

KIEFER HABLITZEL | GÖHNER ART PRIZE

2024

SWISS ART AWARDS

June 11 – 16, 2024

Messe Basel Halle 1.1

An exhibition by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 8pm

Sunday: 10am – 6pm

Free entry

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In a first round of evaluations in February 2024, the jury appraised 146 portfolios and invited 17 artists to participate in an exhibition in the context of the Swiss Arts Awards in Basel. In the second round, seven young artists from these nominations were awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize 2024 of CHF 15,000. Additionally, a special prize is granted as a solo exhibition with a catalogue at a Swiss institution. This solo exhibition will take place in the year after it is awarded – in 2025 at Kunstmuseum Luzern. The evaluation was based exclusively on the works exhibited here. An entire section is devoted to the works by the Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize nominees, so that the artistic practice of Swiss artists under 30 is united in one space.

THE JURY

The members of the jury for the 2024 edition are:

Claire Hoffmann
President of the jury
Curator Centre culturel suisse, Paris

Denise Bertschi
Artist

J. Emil Sennewald
Art critic

Guest jurors 2024:
Caroline Bachmann
Artist

Barbara von Flüe
Art historian, curator

Eveline Suter
Curator at Kunstmuseum Luzern



BISSO YANN STÉPHANE (Special prize)

Born (1998) in Sangmelima (CM), works in Geneva

Cooking mama series (1), 2024

Oil on canvas, 24 × 33 × 4 cm

Cooking mama series (2), 2024

Oil on canvas, 24 × 33 × 4 cm

Cooking mama series (3), 2024

Oil on canvas, 24 × 33 × 4 cm

Cooking mama series (4), 2024

Oil on canvas, 24 × 33 × 4 cm

Cooking mama series (5), 2024

Oil on canvas, 24 × 33 × 4 cm

La tresse du dimanche, 2024

Stainless steel, plastic, rubber, 56 × 54 × 80 cm

Man is what he eats. In an essay in 1864, Ludwig Feuerbach described materiality as a condition of human life. The Geneva painter Bisso Yann Stéphane shows that the painter paints what he eats. Four dishes in particular, prepared by his mother. A fifth painting shows a packet of rice, apparently of Asian origin. One of the ubiquitous “Monobloc” chairs, the embodiment of globally uniformised cheap design, is placed in front of the paintings. On it lies a bent fork. It is no longer used for eating. Transformed into a tool, it has been used to weave a long plait from black rubber bands, *La tresse du dimanche*. A reference to care work, to hours of afrodescendant hair-braiding, to the traditional Swiss brioche. Driven by a preoccupation with multicultural roots, Édouard Glissant’s creolisation and the question of how different narratives interweave to form a new, shared history, the 26-year-old artist’s paintings suggest further answers. The issue of migration has long since ceased to be just one of people fleeing, strangers in a foreign land, the loss of national identities. It is one of globalisation as transnational digestion, the incorporation of diverse identities, the embodiment of multiple affiliations. Bisso’s art acts like oil on food: it adds flavour and binds the individual parts into a whole. In the painting, it gives pigments fluidity, imagination splendour.



LOU COHEN

Born (1995) in Paris (FR), works in Geneva

L'autre I, 2024

Oil on linen canvas, 150 × 100 × 4 cm

L'autre II, 2024

Oil on linen canvas, 150 × 100 × 4 cm

L'autre III, 2024

Oil on linen canvas, 150 × 100 × 4 cm

I'll Never forget you (Baby one), 2024

Dry pastel on paper, wood, cotton, wadding frame, 79 × 59,5 × 4,5 cm

I'll Never forget you (Baby two), 2024

Dry pastel on paper, wood, cotton, kapok, wadding frame, 86 × 67,5 × 4,5 cm

On three large-scale oil paintings and two pastel drawings, Lou Cohen wedges bodies into each other. The artist deftly employs the various techniques of the painterly medium, ranging from translucent, flowing glazes to impasto applications and striking white highlights to compose the lighting. The paint's material quality corresponds to the motifs' corporeality. Interlocked bodies feature mannerist hands, some sporting one or two superfluous fingers. Strangely bloated heads are squeezed in-between, and the paintings are interspersed with symbols originating in digital culture. The paintings evoke an ambiguous atmosphere that oscillates between tenderness and violence. Here, the long history of painting re-emerges, or rather is being re-imagined with monstrous virtuosity, birthing chimeras and hybrid creatures in a mishmash of styles. Even the drawings' textile frames recall crumpled bedsheets as well as historical draperies. Cohen's imagery toys with contemporary habits of seeing which blur the boundaries between intimacy and staged poses, reality and AI-generated fakes, gleaming kitsch and the unfathomable.



LAURA GAUCH

Born (1997) in Fribourg, works in Berne

The Ocean Is Closed on Mondays, 2023

Experimental short film, 06'04"

Keep Out, 2023

C-print on aluminium, 120 × 90 × 0.3 cm

Digging, 2023

Cyanotype in distance frame, 80 × 65 × 1.4 cm

In her short film *The Ocean Is Closed on Mondays*, Laura Gauch takes stock of what is lost through migration and assimilation. The point of departure for her research is her own family's history of migration from Chile to the United States. The artist collects stories from New York's Hispanic community and, in collaboration with the poet Elisabet Velasquez, interweaves them into a lyrical text which addresses everyday experiences and migratory encounters in the rhythm of the days of the week. The film translates this poetic soundtrack into atmospheric, touching images, with the changing protagonists carrying the film's themes into a universal context. The film is presented in the context of an installation which evokes a domestic setting using carpeting and cushions. It references the family as a home, as a formative community and space. An initial draft of the poem as a cyanotype and a photograph entitled *Keep Out* complement the film and expand the scope of its association with the sea and migration beyond individual fates into world politics.



VINCENT GRANGE

Born (1997) in Geneva, works in Geneva

Dorothy's Closet, 2024

Installation, 253 × 237 × 237 cm

In the exhibition room there is a rough, wooden, wired box. Vincent Grange works with found objects, literary and historical references, fictional settings. He places them in the room as an invitation. When we enter, we encounter "une pièce de la maison de Dorothy", part of a story of fictions, of solidarity. „Dorothy's friends" was the name given to US-American homosexuals in the 1950s, later members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Secret code for solidarity, "Dorothy" became so real that the military intelligence service was on the lookout for her. Perhaps she stands behind the rainbow? In Hollywood's first Technicolour film in 1939, Judy Garland unites as Dorothy a queer variety of people in the magical land of Oz for a better life free from oppression. Vincent Grange leads us into such a leaky world of souvenirs in his treasure chest full of fabulous memorabilia. By inscribing himself in an art history of exhibited intimate spaces - from Edward Kienholtz to Gregor Schneider to Manon - with the continued construction of Dorothy's house, the artist makes a seemingly particular concern tangible as a fundamental human need.



MARIA FERNANDA ORDOÑEZ

Born (1995) in Bogota (CO), works in Geneva

Parafernalia, 2024

Performance, 20'

Suelo Parafernalia, 2023

28 individual wooden boxes, painted in acrylic, 24 × 16 × 24 cm each

Video Parafernalia Subtítulos, 2024

Subtitles, 20'

The sculpture is minimalist and magical at the same time. 28 colorfully painted wooden boxes form a stage; transparent fabric and a spotlight beam create a sense of impending action. On stage, Maria Fernanda Ordoñez is not alone: the artist conjures props from the aforementioned boxes and lends them their own voice. Thus, her speech is manifold: not only does she speak French and Spanish, but she shares her voice with hand puppets, English subtitles, and herself in the role of Paraya (Spanish for clown). Together, these voices tell of her childhood in Columbia, of disciplinary measures at school, of arriving in a foreign country, of hurtful encounters and the gradual loss of her voice. „La voix est l'une des choses qui se perdent lors de la migration, car le silence occupe peu à peu un espace qui devient une habitude.” (Ordoñez). *Parafernalia* is a phantasmagoric performance full of humor, fragile and powerful at the same time. Inspired by Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, the artist creates a space of possibilities where that which appeared to be lost can be articulated and, through speech, brought back into the light.



JENNIFER MERLYN SCHERLER

Born (1996) in Oberdiessbach, works in Basel

Mourning Embroidery: Tamagotchi Graveyard Servers, 2024

Digital print on velvet fabric, lace, fake leather, 42 × 55 cm

Mourning Embroidery: Alternate Endings, 2024

Digital print on velvet fabric, lace, rhinestones, 46 × 58 cm

Death Digest, 2024

Single channel video, UHD, 16:9, 9'21"

Mourning Embroidery: To Those That Slip Away Upon My Waking, 2024

Digital print on velvet fabric, feathers, satin trim, 60 × 72 cm

Mourning Embroidery: Passageways, 2024

Digital print on velvet fabric, sequins, polyester trim, 42 × 55 cm

In *Digital Digest*, the God Hades, portrayed by Jennifer Merlyn Scherler, guides us through the underworld, which is depicted as a digitally rendered grotto with various decorated chambers and landscapes. By referring to the TV show "Architectural Digest", in which celebrities showcase their private living quarters, Scherler constructs a compelling narrative framework for questions concerning our digital afterlives and their spatiality and materiality. In an ironically charged tone that suggests expertise, Hades guides us from server grave stones for Tamagotchis and video game characters to their bedroom, continually creating interactions between digital and material media and representations of landscapes. The skillful narration also makes historical references to the 18th century, when cultural practices relating to death were still an integral part of the domestic, for example in the form of lace-embroidered 'mourning cloths'. The installation's centerpiece is the video, which is complemented by a series of four contemporary versions of such embroideries, along with video stills printed on velvet.



LEEVI TOIJA

Born (1998) in Helsinki (FI), works in Zurich and Helsinki (FI)

motion study 1 (musical box), 2024

Full HD video on loop, 0'12", modified arm mount

motion study 2 (toy), 2024

Full HD video on loop, 0'4", modified arm mount

motion study 3 (camera), 2024

Full HD video on loop, 0'1", modified arm mount

motion study 4 (salad dryer), 2024

Full HD video on loop, 0'7", modified arm mount

motion study 5 (cassette player), 2024

Full HD video on loop, 0'05", modified arm mount

Leevi Toija presents five LCD screens measuring approximately 50 × 35 cm, each fixed vertically at its center, at eye level, on an articulated metal arm that holds it at a distance from the wall on which it is hung. Together, they comprise a set of monochrome tableaux in orange, mauve, black, blue, and yellow, both fixed and mobile. In fact, the images are close-ups of details of functional devices, animated by certain rotating components. The filmed objects (musical box, toy, camera, salad dryer, cassette player) evoke a bygone mechanical era. In each panel, a central cog, aligned with the fixing point at the rear of the screen, turns in a loop. The devices all have a different rhythm and sometimes contain other elements rotating at varying speeds. The montage is extremely precise, both sculpturally and conceptually. The varied rhythms emanate a strange sense of poetry, disturbing in its sensual yet mechanical inevitability.

THE FOUNDATION AND THE PRIZE

The Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation is one of the most important cultural foundations in Switzerland. It was founded in 1943 by Charles and Mathilde Kiefer Hablitzel. As industrialists based in Brazil, the couple had accrued both great renown and a vast fortune during the first half of the 20th century. In the 1930s, they returned to Switzerland, taking up residence in Freilinden castle near Lucerne. During their lifetimes, they were generous patrons of the arts, funding, among others, the construction of the old Kunsthaus Luzern. In close cooperation with the Swiss federal government, the couple, who had no children, decided to use the lion's share of their fortune to establish a foundation. Thus, the Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation was born. Every year, the return on the foundation's assets is split into 16 parts, with most going to documented institutions such as the Gottfried Keller Foundation, Switzerland's two national universities (ETHZ and EPFL, in Zurich and Lausanne respectively), the Swiss Heritage Society and the National Park Commission. Five of these 16 parts, however, are earmarked for young artists and classical musicians born or based in Switzerland. These funds take the form of endowments or prize money awarded as part of annual competitions run by the Foundation since 1951. Their purpose is to support young artists further their education. The activities of the Foundation are under the direct supervision of the Swiss Federal Council. The Foundation's Board of Trustees comprises representatives from public and cultural life from across Switzerland.

In 2012 the Foundation began working with the Ernst Göhner Foundation. Starting in 2018, the award's official name is Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize. The Ernst Göhner Foundation promotes young artists and is also active in the areas of culture, social outreach, education and science. Beginning this year, the partnership with the Ernst Göhner Foundation enables the Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation to endow a total of 7 artists per year with prizes of 15'000.- Swiss Francs each, as well as a special prize in form of a solo exhibition with an accompanying catalogue.

INFORMATION

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Courtesy BAK/OFC, Gina Folly, 2024

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