

# Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History 2020 awarded to **Lorraine Daston**



Lorraine Daston  
Photo: Skuli Sigurdsson

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences has awarded the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History 2020 to Lorraine Daston, director emerita of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) in Berlin and visiting professor at the University of Chicago. Daston is receiving the prize for her study of the development of the concept of objectivity and the transformation she has brought about in the history of science.

The Heineken Prizes are the Netherlands' most prestigious international science prizes. Every two years the prizes are awarded to five leading researchers. They were instituted in 1964 by Alfred H. Heineken in honour of his father Dr Henry P. Heineken. The 2020 laureates will be announced in the first week of June.

## **Daston offers new perspective on "truth" and "objectivity" in science**

Lorraine Daston is considered one of the most eminent historians of her generation. From the outset, her publications have had a major influence on the research agenda in the discipline of the history of science. She has shown how the scientific approach to acquiring knowledge is highly dependent on the period in which it is developed. Her entire work is an investigation and clarification of the moral economy of science.

## **History of objectivity**

*Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (1998), the book Daston wrote together with Katharine Park, investigates the role of passions such as wonder, curiosity, pleasure, or horror in the study of nature. It opened up the discipline of the history of science to cultural history, the arts and literature, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, and led to the authors receiving the Pfizer Prize.

In the also award-winning *Objectivity* (2007), Daston and co-author Peter Galison studied the historical development of what were considered to be the right ways to acquire knowledge, from the eighteenth century to the present day. They did so on the basis of illustrations in scientific atlases from a wide range of disciplines. In their book, which was widely acclaimed in both the humanities and the hard sciences, the authors show that the core scientific concept

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of “objectivity” has a history and that principles regarding the formation of knowledge have developed in interaction with ideas about what characterises a scientific researcher.

In 2018 Daston published her essay *Against Nature*, in which she attempts to explain why people appeal to nature in order to justify moral arguments. We view nature as a model and ideal, from which we wish to derive standards and values. Deviations from natural order are considered unnatural and often wrong. According to Daston, this is a persistent misconception: all standards are based on an order, but nature is too multiform for us to derive a clear-cut order from it.

## **Rules and the modernity of science**

Daston’s current projects include a “history of rules”, which traces how rules evolved from models to algorithms over many centuries. She is also re-examining the relationship between science and modernity, posing the question how the sciences and modernity became so strongly associated with each other, and with what consequences for their public image.

## **About the laureate**

Lorraine Daston was born in East Lansing, Michigan in 1951. She studied the history of science and philosophy at Harvard University and the University of Cambridge. She has held various visiting positions, including in Paris, Vienna, Oxford, and Chicago. From 1990 to 1992, she was a professor and director of the Institute for the History of Science at the Georg August University of Göttingen (Germany). For the next five years, she was Professor of History and History of Science at the University of Chicago. From 1995 to 2019 she was the director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. Although she now officially holds *emerita* status, Daston is still very active in both Berlin and at the University of Chicago.

Her work has been recognised by numerous awards. She received the Pfizer Prize on two occasions, the Sarton Medal of the History of Science Society, the Schelling Prize of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Lichtenberg Medal of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and the Luhmann Prize of the University of Bielefeld. In 2018 she received the Dan David Prize. Daston is a member of several academies including Académie Internationale d’Histoire des Sciences (Paris) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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## **Note for editors**

For more information, interviews, and visuals relating to the Heineken Prizes, please contact:

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## **About the Heineken Prizes**

Over the past five decades, the Heineken Prizes have become an internationally renowned distinction. They are the Netherlands’ most prestigious prizes in the arts and sciences.

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Every two years, five internationally renowned researchers and one artist, who lives and works in the Netherlands, are honoured. The work of the laureates offers new perspectives, achieves unexpected breakthroughs, and opens up new avenues for others. Since 2010 future generations are also celebrated. Four highly promising young researchers working at Dutch research institutes receive the Heineken Young Scientists Awards.

The laureates are selected by juries made up of members of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Young Academy, and international experts. The Heineken science prizes include a monetary reward of USD 200,000. The artist receives EUR 100,000, half of which is intended for a publication and/or exhibition. The incentive prizes for young scientists are EUR 10,000 each.

The Heineken Prizes were instituted in 1964 by Alfred H. Heineken (1923–2002) in honour of his father Dr Henry P. Heineken (1886–1971). In that year the Dr H.P. Heineken Prize for Biochemistry and Biophysics was awarded for the first time. It has since been joined by five other Heineken Prizes: the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Art (1988), for Medicine (1989), for Environmental Sciences (1990) and for History (1990), and the C.L. Carvalho-Heineken Prize for Cognitive Science (2006).

Alfred Heineken's daughter, Charlene L. de Carvalho-Heineken (b. 1954), is continuing this tradition as chair of the Alfred Heineken Fondsen Foundation and the Dr A.H. Heineken Foundation for Art, which finance the prizes.

For more information, go to [www.heinekenprizes.org](http://www.heinekenprizes.org)