

Federal Minister Fassmann awards ASciNA Awards 2018 to excellent Austrian researchers in North America

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Washington (BMBWF) - Austrian researchers Claudia Leeb, Andreas Pedross-Engel and Jelena Todoric will be honored this evening by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research with this year's ASciNA Awards (ASciNA = Austrian Scientist and Scholars in North America) for their exceptional research achievements in the US.

"International mobility and the opportunity to work at foreign research institutions is essential for advances in science and research. With the presentation of the ASciNA Awards 2018 to Claudia Leeb, Andreas Pedross-Engel and Jelena Todoric, we acknowledge the outstanding achievements of Austrian scientists who have performed their research work at renowned universities in North America. This makes them important ambassadors for our country and our universities. I sincerely congratulate the awardees," says Heinz Fassmann, Austrian Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research.

The ASciNA Awards are given to young researchers for excellent scientific work in the categories "Junior Principal Investigator" (JPI) and "Young Scientist" (YS). They are endowed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research with a prize money of 10,000 Euros (JPI) and two times 7,500 Euros (YS) and advertised by the ASciNA network. The winners are selected by the Austrian Science Fund FWF on the basis of international reviews.

This year Claudia Leeb was awarded in the category "Junior Principal Investigator". Now a senior assistant professor at Washington State University's School of Politics, Philosophy and Public Affairs, she wrote the award-winning work "Power and Feminist Agency in Capitalism: Toward a New Theory of Political Subject" published in 2017 by Oxford University Press. In this publication Claudia Leeb brings the critical theories of Karl Marx and Theodor Adorno into dialogue with the psychoanalytic theories of the French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to analyze power and the socio-political changes in capitalist societies. In this context, she developed the idea of ??the moment of the limit, which refers to moments when power structures to completely subordinate the working classes, women, and minorities, and transformative agency becomes a possibility. In addition, she develops the concept of "political subject-in-outline" according to which the working classes, women, and minorities must be defined as political subjects in order to be able to change power structures.

Claudia Leeb completed her Bachelor and Master studies in Psychology at the University of Vienna before joining a Master in Gender Studies at New School for Social Research, New York. The next step in her research career took her back to the University of Vienna, where in 2001 she received her doctorate in psychology and philosophy of science. This was followed in 2006 by a Ph.D. in political theory from the New School for Social Research, New York.

Andreas Pedross-Engel and Jelena Todoric were honored in the category "Young Scientist". Andreas Pedross-Engel moved from the Graz University of Technology to the Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he works as a postdoc on micro and millimeter-wave imagers. The ASciNA Award-winning publication "Orthogonal Coded Active Illumination for Millimeter Wave, Massive MIMO Computational Imaging with Metasurface Antennas" was published in the journal "IEEE Transactions on Computational Imaging" in June 2018 and describes a 3D imaging system based on active illumination with electro-magnetic millimeter waves (mmWaves). The main innovation is the implementation of several transmitters emitting orthogonal coded signals. With this new type of active imaging technique for active mmWaves,

image quality as well as frame rate could be significantly improved compared to existing systems. An important contribution to this field of science is the experimental set-up based on forward modeling and the resulting data.

Jelena Todoric moved to California two years after completing her doctorate in endocrinology and metabolism at the Medical University of Vienna in 2010, where she has been a senior postdoctoral scientist in oncology at the University of California, San Diego. The Young Scientist Award-winning article "Stress-Activated NRF2-MDM2 Cascade Controls Neoplastic Progression in Pancreas" was published in December 2017 in "Cancer Cell". In this study, Jelena Todoric was able to assign autophagy an important role in the development of pancreatic carcinoma. Pancreatic carcinoma is one of the most aggressive types of tumors for which there has been no progress in therapy over the last 40 years. The findings of the work of Jelena Todoric, which could be detected both on the animal model and in human cells, have a very high therapeutic potential. Jelena Todoric was made possible by an Erwin Schroedinger scholarship from the FWF and an APART scholarship from the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

The awards ceremony by Heinz Fassmann, Austrian Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research, took place on December 8, 2018, following the annual Austrian Research and Innovation Talk (ARIT) of the Office of Science and Technology Austria, Washington D.C.

"The ASciNA Awards are a publicly visible sign of recognition for the outstanding scientific achievements of young Austrian researchers in North America," continued Fassmann, "The aim of the awards is to build a scientific bridge between Austria and North America and to award the outstanding research young Austrian researchers perform abroad. The ASciNA Network, which conducts the competitions, is a long-standing and committed partner of the Science Department [of the Austrian Federal Ministry] in North America. It contributes in many ways to the networking of Austrian researchers in North America and forms an important link to the research community in Austria and Europe."

The Network of Austrian Researchers in North America ASciNA was founded in 2002 in Washington D.C. and has over 1200 members worldwide. In addition to the ASciNA Awards, the ASciNA mentoring program and the local networking in the ASciNA chapters are central activities of the network.