

PRIZE

KIEFER HABLITZEL | GÖHNER

2026

SWISS ART AWARDS

June 16–21, 2026

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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KIEFER HABLITZEL | GÖHNER ART PRIZE 2026

In February 2026, the jury selected 17 artists from 175 applications in a first round and invited them to participate in the exhibition presented as part of the Swiss Art Awards in Basel.

In a second round of judging, seven young artists were awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize 2026, each receiving a prize of CHF 15,000.

In addition, the two foundations award a special prize consisting of a solo exhibition accompanied by a publication at a Swiss institution. The exhibition takes place in the following year – in 2027 at the Kunsthalle Bern.

The jury's decision was based exclusively on the works presented in the exhibition. All nominees for the Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize are presented in a dedicated section that highlights and brings together the current practices of artists under the age of 30 living in Switzerland.

THE JURY

The members of the jury for the 2026 edition are:

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

Latefa Wiersch
Artist, Zurich

J. Emil Sennewald
Art critic, Paris

Barbara von Flüe
Curator at Kolumba, Cologne

Guest Juror 2026:
iLiana Fokianaki
Director, Kunsthalle Bern



ÉLIE AUTIN

Born in 1997. Lives and works in Lausanne.

Gardiennes, 2023

Wood and mushrooms found in the forest, masks, personal braids, epoxy resin, glitter, spray paint, variable dimensions

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Performance Residue, 2026

Target and arrows. Text on the target: James Baldwin

Elie Autin, based in Lausanne, has a background in contemporary dance (La Manufacture in Lausanne) and has expanded their practice in the performing arts to include installation and sculptural works.

The *Gardiennes* in Elie Autin's installation form a powerfully striking ensemble: these masks, hung in a row on the wall, display exaggerated features, sharp teeth, and haunted gazes. Each mask is paired with a slender tree branch. The masks appear to have stepped straight out of horror films, for they evoke the deeply racist representations of the era of slavery and segregation in the United States. The title *Gardiennes* suggests a potential for subversion and reappropriation, restoring agency to these figures and assigning them a role as protectors.

The performance accompanying the installation adopts this strategy of reversal. Elie Autin appears armed with a bow and, after a silent invocation, fires three arrows at the black target hanging in the row of masks. Affixed to the target are two prints of historical photographs of lynching, which, along with excerpts from the writings of the author James Baldwin, document the historical and systemic violence of racism that dehumanises Black bodies. The performance unfolds in a state of deep concentration and possesses the intensity of a ritual.

The references in Elie Autin's presentation plunge us deep into the history of injustice and violence that affects Black bodies, the enduring relevance of which the artist highlights by positioning themselves as an active agent in this context.



IULIA BUCURESTEANU

Born in 2001 in Bucharest (RO). Lives and works in Lausanne.

I ♥ EUROPE, 2026

Concrete, 40 × 300 cm

Megalomania, 2026

Video, 4 min 01 sec. Sound credit: DjGoro

Arma Christi, 2026

Cast aluminium, 12 elements, each 18 × 1 cm

#holiday4ever, 2026

Cast aluminium, 43 × 80 cm

Iulia Bucuresteanu, based in Lausanne and currently studying for a Master's degree at ECAL, combines a video, two cast aluminium sculptures, and a concrete relief in her project. Her installation offers a precise, non-nostalgic and non-judgemental perspective on a country in the midst of transition from its Soviet past to aspirations for a better life. In the video *Megalomania*, the camera traverses urban spaces, moving from Soviet palaces to the ruins of rampant capitalism, which has wreaked havoc, from the promise of consumption in the huge posters of luxury goods to the empty stalls in covered markets, from private interiors to stray dogs. The dynamic editing and soundtrack lend a sense of levity to this portrait of today's Romania. By using iconic locations, symbols, and familiar objects from Eastern Europe, the artist reveals a sense of the marginalisation to which these regions and countries are relegated in the face of the persistent, pervasive myth of a coherent and unified Europe. Her work resists simplistic dualism and clichés by making palpable all the fractures, inconsistencies, and tensions that exist between political and economic projects, the construction of national identities, and the realities of personal experience.



TINA JANIASHVILI

Born in 2001 in Tbilisi (GE). Lives and works in Basel.

The goat is not a goat, the bone is not a bone, 2026
Ceramics and charcoal, 43 × 35 cm

Excavated remains, 2026
Ceramics and charcoal, variable dimensions

Brewing, emptying, 2026
Ceramics and charcoal, 44 × 52 cm

In Tina Janiashvili's paintings and drawings, different eras converge. She interweaves contemporary themes with motifs drawn from myths, religious contexts, and narratives, which together form a resonant space in which themes are suggested rather than explicitly articulated. This ephemerality is mirrored by the powdery texture of the painting materials – charcoal and pastels – which Janiashvili applies to the ceramics. Situated at the intersection of painting, drawing, and sculpture, and reduced to black and white and a delicate pink, these are inner images that deal with ambivalent relationships between humans and animals, with bodies and their nourishing qualities, and with silencing and wounding. The choice of supports and the technical execution are distinctive and draw upon pictorial traditions that attribute magical functions to the image. Thus, the footprints bear witness not only to the artist's presence (as they do in prehistoric wall paintings), but also to an understanding of the image that attributes to the object a power of the object's very own.



LALE KEYHANI

Born in 1997 in Hamburg (DE). Lives and works in Basel and Kerman (IR).

I am weapon I am coin, 2026

UHD video, 24 min 24 sec

A patient camera that lingers on seemingly incidental details. Faces that do not speak but reflect thought. Gazes directed towards a landscape marked by shifting borders, conflict, and loss.

Lale Keyhani's film begins with questions of restitution, cultural heritage, and collective memory. At its centre stands Anahit, one of the most significant figures in Armenian cultural history, known today largely through the surviving fragments of a dismembered sculpture. The work questions the role of cultural objects, whether they create community, sustain memory, or become instruments of national narratives.

Yet the sculpture itself never appears. Instead, the camera follows residents living near the tri-border region. A short drive through the surrounding landscape is followed by a domestic scene around a kitchen table, where women read and discuss a text about Anahit. Then, without making a big deal out of it, history unfolds through conversation.

What emerges is a portrait of resilience grounded in oral exchange. Facts matter, but so do warmth, humour, and the shared labour of remembering. The women speak of the past while continuing to live with the consequences of conflict. Their conversations become acts of endurance, carrying cultural knowledge across generations, in the face of political uncertainty. The film's strength lies in its refusal of accusation and spectacle. Rather than constructing a forceful political argument or catching images of monuments, Keyhani creates space for attentiveness and complexity. Pain, survival, and persistence are present throughout, but never reduced to a single narrative. In a quiet yet assured manner, the work creates a compelling counter-image to the visual language often associated with political advocacy.



LYNA & ALESSANDRO

Born in 1999 in Lausanne and 1999 in Milan (IT). Live and work in Bern.

El-ghoul ma yakoulch de fruits, yakoul el naar — [The ogre does not eat fruit, he eats fire.], 2026
Metal and ceramics, variable dimensions

Lyna Beggah's and Alessandro Ferrari's collaborative practice develops through primarily artistic research into histories of violence and resistance, which is made manifest in installations, sculptures, sound works, and environments.

Through their work, they examine how historical events continue to shape contemporary identities and social realities. The practice explores themes of identity, memory, decolonisation, and migration, at times investigated through the prism of personal history. Beggah's Algerian roots and Ferrari's Italian heritage serve as points of entry into poignant reflections on colonial history, displacement, and belonging.

The piece presented is a stark representation of the triumph of life over subjugation, extraction, and control, as well as a subtle reminder of the bittersweet taste of exile and migration.

Looking into the impact of colonial policies and the defiant resilience of nature, the artists succeed in exploring themes of resistance and collective memory through ceramic sculptures, text, and wire, in an installation that offers meaningful connections between past and present.



MILLA MERCEDES

Born in 1997 in Basel. Lives and works in Basel.

Stolen Land, 2025

Oil on canvas, 80 × 60

¿Dónde Estás?, 2026

Oil on canvas, 80 × 60

Chicago Sunset, 2025

Oil on canvas, 80 × 60

Never Again, 2025

Oil on canvas, 80 × 60

No Fear, 2026

Oil on canvas, 80 × 60

Milla Mercedes and has experience in theatre, in addition to pursuing their visual arts degree at FHNW Basel, combines pictorially simplified forms of intense colour with precise observations of social reality. Formally reminiscent of naïve painting and graphic literature, their 2025 series on the USA evokes artists such as Edward Hopper. Drawing on their own experiences on the ground, they explore the tensions between scenic beauty, social experiences, and the consequences of colonialism and capitalism. Works such as *Chicago Sunset*, *Never Again*, *Stolen Land*, and *Precious Lives*, together with the red PVC on the floor, make a powerful statement on current social and political developments. Through recurring motifs such as the railway and the red elements – sometimes a river, sometimes a road – a field of meaning unfolds that allows for historical references, without reducing them to mere recounting. Navigating between narrative condensation, symbolic landscape, and social commentary, the aesthetic independence and political awareness of this work make a significant artistic contribution to the perception of and engagement with current realities.



SABRINA SMAILI

Born in 1996 in Geneva. Lives and works in Geneva.

BORN FREE / IN THE BOLD GRÜN, paintings (from left to right)

the leaps into the void, suspended by an elastic thread, 2026
Oil on canvas, silicone, 60.5 × 70 cm

ALPAUFZÜG, 2026
Oil on canvas, silicone, 45.5 × 75 cm

vertiges, 2026
Oil on canvas, silicone, 60.5 × 70 cm

le sacre du printemps, 2026
Oil on canvas, silicone, 45.5 × 75 cm

extrait d'obéissance, 2026
Oil on canvas, silicone, 60.5 × 70 cm

home, swiss.id, 2026
Floor piece, synthetic grass, silicone, 5 × 2 m

A seemingly ordinary installation consisting of grass-green carpeting, a green-painted wall, and several vertical format canvases initially suggests an ironic engagement with art history and popular culture. A rectangular cut-out in the carpet reveals the grey concrete floor beneath, while the entire environment is punctuated with references to green screens, animation, film production, and digital image-making.

The canvases feature blurred, female-presenting figures, bodies in formation and transformation, and animal beings arranged in choreographic compositions. A circling eagle with symmetrically spread wings is surrounded by dancing figures; elsewhere, cows graze peacefully in verdant landscapes, while a bleeding female body frames the scene. Smail's imagery is infused with references to both art history and popular culture, evoking associations with Leda and the Swan, Zeus and Ganymede, Manet's *Olympia*, and Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque*. These references are not simply quoted but reconfigured into new and ambiguous constellations.

Within the carpet's cut-out rectangle appears a female-presenting avatar with bluish skin and long black hair. The figure recalls the exoticising representations of modernist painting and initially remains motionless, like a living image. Suddenly, however, she rises, surveys the audience, lets out a shrill laugh, and begins to speak.

What follows is an extended monologue delivered in the tone of an affected upper-class art audience. Orange wine, colour, and perception become recurring themes, yet the logic of the avatar's world never fully aligns with that of the exhibition space. Blue becomes green, white remains unspeakable; language and meaning continuously slip away.

The performance exerts a powerful pull. Moving fluidly between painted image and live enactment, it generates striking visual and conceptual tensions. Art history, popular culture, exoticism, and gendered representation are not separated but deliberately intertwined.

THE FOUNDATION AND THE PRIZE

The Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation was established in 1946 by Charles and Mathilde Kiefer-Hablitzel. As industrial pioneers in Brazil, the couple had accumulated significant wealth. In the 1930s, they returned to Switzerland and settled at Dreilinden Castle in Lucerne. Childless, Charles and Mathilde were active patrons of the arts during their lifetimes, supporting various cultural projects. In close cooperation with federal authorities, they established a foundation before their passing, to which they bequeathed the majority of their estate. Thus, the Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation was created, with its income largely dedicated to supporting young Swiss artists and musicians. This support is awarded annually through open competitions for emerging talent. The foundation operates under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Government. Its board is composed of prominent figures from public and cultural life, ensuring balanced representation of Switzerland's linguistic and regional diversity.

Since 2012, the competition has been organized in close partnership with the Ernst Göhner Foundation. Since 2018, it has been known as the Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize. The Ernst Göhner Foundation supports young artists but is also engaged in culture, social causes, environment, education, and science. Thanks to this partnership, since 2021 the Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation has been able to award seven prizes of CHF 15,000 each annually in the field of visual arts. Additionally, a special prize is granted in the form of a solo exhibition with accompanying publication, hosted in rotating Swiss partner institutions.

INFORMATION

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Courtesy BAK/OFC, Gina Folly, 2026

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