

Press release – Düsseldorf, 27 June 2012

The world as a single whole: Jürgen Osterhammel awarded the 2012 Gerda Henkel Prize

The 2012 Gerda Henkel Prize will go to Konstanz-based historian Prof. Jürgen Osterhammel. In awarding him this accolade, the Foundation wishes to acknowledge Jürgen Osterhammel's outstanding contributions in the field of world historiography. The Gerda Henkel Foundation set up the prize in 2006 to recognize exceptional research achievements in the disciplines and funding areas it supports. Since it was established in 1976, the Düsseldorf-based foundation has promoted research projects in the historical humanities and in addition has in recent years turned to selected topics from associated present and future-oriented disciplines. With prize money of €100,000, the Gerda Henkel Prize is among the most prestigious honours in this field. Jürgen Osterhammel will receive the award on 29 October 2012 in Düsseldorf.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees unanimously accepted the recommendation of the jury, which includes figures from the academic and public spheres as well as the members of the Foundation's Academic Advisory Committee. The jury, chaired by Professor Wolfgang Frühwald, explained its decision thus: "Jürgen Osterhammel (born 1952) has decisively contributed to reinstating the world-historical perspective in German history not only in the theory, but also the practice of historiography. In an extensive series of monographs (which have also been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean and English), he sees world history not as the sum of national histories, but as a complex of relationships and contrasts that can be read and understood as the global history of civilisation. His book "Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts" (Munich, 2009), which came out in its fifth edition in 2010, was received with exceptional enthusiasm by critics, for Jürgen Osterhammel knows how to tell history in story-form without sacrificing analytical trenchancy and in so doing demonstrate to a wider public that the fragmented world can still be seen as a single whole."

"Jürgen Osterhammel's research shows the real reach of research in the humanities," comments Chairman of the Executive Board of the Gerda Henkel Foundation Dr. Michael Hanssler. "For an internationally active foundation that seeks to link scholarly perspectives across national borders, too, his selection as the prize winner is a trailblazing decision."

Jürgen Osterhammel, born in 1952 in Wipperfürth, Germany, studied History, Political Sciences, German and Philosophy at the University of Marburg. He received his doctorate in History in 1980 at the University of Kassel. Following periods at the German Historical Institute London and University of Freiburg, he completed his

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postgraduate studies in 1990 with a thesis on “China und die Weltgesellschaft. Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in unsere Zeit” (China and world society. From the 18th century to the present day). From 1990–1997 Jürgen Osterhammel was Professor of Modern, especially Extra-European History at the University of Hagen distance-learning institute and from 1996–1997 Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. In 1997 he accepted an appointment at the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales* in Geneva. Since 1999 he has held the Chair for Modern History (focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries) at the University of Konstanz. Jürgen Osterhammel’s research interests focus on European and Asian history from the 18th century onwards, the history of intercultural relations and perceptions, the history of ideas, the history of the theory of historiography and global history in theory and practice. He has received numerous awards for his research, including the 2010 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize from the German Research Foundation (DFG). In 2009 he received the NDR Non-Fiction Book Prize for his study “Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts” (The transformation of the world. A history of the 19th century), published in the series “Historische Bibliothek der Gerda Henkel Stiftung” (Gerda Henkel Foundation’s Historical Library).

The Gerda Henkel Foundation was set up in Düsseldorf in 1976 by Lisa Maskell (1914–1998) in memory of her mother Gerda Henkel. The sole purpose of the Foundation is to advance scholarly research. The Foundation is active in Germany and worldwide and since its establishment has supported almost 6,000 international research projects with around €100 million. The **Gerda Henkel Prize** is a biennial award initiated in 2006. Past prize-winners are art historian Prof. Martin Warnke (2006), sociologist and cultural historian Prof. Richard Sennett (2008) and Islamic studies scholar Prof. Gudrun Krämer (2010). All **information** on the prize winner is available for download on the Internet at <http://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/prize>. We will also be happy to send you a press pack.

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