

# The 2024 Zurich Art Prize goes to Olaf Holzapfel

In 2024, the *Zurich Art Prize*, awarded annually by Museum Haus Konstruktiv and Zurich Insurance Company Ltd, goes to Olaf Holzapfel (b. 1967 in Dresden, lives and works in Berlin and Brandenburg). He is the 17th winner of the renowned award. Endowed with CHF 100,000, the prize consists of an CHF 80,000 budget for the production of a solo exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv and CHF 20,000 in prize money.

In his multi-layered oeuvre, Olaf Holzapfel deals with the conception and materiality of spaces. After the 2000s, during which he particularly focused on megalopolises and their relationship with virtual space, observing a kinship between urban structures' grids and the internet's digital grids, his interest increasingly shifted toward the physically material site. Since then, Holzapfel has been searching for ways to artistically dissolve dualities, such as those of city and landscape, interior and exterior, or virtual and real visual spaces, and to describe them as something fluid. The result is a constant exchange between these forces. His work revolves around intercultural exchange with artists and artisans, as well as recourse to vernacular techniques. For example, Holzapfel has been working for more than ten years with weavers from the Wichí community in Argentina's Gran Chaco and with carpenters from Lower Saxony, who implement his designs using natural and locally typical materials, such as wood, straw or natural fibers. The projects produced in this way are process-oriented and collectively developed during an ongoing exchange of knowledge between all participants. "Engaging with other cultures," states Holzapfel, "leads to exhibitions with a variety of media (installation, sculpture, material pictures, film). [...] For me, an openness toward related media is a prerequisite for understanding art. Visual discourse is always simultaneously a discourse on media theory, and is negotiated on the basis of experiential knowledge gained from practicing manual work. I find it important to raise awareness of the connections between various space-creating techniques and where they come from."

The *Zurich Art Prize* jury was particularly enthusiastic about Olaf Holzapfel's adept handling of a wide range of very different media and spaces. His works, realized in a multifaceted formal language, raise substantial questions, for instance about production mechanisms or the relationship between culture and nature, without losing any of their poetic lightness. His groups of works, developed over several years, captivate with a continuity that resists the fast pace of our times in an enchanting way.

Holzapfel began to train as an artist at the age of 29 in Dresden. There, he studied painting at the Dresden University of Fine Arts from 1996 to 2001 and was in Ralf Kerbach's master class from 2001 to 2003. In 2001, he received the Hegenbarth Scholarship and, in the same year, traveled to the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad, India, where he spent several months as a research student under Singanapalli Balaram. In 2002, this was followed by an artist-in-residence stay at Columbia University in New York. In 2014, he was awarded the Gerhard Altenbourg Prize. Holzapfel can look back on numerous international solo and group exhibitions. He had solo shows, for instance, in 2021 at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Salta, Argentina, as well as at Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur, in 2019 at Museo Nacional de Arte Decorativo in Buenos Aires, in 2018 at the Schoenthal Monastery Sculpture Park, and in 2015 at the Mishkan Museum of Art in Ein Harod, Israel. His permanent installations can be seen in public spaces, for example *they will return there* (2023) at the BUGA site in Mannheim, *Harfen* (Harps, 2022) at Nassfeldalm in Bad Gastein, *Der Geflochtene Garten* (The Woven Garden, 2022) at the Museum of European Cultures (MEK) in Dahlem, Berlin, and *Arena* (2020) in Plot 3 at Kunsthaus Dresden. His works were also shown at *documenta 14* in 2017 and at the *54th Biennale di Venezia* in 2011.

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The *Zurich Art Prize* is part of Zurich Insurance Company Ltd's commitment to culture.



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## ZURICH ART PRIZE

The *Zurich Art Prize* was set up in 2007 by Museum Haus Konstruktiv together with Zurich Insurance Company Ltd, patron partner of the museum, and now has a strong international presence. Each year, an independent artist is honored, who operates at the interfaces where the cultural heritage of constructivist-concrete and conceptual art, on one hand, meets contemporary trends on the other. Since 2017, the prize donated by Zurich Insurance Company Ltd has consisted of an CHF 80,000 budget for the production of a solo exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv and CHF 20,000 in prize money for the artist.

## NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Each year, Sabine Schaschl, director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv, invites six curators or other art experts to each nominate one artist, who has already made an impression as a visible force on the international art scene, and who demonstrates an intellectual extrapolation of the constructivist-concrete and conceptual heritage within contemporary art. The nominations for this year's award came from: Sebastian Baden, director of Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Stefanie Gschwend, director of Kunstmuseum/Kunsthalle Appenzell; Leevi Haapala, director of Kiasma, Helsinki; Claire Hoffmann, curator at Centre culturel suisse (CCS), Paris; Genoveva Rückert-Sommerauer, contemporary art curator at OÖ Landes-Kultur GmbH; and Ruben Steinum, director of the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA).

## SHORTLIST

Alongside Olaf Holzapfel, the following were also nominated for the 2024 Zurich Art Prize: Caline Aoun (b. 1983 in Beirut, Lebanon), Judith Fegerl (b. 1977 in Vienna, Austria), Tarik Kiswanson (b. 1986 in Halmstad, Sweden), Camilla Løw (b. 1976 in Oslo, Norway) and Caroline Monnet (b. 1985 in Ottawa, Canada).

## JURY

The composition of the jury for the 2024 Zurich Art Prize was as follows: Sabine Schaschl, director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv (chairperson); Tobia Bezzola, director of Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana in Lugano; Carin Gantenbein, head of professional liability at Zurich Insurance Company Ltd in Zurich; Friedemann Malsch, former director of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz; Matthias Mühlhng, director of Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; and Stella Rollig, general director and scientific director at the museum Belvedere, Vienna.

## PREVIOUS PRIZE-WINNERS

2023: Damián Ortega (b. 1967 in Mexico City)  
2022: Kapwani Kiwanga (b. 1978 in Hamilton, Canada)  
2021: Sonia Kacem (b. 1985 in Geneva, Switzerland)  
2020: Amalia Pica (b. 1978 in Neuquén, Argentina)  
2019: Leonor Antunes (b. 1972 in Lisbon, Portugal)  
2018: Robin Rhode (b. 1976 in Cape Town, South Africa)  
2017: Marguerite Humeau (b. 1986 in Cholet, France)  
2016: Nairy Baghramian (b. 1971 in Isfahan, Iran)  
2015: Latifa Echakhch (b. 1974 in El Khnansa, Morocco)  
2014: Haroon Mirza (b. 1977 in London, UK)  
2013: Adrián Villar Rojas (b. 1980 in Rosario, Argentina)  
2012: Mariana Castillo Deball (b. 1975 in Mexico City)  
2011: Mai-Thu Perret (b. 1976 in Geneva, Switzerland)  
2010: Ryan Gander (b. 1976 in Chester, UK)  
2009: Tino Sehgal (b. 1976 in London, UK)  
2007: Carsten Nicolai (b. 1965 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, now Chemnitz, Germany)