

**PRESS RELEASE, 8 JUNE 2021**

**Mario Merz Prize, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition**

The only international prize for art and music

**Fondazione Merz announces finalists for the Mario Merz Prize, 4th Edition**

**Art Category: Yto Barrada** (France/Morocco); **Paolo Cirio** (Italy); **Christina Forrer** (Switzerland); **Anne Hardy** (UK); **Koo Jeong A** (Korea); **He Xiangyu** (China)

**Music Category: Katherine Balch** (USA); **William Dougherty** (USA); **Farzia Fallah** (Iran); **Fusun Köksal** (Turkey); **Claudia Jane Scroccaro** (Italy)

Fondazione Merz is pleased to announce the six artist finalists for the Mario Merz Prize, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition's Art category, and the five composers shortlisted for the Music Category.

**Yto Barrada** (France/Morocco), **Paolo Cirio** (Italy), **Christina Forrer** (Switzerland), **Anne Hardy** (UK), **Koo Jeong A** (Korea), and **He Xiangyu** (China) are the artists selected by this year's jury composed of Beatrice Merz (President, Fondazione Merz); Claudia Gioia (Independent Curator), and Samuel Gross (Special Project Manager Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva).

In late Spring 2022 Fondazione Merz will present a group exhibition of the shortlisted artists in Turin. The winner, who will be announced in September 2022, will be commissioned to produce a new site-specific solo exhibition at the Foundation in 2023.

In the Music Category, the five shortlisted composers are: **Katherine Balch** (USA), **William Dougherty** (USA), **Farzia Fallah** (Iran), **Fusun Köksal** (Turkey), and **Claudia Jane Scroccaro** (Italy).

The winning composer in the music category will be commissioned to make and perform a new musical score in 2023.

The music jury is composed of: Gianluca Cangemi (music composer, record producer, A&R), Luisella Molina (General director Orchestra Sinfonica Milan University) and Philip Samartzis (Sound-designer and Professor at Melbourne University)

Paris-based video artist, Bertille Bak, winner of the Prize's Third Edition will have her solo commission exhibition at Fondazione Merz in February 2022.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **Mario Merz Prize**

Held every two years, the **Mario Merz Prize**, was established to identify and celebrate key figures in the field of contemporary visual art and music composition. It is the only international prize for art and music. The Mario Merz Prize, inaugurated by the Fondazione Merz with the collaboration of an organising committee and supported by an authoritative international committee of honour, has been awarded the Medal of the President of the Italian Republic. The prize is supported by the Embassy of Switzerland in Italy, the Embassy of Italy in Switzerland, the Piedmont Region, the City of Zurich and the City of Turin.

Winners of the Mario Merz Prize previous editions: Art: Wael Shawky (Egypt), 1st Edition; Petrit Halilaj (Kosovo), 2nd Edition; Bertille Bak (France) 3rd Edition – Music: Cyrill Schürch (Switzerland), 1st Edition; Geoffrey Gordon (USA) 2nd edition, Jay Schwartz (USA) 3rd Edition.

## **SHORTLISTED ARTISTS**

### **Yto Barrada** (b. 1971, France/Morocco)

Working with a wide range of media including photography, sculpture, installations, textile, and video, Barrada's extensive series and project-based practice is rooted in the culture, landscape, economy and politics of her hometown of Tangiers, Morocco. She is the founder of Cinémathèque de Tanger, a cultural center that has become a landmark institution bringing the Moroccan community together to celebrate local and international cinema. Barrada's work has won numerous awards including the 2019 Roy R. Neuberger Prize, 2016 Tiger Award for short film, the 2015 Abraaj Group Art Prize and the 2011 Deutsche Guggenheim Artist of the Year award. Barrada's work has been shown in, and held in the collections of, major museums around the world including the Metropolitan Museum (New York), Tate Modern (London), MoMA (New York), Renaissance Society (Chicago), Wiels Art Center (Brussels), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Museo de Sao Paolo, and the 2007 & 2011 Venice Biennales. She has had solo exhibitions at the Barbican Center (London), The Power Plant (Toronto), the Secession (Vienna), M Museum (Leuven), the Serralves Museum (Porto) and Carré d'Art (Nimes).

### **Paolo Cirio** (b. 1979, Italy)

Cirio works with the legal, economic and cultural systems of the information society. His artistic practice investigates how contemporary society is influenced by the distribution, organisation, and control of information, laying bare and revealing its conflicts, contradictions and infinite potential.

Cirio has had solo shows at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2019; Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin, 2019 International Kunstverein Luxembourg, 2016; NOME Gallery, Berlin, 2019, 2016, 2015; Bellegard Centre Culturel, Toulouse, France, 2015; Aksioma Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2013 and 2011. His work has been presented at the Gwangju Biennale, 2018; Strasbourg Biennale, 2018; Benaki Museum, Athens, 2018; MIT Museum, Boston, 2017; Tate Modern, London, 2017; C/O Berlin museum, 2017; Museum für Fotografie, Berlin, 2017; Münchner StadtMuseum, 2017; Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art of Luxembourg, 2017; Haifa Museum of Art, 2017; International Kunstverein Luxembourg, 2016; ICP Museum, NYC, 2016; Gaîté lyrique, Paris, 2016; and China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, 2015

### **Christina Forrer** (b. 1978, Switzerland)

Forrer's weavings, paintings, and works on paper are at once fantastic and brutally honest, cartoonish and harrowing. Her work is a searing exploration of conflict, which she perceives as being the very core of all relationships, human as well as throughout the natural world. Forrer's visual language is rooted in the folkloric, yet the raw emotion and essential truths revealed are blatant and undeniable.

Forrer lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected solo exhibitions include Luhring Augustine, New York (2019); Swiss Institute, New York (2017); The Finley, Los Angeles (2016) and Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2014). Group exhibitions include “Midtown”, Lever House, New York (2017); “Unorthodox”, The Jewish Museum, New York (2015); “Some Masks”, Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2015); “Can’t Reach Me There”, Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis (2015); and “Made in L.A. 2020: A Version”, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA (2020-2021). She is the recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist Grant (2014).

**Anne Hardy** (b. 1970, U.K)

Anne Hardy is internationally recognised for her photography and large-scale sculptural installations or ‘FIELDWORKS’, which combine physical materials with light and sound to create immersive and sensual environments. These works derive from places she calls ‘pockets of wild space’ – gaps in the urban space where materials, atmospheres, and emotions gather. Hardy thinks of these works as moments out of time – voids within the ‘everyday’ space, that act as a spell or dream in which to re-encounter our relationships to the worlds that we inhabit. Anne Hardy was recently commissioned by Tate Britain to create ‘The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light’ for their annual Winter Commission. In 2019, Hardy was invited to curate the Arts Council Collection, creating a site specific sensory installation, ‘The Weather Garden’ at Towner Art Gallery, UK (2019). Recent solo exhibitions and commissions include ‘Sensory Spaces #13’, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Netherlands (2018), Museum Marta Herford Museum, Germany (2018), ‘Falling and Walking (phhhhhhhhhhh phosshhhhh crrhhzzz mn huaooogh) at Leeds Art Gallery (2018) and ArtNight, London (2017).

**Koo Jeong A** (b. 1967, Korea)

Since the early 1990s, Koo Jeong A has made works that are seemingly casual and commonplace, yet at the same time remarkably precise, deliberate, and considered. Her reflections on the senses and the body incorporate objects, still and moving images, audio elements, and aromas. Many of her works are conceived within site-specific environments that question the limits of fact and fiction, the imaginary and actuality of our world. She draws from a wide spectrum of concerns which she developed over the years. Ranging from human cognition, to the philosophy of Taoism, from the science of Qi, to the interaction of natural elements such as earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. She was named ‘2016 Artist of the Year’ by the Korean Cultural Centre UK. Current solo shows include: Koo Jeong A., Galerie Eva Presenhuber, New York (2020) and OooOoO, La Triennale di Milano, Milano (2019). Recent solo exhibitions and commissions include: *ajeongkoo*, Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2017); *Enigma of Beginnings*, Yuz Project Room at Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2016); Koo Jeong A x Wheelscape: Evertro, Everton Park, Liverpool (2015)

**He Xiangyu** (b. 1986, China)

From the *Cola Project*, 2009-2011, the *Lemon Project*, 2014-2019 to the ongoing *Palate Project* since 2012, He Xiangyu’s conceptual practice manifests in multi-year projects that span sculpture, drawing, installation, video, feature-length documentary, and publication. Emerging as part of a generation of artists who have experienced the post-socialist state of China, He’s work looks to shift the perception of cultural signifiers through an examination and manipulation of a diversity of materials. Divergent in aesthetic and forms, He’s projects aim to investigate personal, social, and political themes, addressing the institutionalized status of contemporary art, the archeological aspect of the everyday and various post-human conditions.

He Xiangyu lives and works in Beijing and Berlin. He’s recent solo exhibitions include: “Soft Dilemma”, Andrew Kreps Gallery, 2021; “Hard Palate”, White Space Beijing, Beijing, 2020 ; “Who Are Interested in Us”, SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo, 2019; “Evidence”, White Cube, London, 2018, and “New Directions: He Xiangyu”, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2015.

**SHORTLISTED MUSICIANS**

**Katherine Balch** (1991, San Diego – USA)

Called “spellbinding” (*Seen and Heard International*) with “glow and poise and electric tension” (*The Daily Telegraph*), the music of composer Katherine Balch captures the magic of everyday sounds, inviting audiences into a sonic world characterized by imagination, discovery, and stylistic variety. Often inspired by

literature, nature, and science, she has been described as “some kind of musical Thomas Edison – you can just hear her tinkering around in her workshop, putting together new sounds and textural ideas” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Katherine’s work has been commissioned and performed by leading ensembles including the *Los Angeles Philharmonic*, the *London Sinfonietta*, the *Argus quartet*, and the symphony orchestras of Minnesota, Oregon, Albany, Indianapolis, California, Dallas, and Tokyo. Her music is published exclusively worldwide by Schott.

**William Dougherty** (1988, Philadelphia - USA). Lives in New York.

Dougherty is an American composer and recipient of the 2021 Luciano Berio Rome Prize in Music Composition from the American Academy in Rome. His music has been featured in festivals such as IRCAM's ManiFeste (2019), musikprotokoll (2018), Donaueschingen Musiktage (2017), New Music Miami (2017), Tectonics Festival New York (2015), the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival (2015), the 47th Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt (2014), the New York Philharmonic Biennale (2014), and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Dougherty has received awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Gaudeamus Muziekweek, the Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM/ISCM), the Aaron Copland House, SEAMUS/ASCAP, BMI, PARMA Recordings, the PRS for Music Society, the American Composers Forum, the Philadelphia Orchestra Association, and the UK Foreign Aid and Commonwealth Office.

**Farzia Fallah** (1980, Tehran - Iran). Lives in Cologne, Germany.

Fallah works as a freelancer, composing and working internationally with various ensembles and musicians from Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Taiwan and the United States. She had many premieres at renowned festivals such as *Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik*, *Acht Brücken Festival Köln*, *NOW! Festival Essen* and *Forum neuer Musik Deutschlandfunk*. The spectrum of her work includes solo pieces, chamber music and pieces for ensembles and orchestra. She also works in other interdisciplinary fields such as installation and video art. In 2019, she initiated the project *Mind the gap - Music for horn & viola*. She is a member of *Kollektiv3:6Koeln* as well as *tritonus - Verein zur Förderung zeitgenössischer Musik*. In 2017, she received the *24th Video Art Prize Bremen* and in 2020 the *Oldenburger Kompositionspreis für Zeitgenössische Musik*.

**Fusun Köksal** (1973, Bursa - Turkey). Lives in Izmir, Turkey.

Köksal is a composer whose works have recently been programmed in various contemporary music festivals such as *Berliner Festspiele MaerzMusik* (Germany), *Schleswig Holstein Music Festival* (Germany), *Warsaw Autumn* (Poland), *Via Stellae Festival* (Spain), *Forum Neuer Musik* (Germany), *Berlin Young Euro Classic* (Germany), *Fertile Crescent* (USA), *Mise-En Music Festival* (USA), *Centre Acanthes* (France), *Bilkent New Music Days* (Turkey), *Dias de Musica Electroacustica* (Portugal), *Timsonia* (Romania), *KNM Contemporaries* (Germany) and *NOW Festival* (Germany). The prominent ensembles and performers who have featured her music include Derek Bermel, Agata Igras, Richard Haynes, Horia Dumitrache, Alfredo Ovalles, Matei Ioachimescu, International Ensemble Modern Academy, E-Mex Ensemble, Penderecki String Quartet, Ensemble Calliopée, Ensemble U, Hezarfen Ensemble, Pacifica Quartet.

**Claudia Jane Scroccaro** (1984, Neuilly-Sur-Seine - France). Lives in Stuttgart, Germany.

Claudia Jane Scroccaro is an Italian composer of instrumental and electroacoustic music. The sonic aspect holds a dominant role in her work and reflects deep interests for electronic music and for music of aural tradition. Her creative approach explores a musical dramaturgy shifting between a humanly perceivable listening experience and microphonic projections of the dynamic properties of sound on multi-dimensional spaces, resulting into an alternation between kaleidoscopic movements and introspective explorations. Her music has been performed in Europe and in the USA by Ensemble Ascolta, ECCE Ensemble, Ensemble Suono Giallo, EchtZeit Ensemble, Ensemble Musikfabrik, among others. She has been composer in residence for the Music Innovation and Science Centre in Vilnius. She is currently in residence at the composition academy of the SWR Vokalensemble.

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