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Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler and Carol Bove at the Pavilion of Switzerland

Curator Philipp Kaiser has invited artists Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler and Carol Bove to show their work in the exhibition «Women of Venice» at the Pavilion of Switzerland at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. 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.

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The exhibition «Women of Venice» refers to the little known absence of Alberto Giacometti at the Biennale di Venezia. Set in the Pavilion of Switzerland, which was built in 1952 by Alberto’s brother, the renowned architect Bruno Giacometti, it will feature new work by Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler and Carol Bove created specifically for the Biennale di Venezia 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 Biennale di Venezia 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.

Film installation «Flora»

Over the past years, the artist duo Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler have used a documentary approach to delve into the archaeology of film. At the Biennale di Venezia, they will present their 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 both reconstruct and re-imagine Flora Mayo’s life and work, also giving voice to her previously unknown son. 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.

Sculptural constellations

Carol Bove represents the second artistic position to be featured at the Swiss Pavilion. The Geneva-born, American artist’s work raises issues of theatricality and autonomy. With her installations and sculptural arrangements, she conjures up discursive, yet veiled connections and, with a lightness of touch, explores the vocabulary of sculpture. 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 will create a new group of sculptures referring to the artist’s late figurative work.

No appropriation by any state

Alberto Giacometti is without doubt one of the most influential Swiss artists of the 20th century. This makes his absence from the Biennale di Venezia all the more surprising. In fact, 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 «Femme 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.

The 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia takes place from 13 May to 26 November 2017. The Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia is responsible for the Swiss contributions to the Biennale di Venezia.

Brief biographies of the artists and curator as well as high-resolution images can be accessed at www.prohelvetia.ch.

Further information: www.biennials.ch and www.prohelvetia.ch

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Notes for editors

Philipp Kaiser, who works as an independent curator and art critic in Los Angeles, California, retains close links to the Swiss art scene. He is currently preparing a comprehensive exhibition of the archive and library of the late, world-famous Swiss curator Harald Szeemann at the renowned Getty Research Institute in LA. Kaiser, who holds a PhD in art history, began his career in Switzerland. 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. At the age of 39 he was appointed director of Museum Ludwig in Cologne. Positions as visiting professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe, the University of California in Los Angeles and, also in California, the Claremont Mc Kenna College give evidence of his close ties to teaching and research.

Teresa Hubbard (Irish/ American/ Swiss, born in Dublin, Ireland 1965) and **Alexander Birchler** (Swiss, born in Baden, Switzerland 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 that sit just outside the frame of a recorded image. 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 in Halifax, Canada in 1992.

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 Sofia Museum Madrid; Kunsthaus 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. In January 2017, the artists will present the European premiere of their video installation «Movie Mountain (Méliès)», in the exhibition Cinema mon amour: Film in der Kunst at the Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau.

They live in Austin, Texas and Berlin, Germany.

Geneva-born, American artist **Carol Bove** (b. 1971), who was raised in Berkeley, California, 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, France; 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.

Bove studied at New York University where she later taught as a clinical associate professor of studio art. She is co-represented by David Zwirner and MacCarone galleries. From 5 November to 17 December 2016, David Zwirner will present «Polka Dots», a solo show of the artist's new work.

She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.