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Doris Salcedo Wins Nasher Prize for Sculpture

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Doris Salcedo is the first winner of the Nasher Prize, a new, annual \$100,000 award created by the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas in recognition of an artist's influence in the field of sculpture. The intent of the prize, announced Wednesday evening, is to "stimulate ongoing awareness and debate" about what constitutes sculpture today, according to the Nasher's director, Jeremy Strick. Is that a tall order for an art prize?

Over the past three decades, Ms. Salcedo, a Colombian-born artist whose retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum is on view through Oct. 12, has made haunting and poetic sculptures and installations from domestic objects and clothing that memorialize victims of political violence in her homeland and also internationally.

Doris Salcedo. Credit William Zbaren for The New York Times

A jury of seven, including this year's Venice Biennale visual arts director Okwui Enwezor, the artist Phyllida Barlow and the director of the Tate art museums, Nicholas Serota, selected Ms. Salcedo. She was chosen from a pool of more than 50 nominees in part because her work spoke to "the potential for sculpture to matter, not only in the realm of art but in the realm of society," Mr. Strick said. (The candidates were nominated by 100 museum professionals, scholars and artists.)

Mr. Strick hopes to extend the reach of the prize through panel discussions on sculpture organized in partnership with the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, beginning Oct. 11 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. It will be followed next spring by events at the Nasher.

While Anne Pasternak, director of the Brooklyn Museum, who was not involved with the award, acknowledged "a growing cynicism about prizes" in general, she said that "having major artists come talk about their work and all the things connected with a prize is very inspiring to a local arts scene." As for the potential of the Nasher Prize to influence the field of sculpture, Tom Eccles, executive director for the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in New York, and one of the nominators, said: "One hundred thousand dollars to the field of penmanship may draw attention to penmanship. Would \$100,000 to the field of science make a difference? Maybe sculpture lies somewhere between penmanship and science."



"Plegaria Muda, 2008-10," part of the retrospective of Doris Salcedo's work at the Guggenheim Museum.
Credit Ruth Fremson/The New York Times