The 2019 Balzan Prizewinners

Each prize is worth CHF 750 000 (approx. EUR 680 000; USD 760 000; GBP 620 000)
Half of the amount must be destined by the winners to research projects

Milan, 9 September 2019 - The names of the 2019 Balzan Prizewinners were disclosed today in a public announcement:

Jacques Aumont (France), Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris-3), for Film Studies
Michael Cook (UK), Princeton University, for Islamic Studies
Luigi Ambrosio (Italy), Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, for Theory of Partial Differential Equations

Research Group Erika von Mutius, Klaus F. Rabe, Werner Seeger, Tobias Welte (Germany), for Pathophysiology of respiration: from basic sciences to the bedside.

The 2019 Balzan Prizewinners were announced today in Milan by the Chairman of the Balzan General Prize Committee, Luciano Maiani, together with the President of the Balzan “Prize” Foundation, Enrico Decleva, at the Corriere della Sera Foundation.

The Prizes will be presented by the President of the National Council of the Swiss Federation Marina Carobbio during the award ceremony to be held in Bern on 15 November.

The amount of each prize is CHF 750 000 (approx. EUR 680 000; USD 760 000; GBP 620 000).

The profiles of the winners and the citations were presented by prestigious members of the General Prize Committee.

Peter Kuon (Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Salzburg) and Victor Stoichita (Chair of Modern Art History at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland; European Chair at the Collège de France) read the citation for the assignment of the Prize for Film Studies to Jacques Aumont
“For his role as the founder of “film studies” as an academic discipline. For his contribution to the definition of the concept of film aesthetics and of film as a figurative art. For his contribution to the interpretation of the language of film and its history”.

Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco (Director of the Instituto de Etnomusicologia - Centro de Estudos em Música e Dança, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal, and President of the International Council for Traditional Music) read the citation for the assignment of the Prize for Islamic Studies to Michael Cook
“For the exceptional impact of his work on several research areas in Islamic Studies most notably: the study of the origin and early history of Islamic thought, the intellectual, social and political history of Islam through the ages and the place of Islam in global history; for the outstanding quality of his scholarship in depth, temporal and geographical breadth and methodological rigour as well as the use of a comparative approach; and for the meticulous philological analysis of primary sources in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, South Arabian, and Sanskrit”.

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Etienne Ghys (Permanent Secretary of the Académie des sciences, Institut de France, Paris; Research Director CNRS, École Normale Supérieure de Lyon) read the citation for the assignment of the Prize for Theory of Partial Differential Equations to Luigi Ambrosio:

“Luigi Ambrosio is a remarkable mathematician whose astonishing capacity for synthesis has made it possible to create hitherto unimaginable bridges between partial differential equations and the calculus, of variation, aiming at finding optimal shapes. His influence on the analysis of very general spaces is exceptional”.

Peter Suter (Honorary Professor of Medicine at the University of Geneva; former President of the Swiss Academy of Arts and Sciences) read the citation for the assignment of the Prize for Pathophysiology of respiration: from basic sciences to the bedside to Research Group Erika von Mutius, Klaus F. Rabe, Werner Seeger, Tobias Welte

“For the outstanding achievements of four exceptional scientists working on respiratory diseases, Erika von Mutius, Klaus Rabe, Werner Seeger and Tobias Welte, who, under the leadership of Seeger, joined their efforts in translating innovative research into new treatments to improve the quality of life for these patients, while also motivating and training the next generation of scientists, within their common German Center for Lung Research”.

At the conclusion of the announcement of the 2019 Balzan Prizewinners, the President of the General Prize Committee, Professor Luciano Maiani, informed the public that the 2020 Balzan Prizes will be awarded in the following fields:

- Human Rights
- Earth System Dynamics

As a further testimonial to the interdisciplinary mission of the Balzan Prize, for the first time in its history, the two general subject areas of the awards, the sciences and the humanities, will share a common theme that is fundamental and highly pertinent to today’s concern with the future of the planet:

Environmental Challenges, which will in turn be divided into these two areas:

- Responses from the Social Sciences and the humanities
- Materials Science for Renewable Energy

The amount of each of the four 2020 Balzan Prizes will be CHF 750 000.

Every year, the four Balzan Prizes are awarded to scholars and scientists who are distinguished in their fields on an international level. The aim of the Balzan prizes is to foster culture, the sciences and the most outstanding humanitarian initiatives of peace and brotherhood among peoples, regardless of nationality, race or creed.

The four subject areas for the awards change every year. As stipulated in the Articles of the Balzan Foundation, they are selected from among “literature, the moral sciences and the arts” and “the physical, mathematical and natural sciences and medicine”. Rotating the subjects ensures that new or emerging research gets recognition, while at the same time it supports important fields of study that may have been overlooked by other great international awards.

Since 2001, the rules of procedure of the Foundation’s General Prize Committee have stipulated that Prizewinners must destine half of the Prize to finance research projects that are preferably carried out by young scholars or scientists.

The International Balzan Foundation, founded in 1957, operates through two separate institutions. The International Balzan Foundation “Prize” in Milan, chaired by Enrico Decleva, selects the subjects to be awarded and the candidates through its General Prize Committee. The Balzan Foundation “Fund” in Zurich, chaired by Gisèle Girgis-Musy, administers the estate left by Eugenio Balzan, so as to place at the disposal of the International Balzan Foundation “Prize”. the financial means necessary to realize its objective.