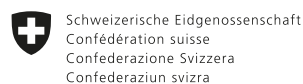


# Prix Meret Oppenheim 2026

Fabrice Gygi  
Hilar Stadler  
Tilla Theus

Schweizer Grand Prix Kunst  
Grand Prix suisse d'art  
Gran Premio svizzero d'arte  
Grond premi svizzer d'art Swiss  
Grand Award for Art

Presskit



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The Federal Office of Culture FOC is awarding the Prix Meret Oppenheim to outstanding Swiss art practitioners for the 26<sup>th</sup> time since it was founded in 2001. At the recommendation of the Federal Art Commission FAC, the prizes for the 2026 edition will go to Fabrice Gygi, Hilar Stadler and Tilla Theus. The FOC would like to warmly congratulate the prizewinners as well as the members of the jury.

The FOC is marking the occasion with the Swiss Grand Award for Art / Prix Meret Oppenheim publication, containing portraits and interviews with the laureates. The conversations were conducted by Lionel Bovier for Fabrice Gygi; David Glanzmann (with Oliver Elser, Klodin Erb, Arnon Grünberg, Andreas Hertach, Rita Lötscher and Nina Zimmer) for Hilar Stadler; and Elli Mosayebi for Tilla Theus.

The laureates will receive their awards on 15 June 2026 in Basel, in a ceremony during which the Swiss Art Awards will also be presented.

#### Swiss Grand Award for Art / Prix Meret Oppenheim 2026 for:

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June 16–21, 2026, Messe Basel, Hall 1.1  
Award Ceremony and Opening: June 15, 2026

“I no longer wish to look at this world, to gaze upon it with a critical eye; I long instead to flee, to find a way out.”

“Even the sculptures: they were always nomadic structures. Although they were the structures of power, you could load them onto a truck and move them around, you could set up a kind of camp site.”

“Without really anticipating it, I think what has long fascinated me about geometry is also what I wish to get away from.”

## An aesthetic of escape

Ever since the 1990s, working amidst Geneva's alternative scene and community squats, Fabrice Gygi (\*1965 in Geneva) has been developing an aesthetic of escape. His sculptures, along with watercolours, prints, performances, tattoos and jewellery, interrogate the mechanisms of authority while borrowing from its register: tarpaulins, storage containers, tents, sandbags, fastenings, anti-tank defences, wire mesh, straps. These are transformed by enlargement or by combinations of different worlds, as with *Vigie*, a 12-metre-high surveillance tower reminiscent of the watch towers of high-security prisons. It was presented at the 25<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Art Biennial in 2002, where Fabrice Gygi was representing Switzerland. With its associations of both prison and performance, the work hijacked the codes of a surveillance society, echoing the city in which it was shown: a metropolis plagued with violence born out of vast social inequality.

Using materials connected to emergencies, Fabrice Gygi emphasises the idea of nomadic and fragile individuals moving constantly around the world. During a solo exhibition at the Swiss Institute in New York in 2001, his installation recreated a voting booth reduced to the essentials: a provisional construction that might be set up in a village hall. These reimaginings invested his work with a powerful political overtone. For the 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale in 2009, where he was once again representing Switzerland, Fabrice Gygi arranged two rows of padlocked metal cages in the church of San Stae: storage for emergency supplies of the type found in military commissaries or civilian food stores in times of crisis. The installation explored the location's dual safeguarding role: as both protected historic monument and potential refuge for civilian populations.

Today, having put his installation practice on hold, the artist pursues this iconographic interest in grids through the medium of watercolours criss-crossed by wide, translucent straight lines. These works, reproduced in various formats and colours, locate the artist's approach within a meditative discipline which, here, is suggestive of psychological rather than physical emancipation.

Living between Valais and Geneva, Fabrice Gygi still maintains the close connection with the land and nature that, in his youth, had taken him on a number of solo treks in the far north of Canada. In winter 2026, he will be on the road again. Fabrice Gygi is thus engaged in a quest that runs through all of his work: a search for liberty and a compulsion to escape the confines of a self-imposed prison. Fabrice Gygi received the *Prix de la Société des Arts de Genève* in 2021. He is a graduate of the *École des arts décoratifs* and the *École supérieure des arts visuels de Genève HEAD*. He teaches at the *École cantonale d'art de Lausanne ECAL* and at *HEAD*. He has featured in large-scale solo exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad, notably at MAMCO, Geneva, the Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris, and Le Magasin – Centre national d'art contemporain, Grenoble. He has also been involved in major group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and MoMA PS1, New York. His works can be found in the collections of numerous institutions, including MAMCO, Geneva, M HKA, Antwerp, and the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

In September 2026, a solo exhibition devoted to him will open at the Skopia gallery in Geneva.

“Archives are a place of solace for impoverished museums.”

“Sometimes we’re an art museum, sometimes a photography museum or a hardcore museum of local customs. We reinvent ourselves from one exhibition to the next.”

“From the outset, I refused to just take art out of the studio. I wanted the works to respond to the space.”

## Inventor of the contemporary *Heimatmuseum*

*Florida*, a former factory owner's villa in a park in Kriens, is home to an institution that has influenced Switzerland's museum landscape for decades: the Museum im Bellpark. Its identity is inseparable from Hilar Stadler, who has run it since 1996. Under his auspices, the museum has established itself as a centre that tackles local history with the same self-assurance as international stances in art, photography and architecture.

Hilar Stadler (\*1963 in Lucerne), whose biographical roots are in Goldau and Kriens, embarked on a career in education, gaining a primary school teaching certificate from the training college in Lucerne. But he remained fascinated by design and images: after attending the foundation course at the school of design in Lucerne, he studied art history and film science at the University of Zurich, graduating in 1995. He soon began to combine this academic specialisation with practical experience: as a temporary projectionist at cinemas in Lucerne, a scientific assistant at the auction house Galerie Fischer, and a member of the editorial team at the *Kunstbulletin* in Zurich, where he honed his appreciation of contemporary art.

Stadler's curatorial strategy underpins his unconventional approach. He subjects the seemingly everyday to scrutiny, and places historical finds in contemporary contexts. The result: exhibitions about motorways, bunkers, huts and barracks, and the association as model for the future. At the same time, Stadler extends his gaze far beyond the local. With the exhibition and publication *Las Vegas Studio* – based on the archive of Venturi, Scott Brown – he made an internationally admired contribution to the study of suburban spaces. The museum's profile was further established by cultural history displays, such as the first comprehensive presentation of the balloon pioneer and photographer Eduard Spelterini, and the exhibition *2-Takt* on Swiss moped culture (2005), created in partnership with Filip Erzinger, the long-serving graphic designer of the Bellpark posters. Similarly influential were a dense succession of artistic stances: from Jean-Frédéric Schnyder's *Ausstellung 2012* and the site-specific intervention *Magie des Alltäglichen* by Lutz and Guggisberg (2014) to *Frankfurt Freakout* by Kaspar Müller (2016). The institution's international scope was underscored by projects such as the retrospective of photographer Sabine Weiss (2016), *Zusammen zeichnen* with Hans Ulrich Obrist (2022) and the multimedia installation *Kim Gordon for Design Office* (2022). Most recently, Tina Braegger has extended the sequence with her ursine imagery (*One Million Bears*, 2025).

The characteristic features of Stadler's working method include close collaboration and interdisciplinary exchange. His projects are often the fruit of long-standing partnerships: the cooperation with Franz Bucher and Gerold Kunz for Expo.02 and with Andreas Hertach on the project *PHOTOsuisse* (2005) attest to his understanding of curation as a collective process. He pursued a similar approach in the exhibition *The Architecture of Hedonism*, which he created in 2014 together with Martino Stierli and Nils Nova at the International Architecture Exhibition in Venice. Today, the Museum im Bellpark is a place where social issues and artistic research combine in synergy – a tribute to Hilar Stadler's doggedly consistent approach.

“Moments like these are a real joy, when project owners sacrifice something today to leave leeway for the future.”

“The fact that nothing existed there before has never bothered me; if anything, it motivates me.”

“I know how to manipulate renderings – perspective, light, focal length. That doesn’t interest me. I want to know whether a space works, whether it’s right.”

## An architecture of single-mindedness

Ever since graduating from the ETH Zurich and immediately opening her office in 1969, Tilla Theus (\*1943 in Chur) has pursued an architectural practice that is both self-contained and sensitive. In an environment of male-dominated and hierarchical structures, her choice of subject ran counter to the expectations of society and her family, who viewed architecture as too technical, too demanding and too masculine. Her stubbornness, an inner “granite” inherited from her Graubünden roots, has shaped her resolutely independent approach.

While maintaining the internal logic of the building, with its structures, spatial volumes and specific uses, Tilla Theus is notable for her precocious attention to the actual substance of the built heritage. In 1962, the Rathauswache lingered on as an isolated fragment of Zurich’s historic centre. Her intervention reinvested the building with its original strength, adding a modern extension that echoed the classical colonnade. The mechanically cut stone engages in dialogue with the surrounding heritage; the interior is shared between the cantonal police and a wood-lined café opening onto the River Limmat.

A counterblast to functionalist, cold and standardised modernity, her thinking focuses on an atmospheric concept that explicitly takes account of factors such as light, tactile experience and perception. That interest is especially apparent in her social projects, such as the Grünhalde retirement home in Zurich, for which she received *the Auszeichnung der Stadt Zürich für gute Bauten* in 1980. These sensitive living environments are designed to foster an experience of well-being, dignity and social belonging, and employ an architectural ethic that seeks first and foremost to create warm, human spaces, especially for often marginalised populations such as elderly people and residents of historic centres. In 2021, she was responsible for renovating the 1915 Leuenhof, one of the most iconic buildings on Zurich’s Bahnhofstrasse. Previously the headquarters of a bank, it was converted to accommodate multiple uses while preserving its architectural quality and historical substance. Her project rediscovered the original structure and repurposed the banking hall, while paying particular attention to its spatial structure and interior flow.

Tilla Theus revealed an interest in monumental projects at an early stage. Her large-scale complexes adopt a defiantly more hybrid, fluid and emotional approach, in opposition to spectacular and authoritarian monumentality. She also questions the gendered hierarchies of architecture, as seen in the construction of the new FIFA headquarters in Zurich, between 2003 and 2006. Natural light shimmers on the building’s slightly torqued frontage, echoing the light effects created by the surrounding woods. Inside, marble floors and translucent alabaster walls maintain an atmospheric continuity with the outdoors. A leading figure in Swiss architecture, Tilla Theus continues to practise her trade actively, dividing her time between Zurich and Graubünden. She still runs her agency with the same rigour and independence that have characterised her entire career. She received the *Bündner Kulturpreis* in 2023, in recognition of her work.

## Publication

The Federal Office of Culture is producing the publication Swiss Grand Award for Art / Prix Meret Oppenheim 2026 with portraits and interviews of the prizewinners. The conversations were conducted by Lionel Bovier for Fabrice Gygi; David Glanzmann (with Oliver Elser, Klodin Erb, Arnon Grünberg, Andreas Hertach, Rita Lötscher and Nina Zimmer) for Hilar Stadler; and Elli Mosayebi for Tilla Theus.

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- Graphic Design:  
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- Photography:  
Yumna Al-Arashi

The publication can be ordered free of charge from June 2026 at [swissart@bak.admin.ch](mailto:swissart@bak.admin.ch).

## Filmed Portraits

Director Yumna Al-Arashi created film portraits of the winners of the Swiss Grand Award for Art / Prix Meret Oppenheim 2026.

German, French, English with subtitles

The film portraits will be shown at the *Swiss Art Awards* exhibition and can also be viewed at: [swissartawards.ch](http://swissartawards.ch) and [schweizerkulturpreise.ch](http://schweizerkulturpreise.ch) as of June 15, 2026.

Swiss Grand Award /  
Prix Meret Oppenheim

The Prix Meret Oppenheim was launched in 2001 by the Federal Office of Culture in collaboration with the Federal Art Commission.

It honours artists, architects, art educators, researchers and critics who have succeeded in putting Swiss artistic production in the spotlight beyond national borders and for extended periods of time. Each award carries prize money of CHF 40,000.

## Jury

Prix Meret Oppenheim 2026  
Federal Art Commission

### President

• Raffael Dörig, director of the Kunsthaus Langenthal (until 31.12.2025)

### Members

- Tobias Kaspar, artist, Zurich and Mesocco
- Roman Kurzmeyer, exhibition curator, professor, and director of the Ricola Collection, Basel
- Mai-Thu Perret, artist, Geneva
- Oliver Lütjens, architect, Lütjens Padmanabhan, Zurich
- Nicole Schweizer, Curator of contemporary art, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (until 31.12.2025)
- Una Szeemann, artist, Zurich and Tegna

### Architecture experts

- Shadi Rahbaran, architect, Rahbaran Hurzeler, Basel
- Nemanja Zimonjić, architect, Ten Studio, Zurich (until 31.12.2025)

### Commission secretariat

- Léa Fluck, art historian  
Federal Office of Culture

Laureates 2001–2025	2017 Peter Märkli Daniela Keiser Philip Ursprung	2009 Ursula Biemann Roger Diener Christian Marclay Muda Mathis & Sus Zwick Ingrid Wildi Merino	2003 Silvia Bächli Rudolf Blättler Hervé Graumann Harm Lux Claude Sandoz
2025 Felix Lehner Pamela Rosenkranz Miroslav Šik	2016 Adelina von Fürstenberg Christian Philipp Müller Martin Steinmann	2008 edition fink (Georg Rutishauser) Mariann Grunder Manon Mario Pagliarani Arthur Rüegg	2002 Ian Anüll Hannes Brunner Marie José Burki Relax (Marie Antoinette Chiarenza, Daniel Croptier, Daniel Hauser) Renée Levi
2024 Jacqueline Burckhardt Marianne Burkhalter & Christian Sumi Valérie Favre	2015 Christoph Büchel Olivier Mosset Urs Stahel Staufer/Hasler	2007 Véronique Bacchetta Kurt W. Forster Peter Roesch Anselm Stalder	2001 Peter Kamm Ilona Rüegg George Steinmann
2023 Stanislaus von Moos Uriel Orlow Parity Group	2014 Anton Bruhin Catherine Quéloz Pipilotti Rist pool Architekten	2006 Dario Gamboni Markus Raetz Catherine Schelbert Robert Suermondt Rolf Winnewisser Peter Zumthor	
2022 Caroline Bachmann Klodin Erb Jürg Conzett & Gianfranco Bronzini	2013 Thomas Huber Quintus Miller & Paola Maranta Marc-Olivier Wahler	2005 Miriam Cahn Alexander Fickert & Katharina Knapkiewicz Johannes Gachnang Gianni Motti Václav Požárek Michel Ritter	
2021 Georges Descombes Esther Eppstein Vivian Suter	2012 Bice Curiger Niele Toroni Günther Vogt	2004 Christine Binswanger & Harry Gugger Roman Kurzmeyer Peter Regli Hannes Rickli	
2020 Marc Bauer Barbara Buser & Eric Honegger Koyo Kouoh	2011 John Armleder Patrick Devanthery & Inès Lamunière Silvia Gmür Ingeborg Lüscher Guido Nussbaum		
2019 Meili Peter Architekten Shirana Shahbazi Samuel Schellenberg	2010 Gion A. Caminada Yan Duyvendak Claudia & Julia Müller Annette Schindler Roman Signer		
2018 Sylvie Fleury Thomas Hirschhorn Luigi Snozzi			

## Events

Award Ceremony  
Swiss Grand Award for Art /  
Prix Meret Oppenheim and  
Swiss Art Awards  
June 15, 2026

Exhibition  
Swiss Art Awards 2026  
June 16–21, 2026  
Messe Basel, Hall 1.1  
Free admission  
Tue–Sat 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information, see:  
[schweizerkulturpreise.ch](http://schweizerkulturpreise.ch)

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