

News Release

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Johann Heinrich Merck Award of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany Goes To Kathrin Passig

- **Writer to receive prize worth € 20,000 in November**
- **Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany grants renowned literature award, underpinning its commitment to corporate responsibility and history**

Darmstadt, Germany, July 1, 2016 – The journalist, writer and blogger Kathrin Passig is the winner of the Johann Heinrich Merck Award for Literary Critique and Essay 2016 of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. The German Academy for Language and Poetry will be presenting the prize worth € 20,000 on November 5 in Darmstadt. The Johann Heinrich Merck Award of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is one of the most important distinctions for literary critics and essayists in the German-speaking world. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany sponsors the award in memory of the writer and literary critic Johann Heinrich Merck, who lived in Darmstadt from 1741 to 1791.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany sees the promotion of literature as part of its social responsibility. In addition to health and the environment, culture is a strategic sphere of activity of the company's sustainability efforts. "Cultural offers help to make a society worth living in; they inspire creativity and enthusiasm. As a science and technology company, we can benefit from this. That is why we promote literature as well as music and education around the world," said Stefan Oschmann, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany.

The works by this year's winner, Kathrin Passig, address the opportunities and risks of daily life in the digital world. "Digitalization is no doubt one of the greatest



challenges facing our society, as well as the business world. We are embracing digitalization and aim to make even better use of the tremendous growth opportunities it offers our businesses. Public debate of the topic is thus valuable to us," Oschmann continued.

Kathrin Passig "describes and analyzes digital culture as a way of life," said the German Academy for Language and Poetry. The jury is awarding her the Johann Heinrich Merck Award for Literary Critique and Essay for "her highly original texts that address a broad spectrum of topics and expertly span the blog, book and essay formats". In the jury's opinion, "in her endeavors to try out new writing forms and formats, she not only reflects the conditions of authorship, but also productively calls into question the traditional notions of the cultural scene, doing so well beyond the sphere of the writing process." With her work, "she furthers the critical examination of an epochal change and explores new possibilities of essay and critique beyond the Gutenberg galaxy."

Kathrin Passig was born on June 4, 1970 in Deggendorf, Germany and lives in Berlin today. She has written numerous works of non-fiction, including "Standardsituationen der Technologiekritik" (2013) and together with Sascha Lobo "Internet – Segen oder Fluch" (2012). As a freelance journalist, she regularly writes for newspapers across Germany and for technology magazines. In addition, Passig is co-founder and author of the German blog entitled "Technologietagebuch". From 2002 to 2009 Passig was managing director of the "Zentralen Intelligenz Agentur" (ZIA) – a project platform for journalists and web designers. In 2006, the ZIA blog "Riesenmaschine" received the Grimme Online Award. In the same year, Passig received the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize and the Kelag Audience Award in Klagenfurt, Austria, for her short story entitled "Sie befinden sich hier".

In 1771, Johann Heinrich Merck founded a publishing house that initially produced inexpensive reprints of Western European literature in the original language, and then added contemporary German works as well. Merck's home was the gathering point of the "Darmstädter Kreis," a group of writers that promoted literary sentimentalism and included Johann Gottfried Herder and Franz Michael Leuchsenring. Merck had friendly ties to Goethe in his young years.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany sponsors the Johann Heinrich Merck Award of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, which builds bridges between literature and empathetic understanding. In addition, the company awards the Premio Letterario of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany in Italy, which recognizes authors for building bridges between literature and science, since 1993. By contrast, building bridges between cultures is at the forefront of the literature awards in Japan (Kakehashi Prize of Merck Ltd. Japan, a subsidiary of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany) and India (Tagore Award of Merck India, a subsidiary of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany) and Russia, which Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany grants in cooperation with the Goethe Institut.

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