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ALL EYES ON THE PRIZE

HOW THE NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER'S SIX-FIGURE SALUTE TO AN ART FORM JUST PUT SCULPTURE — AND DALLAS — FIRMLY ON THE WORLD STAGE

by MICHAEL GRANBERRY

What more can we do that advances our mission?” Director Jeremy Strick says that is an ongoing question at the Nasher Sculpture Center. “We always think about the legacy, the intention the Nashers had in creating the sculpture center.” Patsy Nasher and Ray Nasher, whose private collection fills the downtown center, would no doubt be joyful about the new Nasher Prize. Announced in April, it is to be an annual international award presented to a living artist whose work, in the eyes of museum leadership, “has had an extraordinary impact on the understanding of sculpture.” The Nashers, Strick says, “assembled one of the greatest collections in the world of modern and contemporary sculpture and created an environment for that collection that is second to none. They really wanted the Nasher Sculpture

Center to be an international focal point. And so, in thinking about that, we realized that there’s not an international sculpture prize conferred by a major museum.”

There is now. Strick has likened the prize to the top architectural award, the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which he said “has brought the work of so many architects to public notice and attention and also really shaped the discussion of architecture for decades now.” The annual Pritzker, like the Nasher, carries a \$100,000 award. Pritzker winners with projects in Dallas include Thom Mayne, I.M. Pei, Philip Johnson and Renzo Piano, the Italian architect who designed the Nasher Sculpture Center. Piano is also designing the Nasher Prize “award object,” as it is being called, to be given to the winner each year. The first victor gets his or hers (the September 30 announcement of the winner comes after press time of this issue) in Dallas on April 2, along with that check for \$100 grand. The sure-to-be unconventional object was commissioned by Nancy A. Nasher, the Nashers’ daughter, and her husband, David J. Haemisegger, who together own NorthPark Center. The prize’s inaugural co-chairs are top-notch, too: Catherine Rose and Jennifer Eagle, both philanthropists and art collectors. Museum officials recently announced donations by two major contributors: luxury-car company Aston Martin Lagonda and JPMorgan Chase, each of which is allocating \$100,000 toward the Nasher Prize.

The list of judges who selected the winner at a hush-hush conclave in July at the Tate Britain reads like a who’s who of international sculpture: Phyllida Barlow, the great-great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin, who recently concluded her own dynamic exhibition at the Nasher; Lynne Cooke, senior curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; Okwui Enwezor, director of Haus der Kunst in Munich; Yuko Hasegawa, chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo; Steven Nash, founding director of the Nasher and director emeritus of the Palm Springs Art Museum; Alexander Potts, art historian; and Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate in Great Britain.

The *London Evening Standard* has weighed in on the Nasher Prize. “There’s the Turner, the Tonys, the Oscars, the Baftas, the Man Booker ... but there has never been an annual prize dedicated to sculpture.” The \$100,000 allocated to the winner puts the Nasher Prize “among the biggest art awards in the world,” the *Standard* opines. In giving the award, the Nasher also poses a question: What exactly is sculpture in the 21st century? The art form has changed radically since the 1960s: Sculpture is no longer merely masterpieces by Rodin or Giacometti or George Segal. It is, as the *Standard* says, “everything from installation to performance to land art.” The boundaries keep shifting. The Nasher Prize should show us how far, in the years to come.



EYE ON THE PRIZE The winner of the first Nasher Prize will be announced between 6 and 8 p.m. on September 30, at an invitation-only reveal. *FD* will be there. At fdmag.com, we'll have the Nasher Prize winner, plus exclusive prize-related content. Above, Nasher director Jeremy Strick this April.

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