



## Ngozi Ajah Schommers »I'm sorry, I can't help you.«

Awardee of the 2024 HAP Grieshaber-Preis der VG Bild-Kunst

Opening: Thursday, 12 December 2024 | 6 pm  
Words of welcome: Cornelia Rößler, Executive Spokeswoman, Deutscher Künstlerbund  
Dr. Urban Pappi, Executive Director, VG Bild-Kunst  
Frank Michael Zeidler, Board Member, Stiftung Kunstfonds  
Isabel Hénin, Head of the Division for West and Central Africa  
at the Federal Foreign Office  
Laudatio: Bukola Oyebode-Westerhuis  
Art critic, editor and curator  
Exhibition runs: 13 December 2024 – 21 March 2025  
Hours of opening: Tuesday – Friday | 2 – 6 pm  
Winter break: 23. December 2024 – 06. January 2025  
Location: Deutscher Künstlerbund  
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## Press Release

This year's »HAP Grieshaber-Preis der VG Bild-Kunst«, awarded since 1999 by Stiftung Kunstfonds for outstanding artistic achievement, goes to Ngozi Ajah Schommers. Moving between the cultures of Europe and Africa, the artist's many-layered oeuvre addresses themes including identity, cultures of memory, equality and colonialism. Her work is shaped by her cultural diversity and personal experience, lending it a particular depth.

In her solo exhibition »I'm sorry, I can't help you.«, hosted and organized by Deutscher Künstlerbund, the 26th prize-winner presents a new group of cross-media works combining sculptures, paintings, drawings and installations in an impressive range of materials.

Based on her own experience and that of other women, Ajah Schommers focusses attention on a little-discussed issue: the challenges faced by African and Black women in the German health system. Her works deal with implicit prejudices encountered in medical contexts and with the frequent lack of consideration for the ailments and suffering of these women..

A central theme in Ajah Schommers' practice is »care« in all its meanings, a theme she explores from a female perspective. This theme, shaped by personal experience, is transformed in her work into something general. Although not directly linked with activism, in her work the personal becomes political – speaking for those who have often gone unheard.

Due to a turpentine allergy, she decided to work with paper confetti, which had a shaping impact on her work. This material now occupies a central position in her practice and expresses a creative liberation from individual restrictions. By using confetti made out of recycled material, she also expands the theme of care: the careful reuse of materials is analogous with caring treatment of people and communities.

The role of care in Ajah Schommers' practice is reflected in particular in the close cooperation with women from her Nigerian community. Including them in her artistic process creates networks that enable personal and collective narratives. This linking of art, community and care allows marginalised voices to be heard and creates new forms of solidarity and support.

Awarding the HAP Grieshaber Prize to Ajah Schommers pays tribute not only to her art but also to her values of solidarity and care: the prize's patron, HAP Grieshaber, who championed the rights and welfare of his fellow artists, stands for values that Ajah Schommers communicates in her art and lives out in her social commitment.

On the occasion of her being awarded the prize, a short film was made about the artist, produced by Basiliscus Film and funded by VG Bild-Kunst. This film is available on the website of the Deutscher Künstlerbund.

### **About the artist**

Ngozi Ajah Schommers (born 1974 in Nigeria) studied painting at Yaba College of Technology in Lagos and sculpture at Hamburg University of Fine Arts. She lives in Bremen. Her work has featured in many exhibitions in Germany and abroad, including Kunsthalle Bremen, Magin-A Gallery (Paris), Brunei Gallery (London), National Museum (Lagos), Kent State University Museum (USA) and Konstmuseum Ystad (Sweden). Her work is currently included in the show »Made in Germany? Art and Identity in a Global Nation«, at the Bush-Reisinger Museum/Harvard Art Museums (Boston).

Ngozi Ajah Schommers is the Special Prize Winner of the Paula Modersohn-Becker Kunstpreises 2024.

The monograph »ngozi ajah schommers: tracings of time and place« was published in 2023.

### **»HAP-Grieshaber-Preis der VG Bild-Kunst«**

As one of Germany's most richly endowed art prizes (25,000 euros), the HAP Grieshaber Prize has been awarded since 1999 for outstanding achievements in contemporary art. Previous winners include Rosa Barba, Gert & Uwe Tobias, Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt, and Maya Schweizer. Since 2003, the annual exhibition of the winner's work has been hosted by the Deutscher Künstlerbund. The prize and the exhibition are organized in close cooperation by VG Bild-Kunst, Stiftung Kunstfonds and Deutscher Künstlerbund.

The painter and woodcutter HAP Grieshaber played a key part in the initiative to establish VG Bild-Kunst, Germany's copyright agency for visual art. From the 1970s onwards, Grieshaber campaigned hard for copyright on behalf of his fellow artists, as well as being a strong advocate of improved social support for artists.

The prize money for the HAP Grieshaber is provided by Stiftung Kulturwerk, the cultural organization of VG Bild-Kunst, using funds held back in accordance with the agency's plans for copyright payments. The prize is thus a mark of recognition for artists from artists. Each year's winner is selected by the trustees of Stiftung Kunstfonds from the applicants for working grants.

VG Bild-Kunst and Stiftung Kunstfonds in cooperation with the Deutscher Künstlerbund



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