

# **Press Kit**

## **Swiss Pavilion and Salon Suisse**

57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia,  
13 May to 26 November 2017



## Pavilion of Switzerland at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

### **Women of Venice**

**Carol Bove and Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler**

**Curator:** Philipp Kaiser

**Commissioner:** Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia – Head of Visual Arts, Marianne Burki;  
Project Leader, Sandi Paucic; Project Coordinator, Rachele Giudici Legittimo

**Press conference:** Wednesday, 10 May 2017, 2 pm

**Opening:** Friday, 12 May 2017, 4.30 pm

**Exhibition:** 13 May to 26 November 2017

**Curator Philipp Kaiser has invited artists Carol Bove and Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler to show their work in the exhibition «Women of Venice» at the Pavilion of Switzerland. With the project Kaiser aims to explore Alberto Giacometti's absence in the history of the Swiss Pavilion. During his lifetime, Giacometti declined all requests for him to exhibit his work there.**

The exhibition «Women of Venice» refers to the little known absence of Alberto Giacometti from the Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Set in the Pavilion of Switzerland, which was built in 1952 by Alberto's brother, the renowned architect Bruno Giacometti, it features new work by Carol Bove and Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler created specifically for the Biennale Arte 2017 in reference to the legacy and universe of Alberto Giacometti. Philipp Kaiser, nominated as curator of the Swiss Pavilion by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, outlines his concept as follows: «*The exhibition «Women of Venice» aims to reflect on the history of the Pavilion and Switzerland's contributions to the Venice Biennale from a contemporary perspective, and to initiate new work, specific to this context.*» With the exhibition, Kaiser intends to explore concepts of national identity as well as issues of cultural policy.

At the Biennale Arte 2017, the Swiss American artist duo Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler present their double-sided film installation «Flora», based on discoveries made in the course of their research on the largely unknown American artist Flora Mayo who studied in Paris in the 1920s, at the same time as Giacometti, and who was his lover. By weaving together fictional and documentary material, Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler re-imagine Flora Mayo's life and work, also giving voice to her previously unknown son. «Flora» is structured as an interwoven conversation between two sides – a mother and son; Los Angeles and Paris; 2016 and 1927 – and is presented in the large room of the pavilion. In the adjoining graphic cabinet space, Hubbard / Birchler present a second work, «Bust», a reconstruction and re-imagination of Flora Mayo's destroyed bust of Giacometti, which owes its survival solely to a lost photograph. Giacometti's and Mayo's relationship and their ensuing portrait busts reflect the creative energy



generated by their collaborative artistic activity and also shed light on Alberto Giacometti's early life.

Carol Bove represents the second artistic position featured at the Swiss Pavilion. The Geneva-born American artist's work raises issues of theatricality and autonomy. For the Swiss Pavilion exhibition, Bove takes Giacometti's figurative constellations as a starting point, tracing their relational forces. As a response to Alberto Giacometti's historic absence from the Swiss Pavilion, she creates a new group of seven sculptures, «Les Pléiades», presented in the courtyard of the Swiss Pavilion referring to the artist's late figurative work. Bove is interested in how the verticality and physicality of Giacometti's figures explore the essence of sculpture. Her new works engage sculptural vocabularies through both material specificity and eclecticism, loosely referencing some of Giacometti's well-known figural groupings such as «Forest» and «Femmes de Venise». In conversation with these, two additional sculptures by Bove voluminously occupy the sculpture hall and address the notion of presence in correspondence with their architectural surroundings.

Alberto Giacometti is without doubt one of the most influential Swiss artists of the 20th century. This makes his absence from the Venice Biennale all the more surprising. Giacometti, who lived in Paris, was repeatedly requested to represent Switzerland in Venice – a request that the artist regularly declined. From an early age, Alberto Giacometti, who was born in Borgonovo in the Canton of Grisons, saw himself as an international artist and refused to be defined through a national identity. Even when his brother, the architect Bruno Giacometti, built the new Swiss Pavilion in 1952 and Alberto was asked to show there, he graciously turned the invitation down and suggested another artist instead. In 1956, he finally consented to put on display a group of plaster figures entitled «Femmes de Venise» in the French Pavilion. As a form of international recognition for his oeuvre, he was awarded the Grand Prix for Sculpture in Venice in 1962, a few years before his death.

#### Publication:

On the occasion of the exhibition at the Swiss Pavilion, Scheidegger & Spiess publishes «Women of Venice». Designed by NORM, the publication is edited by Philipp Kaiser and features interviews with and contributions by Carol Bove, Sabeth Buchmann, Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler and Philipp Kaiser. Linen-bound volume, ca. 120 pages, numerous illustrations. ISBN 978-3-985881-795-2 (English), ISBN 978-3-985881-549-1 (German). The publication is supported by Pro Helvetia and is available at the Swiss Pavilion during the preview days of the Biennale di Venezia for a special price of €10 (later bookstore price: €19 | sFr.19).

#### **Further information and press images are available on:**

[www.biennials.ch](http://www.biennials.ch) and [www.prohelvetia.ch](http://www.prohelvetia.ch)



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## Note to editors

**Philipp Kaiser** (Swiss, born in Bern 1972), holds a PhD in art history, and began his career in Switzerland. He now works as an independent curator in Los Angeles, California, but retains close links to the Swiss art scene. He is currently collaborating on a comprehensive exhibition of the archive of the late Swiss curator Harald Szeemann with co-curator Glenn Phillips at the renowned Getty Research Institute in LA. From 2001 to 2007, he worked as curator for modern and contemporary art at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel. He then moved to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles as a Senior Curator and was in 2012 appointed Director of Museum Ludwig in Cologne where he stayed until 2014.

He teaches at University of California in Los Angeles and Claremont McKenna College in California and is working on multiple exhibition projects internationally, including the recent Cindy Sherman retrospective at The Broad Museum, Los Angeles, and the two upcoming inaugural exhibitions of the Marciano Art Foundation in Los Angeles «Jim Shaw: The Wig Museum» and «Unpacking».

**Carol Bove** (American, born in Geneva 1971) is known for her assemblages that combine found and made elements. Incorporating a wide range of domestic, industrial and natural objects, her sculptures, paintings, and prints reveal the poetry of their materials. As the art historian Johanna Burton notes, «*Bove brings things together not to nudge associative impulses into free play driven by the unconscious, but rather to conjure a kind of affective tangle that disrupts any singular, historical narrative.*»

Work by the artist is represented in permanent collections worldwide, including the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) Nord-Pas de Calais, Dunkerque; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

Bove's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; High Line at the Rail Yards, New York; The Common Guild, Glasgow; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; Kunsthalle Zürich; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and Kunstverein Hamburg.



Major group exhibitions include Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany; 54th Venice Biennale, and the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In 2014, a major two-person exhibition, «Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa», was held at Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, and travelled to Museion, Bolzano, followed by Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle.

Bove studied at New York University, where she later taught as an associate professor of studio art. Co-represented by David Zwirner and MacCarone galleries, she lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

**Teresa Hubbard** (Irish/American/Swiss, born in Dublin 1965) and **Alexander Birchler** (Swiss, born in Baden 1962) have been working as a collaborative artist duo since 1990. Their lens-based practice interweaves hybrid forms of storytelling and explores the connections between social life, memory and history. As the critic Jeffrey Kastner notes, «*Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler's filmic essays are also in their way detective stories, with all the poetic and philosophical resonance that the form at its best can offer. Not run-of-the-mill whodunnits, but examinations of the ways in which knowing and not-knowing are related.*»

Hubbard attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the graduate sculpture program at Yale University School of Art, New Haven. Birchler studied at the Academy of Art and Design Basel and the University of Art and Design, Helsinki, Finland. They received MFA degrees from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, NSCAD University, Halifax, Canada, and were both awarded recently, by the same institution, an honorary degree Doctor of Fine Arts, *honoris causa*.

Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler's work is held in numerous public collections including the Kunsthhaus Zurich; Kunstmuseum Basel; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D. C.; Aargauer Kunsthhaus Aarau; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna and the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich. Their exhibition history includes solo and group exhibitions at venues including the 48th Venice Biennial; Tate Museum Liverpool; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Städel Museum Frankfurt am Main; Reina Sofía Museum Madrid; Kunsthhaus Graz; Mori Museum Tokyo; Hamburger Bahnhof; Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

Birchler is an Affiliate Research Scholar at the University of Texas at Austin and Hubbard holds the William and Bettye Nowlin Endowed Professorship in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin.

Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler are represented by Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; Galerie Vera Munro, Hamburg and Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, Texas.

They live in Austin and Berlin.



The **Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia** is responsible for the Swiss contributions to the Art and Architecture Biennale as the commissioner of the exhibition at the Pavilion of Switzerland. Mandated by the Swiss Confederation, the Swiss Arts Council promotes artistic creation in Switzerland, contributes to cultural exchange at home, promotes the dissemination of Swiss culture abroad and fosters cultural outreach. Switzerland has been present at the Biennale Arte since 1920 and at the Biennale Architettura since 1991. The **nominations** for both are within the remit of two independent juries commissioned by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia. The Jury, which nominated Philipp Kaiser to curate the exhibition at the Pavilion of Switzerland, is comprised of the following people: Jacqueline Uhlmann, Head of Fair Management and Communication at LISTE Art Fair Basel; Silvie Defraoui, artist; Balthazar Lovay, Director Fri Art, Fribourg; Michele Robecchi, writer and curator, and Christina Végh, Director Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover.

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## Collateral Event of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

### «Salon Suisse»: ATARAXIA

**ATARAXIA: As a word Ataraxia is equivocal, but never neutral. From the Greek *a* - «not» and *tarássein* «to disturb», twist it further and it spits back apathy.**

**Salonnière:** Koyo Kouoh

**Co-Salonniers:** Samuel Leuenberger (independent curator), Livia Páldi (curator), Rasha Salti (curator, writer and researcher) and farid rakun (researcher and artist)

**Location:** Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi, Dorsoduro 810, Vaporetto stop: Zattere

«Salon Suisse» presents ATARAXIA, this year's talks and events programme running in parallel with the exhibition at the Pavilion of Switzerland at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Organised by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia in collaboration with Dakar-based RAW Material Company, the collateral talks programme offers a platform for exchange on contemporary art and thought in a stimulating atmosphere. The programme will take place throughout the opening event and the three subsequent long weekends.

Directed by curator Koyo Kouoh, ATARAXIA aims to understand the paradoxical position Switzerland occupies within the current economic, political, scientific and cultural landscape of Europe and further afield, as well as reflect on its (post)colonial narratives. An important engine and geographical centre of Europe, but outside of the Union, Switzerland's position demonstrates the European paradoxes and dissonances of current political standards.

*Kouoh states: «As current political regimes in the West do their best to squeeze social and cultural production into remission, we must listen to those around us and to those that neighbour us. We must deploy a politics of care to bridge connections across the very political, cultural and social disparities that divide us. The programme will investigate how best to reconcile such feelings of disenchantment with the aim of mobilising these conditions into generative and spirited forms of response.»*

The discursive framework of ATARAXIA is inspired by Roland Barthes's collection of essays «Mythologies» (1957) to consider the mythologisation of «Switzerland as a country without problems» and the disparity between the representation and the realities of this construct. Thought to have the largest concentration of cultural capital in the world, yet largely side-stepping confrontation on the subject of its imperial histories and complicities, Switzerland is facing increasing political and moral backlash in relation to its statecraft. Its media representation as a sovereign powerhouse boasts prime living standards in a «green» economy; yet its truer image is intrinsically linked to its bordering European neighbours and their involvement in colonial histories past and present.



The location of Venice further contextualises ATARAXIA. During the biennale, Venice hosts a maelstrom of capital and collectors with on average 3,000 visitors per day; but it is also home to a vanishing population of some 55,000 inhabitants. A city caught between ecology and economy – a city with a double image. In transposing Switzerland *in* to Venice, the programme asks: how do we act as parts within a larger whole (bearing in mind a «whole» could mean the Biennale just as it could Europe)?

Kouoh's assertion, and the premise for ATARAXIA, is that how Switzerland and Swiss cultural institutions reflect on its complex heritage and positionality is key to moving forward responsibly:

*«Unpacking these «mythologies» is to stand against this overarching narrative and to confront their common parlance. What is needed – at the risk of sounding utopian – is a new set of relations and resonances, understanding that «they» or «them» smack of exceptionalism. Only then can we foster a language that is multilingual: a language which communicates our commonalities along with our differences. A language which reaches beyond the screen of viral activism to shake us by the shoulders and urges us to stand shoulder to shoulder.»*

*«We are quick to exclaim words such as compassion and empathy to ratify our political or social engagements, but all too often the enactment of that gesture forms a proxy for meaningful action. Recognising that so-called «neutrality» might better diagnose a certain condition of apathy, ATARAXIA aims to rattle and awaken the dormancy of our body's dwindling energies. ATARAXIA is a call to mobilise and to organise around a politics of care and respect. In this we celebrate the diversity of our collective experiences as global citizens.»*

The «Salon Suisse» consists of a series of talks and events.

The events are taking place at the Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi, Venice during the opening event and over the course of three subsequent long weekends:

**Salon Suisse One** (opening event): Thursday 11 May;

**Salon Suisse Two:** Thursday 31 August to Saturday 2 September;

**Salon Suisse Three:** Thursday 19 October to Saturday 21 October;

**Salon Suisse Four:** Thursday 23 November to Saturday 25 November.

Each salon will start at 6.30pm. A detailed programme of the «Salon Suisse» events will be published on: [www.biennials.ch](http://www.biennials.ch).

Collaborating institution: RAW Material Company, Dakar.

LAUFEN Bathrooms AG is partner of the «Salon Suisse» and is contributing to the events at the Palazzo Trevisan with the intention of participating in and encouraging an international dialogue in the fields of art and architecture.

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## Note to editors

### **Koyo Kouoh**

Koyo Kouoh is the founding artistic director of RAW Material Company, a centre for art, knowledge and society in Dakar, Senegal, and the curator of 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in London and New York. She was recently appointed artistic director of Fabrica de Sabao, an art & innovation initiative in Luanda, Angola. Kouoh's theoretical, exhibition-making and production practice has contributed to a paradigm shift in global curatorial perspectives of recent years. She was the curator of «Still (the) Barbarians», the 37th EVA International, Ireland's Biennial in Limerick (2016) and is the initiator of RAW Académie, an international study programme for artistic research and curatorial inquiry in Dakar. She lives and works in Dakar, Luanda and Basel.

### **Samuel Leuenberger**

Samuel Leuenberger is a Basel-born independent curator. He is the founder and director of SALTS, a space dedicated to exhibit contemporary art in Birsfelden, Switzerland, which promotes emerging Swiss and international artists. Since 1998 he has worked with several galleries, institutions and non-profit organisations, amongst others for Kunsthalle Zurich and Stephen Friedman Gallery. He co-curated Pro Helvetia's presentation for the «Collection Cahiers d'Artistes» in 2013 and was associate curator of «14 Rooms», a joint venture between Fondation Beyeler, Theater Basel and Art Basel in 2014. Since 2016, he is the curator of Art Basel's Parcours sector and is member of the Commission of the Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt.

### **Lívía Páldi**

Born in Budapest, Lívía Páldi is the Curator of Visual Arts at «Project Arts Centre» in Dublin. Previously she was director of «BAC – Baltic Art Center» in Visby between 2012 and 2015 and chief curator of the Múcsarnok Kunsthalle in Budapest between 2007 and 2011. She has organised talks, discussions, workshops and numerous exhibitions and edited several books and exhibition catalogues. Páldi was one of the curatorial agents of DOCUMENTA (13). During 2016 she was member of the OFF-Biennale Budapest curatorial board. She lives and works in Dublin.

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### **Rasha Salti**

Rasha Salti is an independent film and visual arts curator and writer, working and living between Beirut and Berlin. She has co-curated a number of film programmes including «The Road to Damascus» (2006–08) and most recently, «Mapping Subjectivity: Experimentation in Arab Cinema from the 1960s until Now» (2010–12) at MoMA in New York. Salti has collaborated with a number of festivals as a programmer, including the Toronto International Film Festival (2011–15). She co-curated the 10th edition of the Sharjah Biennial (2015) and «Past Disquiet: Narratives and Ghosts from the Exhibition of International Art for Palestine» (Beirut, 1978) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2016). As a writer, Salti's articles and essays have been published in *Afterall*, *The Jerusalem Quarterly Report*, *Naqd*, *MERIP*, *The London Review of Books*, and *Third Text*.

### **farid rakun**

Trained as an architect, farid rakun currently functions as a researcher and education coordinator for the artists' initiative «ruangrupa», a non-profit organisation founded in 2000 that examines contemporary Indonesian urban and cultural issues. Recently he was appointed to serve as the managing director of Jakarta Biennale.

### **The Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi in Venice**

The second floor of the Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi at Zattere belongs to the Swiss Confederation and houses the offices of the Swiss Consulate. Initiated by Pro Helvetia, the «Salon Suisse» is held in the main room of the Palazzo as of 2012.

Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi, Dorsoduro 810, is close to Campo S. Agnese. The nearest vaporetto stops are Zattere and Accademia.

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## Other Swiss Contributions to the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

The 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, entitled «**VIVA ARTE VIVA**», is curated by **Christine Macel** and organized by La Biennale di Venezia. It includes 85 National Participations in the historic Pavilions at the Giardini, at the Arsenale and in the historic city centre of Venice.

As in previous editions, the Pavilion of Switzerland and the «Salon Suisse» are not the only places where Switzerland's tradition in art and its lively arts scene can be experienced.

Supported by the Swiss Art Council Pro Helvetia, Swiss artists **Heidi Bucher and Julian Charrière** are among the 120 artists presented in the main exhibition «**VIVA ARTE VIVA**», which offers a route that unfolds over the course of nine chapters, beginning with two introductory realms in the Central Pavilion, followed by another seven across the Arsenale through the Giardino delle Vergini.

To be presented in the Corderie at the Arsenale, Christine Macel has selected works by Swiss avant-garde artist **Heidi Bucher** (1926-1993), which have been created between 1973 and 1977. In this period, the artist chose as the basic material of her work clothes belonging to the intimate universe of a woman.

**Julian Charrière** (b. 1987 in Morges, Switzerland) is concerned with the sudden and gradual physical transformations that have occurred naturally or due to human activity in specific locations. He explores ecological and environmental issues in these places, and examines how humanity interrelates with the natural order. He will present a new installation in the Corderie at the Arsenale.