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|  | **PRESS RELEASE** |  |

**German photographer Thomas Struth wins**

**Helena Vaz da Silva European Award 2024**

**Lisbon / The Hague, 12 July 2024** – The German photographer **Thomas Struth** is the winner of the **Helena Vaz da Silva European Award for Raising Public Awareness on Cultural Heritage 2024**. This European recognition pays tribute to Thomas Struth’s exceptional art of communicating European culture and values through photography.

The Helena Vaz da Silva European Award was established in 2013 by the **Centro Nacional de Cultura** (Portugal) in collaboration with **Europa Nostra** and the **Portuguese Press Club**, and has the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and Tourism of Portugal.

The Award [Jury](http://www.europanostra.org/our-work/partnerships/helena-vaz-silva-award/jury/) also granted a **Special Recognition to** the Cypriot dancer **Ioanna Avraam**,who is the Principal Dancer at the Vienna State Ballet, for her contribution to the promotion of European intangible cultural heritage.

The award ceremony will take place on **21** **October 2024** at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

Reacting to the announcement, Thomas Struth stated: *“I am absolutely delighted to receive the Helena Vaz da Silva European Award 2024. I would like to thank the Jury and the Centro Nacional de Cultura from the bottom of my heart. I feel honoured to join the group of important cultural figures who have already received this Award. Raising awareness of a united Europe and its cultural heritage is particularly important in today's world.”*

The Award Jury highlighted: *“Thomas Struth's work embodies what is essential in heritage: it portrays people, cities, museums, environments and technologies; it comes as a revelation to many people. He is a European open to the world, with an admirable intuition. If a picture is worth a thousand words, Thomas Struth ‘wrote’ monumental pieces of works – ‘to keep things from dying’, as he often says – which show and promote the passion for heritage, both European and universal”.*

**European Helena Vaz da Silva Award 2024 for Thomas Struth**

[Thomas Struth](https://thomas-struth.com/) (born in 1954, Geldern, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Recognised for his photographic work since the 1970s, Struth is driven by the idea that art should “show what the others do not see”.

Thomas Struth is known best for his *Museum Photographs* series, monumental colour images of people admiring iconic works of art in museums. His large-scale photos, which are characterised by exuberant colours and extreme attention to detail, have a mesmerising effect. Some photos are contemplative, such as *Kunsthistorisches Museum 3, Vienna* (1989), which shows a man inspecting Rembrandt’s *Portrait of a Man*. Other photographs in the series are crows of people trying to get a glimpse of the work of art, as in *Stanze di Raffaello 2* (1990), taken at the Vatican in the fresco rooms painted by Italian Renaissance master Raphael. The [*Museum Photographs 2*](https://www.thomasstruth32.com/smallsize/photographs/museum_photographs_2/index.html)were created in the mid-1990s. For some of these photos, Struth orchestrated the composition, placing the people where he wanted them.

As an offshoot of that series, Struth created [*Audiences*](https://www.thomasstruth32.com/smallsize/photographs/audiences/index.html) (2004), for which he photographed people from the perspective of the work of art on display. For example, he placed his camera below Michelangelo’s sculpture *David* to capture the facial expressions of the viewers looking up at the artist’s masterpiece. Struth finished the [Museum series](https://www.thomasstruth32.com/smallsize/photographs/museo_del_prado/index.html) in 2005, after photographing in front of Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656) at the Prado Museum in Madrid.

Struth's artworks are in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Tate in London and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, among others.

Recent major exhibitions of Struth's work include *Figure Ground*, the largest one to date, which was presented at Haus der Kunst in 2017 in Munich, before travelling to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 2019, as well as *Nature & Politics* displayed at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, the High Museum in Atlanta, the Moody Center for the Arts in Houston, the St. Louis Museum of Art and the MAST Foundation in Bologna between 2016 and 2019.

The major retrospective *Photographs 1978-2010* travelled from Kunsthaus Zürich (2010) to K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2011) and from Whitechapel Gallery, London (2012) to Museu Serralves, Porto (2011-2012). His photographs have also toured the world in international group shows, including *Capturing the Moment* at Tate Modern London (2023/2024) and … *et labora* at Fondation Vincent van Gogh in Arles (2019/2020), among others. Struth also participated in *Common Ground,* the Venice Architecture Biennale (2012), *Future Dimension*, the Venice Biennale (1990) and *Documenta IX* (1992).

**Special Recognition for Ioanna Avraam**

The Award Jury also decided to grant a Special Recognition to the Cypriot dancer Ioanna Avraam, emphasising: “*Through her art, Ioanna Avraam contributes to the promotion of Europe’s intangible cultural heritage, promoting values ​​such as freedom, equality and respect for diversity.*

Reacting to the announcement, Ioanna Avraam commented: “*This Special Recognition is an unexpected honour that fills me with joy, emotion, and pride. Being recognised by a pan-European organisation that promotes European cultural heritage and values is truly a great honour and bears a dual responsibility. First, as an artist, one must continue to strive for perfection in their professional field, for only in this way can we serve aesthetics and bring more beauty into the world. Second, through art and the ideas and values it promotes, we also fight as citizens against all forms of ugliness, such as wars of conquest, environmental destruction, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and religious and nationalist fanaticism, phenomena which, unfortunately, continue to thrive and develop*. *This Special Recognition honours the Vienna State Ballet, a multicultural company. It also highlights my small and unfortunately partially occupied homeland, Cyprus.”*

Ioanna Avraam is the Principal Dancer of the Vienna State Ballet. Her career includes several roles from the classical, neoclassical and contemporary repertoire, which she interprets using her extraordinary technique, but also the refined and unique art she brings to her interpretation. She is frequently invited to dance as a guest artist in many countries in Europe and other continents, thus becoming an exemplary ambassador of European cultural heritage.

Ioanna Avraam participated in several international competitions and received prestigious awards, including the 2023 Artist Award from the Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts. At last New Year's concert in Vienna, which was broadcast around the world, millions of culture lovers had the pleasure of enjoying her performance.

Born in Nicosia, she began taking ballet lessons at the age of four at Nadina Loizidou's School in Limassol. She continued her studies with a scholarship at the Heinz Bosl Stiftung Ballet Academy in Munich, Germany. This scholarship was awarded to her after being a finalist in the Prix de Lausanne, in Switzerland. Upon completing her studies, she auditioned for the Vienna State Ballet and, having been selected, chose to live and work in what is one of the most significant cultural capitals in the world. She started as a member of the Corp de Ballet, then progressed to Demi Soloist, Soloist and finally was promoted to Principal Dancer.

**More information**

**Award Jury**

The [Jury](http://www.europanostra.org/our-work/partnerships/helena-vaz-silva-award/jury/) of the Helena Vaz da Silva European Award, chaired by **Maria Calado**, President of the Centro Nacional de Cultura, is made up of independent specialists in the fields of culture, heritage and communication from several European countries: **Francisco Pinto Balsemão** (Portugal); President of the Board of Directors of the Impresa Group; **Piet Jaspaert** (Belgium), Vice-President of Europa Nostra; **João David Nunes** (Portugal), Vice-President of the Portuguese Press Club; **Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins** (Portugal), Administrator of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; **Irina Subotić** (Serbia), President of Europa Nostra Serbia; and **Marianne Ytterdal** (Norway), Member of the Council of Europa Nostra.

**Helena Vaz da Silva European Award**

The Helena Vaz da Silva European Award for Raising Public Awareness on Cultural Heritage was established in 2013 by the Centro Nacional de Cultura (Portugal) in collaboration with Europa Nostra and the Portuguese Press Club.

The Award is named after the Portuguese journalist, writer, cultural and political activist **Helena Vaz da Silva** (1939-2002), in memory and recognition of her notable contribution to the dissemination of cultural heritage and European ideals. It is awarded annually to a European citizen whose career has been distinguished by activities of dissemination, defence and promotion of Europe's cultural heritage, in particular through literary or musical works, reports, articles, chronicles, photographs, cartoons, documentaries, films and radio and/or television programmes.

The [previous laureates](https://www.europanostra.org/tag/helena-vaz-da-silva-european-award/) of this Award were the Baritone **Jorge Chaminé**, President of the Centre Européen de Musique (2023); the Ukrainian conductor **Oksana Lyniv** (2022); the Belgian contemporary dance choreographer **Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker** (2021); the Portuguese poet and librarian of the Vatican Library **José Tolentino Mendonça** (2020); the Italian physicist **Fabiola Gianotti** (2019); the British historian and broadcaster **Bettany Hughes** (2018); the German filmmaker**Wim Wenders** (2017); the French editorial cartoonist **Jean Plantureux**, known as Plantu, and the Portuguese philosopher,**Eduardo Lourenço** (*ex aequo,* 2016); the musician and Spanish conductor **Jordi Savall** (2015); the Turkish writer and Nobel Prize winner**Orhan Pamuk** (2014); and the Italian writer **Claudio Magris** (2013). The video recordings of the winners’ speeches at the ceremonies can be watched [here](https://helenavazdasilva.pt/premio-helena-vaz-da-silva/).

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