



Press Release

Gothenburg
March 8, 2022

Dayanita Singh 2022 Hasselblad Award

The Hasselblad Foundation is delighted to announce that the 2022 Hasselblad Award recipient is the photographer Dayanita Singh.

Dayanita Singh lives in New Delhi and is the first laureate from South East Asia as well as the first to receive the new prize sum of SEK 2,000,000.

The award ceremony will take place in Gothenburg, Sweden on the 14th of October 2022. On the same day an exhibition with a selection of Dayanita Singh's signature works will open at the Hasselblad Center and a publication about the artist, including a newly written essay by the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, will be released.

The Hasselblad Foundation's citation

Through her extensive photographic oeuvre Dayanita Singh has paved new ways for engaging with images. From a humanist approach to portraiture to a consistent interest in the archive, her wide-spanning photography is innovatively presented in books and installations.

Her unique mobile 'museums' allow her images to be edited, re-sequenced, archived, and displayed, making the viewer an avid participant. With a distinctive sense of materiality, the 'museums' present her photographs as interconnected bodies of work charged with both poetic and narrative possibilities. Making images nurtured by a boundlessly curious intellect, Dayanita Singh's influence on the younger generations of photographers, internationally but especially in India, has been and still is far-reaching.

The jury behind the 2022 Hasselblad Award:

The Hasselblad Award Jury which submitted its proposal to the Hasselblad Foundation's Board of Directors, consisted of:

Joshua Chuang

Jury Chair, independent curator,
editor, and publisher, USA

Koyo Kouoh

Executive Director and Chief
Curator, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary
Art Africa, South Africa

Susan Meiselas

Photographer, Hasselblad Award
Winner 1994, USA

Daniel Palmer

Professor, Associate Dean of
Research and Innovation,
School of Art RMIT University
Melbourne, Australia

Niyatee Shinde

Photo Historian, Curator, Director
TurmericEarth Art Projects, India



"I can hardly believe this is true, I feel honored and humbled to receive this award from the Hasselblad Foundation" Dayanita Singh says. "For years I had wanted to teach a class called 'Dancing with my Hasselblad'. And now to have this award as well as be in the esteemed company of previous awardees is beyond my imagination. I accept this award on behalf of my book objects and mobile museums."

"Dayanita Singh generously opens up for intimate, affective and physical encounters with photography" say Stefan Jensen and Louise Wolthers, curators of the upcoming Hasselblad Award exhibition. "Through photography she records and shapes the stories told within the structure of the archive before turning it into a new form. Her works are moving in several senses of the word: the audience is both touched by and is encouraged to touch the images. This will be reflected in the exhibition at Hasselblad Center, which will focus on her portable 'museums' and the meaning of archives."

Joshua Chuang, Chair of the Hasselblad Award Jury 2022 states:

"Through her intuitive, multivalent approach to photography, Dayanita Singh is able to both record and re-animate the ineffable character of the human experience. In an increasingly virtual age, her practice is rooted in worldly physicality. Whether seen in a book, print, or self-contained wooden structures, her pictures engage the past and the present in a manner that is as textured, immediate, and unpredictable as life itself."

Biography

Dayanita Singh was born in 1961 in New Delhi, India, where she currently lives and works. She studied Visual Communication at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, graduating in 1986. Her final project was the photobook *Zakir Hussain* that recorded her time spent following the celebrated tabla maestro as he performed around India. In 1988 she completed her photojournalism and documentary photography studies at the International Center of Photography in New York. On returning to India Singh was asked to photograph the Hijra community and this is when she met Mona Ahmed who became a lifelong friend. Continuing to avoid clichés, sentimentality and photographic conventions Singh moved on from photojournalism. In a quest to challenge exoticizing conceptions of India she also focused on members of her own social milieu.

Since 1989 her work has been shown in numerous international publications, and the first internationally acclaimed exhibition was *Empty Spaces*, at Frith Street Gallery, London, in 2001. Soon thereafter Singh began testing the permeability of the photobook, creating novel methods of exhibiting her work – and publishing became a significant part of her practice. Through the books, she experiments with alternate forms of producing and viewing photographs while blurring the boundaries between book, object and exhibition — the photobooks becoming a gallery for the photographs and the



exhibitions serving as catalogues for the books. In works like *Sent a Letter* (2008) Singh continued exploring ways to disseminate her work to a larger audience, designing miniature accordion-style photobooks, such as a calico covered box with seven notebooks inside.

In 2007 Singh published *Go Away Closer*, with 31 black-and-white photographs and no text, a book she describes as a novel without words. In the series of *Blue Books* (2008) Singh published photographs made during her wanderings in industrial landscapes, places that could be anywhere in the world. This was followed by the book *Dream Villa* (2010), a publication that shows how the night can transform everyday situations into mysterious and unsettling events.

Over the next decade, Singh developed her idea of the book-as-exhibition *Museum Bhavan* (2017), a collection of nine volumes and text — each its own museum. *Museum Bhavan* follows earlier projects including the *File Room* (2010), a requiem to paper in the digital age. *File Room* contains photographs of archives with endless rows of paper from government officials, Indian courtrooms, and institutions. These archives show the problems of communal memory and remembrance in a country of more than a billion inhabitants. *Museum of Chance* (2015) elusively unfolds to reveal images by chance, weaving together stories and timelines in a never-ending labyrinth of connections.

By rethinking the two modes in which photography is most traditionally received, Singh has created a primary experience of her work via objects meant to be held, seen, and read. *Suitcase Museum* (2015) assembled images from her immense archive in two suitcases that allowed flexibility of movement and display. With *Museum of Shedding* (2016) Singh again broke new ground: the entire assemblage held display stands while containing a bed, chairs, desk and a cabinet for storing prints, in essence attending to the curator's need within a museum. Recently, the museums have evolved into the singular pillar form, consisting of five cubes that can be packed flat and accompanied by a stool. Her *Montage* series, drawn from her own extensive archive of interconnected bodies of work, is a result of combining prints of the same size with a single, decisive cut.

Over the decades of her career Singh has exhibited internationally in over sixty solo shows and more than a hundred select group exhibitions. She is the recipient of six international awards, and has over 20 published books, notably with a consistent collaboration with the publisher Gerhard Steidl. During the spring of 2022 Singh will have a large retrospective exhibition at the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, Germany. Singh's latest publication *Let's See* with Steidl will be released in June 2022.



About the Hasselblad Foundation

The Hasselblad Foundation was established in 1979 under the terms of the last will and testament of Erna and Victor Hasselblad. The purpose of the Foundation is to promote scientific education and research in photography and the natural sciences. The Foundation's annual international award for outstanding achievements in photography is considered one of the most prestigious photography awards worldwide.

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. Further stipends for photographic advancement are awarded each year 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

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