

**MAX MARA ART PRIZE FOR WOMEN
IN COLLABORATION WITH WHITECHAPEL GALLERY
A SUMMARY**

The **Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with Whitechapel Gallery**, reflects Max Mara's close relationship with the worlds both of women and of art.

The prize – awarded every two years and open to all art forms – aims to encourage and support emerging women artists who live and work in the United Kingdom, which today is one of the centres of the international art scene. The prize provides an opportunity for further development of their creative potential by way of the creation of a new artwork.

Since its first edition, the Max Mara Art Prize for Women has been organised in a partnership with Whitechapel Gallery, and Iwona Blazwick, Whitechapel's director, is the president of the jury panel. Whitechapel Gallery is involved specifically in the scientific-curatorial areas of the project, in particular in the selection phase of the artists and in the creation of the work. Each edition of the prize is entrusted to a specially appointed jury panel of women that consists an art critic/writer, an artist, a gallerist and a collector, each of whom nominates some artists. These initial artistic proposals are then pared down to a final shortlist of five candidates, each of whom is commissioned to make a project to be realized during a six-month residency in Italy. The winner's work is acquired by Collezione Maramotti. In March 2007, the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with Whitechapel of London was the recipient of the prestigious British Council Arts & Business International Award.

As his well known, the prize consists in a 6-month residency in Italy, in the production of a new work and in its acquisition by Collezione Maramotti, thus joining its permanent collection.

From the second edition, Collezione Maramotti started to collaborate with Max Mara and Whitechapel Gallery. It is involved in the selection of the residency proposals in Italy (changing every time as they are linked specifically to the winner's project from the 5th edition), and provides tutorship during the residency period, assuring a connection with Italian culture and territory. The Collection cooperates with Whitechapel concerning the organisational aspects linked to the production of the work, the catalogue and the presentation of the project to the public.

The work is then presented in two important solo exhibitions: the first one at Whitechapel Gallery in London, and the second one at Collezione Maramotti, in Reggio Emilia (Italy). Before the exhibitions an event is organised in London, with the title of *My Hero*, where the prize winner invites a person representing a focus of interest for her, a mentor during her training, thus highlighting some of the topics and approaches pertaining to her research.

FIRST EDITION

MARGARET SALMON: NINNA NANNA

The first edition of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women was announced in June 2005 at the British Pavilion of the 51st Venice Art Biennale. The shortlist was announced in September 2005: Anne Hardy, Donna Huddleston, Rachel Kneebone, Margaret Salmon and Anj Smith. The prize was then unanimously awarded to video artist Margaret Salmon.

Margaret Salmon's six-month residency was divided between the American Academy in Rome and the Pistoletto Foundation in Biella, where the artist completed her project. In January 2007, the work was exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. The panel of judges, chaired by Iwona Blazwick, director of the Whitechapel Gallery, included Jennifer Higgie, editor of *Frieze* magazine; Victoria Miro, gallerist; Gillian Wearing, artist and laureate of the Turner Prize; and Anita Zabludowicz, collector.

THE WINNER: MARGARET SALMON

Born in Suffern, New York, in 1977. Lives and works in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. She began her career as a video artist at the age of twenty, while pursuing a BFA at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Her style of expression is cognizant of various moments in the history of cinema, from Neorealism, to New Wave and *Cinema Verité*. In 2007 she took part in the Venice Art Biennale and in the Berlin Biennale in 2010. She was also featured in individual exhibitions at Witte de With in Rotterdam and won the Vincent Prize in 2007.

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

Ninna Nanna is a video triptych, shot in 16mm in colour and black and white, and deals with three young Italian mothers filmed in their homes while singing an endless lullaby, a ninna nanna, to their infants. The work celebrates the tenacity and grace of these women as they go about their daily lives, and draws attention to the gap between the iconography of motherhood and its reality.

Ninna Nanna is now part of the Collezione Maramotti and was selected by Robert Storr for the 52nd Venice Art Biennale. Margaret Salmon was also nominated for the coveted Vincent Prize.

SECOND EDITION

HANNAH RICKARDS: NO, THERE WAS NO RED.

Preparations for the second edition (2007-2009) of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with Whitechapel Gallery, were announced on 8 June 2007 at the British Pavilion of the 52nd Venice Art Biennale. The panel of judges, chaired by Iwona Blazwick, director of Whitechapel Gallery, included Rachel Withers, art critic; Cornelia Grassi, gallerist; Cornelia Parker, artist; and Judith Greer, collector. During the following month of October, the panel shortlisted five artists: Yasmeen Al Awadi, Georgie Hopton, Melanie Jackson, Lisa Peachey and Hannah Rickards.

The jury's review of the projects presented by the shortlisted artists was followed by the announcement on 29 January 2008, during a gala dinner at the Italian Embassy in London, that the prize had been awarded to Hannah Rickards.

The artist realised her project in 2008, during periods of residency at the American Academy in Rome and the Pistoletto Foundation in Biella. This residency, in addition to the financial provisions of the prize (also supported by the National Lottery, by way of Arts Council England) allowed her to dedicate over a year to researching and developing her new work, which was shown in London in 2009 at the recently expanded Whitechapel Gallery, and later in Reggio Emilia at Collezione Maramotti, which acquired it.

THE WINNER: HANNAH RICKARDS

Born in Hammersmith, London, in 1979. Lives and works in London.

She completed a BA (Hons) in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2002. Rickards – the youngest of the shortlisted artists – is a conceptual artist, and sound is the primary medium in which she works. Nature and artifice are closely intertwined in her work. Her sound installations often consist of the appropriation of a sound that occurs in nature, and then of its reinterpretation in terms of language or music.

In 2015 she was awarded with the Leverhulme Prize (Visual and Performing Arts category), which recognises the achievement of outstanding researchers whose work has already attracted international recognition and whose future career is exceptionally promising.

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

Rickards' two-screen film – *No, there was no red.* – is based on spoken accounts of a mirage of a city seen to hover over Lake Michigan as the result of a rare atmospheric phenomenon of thermic inversion. The subjective differences, as well as the affinities, echoes and counterpoints of these reports form the core of the piece, allowing for an exploration of the ways in which this natural occurrence is experienced and described. Text is an integral part of Rickards' work, and reveals the influence of such early Conceptual artists as Douglas Huebler, Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner.

Whitechapel Gallery, London: 5 - 23 September 2009

Collezione Maramotti: 24 October, 2009- 31 October, 2010

The work was loaned to Modern Art Oxford in 2014 for the show *Hannah Rickards. To enable me to fix my attention on any one of these symbols I was to imagine that I was looking at the colours as I might see them on a moving picture screen.*

THIRD EDITION

ANDREA BÜTTNER: THE POVERTY OF RICHES

The winner of the third edition (2009-2011) of the Prize was announced at Londons' Whitechapel Gallery on 23 March 2010.

The panel of judges, chaired by Iwona Blazwick, included artist Fiona Banner, gallerist Alison

Jacques, art collector Valeria Napoleone and art critic Polly Staple; they shortlisted the artists Becky Beasley, Andrea Büttner and Elizabeth Price, and after considering their proposals announced the winner of the prize to be Andrea Büttner. The artist then realized her project during a six-months residency in Italy in 2010, partly at the American Academy in Rome, partly at the Pistoletto Foundation in Biella, and also as the guest of a number of religious communities.

THE WINNER: ANDREA BÜTTNER

Born in Stuttgart in 1972. Lives and works in London and Frankfurt.

After studies in history and philosophy at Humboldt University in Berlin, she was awarded a PhD at the London's Royal College of Art in 2009. She has already received a number of awards and other recognitions: Maria-Sibylla-Merian Prize and Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg Grant (2009), Cusanuswerk Scholarship (2005-2008), Working Grant, Tyler Graphics (2006). She has been shortlisted for the Turner Prize 2017. She will present a solo show at the Hammer Museum and at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in 2017.

She works in a variety of media (inclusive of woodcuts and pressed flowers) and is especially interested in themes in which art and religion intertwine and overlap.

Büttner's work also investigates the potential dilemmas the artist faces within the space of the gallery and its powerful charge of expectations.

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

The Poverty of Riches is a project that explores the intersection of religion, art and the condition of the artist in the contemporary world. Andrea Büttner engages with Catholicism by way of a complex, multi-layered reflection on art. The artworks produced in the course of the project were inspired by the Italian religious communities in which she lived for a while, by Giotto's frescoes, and by a number of Arte Povera works at Collezione Maramotti. Her show transforms the exhibition space into a space of contemplation in which we look at works that represent elements of religious iconography, rendered in the traditional technique of woodcuts. Flanking such traditional imagery, we also find pieces of everyday cloth which the artist has retrieved from the uniforms of park guards, policemen and refuse collectors, and then stretched as though they were canvases, thus creating colourful "paintings." These works are part of Büttner's exploration of the symbolic uses of fabrics in Italian religious art.

Whitechapel Gallery: 1 – 10 April 2011

Collezione Maramotti: 12 November 2011 – 29 April 2012

Part of the project was loaned to Whitechapel Gallery in 2015 for the show *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915 – 2015*.

FOURTH EDITION

LAURE PROUVOST: FARFROMWORDS

The judges for the fourth edition of the Prize included artist Lisa Milroy; art collector Muriel Salem; gallerist Amanda Wilkinson, and writer and critic Gilda Williams.

Iwona Blazwick, Chair of the jury announced Laure Prouvost as the 2011 winner of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, at the Italian Embassy of London on 22 November 2011.

She was chosen from a distinguished shortlist of artists which included Spartacus Chetwynd, Christina Mackie, Avis Newman and Emily Wardill.

THE WINNER: LAURE PROUVOST

Born in Lille (France) in 1978. Lives and works in London.

Prouvost studied at Central St Martins, London and after at Goldsmiths College, London.

Her work is characterized by a combination of video and other media.

Prouvost is an artist with an appetite for exploring different cultures and she seizes the artistic potential of her impressions to create gripping films and installations. It is fascinating to see how she has drawn from her Italian residency, bringing together the sensuous and surreal in her work. After the Max Mara Art Prize, she won the Turner Prize in 2013. She had solo exhibitions in many important international venues, among which Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; Hangar Bicocca, Milan; High Line Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; MMK Frankfurt; CAPC Bordeaux; New Museum, New York; Tate Britain, London.

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

Laure Prouvost's project opens new horizons of meaning by unhinging the connection between language and understanding. Her two-part installation *Farfromwords: car mirrors eat raspberries when swimming through the sun, to swallow sweet smells* is inspired by the aesthetic and sensuous pleasures of Italy and plays on the historic idea of visiting the Mediterranean for inspiration.

Farfromwords comprises a large-scale pavilion-like structure recalling a historical panorama: a circular space is interspersed with collaged elements, including photographic prints, paint and pairs of video monitors showing footage of moving heads and feet. This immersive environment leads to an idyllic inner space revealing a new film, *Swallow* (2013). The gentle rhythm of breathing accompanies surrealist imagery and shots of blue skies, ripe fruit and modern-day nymphs. By conveying visual and sensory pleasure through fragments of footage, the film alludes to events and encounters from the artist's Italian residency split between the city of Rome and rural Biella.

A book published by Whitechapel Gallery in collaboration with Collezione Maramotti accompanied the exhibition.

Whitechapel Gallery: 20 March – 7 April 2013.

Collezione Maramotti: 3 May – 3 November 2013

The video *Swallow* was loaned for the show *Résonance(s)*, Maison Particulière, Bruxelles, in 2014.

FIFTH EDITION

CORIN SWORN: SILENT STICKS

In January 2014, Corin Sworn was selected as the winner of the fifth edition of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women by a judging panel including Whitechapel Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick; gallerist Pilar Corrias; collector Candida Gertler; artist Runa Islam and curator and writer Lisa Le Feuvre.

Sworn was chosen from a distinguished shortlist including Beatrice Gibson, Melanie Gilligan, Judith Goddard and Philomene Pirecki.

Based on her winning proposal for the Prize, Sworn was awarded a bespoke 6-month residency in Italy divided between Rome, Naples and Venice. Sworn spent the residency immersing herself in the culture of each city, studying traditional plays and meeting actors and experts in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. She also visited important architectural sites including Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio's *Teatro Olimpico* in Vicenza, whose grand *trompe-l'oeil* stage set is the oldest in the world.

THE WINNER: CORIN SWORN

Corin Sworn was born 1975 in London, but raised in Vancouver (Canada); she lives and works in Glasgow.

She received a BA in Psychology from the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, an BFA at the Institute of Art & Design of Vancouver and an MFA at The Glasgow School of Art. Sworn creates films and installations deeply rooted in research, which weave together history with memories and fragments of true or imagined stories, often with a social-anthropological cut. Together with Hannah Rickards, she was also awarded with the Leverhulme Prize in 2015 (Visual and Performing Arts category).

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

Her new large-scale installation draws from the characters and tales of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, improvised plays from the 16th century that originated in Italy where they continue to be of great cultural importance. Featuring a dramatic stage set with props, costumes, sound and video elements the new work is a result of Sworn's 2014 Italian residency awarded as part of the Prize. Performed by travelling troupes of actors who existed on the fringes of late-renaissance society, *Commedia dell'Arte* dramas featured figures with exaggerated expressions and gestures. The characters of *la commedia* have influenced artists and writers for hundreds of years, from Shakespeare and Marlowe to Goya and Picasso.

Sworn was interested in how mistaken identity was frequently used as a literary device in early theatre productions. Actors in radically different guises, such as a woman dressed as a man, a master dressed as a servant or a lord as a beggar played with the perceived fixity of insignia and rank. Early actors and the characters they took on pointed to social freedoms and mobility but also anxieties around misrecognition and social instability. The work adapts a famous 16th century case of imposture in response to these themes. The installation features fragments of sound and video, and is built through sourced and handmade props and costumes derived from the text *Scenarios of the Commedia Dell'Arte*, by Flaminio Scala, an actor and manager of one of the most pre-eminent theatre companies of the renaissance.

Sworn also researched the circulation of clothing of the time and collaborated with the Max Mara fashion house to produce costumes for the work. Based on sketches of garments made by the artist, the detailed costumes included in the installation were developed by the designers and skilled craftspeople at the Max Mara headquarters in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Exhibition:

Whitechapel Gallery: 20 May – 19 July 2015,

Collezione Maramotti: 3 October 2015 – 28 February 2016

SIXTH EDITION

EMMA HART: MAMMA MIA!

Emma Hart was selected as the winner of the sixth Max Mara Art Prize for Women by a panel chaired by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery, joined by Fiona Bradley, Director of the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; Sarah Elson, Collector and Founder of Launch Pad, a commissioning series supporting emerging artists; Helen Sumpter, Editor at Art Quarterly; and Artist and Royal Academician Alison Wilding.

Hart's project is the result of a six month bespoke residency which started in June 2016 and was divided between three Italian cities: Milan, Todi and Faenza.

THE WINNER: EMMA HART

Emma Hart lives and works in London. She received an MA in Fine Art from the Slade in 2004 and completed her PhD in Fine Art at Kingston University in 2013. In 2015 she was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation award for Visual Art.

Hart works capture the confusion, stress and nausea of everyday experience. Always in pursuit of real life, real feelings, she uses ceramics to create claustrophobic installations that engage the viewer physically and emotionally, or in the form of smaller works which come for the viewer. There are frequent verbal and visual spillages, and Hart's use of clay is often corporeal, forming approximate body parts that act as substitutes for human action and employment.

THE AWARDED ARTWORK

Emma Hart's new large-scale installation titled *Mamma Mia!* presents a family of large ceramic heads, suggesting a dialogue with one other. Each sculpture is jug-like in shape: the spout mimics a nose and the opening a mouth. For the first time in the history of the Prize a significant part of the work was produced in Italy: realized by the artist in Faenza alongside ceramic artisans, each sculpture is glazed incorporating motifs, such as the speech bubble. The interior space of the heads is filled with vivid patterns, designed and hand-painted by Hart after researching the designs and practice of the Italian tradition of maiolica.

Emma Hart's new work is the culmination of an investigation into pattern: visual patterns, and patterns of psychological behaviour, how to design then rupture these and the ruminations in between. The space between viewer and object is key, as ever in Hart's work, and is charged with the artist's particularly personal take on her experiences in Italy: the heat, light and colour, language and family dynamics in an unfamiliar setting.

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Whitechapel Gallery: 12 July – 3 September 2017
Collezione Maramotti: 15 October – 18 February 2018