

Press Release: July 10, 2019

# Murnau Prize Awarded to Lucrecia Martel

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Bielefeld Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Prize has been awarded to Lucrecia Martel.**

The Society for the Presentation of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Film Prize in Bielefeld has awarded this year's prize to the Argentine film director Lucrecia Martel.

Martel, who was selected unanimously by the jury, will accept the award in Bielefeld on September 29, 2019.

## **THE AWARD WINNER 2019: LUCRECIA MARTEL**

Since the late 1980s, the Argentinean film director Lucrecia Martel has developed a cinematic oeuvre—ranging from narrative short and feature films to documentation—which is characterized by both diversity and artistic consistency. Her most recent movie, *Zama* (2017) and her preceding *Salta Trilogy* (2001 – 2008) have established her as one of the most critically acclaimed filmmakers worldwide. The fifty-two-year-old director's films deal in a unique way with Argentine history and society, while at the same time revealing influences from international cinema.

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Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau  
Filmpreises e.V.

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in Prize in Bielefeld

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*La mujer sin cabeza* (The Headless Woman, 2008), for example, is a film reminiscent of Luis Buñuel and Alfred Hitchcock. With their attention to detail and atmospheric density, films such as *La Ciénaga* (2001), *La niña santa* (The Holy Girl, 2004), and *Zama* (2017) are reminiscent of old-master moral paintings. At the same time, her love of experimentation lends the films a great freshness that sharpens perception and has a long-lasting effect on viewers. Martel's highly complex visual compositions, in which figures are often truncated and fragmented, are complemented by an unusual sound design compared to international cinema, which the artist has developed since her first feature film with Guido Berenblum.

It is this sensually perceptible desire to expand the formal and narrative possibilities of the medium that Lucrecia Martel shares with film pioneers such as the prize's namesake, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau.

As rich in sarcastic humor as Martel's work occasionally is, it is also a disruptive cinematic expression of growing uncertainties. Lucrecia Martel's work destabilizes the fixed coordinates of perception, familiar hierarchies, and the ground of hard facts. The suppressed breaks through—in small gestures, as in hallucinatory clouds of consciousness. The latent identity crisis of Véronica, the “headless woman”, thus also leads us as viewers into a realm of dark foreboding and growing instability.

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Suspicions, insecurities, unsettling moments: In this quality as well, a spiritual affinity to Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's films can be felt. The demotion of the civil servant Don Diego de Zama, forgotten and neglected by the crown at an outpost of the Spanish colonial empire, also reflects the experience of social degradation, self-alienation, and mental confusion which Murnau described in *Der letzte Mann* (The Last Laugh).

The work of Lucrecia Martel enjoys great and growing esteem among film artists, cinephiles, and festivals such as those in Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and Toronto. In 2002, Martel was appointed to the international jury of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Berlin Film Festival, in 2006 to the competition jury of the 59<sup>th</sup> Cannes Festival, and in 2008 to that of the Venice Film Festival. Praised by Venice Film Festival's chief Alberto Barbera as "Latin America's most important female director and one of the top female directors worldwide", Martel has been named the president of the jury at this year's Venice Film Festival, the event's 76<sup>th</sup> edition, that will take place shortly before the Bielefeld Murnau award ceremony.

Martel's most recent film, *Zama* (2017), was voted one of the ten best films of the year by 164 international critics and curators for the British Film Institute. The Academia de las Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas de la Argentina nominated Zama as the Argentinean entry for the Oscar category of "Best Foreign

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Language Film” and as the “Best Ibero-American Film” for the Goya Awards.

German film critics also recognize the idiosyncratic and innovative cinematic language of Martel being the most important director of Latin American cinema. Katja Nicodemus writes in the newspaper Die Zeit: „Lucrecia Martel is a queen. The realm of her images is so large and so old that it exceeds all expectations. It encompasses the Latin American continent, its history of colonialism and guilt, its modernism and present—as well as the manifestations of human decadence that Martel observes unperturbedly.” (July 19, 2018)

### **THE BIELEFELD FRIEDRICH WILHELM MURNAU FILM PRIZE**

Awarded for the first time in 1988 on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the world-renowned, Bielefeld-born film director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888–1931), the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Film Prize (Bielefelder Friedrich Wilhelm Film Prize) has been presented to Eric Rohmer, Wim Wenders, Henri Alekan, Herbert Achternbusch, Jacques Rivette, and Werner Herzog. After an intermission, the Bielefeld partners of the Streitbörger law firm facilitated for a new start in 2010.

The first co-laureates of the reinstated prize were the camerawoman and filmmaker Elfi Mikesch and the film and opera director Werner Schroeter. In 2012, the award went to the Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki, and in 2014 to the Belgian filmmaker

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Chantal Akerman. In 2017, the tenth award winner was the German film director Christian Petzold.

For the fifth time, the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Film Prize, which is endowed with 10,000 euros, is supported by the Bielefeld partners of the Streitbürger law firm; since 2014, together with the Volksbank Bielefeld—Gütersloh eG, after it became a member of the awarding society.

The Jury of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Prize is comprised of

**Christiane Heuwinkel**, Member of the Board of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Society Bielefeld and Director of the Kunstforum Hermann Stenner, as jury chairwoman;

**Daniel Kothenschulte**, film critic, film curator, and musician for silent films;

**Matthias Müller**, filmmaker and Professor for Experimental Film at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne;

**Christian Petzold**, film director, winner of the 10<sup>th</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Film Prize; and

**Stefanie Schulte Strathaus**, Co-Director of the Arsenal—Institute for Film and Video Art, Berlin.

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#### **MANUSCRIPT DOWNLOAD:**

[www.murnaufilmpreis.de/presstexte/MurnauAward29Sept2019.pdf](http://www.murnaufilmpreis.de/presstexte/MurnauAward29Sept2019.pdf)  
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**Lucrecia Martel. Photo: Eugenio Fernandez Abril**

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