

Senam Okudzeto receives the Paul Boesch Art Prize 2023

The British-American artist, researcher, writer and founder from Basel, Senam Okudzeto (*1972), is awarded one of the country's highest art awards. The Paul Boesch Foundation thus honors the socio-politically relevant work of the artist with Ghanaian roots. The award ceremony will take place on August 24 2023 at the Kunsthalle Bern.

Senam Okudzeto's work encompasses writing, scholarly research and art practice within a wide range of mediums, including painting, film, installation and social sculpture. Her methodological practice of "Afro-Dada" forges narrative connections between unexpected vectors, an ongoing exploration of identity politics, material culture and critical responses to previously overlooked socio-economic and political histories. Her installations are designed to represent forgotten or unnoticed forms of material and architectural culture as carriers of lost or hidden histories with a focus on the genesis of contemporary West Africa and its diaspora.

Interwoven into these broader themes are ideas such as economics as an archive of social relations and readings of Lacan in relation to race, performance and the gendered body. These "conversations" take place within a theoretical discourse on feminism, African modernity and a general analysis of material culture. This practice locates unexpected juxtapositions in the material culture of post-independence West Africa's modernist narratives through her fluid identity and identifications as a West African who is also a European and of U.S. American descent.

The multifaceted work of Senam Okudzeto

Okudzeto has a PhD in Cultural Studies from Birkbeck College, University of London (2022). Okudzeto received her bachelor's degree from the Slade School of Fine Art, London University College, her master's from the Royal College of Art in London, and pursued postgraduate study at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. She has taught extensively across diverse fields, ranging from African studies, material culture, architectural and art history, through to practical and theoretical approaches to drawing. Recently Okudzeto was the initiator and co-curator of the exhibition 'Fun Feminism' at Kunstmuseum Basel (Sep 2022 – Mar 2023). Moreover, she is the founder and Director of the NGO Art in Social Structures (AiSS), a now dormant project, which worked towards creating experimental platforms in education, the democratization of visual culture and the creating and supporting heritage initiatives in Ghana through teaching workshops and collaborations with junior and senior members of national television, radio and print media.

Highly endowed Swiss art award

The Bernese artist Paul Boesch (1889 - 1969) is mainly remembered for his woodcuts, coats of arms and stained glass. For decades, his graphics shaped the traditional "Pestalozzi" school calendar. He also created the flag of the canton of Jura. The Paul Boesch Foundation was established in 2014 on the initiative of the artist's daughter, Liselotte Boesch (1919 - 2011). In the name of her father, she wanted to support artists and art students. The Paul Boesch Prize has been awarded annually since 2016 and is endowed with 50,000 Swiss francs. This makes it not only one of the youngest, but also one of the highest art prizes in the country. Previous winners include Pamela Rosenkranz, Mai-Thu Perret, and Manuel Burgener.

The Award Ceremony will take place on Thursday, 24 August 2023, 6 p.m. at Kunsthalle Bern, Helvetiaplatz 1, 3005 Bern. The artist Senam Okudzeto will be present.