always but especially as we represent the first jury to judge the ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art.

We spoke of world-class quality and of excellence. We quickly knew the winning artist would need to display true ambition and be indelibly innovative – they would be breaking barriers, doing something no one else was doing. They would be brilliant now and consumed by the will to be better, to do more, to explore more. We spoke about commitment, about drive and the ability to work and work and work. We were looking for not only a great live artist but a great artist full stop.

The winning artist of the inaugural ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art reflects everything outlined above and more. This artist's work, and their extraordinary commitment to it, pushes at the every edges of Live Art – informed as much by classical sculpture as it is by contemporary culture. The place of the artist within the work is critical, this artist's body and this artist's work is one and the same - the space between the artist and the art is collapsed; the maker and the made are inseparable. When we look at this work we look at the artist, but their skill lies in demanding our gaze move beyond the extraordinary set of practices that constitute the specific human body before us, and towards something that we could quite unflinchingly call the human condition. This artist takes their body and makes it, works it, into something else, something that questions how we see each other, how we seek to manipulate ourselves, our bodies and our lives. It is deeply ethical work as it poses crucial questions around the aestheticization and commodification of our bodies and ourselves.

This artist works with brute force, using methods developed in the gymnasium, by that endlessly curious practice of body building, to change, sculpt, challenge and redefine their body. The commitment to this process has been total. The lengths that the artist has gone to realize this work demands a special response from us, their audience. This artist creates profoundly impactful imagery, often made in response to earlier moments in performance art, but in their intensity and power they exceed those contexts and pass into the world around us, through screens, magazines and a series of extraordinary live pieces. The work's explicit relationship to transgendered bodies is equally expansive, the work isn't about transgenerness, instead it starts there and speaks outwardly to us all.

This work is eloquent, sophisticated, dedicated and quite brilliant; the body – the artist's body - transformed again and again into an illusion. Flesh becomes marble, marble becomes flesh. Michelangelo and all who followed would be rightly awed, as we the jury were, by this artists' ability to present the human body as art.

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