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Pierre Huyghe Wins Nasher Sculpture Prize

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By Randy Kennedy



Pierre Huyghe
PHILIPPE QUAISSÉ, VIA NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER

The French artist Pierre Huyghe, who has [stretched the concept of sculpture's stability](#) in recent years by making work with decidedly unstable elements like bees, spiders, horseshoe crabs and artificial snowstorms, has won the Nasher Prize, an award created by the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas to draw attention to the work of the most influential contemporary sculptors.

The \$100,000 prize, which was [awarded last year for the first time](#) to the Colombian-born artist Doris Salcedo, went to Mr. Huyghe this year because of his “expansive view of sculpture” that incorporates “living systems, films, situations and objects” and challenges “the very limits of artmaking,” said Jeremy Strick, the Nasher’s director.



Mr. Huyghe's 2014 work "Cambrian Explosion."
STEFAN ALTENBURGER PHOTOGRAPHY, ZÜRICH

"At this moment, when the environment and culture are so under threat, Huyghe's imaginative, uncanny approach to the serious ecological and social issues facing our planet tie his oeuvre to the ancient purposes of sculpture: they possess a shamanistic quality which tips the mimetic into life," Mr. Strick added.

The jury for the prize is made up of some of the world's most influential artists and curators, like [Nicholas Serota](#), the longtime director of the Tate museums in Britain, and the sculptor [Huma Bhabha](#). In an interview from Paris, Mr. Huyghe (pronounced weeg) said that he was gratified to be recognized for trying to expand what sculpture can mean.

"As much as I can I am trying to stay away from the modernist idea of the autonomous object," he said, adding, "I've been trying to think in a way that doesn't have to do with form but with things that are in formation, that are in the process of changing."

Perhaps to underscore his point, he said that a new project, a piece to be included in an upcoming show organized by the artist [Tino Sehgal](#) at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, will include organisms of a kind that few want to think about, much less admire as art: living cancer cells, donated by the Curie Institute.