

## Press Release

19 August 2019

### Heidi Specogna Awarded the 2019 Konrad Wolf Prize

Swiss documentary filmmaker and director Heidi Specogna receives the Akademie der Künste's Konrad Wolf Prize in 2019. The award ceremony for the prize, endowed with €5000, takes place in Berlin on 20 October 2019. Akademie members Alexander Horwath, Helke Sander and Tamara Trampe made up this year's jury.

Excerpt from the jury statement:

"Heidi Specogna shoots her films at locations where news no longer travel. Her language skills, her prudent nature, but also her perseverance makes it possible for her to share the personal stories of her protagonists in quite an extraordinary way, along with the political backgrounds of their countries – mainly in Latin America and Africa. *Cahier Africain* (2016), filmed in the crisis-ridden Central African Republic, can be cited as an example. The filmmaker especially understands how to shed light on the fates of these women, who from childhood on were victims or witnesses to the horrors of war and rape. Without Specogna's films we would not know anything about how the people living there fight for the exposure of the crimes and justice, nor about their everyday lives and how they must cope with their traumas. To travel in these countries and to expose oneself to the stresses and threats, requires enormous courage from Specogna and her team.

Like feature film director Konrad Wolf was in his time, Heidi Specogna is interested in the fate of the individual caught in the quicksand of large-scale politics."

**Heidi Specogna** has created an extensive body of documentary work from 1988 to the present. Born in Switzerland in 1959, she attended journalism school in Zurich, where she also became a member of the "Presseladen" journalists' office, and studied directing in Berlin at the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie (dffb). Her short film *Fährten* won the Berner Filmpreis in 1985. Specogna held a teaching assignment at the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin, where she taught montage. In 1990 she founded her own production company. In her films *Tania La Guerrillera* (1991), a documentary about Tamara Bunke, a close companion of Che Guevara, and *Deckname Rosa* (1993), about the illegal activity of a radio operator of the Rote Kapelle (Red Chapel) anti-Nazi resistance, Specogna demonstrated her interest in the biographies of militant women involved with resistance movements. She filmed several documentaries in Latin America, including *Das kurze Leben des José Antonio Gutierrez* (2005–06), a portrait of a boy from the streets of Guatemala,

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whose same refugee route Specogna used to record the stories of migrants from Latin American countries.

With *Das Schiff des Torjägers* (2010), *Carte Blanche* (2011) and *Cahier Africain* (2016), Specogna's main emphasis shifted to the African continent. In her descriptions of the conditions there, which are characterised by poverty and civil war, she never loses sight of the West's responsibility. Specogna is currently planning projects in Brazil, Ethiopia and Kenya. Filmography: <http://www.heidispecogna.de/>

Named after the film director and long-standing president of the Akademie der Künste in the GDR, the **Konrad Wolf Prize** is awarded annually for outstanding artistic achievements in the fields of the Performing Arts or Film and Media Arts. Most recently, the prize was awarded to the cultural journal *Lettre International* (2018), to Hungarian director Márta Mészáros (2017), and to theatre and opera director Nicola Hümpel of Nico and the Navigators (2016).

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