

VOLUME 3



*HOW
ARE ARTISTS
CHOSEN?*

*EXCLUSIVITY, PRECARIOUS WORK
AND ASYMMETRIES
IN ART COMPETITIONS*

**WAGES FOR
WAGES AGAINST**

&

STIRNIMANN-STOJANOVIC

AMANDINE GAY

In 2022, the collective Wages for Wages Against applied for the Swiss Art Awards with the ambition of questioning the very model of the prize and its impact on artists. Art competitions are presented as real opportunities for artists, and arise throughout their careers, starting with school—entrance selection procedure, juried evaluations, diplomas and honors distinctions—, all the way to professional recognition—Meret Oppenheim Prize, Marcel Duchamp Prize, Turner Prize, etc. Only a handful of artists are selected for merit-based reward. However, this logic of sorting and validation upholds an entire system that reproduces inequalities and that perpetuates precarity in a milieu that is exclusive, and thus excludes. The institutional practices of communication and selection, as well as the validation of unpaid labor, favor certain artists at the expense of others. In this context, we surveyed the artists who participated, are considering participating, or are not participating in the Swiss Art Awards competition, in the interest of understanding their experiences and sharing their demands. In a broader sense, we wish to rethink the founding principles of artists' support policies and work to build a less competitive art world.

Founded in 2017, Wages For Wages Against is a collective and campaign acting for the fair remuneration of artists in Switzerland, better work conditions, and an alternative economy of the arts, actively fighting all forms of discrimination through public debate and collective action. As artists, art workers and members of the collective WFWA, we investigated how artists are selected in art competitions. Here, we pursue a general reflection on competition as a genuinely democratic tool for supporting artists and the art scene.

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10 euros

“Only one of you will make it.”

*Remark made to 80 first-year students
at the ENSBA Lyon - Collectif Les mots de trop*

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STIRNIMANN-STOJANOVIC
AMANDINE GAY

wfwa.ch

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Nathalie Stirnimann and Stefan Stojanovic have been collaborating as an artist duo since 2015 and are based in Zurich. Stirnimann-Stojanovic's concepts are manifested and materialized in situations, performances, words and objects. Central themes in their practice are the social and structural issues of the art system seen from the viewpoint of aspiring artists. Via transdisciplinary and collective approaches, by exploring the boundaries between art, activism and society, Stirnimann-Stojanovic's aim is to probe and call into question the reality of the art field to thematize and demand fairer and more sustainable working conditions.

*WIN-WIN
FOR LIFE*
2020-ONGOING

STIRNIMANN-
STOJANOVIC

WIN-WIN FOR LIFE

Score

How to transform your production budget into a sufficient living wage?

And why? Because symbolic compensations or speculative value aren't what is needed.

WIN-WIN FOR LIFE

Edition 1

Year: 2020

Context: ZHdK Ma degree show

Resources: a) Production budget: CHF 500.-;

b) Artists' fee: CHF 0.-

Plan of action

1. Invest your CHF 500.- production budget for 100 Win for Life lottery tickets.
2. Rule: reinvest every gained amount (unless jackpot) for further lottery tickets.

Possible outcomes

3. a) *(Jump in the air!)*
You win the jackpot! *(Jump in the air!)*
(= CHF 4'000.-/month/20 years)
(= Sufficient living wage/basic income for one person (in the Swiss context))

or

- 3.b)
You loooooooooooooose it all.

But, win-win: Use the non-winning tickets as material to create "Win-Win For Life (Edition 2)". *(Jump in the air!)*

Result: 3.b)



WIN-WIN FOR LIFE

Edition 2

Year: 2021

Context: Covid-19 work grant (6 months)

granted by the city of Zurich

Resources: CHF 1'316.-/person/month

Plan of action

1.
By cross-funding, partially secure some of the basic costs for *your lives* with the grant: rent, insurance, food. (*Jump in the air!*)
2.
Now: work on "Win-Win For Life (Edition 2)":

- a) Write "LOOOOOOOOOOSERS?" with the 133 "non-winning tickets" from "W-WFL (Ed. 1)".
- b) Make 3 glass micro-mosaics.
- c) Write a *score*. Aim: to transparently document the previous steps of this serial artwork and to imagine its possible future(s).

3.
Exhibit "Win-Win For Life (Edition 2)":

Year: 2021

Context: Grosse Regionale 21/22,

Kunst(zeug)haus Rapperswil

Resources: a) Production budget: CHF 0.- ;

b) Artists' fee: CHF 0.-)

(In case of sale: -25% commission)

4.
Offer "W-WFL (Ed. 2)" for sale for CHF 15'000.-.

5.
Make the potential collector aware that you will:
 - a) Reinvest the whole amount of the sale (minus deductions) for further Win For Life lottery tickets.
 - b) Use the newly bought tickets as material to create "Win-Win For Life (Edition 3)".

Possible outcomes

- 6.a)
You sell "W-WFL (Ed. 2)"! (*Jump in the air!*)

"OMG!
= That's 250 more "O" to write the word "LOOOOOOOOOOSERS?"
= The artwork might be one day big enough to be exhibited at *Art Basel Unlimited!*"

or

- 6.b)
You do not sell "W-WFL (Ed. 2)".
= **this serial artwork ends here...**

Result: 6.a)



WIN-WIN FOR LIFE

Edition 3

Year: 2022

Acquisition of "Win-Win For Life (Edition 2)"

by the collection of the city of Zurich

Resources: CHF 15'000.-

Plan of action

1. Deduce from CHF 15'000.- of the sale: your taxes; your contributions for social benefits; Kunst(zeug)haus's commission (25%); Swiss Social Fund for Artists (2%).

2. Reinvest the remaining CHF 10'000.- for further 2000 Win For Life lottery tickets.

Year: 2022

Context: Balkans travel grant (3 months)

granted by Landis & Gyr Foundation

Resources: a) Accommodation: provided;

b) Artists' fee/per diems: CHF 1'000.-/person/month

3. By cross-funding, partially secure some of the basic costs for *your lives* with the grant: rent, insurance, food. (*Jump in the air!*)

4. Now: work on "Win-Win For Life (Ed. 3)":

- Write a big "LOOOOOOOOOOSERS?" with the 2000 unscratched lottery tickets from the sale of "W-WFL (Ed. 2)".
- Make 3 new glass micro-mosaics.
- Update the score.

5. Apply for art competitions and exhibit "Win-Win For Life (Edition 3)":

Year: 2023

Context: Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize,

Swiss Art Awards, Messe Basel

Resources: Artists' fee/expenses: CHF 1'000.-

Potential prize: CHF 15'000.-

Year: 2023

Context: Werkschau 2023,

Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich

Resources: Production budget: CHF 3'000.-

Potential grant: CHF 24'000.- or

instead, secured grant: CHF 8'000.-

6. Offer "W-WFL (Ed. 3)" for sale for CHF 20'000.-.

7. Make the potential collector aware that you will:

- First scratch the 2000 tickets – and keep any winning jackpot(s) – before handing the artwork to the collection.
- Reinvest the whole amount of the sale (minus deductions) for further Win For Life lottery tickets.
- Use the newly bought tickets as material to create "Win-Win For Life (Edition 4)".



Possible outcomes

4.a)

You win the prize and/or grant!

(Jump in the air!)

= ensures economic stability for the next 6 to 12 months of *your lives* and, and, and...

or

4.b)

(Jump in the air!)

You win the jackpot! *(Jump in the air!)*

(= CHF 4'000.-/month/20 years)

(= Sufficient living wage/basic income for one person (in the Swiss context))

"Let's hope for 2 jackpots!
As a duo, we are two people."

= ensures economic stability for the next 20 years of *your lives* and, and, and...

or

4.c)

You sell "W-WFL (Ed. 3)"! *(Jump in the air!)*

= ensures the production of the next edition of this serial artwork and, and, and...

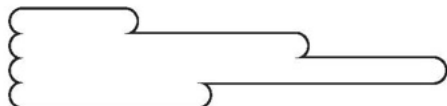
or

4.d)

You do not sell "W-WFL (Ed. 3)".

= this serial artwork ends here...

or...
or...
or...
or...

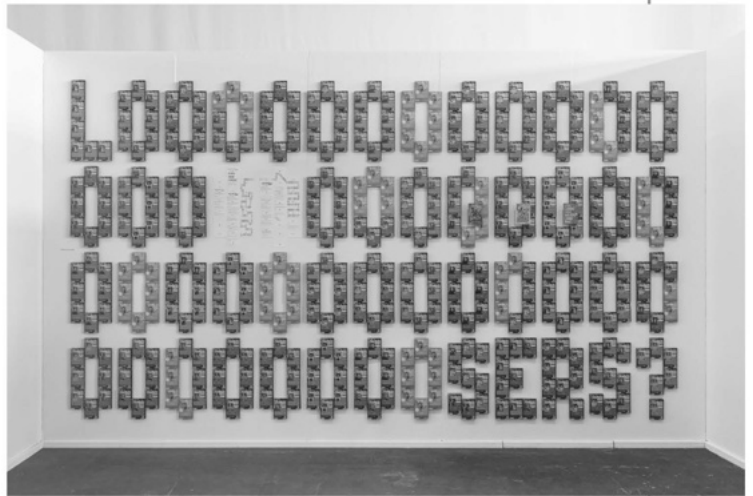


Result (so far): 4.a)

Claim

"What we really desire is for artists to not have to rely on winning the lottery (the lottery of getting a grant/prize, that of selling an artwork or the literal one) in order to have a sufficient living wage."





Win-Win For Life (Edition 3), 2023

2000 unscratched Win for Life lottery tickets;

triptych glass micro-mosaics; score, dimensions variable

Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Prize 2023, Swiss Art Awards, Basel

Photo, credits © Axel Crettenand

JUBEL-HELI

WIN FOR LIFE

PER MESE FR.

20 JAHRE L
ONAT FÜR M
FR. 4'00

GEWINNZA

EN

Stimmt eine oder
über ein,
das Wort
en.

SWIS

PER MESE FR.

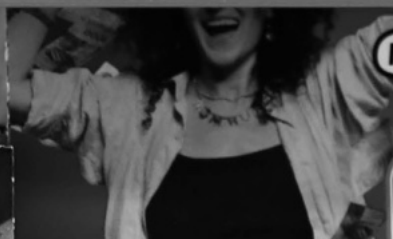
DR
LIF

20 JAHRE
MONAT FÜR M
FR. 4'00

GEWINNZA



EN



HOW ARE ARTISTS CHOSEN?

*EXCLUSIVITY, PRECARIOUS
WORK AND ASYMMETRIES
IN ART COMPETITIONS*

**WAGES FOR
WAGES AGAINST**

Founded in 2017, the collective and campaign Wages For Wages Against (WFWA) aims to generate debate and awareness on issues related to unpaid artistic work and exploitative working conditions for artists, and to act against all forms of discrimination in the arts. We require art organizations to be accountable and transparent in order to guarantee equitable practices and opportunities in a too-often-unfair field. We want to pool our knowledge, recreate common spaces, unveil systemic mechanisms, talk about money and competition, regain power and governance over issues concerning artists, fairly redistribute public money, and counter rather than replicate patterns of domination. The forms WFWA takes, resulting from activist experiences and collective questioning, include the organization of exhibitions, a publication series, round-table discussions, seminars, lectures, surveys, and workshops. We as well meet with and interview people to compile and share situated knowledges.

In 2018, WFWA organized a general meeting for art workers in Geneva to swing into action and demand a systematic remuneration of artists in the city. At the time, artists were almost never paid for their work. To make them rally around this cause, we condemned the fact that artists selected for the *Bourses de la Ville de Genève* (City of Geneva Art Grants) were not given any budget at all for the exhibition of their work. The City of Geneva rewards artists under 35 as part of an exhibition at the Centre d'art contemporain Genève. Through a flyering and social media campaign that subverted the event's poster, WFWA called upon the artists to organize themselves in order to be paid for their work. This generated a shift in the grant's politics, notably in the provision of a budget of 2,000 Swiss francs per artist—an amount that is still insufficient. This meeting additionally engendered the birth of the group GARAGe (Group of Action for the Remuneration of Artists in Geneva). An open letter was then drafted and addressed to the Genevan authorities to guarantee the remuneration of artists in publicly-funded institutions. This group also came to offer administrative training for artists and two websites with very useful tools.¹

¹ travaildesartistes.ch with remuneration recommendations, and infos-artistes-geneve.ch providing artists information on how to declare their income within the legal framework.

“ The societal adages of ‘it’s a labor of love and passion’ and ‘you chose this profession’ sink so deeply into the minds of art workers that they end up believing and even claiming them. By placing themselves outside or above the workers’ group, artists extract themselves from material struggle with immediate demands, accepting their condition as doomed. Thankfully, a new generation of *artist-authors* is proving to be more combative and attached to the term *art worker*. This perspective shift with regard to creative professions is leading to a rejection of endured precarity. It reflects an awareness that is fuelling a whole range of demands, as well as a professional stance they stand by and that is encouraging them to organize collectively in order to acquire new rights.”²

- Towards a continuity of income for artist-authors

². Cultural commission of the French Communist Party, *Pour une continuité de revenus des artistes auteurices*, November 2023, <https://continuite-revenus.fr/continuite-revenus-artistes-auteurices.pdf>

ART COMPETITIONS

Art competitions take various forms. Artists can receive grants, which serve to finance a specific project, research, or residency. In contrast, prizes and awards are considered to be the reward for accomplishment in a field, operating through recognition of symbolic value according to criteria defined in terms of quality, pertinence, and/or a theme— young artists, female artists, performance prizes, etc. These criteria are assessed by juries of professionals chosen by the organizers. Prizes and grants are not considered to be remuneration, and thus are not subject to taxes, nor to social security contributions. This means that artists do not participate in the socialization of their income, so they do not have access to unemployment insurance,³ thus limiting their possibility to secure a stable income and long-term financial security.

Art competitions sustain the idea that artists are more in need of exposure and aid than financial means. We help artists more than we pay them. Competitions are the culmination of an entire system of peer-determined merit-based validation. This participates in the obfuscation of the realities of artistic work and its precarity, all this operating on the currency of exposure. However, numerous artist testimonies in our survey confirm that competition creates frustration, anger, incomprehension, and even mistrust amongst artists. In an art system that is already individualist and competitive, pitting artists against each other in order to distinguish a select few feeds a myth of scarcity and meritocracy, reinforcing a feeling of isolation and illegitimacy for those not selected, who are, by nature, the majority.

The crisis of COVID-19 and the shutdown of the cultural sector operated as a large-scale illumination of the precarity of artists. In response to the emergency, substantial sums of aid were mobilized to support them. For a few months, certain artists had access to a basic income, and tasted a form of previously unknown financial security. However, the post-COVID era has seen the emergence of new funding structures based on competition. In France, the “Mondes Nouveaux”⁴ (New Worlds) plan, with a budget of 30 million euros in 2022, has benefited 430 artists out of 3,000 applicants, a process

³ For information on access to unemployment insurance for artists in Switzerland: <https://action-intermittence.ch/campagne-2023-fr/chapitre2/>
In France: <https://continue-revenus.fr/>

⁴ Different from the logic of artistic commissions, ‘Mondes nouveaux’ offers all selected artists the opportunity to express their desires without any imposed criteria, to benefit from a research allowance to frame their project, to receive support from the artistic committee and to retain ownership of their work. The program will document the creative process and conception of each work. ‘Mondes nouveaux’ has a budget of 30 million euros as part of the government’s ‘France relance’ plan.”

that led to a ceremony at the Elysée in the presence of president Emmanuel Macron. In French-speaking Belgium, the “Un Futur pour la Culture”⁵ (A Future for Culture) structure, with a budget of three million euros in 2020, has supported 238 projects across all sectors. In Switzerland, several cantons have introduced new grants, such as the 2021 research grant instated by the City of Geneva⁶ in the context of COVID-19, which offered grants of 10,000 Swiss francs out of a total budget of 2 million.

With the stated aim of reviving the industry to the tune of millions of euros, these aids have been the main thrust of policies to support artists in the wake of the health crisis. Far from learning lessons from lived experiences, they have been more interested in putting a new coat of paint on a rusty old machine, rather than providing structural solutions to the problem of artist precarity. To better understand how this system is perpetuated, we took the Swiss Art Awards as a case study, on the assumption that it potentially concerns all artists in Switzerland, whether or not they hold a diploma, and whether they are Swiss nationals or residents.

⁵. “The aim is to develop, in the short term, innovative policy solutions to address the crisis caused by lockdown in the cultural sector, to organize its redeployment and to experiment with new policies.” <https://linard.cfwb.be/files/Documents/futur-culture.pdf>

⁶. “This exceptional grant is designed to encourage research work, the exploration of new methods or techniques related to artistic activity, and the study of innovative or diversified modes of diffusion.” <https://www.geneve.ch/demarches/bourses-recherche-2021-contexte-covid-professionnel-culture>

“We believe that all exhibitions, including the exhibitions of the shortlisted nominees, should include an artist fee. Furthermore, artist talks, panels or public discussions should also include fees. Artists contribute greatly to the prestige of this prize, and their labour, like all forms of labour, needs to be compensated proportionately. The fact that the Preis der Nationalgalerie does not have a monetary value, and that the exhibitions and public talks of its nominees do not include fees, means that artists are rewarded only by the promise of exposure. There is an unspoken assumption that the participants are likely to be remunerated by the market as a result of being nominated or winning the prize. As artists, we know this is not always the case. The logic of artists working for exposure feeds directly into the normalization of the unregulated pay structures ubiquitous in the art field, as well as into the expansion of the power of the commercial sector over all aspects of the field.”⁷

– Statement from the nominees of the 2017 Preis der Nationalgalerie in Berlin

⁷ Sol Calero, Iman Issa, Jumana Manna and Agnieszka Polska, *Statement from the nominees of the 2017 Preis der Nationalgalerie in Berlin*, 10 November 2017. <https://artreview.com/news-10-nov-17-open-letter-in-criticism-of-preis-der-nationalgalerie/>

THE SURVEY AS A CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING TOOL

Throughout our campaign, we've observed that artists and art workers rarely have the opportunity to interact with the institutions they work with, nor to weigh in on governance issues. One possible explanation is that the very structure of the profession hinders collective organization. A field that favors short-term and one-off projects, isolated practices, high competitiveness, capitalist market-driven policies, precarious living conditions, unrecognized professional status, and a lack of labor rights, heavily discourages any form of resistance or agency.

With this project, WFWA wishes precisely to rebuild this broken link through the production of a shared discursive and speculative space. Our project offers a collective consciousness-raising exercise that incorporates several tools we applied throughout our campaign: surveys, open working-group discussions, pooling of resources, etc. We wish to contribute to the possibility of a paradigm shift: to propose a less competitive system, to offer reparation for decades of minority invisibilization and alienation, and to imagine an equitable economy of the arts based on solidarity and redistribution. Since its genesis in 2017, our campaign has operated by raising awareness of the systems we inherit, and of the ways in which we often perpetuate them despite our best interests.

As of now, we have yet to find any studies on the socioeconomic impacts of art competitions. As artists, art workers, and members of WFWA collective, this investigation aims to question how artists are selected for the Swiss Art Awards, and to better understand the impact of competition on artists. We question whether the competition format is a real democratic way to support the national art scene and its artists. In the longer term, we wish to contribute to rethinking and reshaping this national event, and in general any award competition.

While some selection criteria are explicitly stated in the conditions of participation of the Swiss Art Awards, others remain implicit, or even unconscious and unarticulated. These tacit criteria can act as psychological and systemic barriers. Unintentionally, they reproduce many behaviors and habits while dismissing certain artists or less conventional practices. Preexisting social differences and exclusivity are reproduced by specific institutional practices of communication and selection. Through this research, we wish to question a system of reproduction of inequalities, in Switzerland as elsewhere, in a highly competitive art world. We also want to understand why some artists choose not to apply.

METHODOLOGY

The Wages For Wages Against collective won a Swiss Art Award in 2022 in the *Critique, Publishing, Exhibition* category. Within this framework, but independently of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), we conducted a survey among the artists who participated, are considering participating, or are not participating in the Swiss Art Awards competition. At the same time, interviews were conducted with the Federal Art Commission (FAC) Chair of the jury and the FAC Secretary in charge of the Swiss Art Awards. We also organized a workshop open to everyone entitled *Let's Shape the Future of the Swiss Art Awards!*, on the afternoon of June 13th 2023 in the exhibition space. Parts of the conclusions you read here are drawn from this working group.

The survey was intended for all artists eligible for the Swiss Art Awards, whether they applied or not. Eligible artists must be Swiss or reside in Switzerland and no longer be enrolled in an art school. The survey was released in March 2023 as an online form available in four languages: German, French, Italian, and English. It was distributed via newsletters and social networks. It was also relayed by personal email to Swiss Art Awards participants from the three years prior to the survey, and to our contacts. 229 responses were received via a web form.

We sorted into six categories—*Respondents' profile, Applying (or not), Criteria, Money, Context, Afterwards*—the data collected anonymously from the public survey. Through 75 questions, it tries to understand the selection processes at all stages of the competition, as well as its impact on the artist's career and psychology. Due to financial and temporal constraints, this survey was intended only for artists, although the Swiss Art Awards competition is also open to architects, critics, editors and curators.

We are peers of the subjects of this study, and thus do not look in from above, but out from within. We speak from the same place as our subject of study, as artists, having applied several times to the competition, and as art workers.

The following report is based on official documents available online, or sent by the administration to the participants, or sent by the administration to us because not publicly available, on interviews with the Federal Office for Culture (FOC) and the Chair of the Jury, our own experience as participants, the responses to the questionnaire, and exchanges with participating artists. We begin with a precise overview of the organization of the Swiss Art Awards, for the sake of greater transparency, followed by the complete survey results. *The Key Results* section reports on the conclusions of our survey, offering some key axes of analysis. Finally, the recommendations are proposals formulated on the basis of these results and informed by consultation and external resources.

THE SWISS ART AWARDS

With more than 12,000 visitors each year, the Swiss Art Awards exhibition is a powerful apparatus for enhancing cultural capital and building emulation within the contemporary art scene in Switzerland. Since 1899, “the world’s oldest art award”⁸ has been evolving toward better access and equal opportunity. In a publication she presented for the prize, the artist Bea Schlingelhoff demonstrated the slow growth in the numbers of female laureates of the award, as well as in the numbers of female jury members or commissioners.⁹ In 2012, the age limit of 40 years old was waived. Two years later, nominated artists started to receive a budget of 5,000 Swiss francs for their exhibition project as contribution to their expenses. The number of prizes awarded has thus decreased from 25 to 10, when the total amount of money awarded across all prize recipients has not increased. As for the abrogation of the age limit, the aim was to move away from a logic of supporting young artists by transforming the *Federal Art Grants* into the *Swiss Art Awards*. The *reward* can now be awarded at multiple points in the artist’s career, although the number of entries is still limited to six attempts.

BUDGET

The Federal Art Commission (FAC) has an annual global budget of 1,2 million Swiss francs, some of which is dedicated to the purchase of artworks for the Confederation’s collection. The remaining envelope for the Swiss Art Awards is a little under one million. In 2022, 560,000 francs were given to artists, of which 300,000 francs were attributed in the form of monetary prizes, and 260,000 francs for their fixed expense allowances. Additional expenditures, adding up to 310,000 francs, are dedicated to scenography, technical equipment, and rent for the exhibition space at Messe Basel. The envelope for communication expenses is 120,000 francs. In total, about two thirds of the budget is dedicated to the exhibition, and one third for the ten artist prizes, as well as one critic, curator, and publisher prize, and one architect prize.

⁸. <https://swissartawards.ch>

⁹. Bea Schlingelhoff, “9’316 applicants, 524 awardees, 24 commissioners, 3 presidents”, *List of awardees, commissioners and presidents of the Federal Art Commission, 1889-2017*, 2018

HOW TO APPLY

The rules governing participation in the Swiss Art Awards are available on the FOC website.¹⁰ They stipulate that “Swiss artists or artists living in Switzerland may apply, provided that none of the exclusion criteria apply to them,” in particular that they must not be enrolled in an art school.¹¹ Applicants register via the FOC’s online platform between late October and early December each year. They must submit a PDF file presenting their artistic work in images, together with a CV and a written statement on their practice. Each year, around 350 applications are received—300 from artists and the rest from other categories—, a figure that is rising slightly but that remains relatively stable, according to the administration.

CONTEST

Between January and March, the Federal Art Commission (FAC) and the invited experts select the 45 finalists. These artists are expected to present an “original work”¹² for the second round, which consists of a seven-day exhibition held in June, in parallel with Art Basel. The Federal Office for Culture (FOC) “contributes to their expenses” in the form of a lump sum of 5,000 francs. Further information¹³ regarding the rest of the procedure is communicated exclusively to the 45 finalists. In about one month following the positive response of the FOC, the finalists must submit a form describing their project for the exhibition, including a sketch. They can choose the structure of their booth—corner, niche, box, free space on the floor—, the color of the wooden walls—black or white—, and specify their needs for electrical outlets, suspension points on the ceiling, and blackout

¹⁰. *Conditions de participation au Concours suisse d’art, d’architecture et critique, édition, exposition (Conditions of Participation for the Swiss competition for art, architecture and critique, publishing, exhibition)*, FOC, 29.09.2023. https://www.bak.admin.ch/dam/bak/fr/dokumente/kulturfoerderung-kunst/normen_und_regelwerke/saa23-teilnahmebedingungen.pdf.download.pdf/SAA23_Teilnahmebedingungen_FR.pdf

¹¹. Other exclusion criteria: “People who: have already received a Swiss art prize three times; have received a prize for art, architecture, criticism, publishing or exhibition in the previous year; have received the Grand Prix Suisse d’art/Prix Meret Oppenheim; entered the Swiss Design Awards in the same year; entered the same year for the Kiefer Hablitzel Göhner Kunstpreis; are enrolled in an art or architecture school at the time of registration; have already participated six times in the Swiss Art Awards; however, if more than three of these participations took place before 2012, it is possible to register three more times.” *Ibid.*

¹². *Ibid.* It’s not clear whether “original” means: created, undertaken for the first time, arising or proceeding independently of anything else, as opposed to any copy or imitation; or presented for the first time.

¹³. *Swiss Art Awards 2024 Description de projet, catégorie art (Project description, category art)*, FOC, 10.01.2024; *Swiss Art Awards 2024 Fact Sheet*, FOC, 19.01.2024

curtains. The rest—ladders, tools, technical equipment, extension cords, drills, and so forth—must be furnished by the artists. The FOC assigns where the artists will be in the exhibition space. The installation takes place over one weekend in a total of 22 hours. In principle, the artists arrive with their works, but they can have them delivered the eve of installation. A parking pass is provided for the duration of the installation and teardown of the exhibition. The FAC and its experts meet and select the winning projects before the opening of the exhibition on the basis of the works presented. Ten prizes are awarded, each endowing 25,000 francs.

JURY

The Federal Art Commission (FAC) is composed of seven to nine members, including a Chairperson. Following a recommendation from the Scientific Associate in charge of Visual Arts in the Federal Department of the Interior, the Swiss Federal Council appoints the members of the FAC for four years, renewable once, for a maximum of eight years. To round off the jury for the Swiss Art Awards, three experts are appointed for a maximum of two years. It is possible that experts later serve as members of the FAC. Theoretically, there is no system of co-optation, with the exception of this precise case. The members of the FAC and the experts are chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the art scene and of the national languages, to create a group that represents the linguistic regions of the country, and in accordance to a minimum 40/60% gender repartition. They are artists—at least half of them—, or curators in active employment, and are deeply familiar with the prize—having themselves participated in the competition and exhausted the maximum number of entries. The members of the jury must recuse themselves, i.e. not intervene in the selection process, if they are close to a candidate—spouse, parent, or any other condition that would impede impartiality.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

For the first round of selection, the FAC and the experts meet over a period of three days. They divide the applications in two groups, and the juries must thus examine at least half of the applications, although some choose to read them all. Each member then makes a pre-selection amongst the applications in their group according to three categories: A = selected; B = to discuss; C = rejected. They then meet in their respective groups to discuss this pre-selection, and can decide to bring applications rejected by others back onto the table, and

put forth arguments based on their knowledge of the work. Following this, a shortlist of about 60 entries is presented and discussed by all members of the jury, narrowing the list down to the 45 finalists. They may use anonymous voting when necessary, especially to prevent group dynamics from becoming too influential.

CRITERIA

The only clues regarding the selection criteria are summarily evoked in the *Conditions of participation*: “The FAC determines the evaluation and decision-making procedures. In particular, it assesses the quality, outreach, topicality, and innovation of the work submitted.”¹⁴ The FAC does, however, work with internal guidelines detailing more refined criteria, such as the thematic rigor, the quality of the material, the motive, the process, the development, and the quality of the application. In the first round, and not the second, the jury strives for balance between the profiles of the selected candidates. Without applying real quotas, they pay particular attention to the representation of genders, linguistic regions, ages, and different practices or artistic languages. The aim is to represent a full range of artistic scenes. In addition, applicants are more likely to be selected in the first round if they are artistically involved in Switzerland, meaning exhibiting or being active within a *Swiss art scene*. In the second round leading to the final award decision, the jury does not consider the portfolio, but exclusively evaluates the exhibited works, including their spatialization and the physical experience. There is no stated requirement to produce an entirely new work for the second round. Finalists can verbally provide information about their works to the staff of the Swiss Art Awards, who, if relevant, may relay this information to the jury. It is possible to receive feedback from the jury’s assessment through a phone call with the staff of the Swiss Art Awards for the first and second rounds.

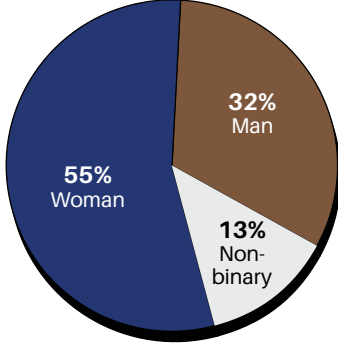
¹⁴. *Conditions of Participation for the Swiss art competition, op. cit.*

SURVEY RESULTS

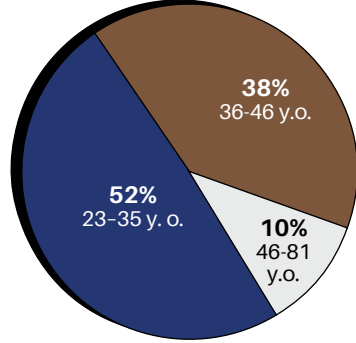
RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

TOTAL RESPONDENTS
229 artists eligible to apply to the Swiss Art Awards.

GENDER

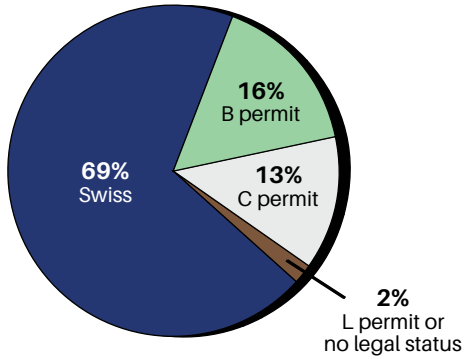


AGE

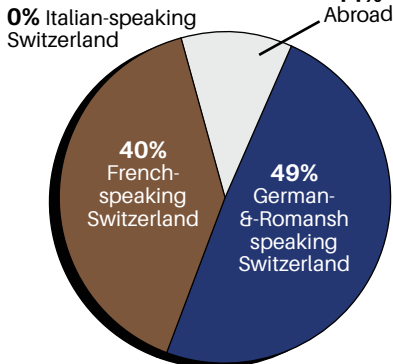


RESIDENCE STATUS

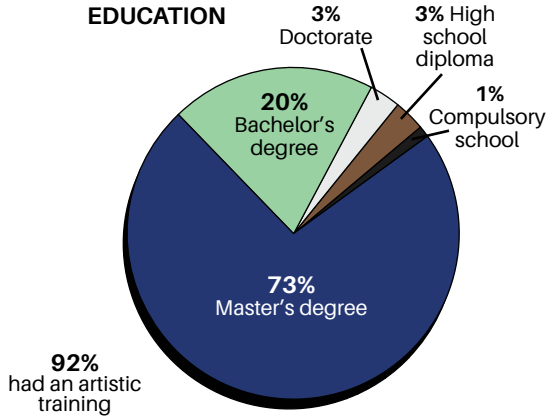
"Je suis de nationalité française. Une "frouze" comme on me nomme péjorativement souvent."



RESIDENCY



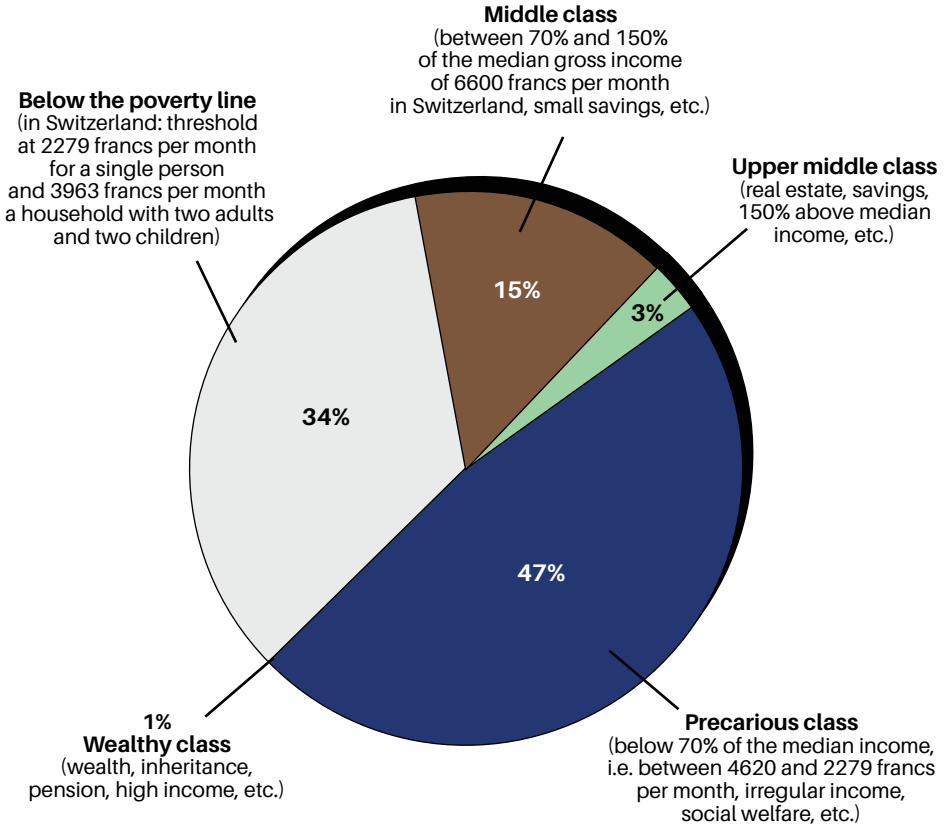
EDUCATION



SOCIAL CLASS

“Je suis en même temps propriétaire d’un bien immobilier et travailleur à revenu précaire.”

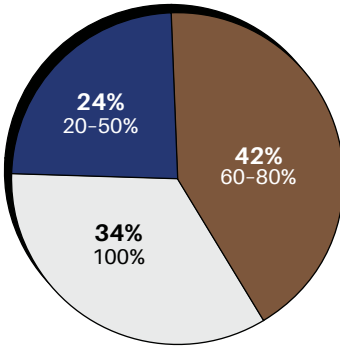
“La mia situazione precaria a livello di permesso di soggiorno e economica non mi permettono di dedicare tutte le energie e risorse alla produzione artistica.”



“Je pense qu’être une femme blanche de 30 ans, célibataire, qui fait de l’art à 100%, tout en restant dans une certaine précarité, est exactement le profil type recherché par les Swiss Art Awards.”

“Je peux me permettre de travailler avec un bas revenu grâce à une situation familiale aisée et un soutien important.”

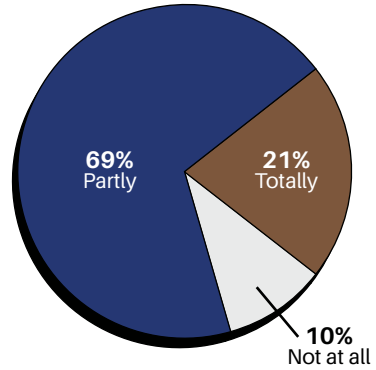
WORK TIME YOU DEVOTE TO YOUR ARTISTIC ACTIVITY



“Ma neurodivergence fait que j’ai tendance à ne pas postuler ou à oublier de le faire.”

“Artista donna! Anche lì c’è discriminazione.”

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE PART OF THE SWISS ART COMMUNITY ?



“Kinder und Familie liess frühere Alterslimate die Masche fallen, die nach der Familienphase grosse Schaffenskraft entwickelt, dann aber ebenfalls am Alter scheitern.”

“Ma catégorie étant régulièrement surreprésentée (homme blanc Cis et aisé), je pense qu’il est plus approprié de céder sa place.”

DO YOU FEEL THAT ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF YOUR IDENTITY/ PERSONALITY HAS A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR ABILITY TO APPLY/BE SELECTED/WIN THE SWISS ART AWARDS ?

Starting with highest occurrence

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| No confidence / shy /introvert /insecure | Precarious economic situation |
| Neurodivergence / disability | White hetero cis-male |
| Age | Precarious residence permit |
| POC | C permit |
| (European) nationality | Language |
| Women | Leftist |
| Mother | Dad |

IS THERE A WAY OF DEFINING YOURSELF THAT HAS NOT APPEARED HERE THAT IS IMPORTANT TO SPECIFY ?

Starting with highest occurrence

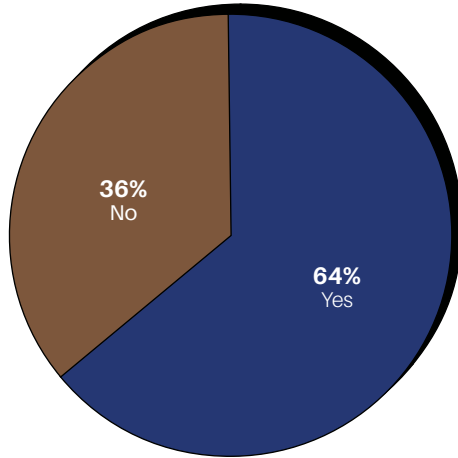
- 32** POC (people of colour)
- 22** disabled / neurodivergent / chronically ill people
- 17** mothers including **5** single parents
- 4** dads including **3** single parents
- 4** trans people

OTHER : Homosexual/queer, mixed race, poor background, raising a disabled child, immigrant, real estate owner or upper middle class background but precarious, not a child of academics

APPLYING (OR NOT)

54% who applied were at least once selected in the first round.

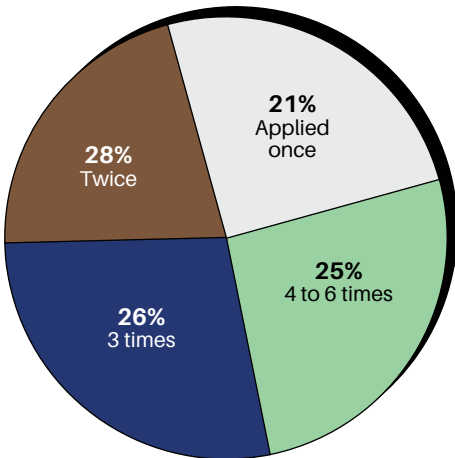
HAVE YOU ALREADY APPLIED FOR THE SWISS ART AWARDS COMPETITION ?



70% last applied in the past 3 years (2021-2023)

"I stopped applying because I feel like it's just about knowing the right people at the right time, people who can support your work."

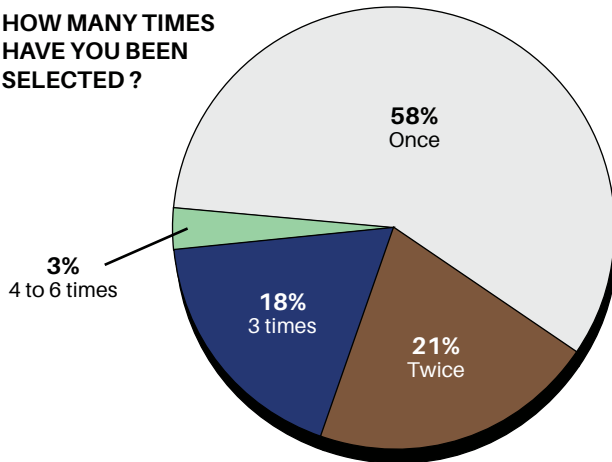
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU APPLIED?



67% were last selected in the past 3 years (2021-2023).

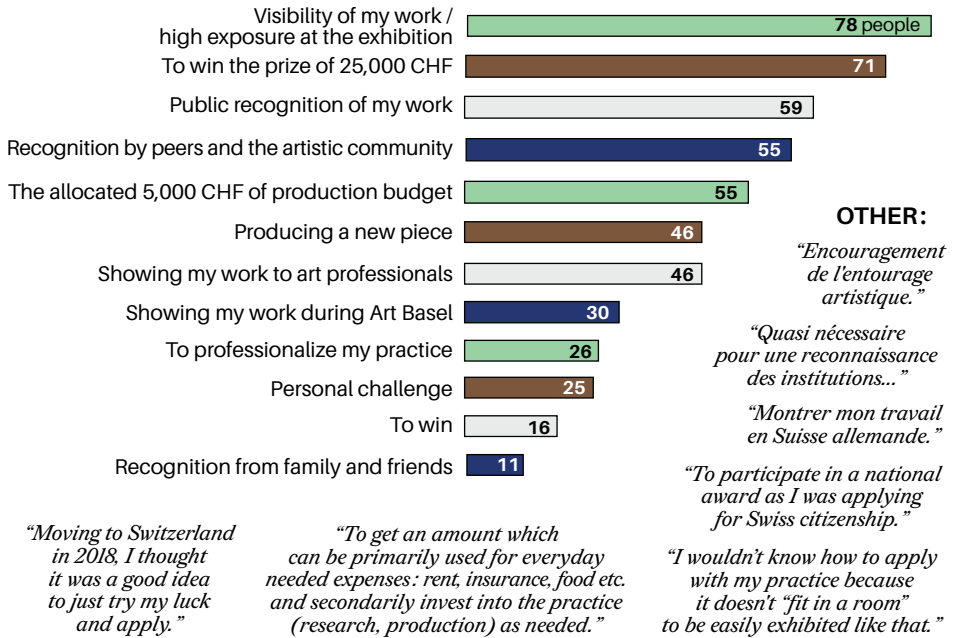
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN SELECTED ?

10 respondents were selected as a collective of 2 or 3 people

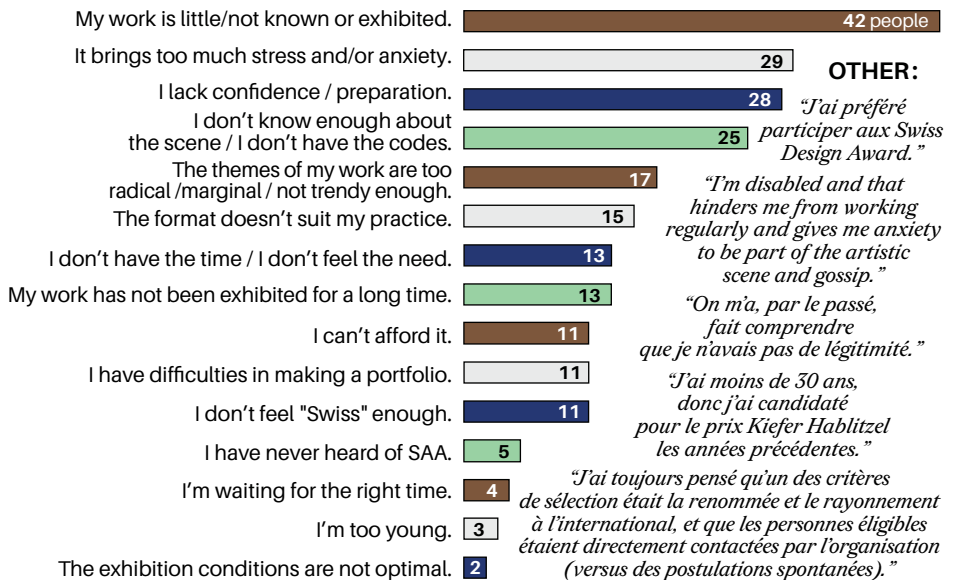


67% were last selected in the past 3 years (2021-2023).

WHAT ARE THE 3 MAIN REASONS THAT HAVE MOTIVATED YOU TO APPLY ?

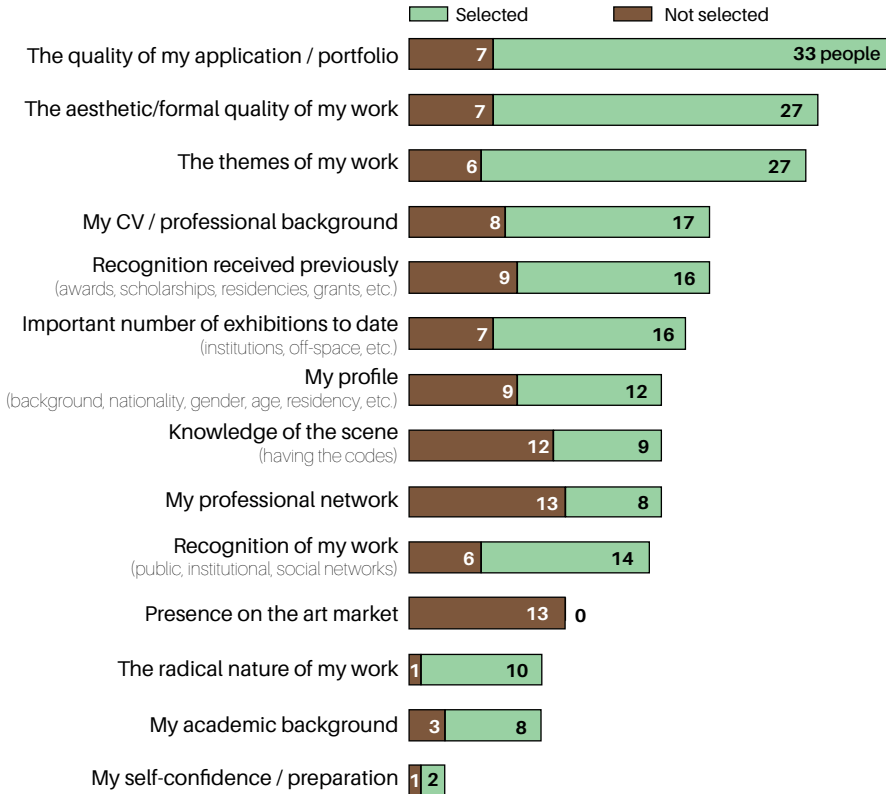


YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE COMPETITION, HOWEVER YOU DID NOT APPLY. WHAT ARE THE 3 MAIN REASONS ?



CRITERIA

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE 3 MAIN REASONS YOU WERE SELECTED ? OR NOT SELECTED FOR THE EXHIBITION?



WHY NOT SELECTED :

"I guess nobody knew or knows me, also given the number of applications, why support somebody new/unknown?"

"Ich wüsste es gerne. Meine Arbeit ist national und international präsent, auch in grossen Museen. Ich denke es ist diskriminierung, wegen meiner Herkunft."

"Je n'ai pas de contact dans le jury."

*"Je suis trop vieille."
(personne de 46 ans)*

"Zufall, wer aus der jury das dossier anschaut."

"The Swiss art awards like clean and minimal aesthetics and that's simply not what I do. Also the more it is cold and conceptual the better."

WHY SELECTED :

"J'espère que c'était le portfolio qui a été le critère de leurs choix."

"Je connaissais une personne dans le jury."

"I worked with someone who works at the SAA and made them publicity in my application."

62% of selected artists won at least once a Swiss Art Award.

28% OF RESPONDENTS FIND THE EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THEIR WORK NOT CLEAR AS THEY APPEAR IN THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION WHICH STIPULATE:

“THE FCA (...) JUDGES THE QUALITY, OUTREACH, TOPICALITY AND INNOVATION OF THE PRESENTED WORK.”

“Generell ist eine Beurteilung in der Kunst ja sehr stark abhängig von Geschmack und einer relativ undurchsichtigen Meinung über Relevanz, die oft streitbar ist.”

“Ces critères me semblent représentatifs des critères sélectifs en art contemporain, ils ne me semblent ni plus ni moins flous que les autres.”

“Verständlich sind sie aber was damit gemeint ist, wird zuwenig transparent diskutiert.”

“Meiner Meinung gibt es auch andere Kriterien die ausschlag gebend für den Entscheid sind.”

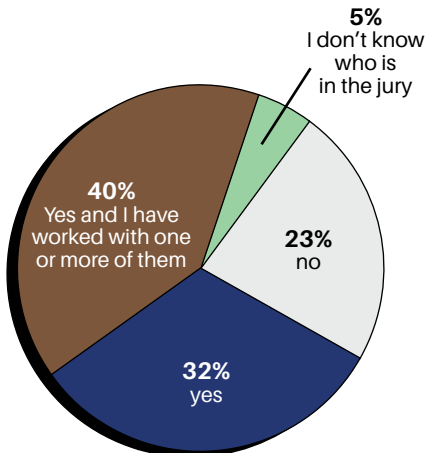
“The criteria are very clear; but they are nonetheless subjective, which is obvious in such a situation.

There are no empirical criteria for judging artworks.”

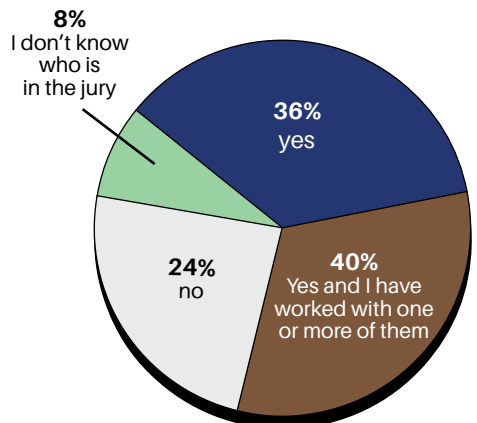
“While the criteria is clear enough, the result of the decision making supposedly based on that criteria were unclear.”

DO YOU PERSONALLY KNOW ONE OR MORE PEOPLE ON THE JURY PANEL?

DID NOT WIN :



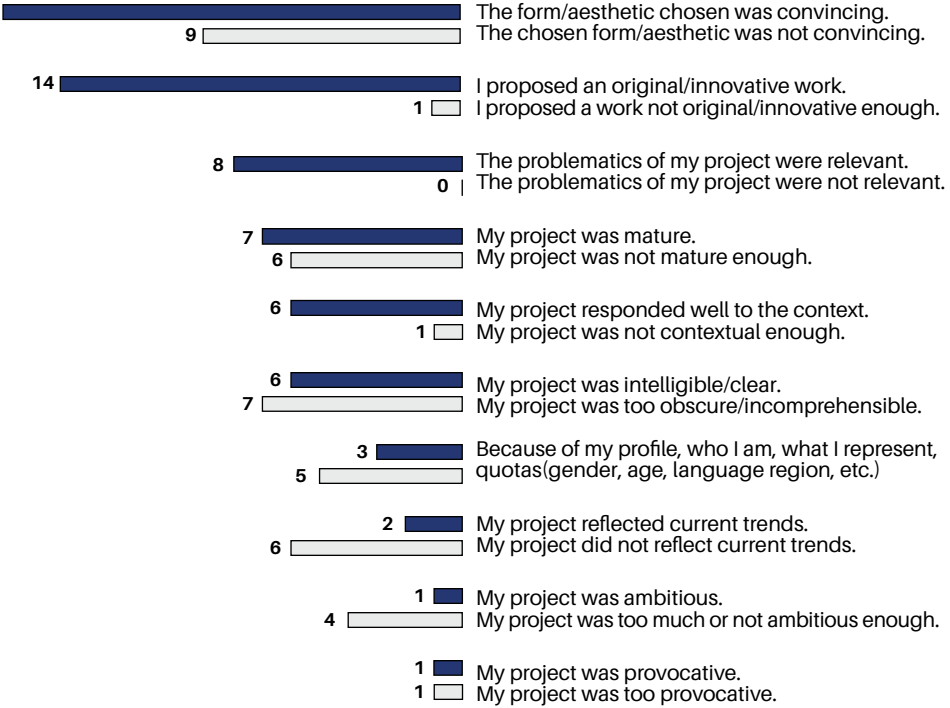
WON :



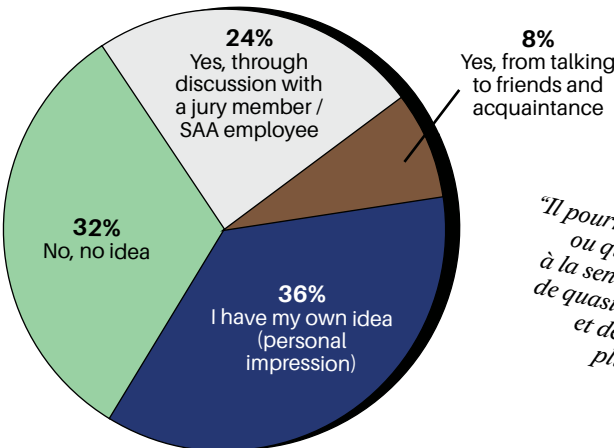
WHAT DO YOU THINK WERE THE 3 MAIN REASONS YOU WON, OR DID NOT WIN?

16 people

■ Won
□ Did not win



DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU WON?



*“Es gewinnt das, was gefällig,
harmlos und leicht zu verstehen ist,
Kunst gewinnt dort nicht.”*

*“Il pourrait y avoir le prix du public,
ou quelque chose d’alternatif
à la sentence du jury, afin d’éviter
de quasi sacréaliser leurs décisions
et de rendre le processus
plus distributeur.”*

MONEY

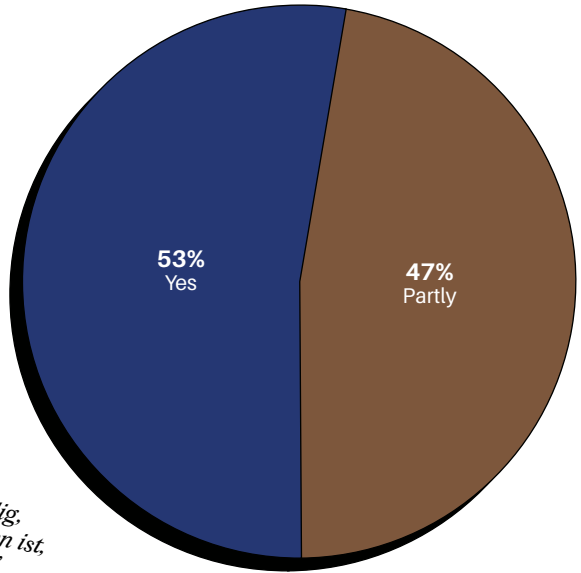
*“ Il m'a manqué de quoi couvrir
2,5 mois de travail à 100 %.”*

*“Avoir un budget digne et un temps
pour l'installation
plus tranquille seraient beaucoup
plus intéressants.”*

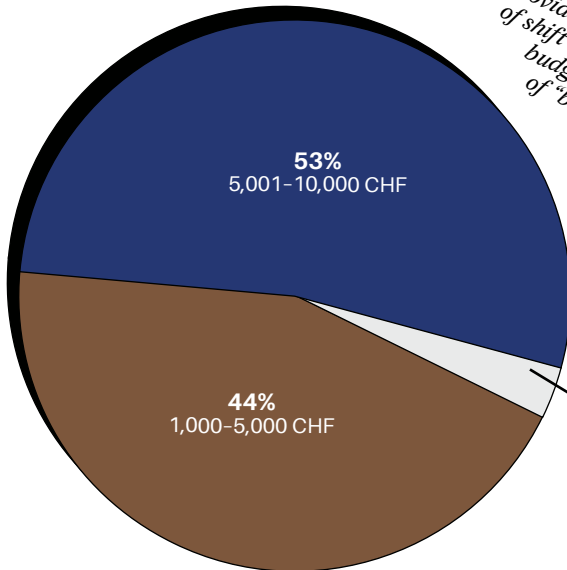
6,200 CHF
is the average
production cost spent
by the respondents.

*“Es gewinnt das, was gefällig,
harmlos und leicht zu verstehen ist,
Kunst gewinnt dort nicht.”*

**HAS THE 5,000 CHF PROVIDED
BY THE SWISS ART AWARDS
COVERED THE PRODUCTION COSTS
AND EXPENSES** (transport, accommodation,
collaborators' fees, etc.)?



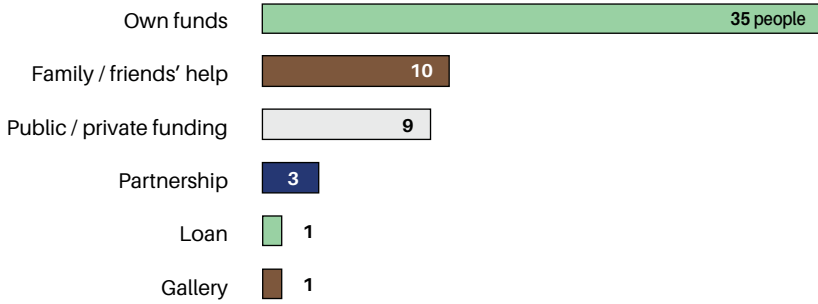
**WHAT APPROXIMATE AMOUNT
HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO COVER
ALL OF YOUR PRODUCTION COSTS
AND EXPENSES ?**



*“A whole restructuring is needed,
so that the budgets can be reshuffled.
It feels it's almost like we are asking
to invent money” but it's here, it could
be distributed and made accessible differently.
Covid (in some cantons) was a good example
of shift of budgets, such as moving production
budgets and bureaucratie to some sort
of “basic income” form of support.”*

*“J'ai adapté mon travail
et les dépenses au budget.”*

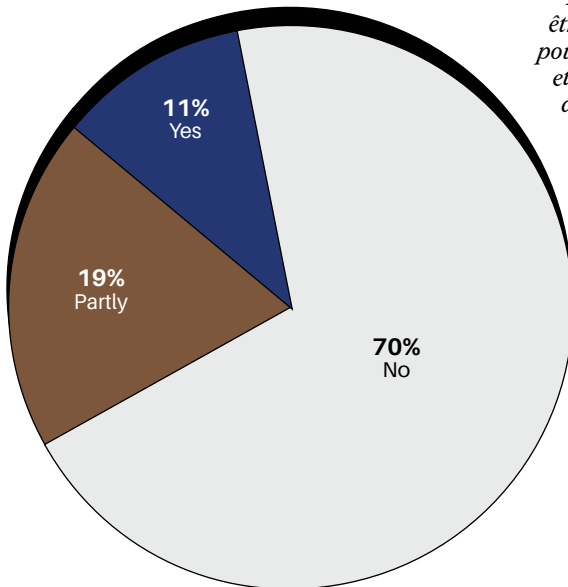
IF THE BUDGET DID NOT COVER ALL YOUR EXPENSES, WHAT WERE THE OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING ?



"If it is still considered important to give recognition to artists then that should happen differently, without involving money prizes."

"Les conditions de montage ne sont pas équitables suivant le lieu d'habitation. Une personne qui vient de Lausanne est désavantagée (arrive plus tard ou alors doit utiliser un bout de son budget pour le logement, etc.)."

HAS THE 5,000 CHF PROVIDED BY THE SWISS ART AWARDS COVERED YOUR REMUNERATION?

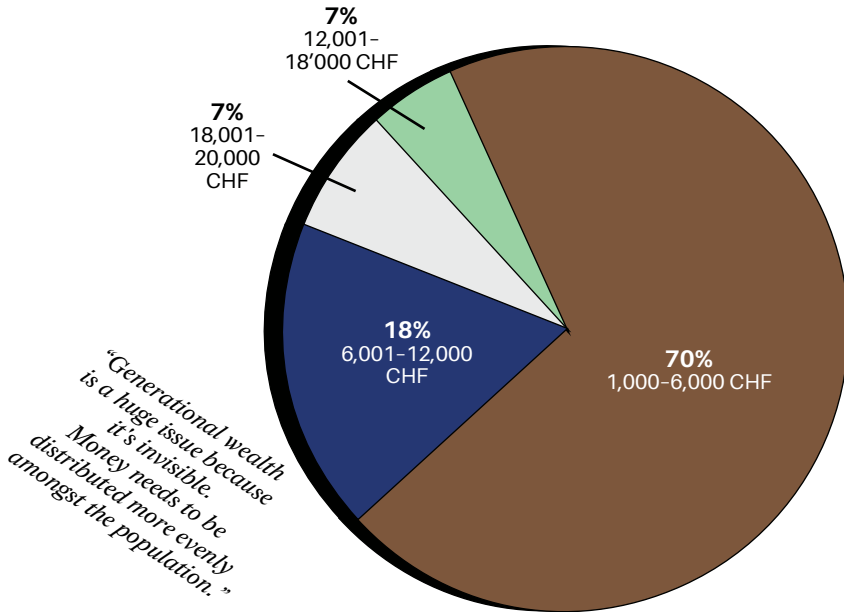


"La somme des prix pourrait être divisée entre tout le monde pour une rémunération du travail et une production à la hauteur de la scène artistique suisse."

"I don't believe artists deserve remuneration for their random ideas."

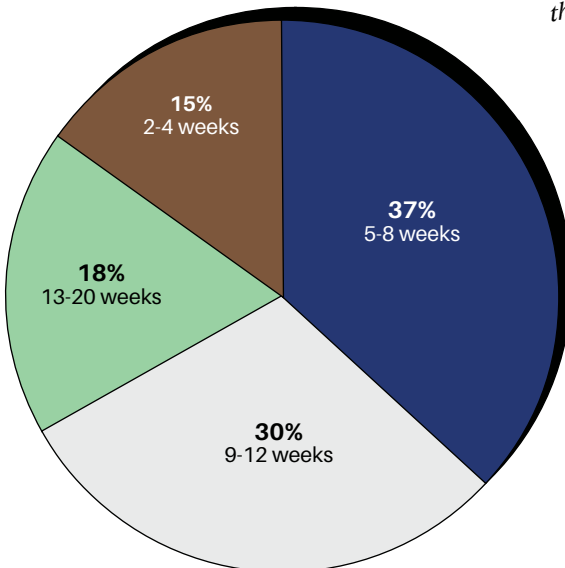
Only 7 respondents sold their exhibited work at the Swiss Art Awards.

**WHAT APPROXIMATE AMOUNT
WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY
TO COVER YOUR REMUNERATION ?**



**HOW MANY WEEKS DID YOU
WORK APPROXIMATELY FOR
THE ENTIRE PROJECT**

(application, administration, research, production, installation, etc.) ?



“If it is still considered important to give recognition to artists then that should happen differently, without involving money prizes.”

9 WEEKS is the average work time for the Swiss Art Awards, which corresponds to **13,500 CHF** of remuneration, based on a **6,000 CHF** a month (or **1,500 CHF** a week), the median income in CH.

CONTEXT

100% of respondents produced a new body of work for the exhibition, 11% adapted an existing work or showed a mix of new and existing works.

IN WHAT WAY?

"The context is ultra specific, terrible art fair vibe."

"In reaction to a very competitive environment."

"I wouldn't necessarily experiment."

"En fonction des rumeurs sur ce que pourrait potentiellement attendre le jury, c'est-à-dire: cohérence et ne pas 'trop en mettre'."

"Ne pas voir le jury, ni avoir la possibilité de parler de la pièce exposée est d'une étrangeté difficile à gérer."

"I partially work with context. So the SAA identity and history participated greatly in the production of the work."

"Je me suis intéressée à la question du concours et des affects produits par ce contexte particulier produisant une interconnexions de différents systèmes de l'art contemporain."

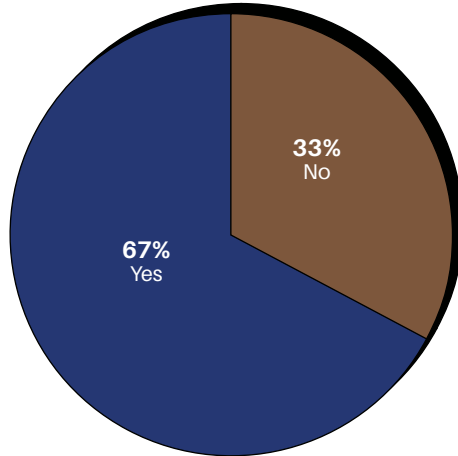
"I partially work with context. So the SAA identity and history participated greatly in the production of the work."

"Le peu de temps pour l'installation."

"Not too deeply research based, visually/aesthetically striking."

"More emphasis on critique of the art market."

DO YOU THINK THAT THE CONTEXT OF THE SWISS ART AWARDS HAS INFLUENCED YOUR CHOICES REGARDING THE FORM AND/OR CONTENT OF YOUR PROJECT ?



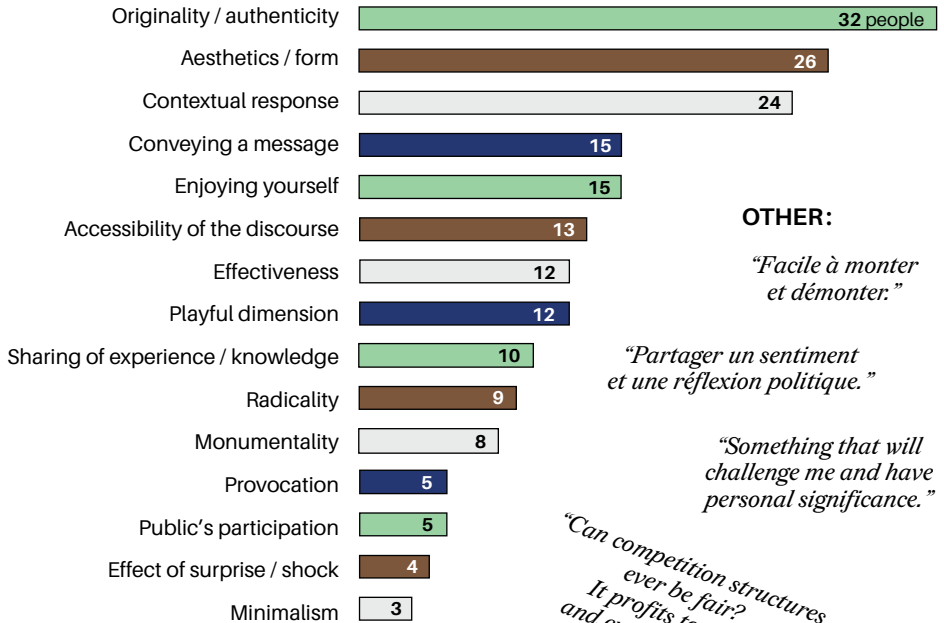
"Une pièce qui peut s'appréhender de manière formelle et rapide, et ne pas exiger trop de l'audience."

"Le spectateur est saturé dans un contexte de Art Basel, j'ai donc adapté à une forme plus directe."

"L'espace ressemble plus à une foire de tech qu'un événement d'art."

"Simplicité nécessaire pour que la proposition puisse être vue parmi les 50 autres."

WHAT ARE THE 3 ELEMENTS YOU PRIORITIZED FOR THE PROJECT YOU PRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION ?



OTHER:

“Facile à monter et démonter.”

“Partager un sentiment et une réflexion politique.”

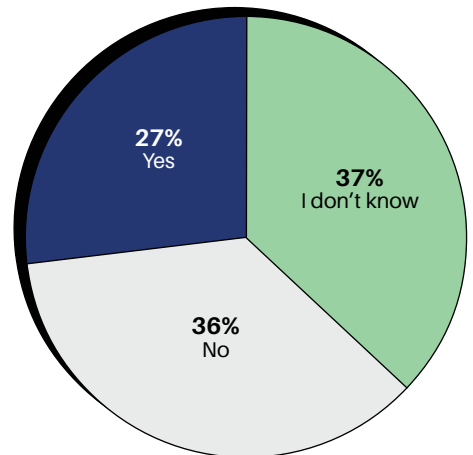
“Something that will challenge me and have personal significance.”

“Can competition structures ever be fair? It profits to a few, and excluding many.”

“Overall I appreciate the Swiss Art Awards. Despite the context of art fairs not being my preferable way to experience art, it has a somewhat homogenizing effect on the works. I do think it is a good thing that Swiss Art Awards takes place during Art Basel.”

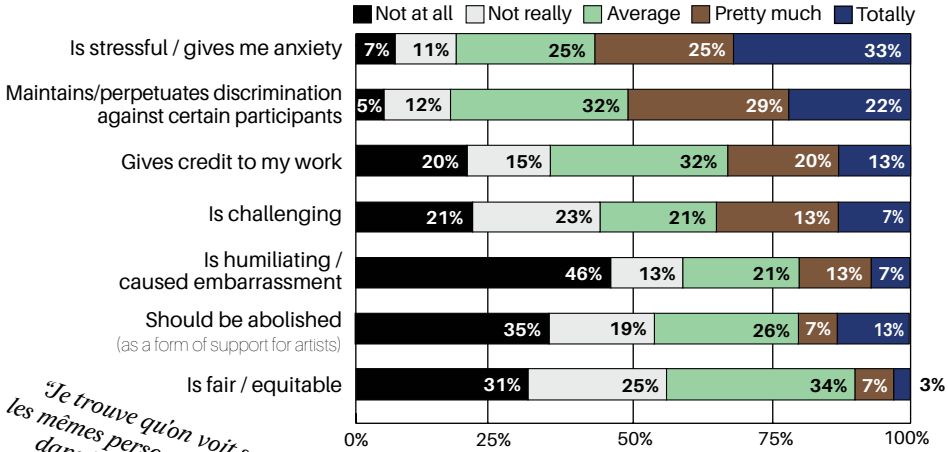
“Il faut réfléchir à des alternatives possibles au format ‘concours’ pour permettre davantage d’accessibilité.”

DO YOU THINK ART BASEL IS THE IDEAL CONTEXT FOR THE EXHIBITION OF THE SWISS ART AWARDS ?



78% of respondents visited the exhibition of the Swiss Art Awards at least once. **85%** visited it the last time within the past 2 years (2022-2023).

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETITION IN THE SWISS ART AWARDS :



“Je trouve qu'on voit souvent les mêmes personnes qui tournent dans le marché. Alors que c'est une occasion de découvrir de nouvelles perspectives.”

“The show doesn't want to be curated. It follows the structure of the competition. They should divide the prize money through everyone selected in the 2nd round and realize a beautiful show in which the work speaks to each other and artists network instead of compete.”

“La compétition est féroce et les artistes ne sont pas invités à présenter leur travail, il n'y a pas de mise de contexte.”

“Dovrebbero migliorare l'aspetto architettonico degli spazi espositivi.”

*“Jährlicher Pflichttermin für alle Künstler*innen.”*

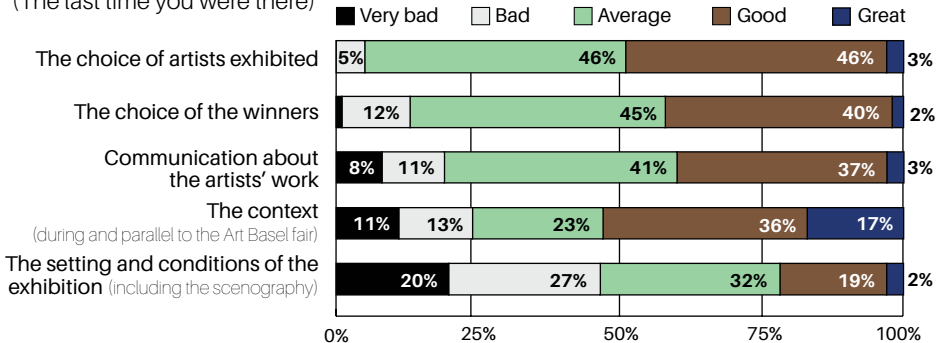
“Die Teilnahme an der SAA hat meinen Verdacht bestätigt, dass diese Wettbewerbsidee überholt ist.”

“Choose a place intended for the exhibition of art-works and not for trading art-objects. Any Kunst-haus-halle-verein-museum you like.”

“It can work well if you do big sculptural installation works or video. But for more ephemeral, subtle, quiet or performative works, it seems like quite a challenging setting. I have not seen many works with these qualities exhibited there when I visited.”

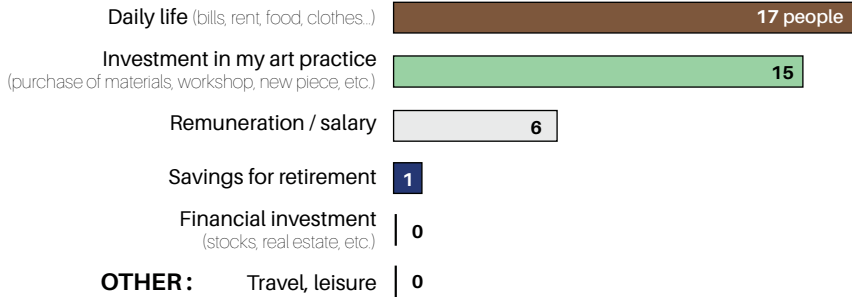
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE EXHIBITION?

(The last time you were there)



AFTERWARDS

IF YOU WON A PRIZE, WHAT DID YOU USE THE MONEY FOR ?



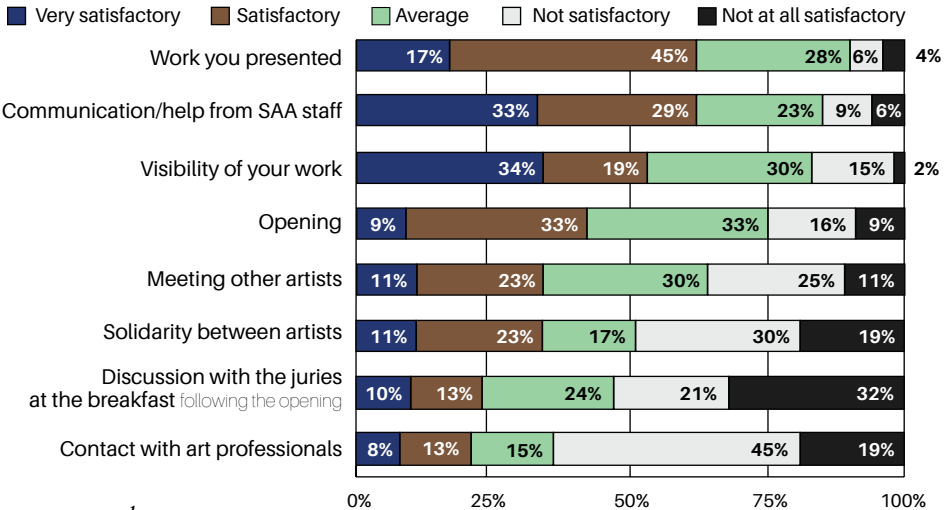
“Finanzierung von Gesundheitsleistungen.”

“A TV screen to watch movies (that could be included into: investment in my art practice).”

“It more or less allowed me to live less precariously for about a year, which also allowed me to dedicate more time to my practice. But it went quick.”

“Rembourser mes dettes.”

WHAT DO YOU RETAIN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE ?



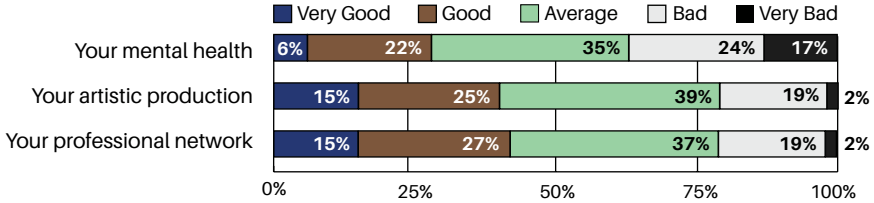
“Kunst und Wettbewerb sind für mich ein Widerspruch.”

“Despite the challenges posed by such a platform and my general aversion to competition, the Swiss Art Awards, for me personally, was an overall positive experience. I remain very grateful for the opportunity.”

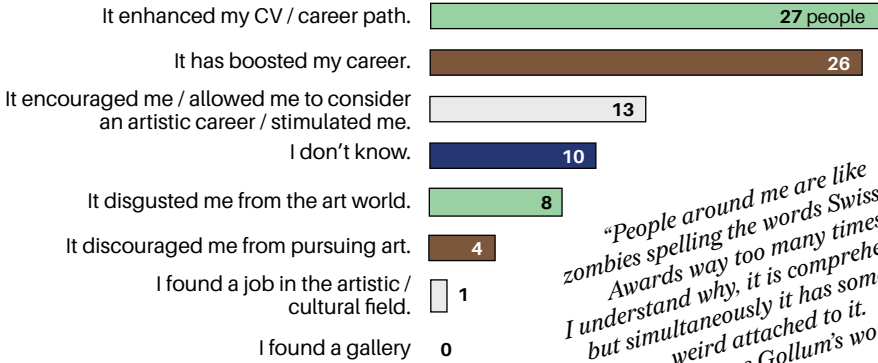
“I think a more collective, solidary form of support for the art scene is needed.”

“Fear and anxiety probably arises from too much unknown, lack of transparency (concentrated power) bound around this event.”

LOOKING BACK, HAS THIS EXPERIENCE HAD AN IMPACT ON :



HAS PARTICIPATING IN THE SWISS ART AWARDS IMPACTED YOUR ARTISTIC CAREER ? (Multiple answers possible)



“People around me are like zombies spelling the words Swiss Art Awards way too many times. I understand why, it is comprehensible, but simultaneously it has something weird attached to it. As they were Gollum’s words.”

OTHER :

“Une compétition à l’allure d’un événement artistique a plus d’impacts négatifs que positifs pour moi.”

“It validated me slightly in the Swiss context.”

“Difficile à évaluer si j’ai eu plus de projets à travers les Swiss Art Awards, je ne sais pas.”

“Erstaunlich wenig Auswirkungen. ich wurde danach für einen Vortrag an einer schweizer kunsthochschule eingeladen, aber das war’s.”

“Erstaunlich wenig Auswirkungen. ich wurde danach für einen Vortrag an einer schweizer kunsthochschule eingeladen, aber das war’s.”

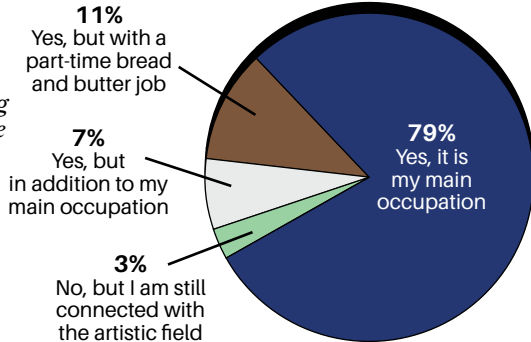
“Keine Auswirkungen.”

“Beaucoup de stress et de travail pour quasi zéro bénéfice (car jamais gagné).

Je considère que l’effort demandé est disproportionné.”

“The Swiss Art Awards plays no part in enhancing artists’ careers. It is nice to receive some money to produce a new work and install around friends and colleagues, but international art professionals do not visit the exhibition.”

HAVE YOU CONTINUED TO MAKE ART SINCE?



“The policies and practices of art schools the student body (...) Analysis of admissions procedures shows that certain social groups are favored, while others remain excluded.

The social differences that exist outside of art schools are reinforced and standardized by specific institutional communication and selection practices. (...) Selection practices go far beyond the admissions procedure itself, and encompass domain-specific aspects as well as institutional, economic, biographical and individual dimensions. Firstly, the financial requirements are considerable. Secondly, our analyses show that candidates rarely succeed without external support.

A third aspect is that admission to art schools implies the ability to mobilize significant economic capital, as well as, and above all, the mobilization of cultural capital likely to be recognized as legitimate in the admissions process. (...) In addition to the aspect of privileged social class and adequate prior schooling, institutional mechanisms encourage the primordially of white, young, non-disabled, healthy and psychically intact bodies.”¹⁵

– *Art.School.Differences*

¹⁵ Philippe Saner, Sophie Vögele and Pauline Vessely, *Final Report Art.School.Differences – Researching Inequalities and Normativities in the Field of Higher Art Education*, Zurich, November 2016
https://blog.zhdk.ch/artschooldifferences/files/2018/07/Rapport-final-ASD_upload-blog.pdf

KEY RESULTS

THE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS THAT:

- **artists applying are mostly precarious despite being highly educated;**
- **most finalists are unable to remunerate themselves with the flat-rate sum of 5,000 francs provided for their expenses, so they are mostly working for free, this creates disparities between participants who can devote a lot of unpaid time and those who cannot;**
- **the announced evaluation criteria are vague, thus favoring candidates who possess the required knowledge and social contacts, and encouraging rumors and misconceptions;**
- **the environment is exclusive, provoking a sense of belonging and legitimacy, or the opposite;**
- **the competitive aspect of the Swiss Art Awards influences the production of artworks and impacts the mental health of artists.**

WHO APPLIES? WHO DOES NOT APPLY?

The artists who responded to this survey are eligible for and interested in the prize, whether they have applied or not. We therefore consider them to be the award's target audience.

EMERGING ARTISTS

The majority of respondents (52%) are between 23 and 35 years of age, and are therefore considered as young and emerging artists by most art competitions and organizations supporting artists.¹⁶ The Swiss Art Awards were for many years limited to artists under the age of 40, and remain perceived as a competition for young artists. A 46-year-old believes she wasn't selected because she was "too old." Another 13 artists feel they were not selected in the first round because of their presence on the art market. This would support the hypothesis that being too established might hinder their admission.

PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

Almost all respondents (92%) have completed a formal artistic education, and the vast majority (76%) dedicate between 60 and 100% of their time to their artistic practice. They are therefore considered professional artists by Visarte, the professional association for visual artists in Switzerland.

PRECARIOUS ARTISTS

Although a large majority of respondents (76%) have a very high level of education (Master or Doctorate) and could access high salaries, 4/5 of respondents (81%) live in precarious conditions, half of them below the poverty line. However, according to the various comments we collected, some receive support from a partner or their family. We observe, therefore, that the main motivation for applying, apart from visibility, is financial—"To win the prize of 25,000 francs"—in order to overcome systemic precarity: paying bills, a studio, financing their activity, etc. However, the answer "To win" is rarely mentioned, confirming that artists aren't necessarily motivated by a desire to compete.

¹⁶ Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Art Award, until 30 y.o.; Manor Cultural Prize, until 40 y.o.; Istituto Svizzero, until 40 y.o.; Prix Mobilière, until 35 y.o.; Prix de la Société Générale, until 35 y.o.; Bourses de la Ville de Genève, until 35 y.o.; Swiss Art award until 2012 limited to 40 y.o.

LACK OF DIVERSITY

32 out of 229 respondents indicated that they are POC (people affected by racism and discrimination on the basis of skin color, origin, religion, language, etc.). Only 14 of them applied, seven were selected, and three won a prize. 22 respondents are living with a disability, a chronic illness and/or are neurodivergent (13%). Only 17 said they are mothers, and 4 fathers, including 8 single parents. Four respondents indicated that they are trans. We asked respondents, “Do you think one or more elements of your identity/personality has a negative impact on your ability to apply/be selected/win at the Swiss Art Awards?” For respondents who answered “yes,” the second most common element cited is disability, neurodivergence and chronic illness, followed by age and being POC. It’s also worth noting that 13% of respondents are non-binary, a choice not available in the online application form.¹⁷

ARTISTS NOT APPLYING

Respondents who do not apply believe they don’t know enough about the milieu or don’t have the codes, that their work is little known or not exhibited often enough, or don’t feel Swiss enough. Another important element is the anxiety and stress generated by the competition, which discourages many artists from applying. Moreover, many artists didn’t even know they could apply to the Swiss Art Awards, they thought people were picked.

¹⁷ The federal administration does not recognize the existence of non-binary people and even prohibits the use of inclusive writing in its forms, favoring the masculine gender: “When designating an individual or several individuals of the same sex [sic], the sexual criterion applies: masculine nouns are used for men and feminine nouns for women. (...) It is not possible to name mixed groups with feminine forms. The inclusive grammatical gender is masculine or unmarked gender [sic]. The fact that it can designate both ‘male’ individuals and mixed groups is part of the general principle of language economy” in *Guide pour un usage inclusif du français dans les textes de la Confédération*, January 13, <https://www.bk.admin.ch/bk/fr/home/documentation/langues/aides-redaction-et-traduction/guide-pour-un-usage-inclusif.html>

HOW MUCH WORK AND MONEY?

NO REMUNERATION, NO SOCIAL PROTECTION

Most of the respondents (70%) are unable to remunerate themselves at all with the 5,000 francs provided as a flat-rate contribution to their expenses. For the majority (56%), their production costs actually exceeded the allocated budget, at an average total of 6,200 francs. In some cases, they surpass 10,000 francs. As it is generally not possible to obtain additional funding (public or private) for the Swiss Art Award exhibition, most artists affirm that they had to cover the extra costs out of pocket. The fact that artists need to be able to work for free, and to mobilize additional capital, creates disparities between participants who can devote a lot of unpaid time to their project and those who can't, especially those with low incomes, without external support, and/or with dependent children. A number of respondents affirm they don't apply because they can't afford it. Finally, only 10% say they could completely cover their remuneration with the 5,000 francs allowance, so the majority of respondents are operating outside of the collectivization of social rights that could grant access to social security.

ARTISTS UNDERVALUE THEIR WORK

One striking finding bears on how difficult it is for artists to evaluate the worth of their own labor. The finalists reported working an average of 9 weeks full-time on their project for the Swiss Art Awards. If we compare with the average salary in Switzerland—which is approximately 6,000 francs per month, or 1,500 francs per week¹⁸—, their total remuneration should be, at the very least, 13,500 francs. The majority of respondents (70%) estimate that they would have needed between 1,000 and 6,000 francs as remuneration, which, at the average Swiss salary, only corresponds to between a few days and four weeks of work.

UNEQUAL INSTALLATION CONDITIONS

Numerous comments from finalists revealed that the conditions of the installation of their work are not the same for everyone, especially depending on where they live. Some artists have to use their budget of

¹⁸. www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/work-income/wages-income-employment-labour-costs.html

5,000 francs for transport, travel and accommodation, while others have little or no expenses of this kind. Generally speaking, respondents deplore the lack of means, time, material assistance, and advice during the two days of installation, which are experienced as difficult and stressful.

“You just need to stop eating to finance your projects.”¹⁹

- ESA La Réunion - Collectif Les mots de trop

¹⁹. Quoted in *Pour une continuité de revenus des artistes auteurices*, op. cit.

“We take, at face value, the intention of this prize to be to support and give voice to serious artistic positions and practices based in Germany. With this in mind, we have been troubled by the constant emphasis, in press releases and public speeches, on our gender and nationalities, rather than the content of our work. It is clear to us that in a more egalitarian world the fact of our gender and national origin would be barely noticed. Having it constantly emphasized can only be indicative of how far we are from such an egalitarian world. Furthermore, the self-congratulatory use of diversity as a public relations tool risks masking the very serious systemic inequalities, which continue to persist at all levels of our field. We would like to stress that commitments to diversity in gender, race and experience need to be built into the everyday operations of institutions and organizations rather than celebrated occasionally at high profile events.”²⁰

– Statement from the nominees of the 2017 Preis der Nationalgalerie in Berlin

²⁰. *Statement from the nominees of the 2017 Preis der Nationalgalerie, op. cit.*

HOW ARE ARTISTS CHOSEN?

ARTISTS NOT SELECTED

Artists who weren't selected in the first round had similar impressions to those who didn't apply: a feeling of not knowing enough about the milieu or not having the codes, having a limited professional network and not having exhibited enough, or lack of prior recognition from the field. They also expressed that their profile—background, nationality, race, gender, age, sexuality, etc.—might be a factor.

A GOOD CV AND KNOWING MEMBERS OF THE JURY

Many finalists affirm that having a significant number of exhibitions on their CV and/or a previous recognition of their work had an influence on the jury's decisions in the first round. Although their professional network was not the possible main reason mentioned for their selection, most of them (72%) knew one or more members of the jury personally. A large majority of finalists (88%) also have contacts with other art professionals, and had discussed their project for the exhibition with them beforehand.

VAGUE SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

The selection criteria are judged unclear by about a third of respondents (28%). They are summarily stated as follows: "The Federal Office of Culture determines the evaluation and decision-making procedures. In particular, it judges the quality, outreach, topicality and innovation of the presented works."²¹ As mentioned, the jury members have access to internal guidelines with more elaborate criteria, which are not publicly available. The implicitly vague nature of the available criteria requires an effort to decode, and encourages rumors and misconceptions. This favors candidates who possess a good knowledge of the rules, the necessary social contacts, and the habitus perceived as adequate regarding requirements and standards.

POORLY STRUCTURED FEEDBACK

The administration collects complaints from disappointed artists, but in an unstructured way, and therefore inevitably emotional setting. The feedback breakfast, scheduled for finalists the day after the exhibition

²¹ *Conditions of Participation for the Swiss Art Competition, op. cit.*

opening, is experienced as a difficult moment by 53% percent of them, as well as by the administration and jury members. However, the finalists find it important to have access to this information. The lack of clarity can either validate or undermine their personal pride, at the expense of objectifiable criteria. This can lead to frustration, anger, or a sense of rejection for artists who failed. This climate can have repercussions just as much on their individual careers as on the possible synergies between artists, and can create mistrust of jury members who expose themselves publicly.

“Creative work is not always and only liberating. It generates stress, anxiety, and frustration, like any other job. It can trigger mental illness and physical and nervous burnout, like any other job. However, no rules regulate the remuneration of artists. No rules regulate their working hours. No rules protect their relationships with the institutions they work with. Artists are exploited at the mercy of whomever pays them, when they pay them... This absence of rights creates the conditions for extremely violent competition. It forces creators to undervalue their labor in order to access commissions. Often, the ‘winners’ are the least expensive, which leads many artists to put themselves in a state of ‘economic suicide.’ All of this contributes to the self-denigration of many artist-authors.”²²

- Towards a continuity of income for artist-authors.

²². Pour une continuité de revenus des artistes auteurices, op. cit.

WHAT IMPACT DOES THE COMPETITION HAVE?

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

To the question “You are eligible for the competition, however you did not apply, why?,” most respondents said that the process created too much stress and anxiety, and that they lacked confidence. A majority of finalists (58%) also considered the competition to be stressful and anxiety-provoking. A significant number of finalists (37%) added that the experience of participating in the Swiss Art Awards had a bad, or very bad impact on their mental health.

INFLUENCING THE PRODUCTION

Most finalists (67%) affirm that the context of the Swiss Art Awards influences their choices regarding the form and/or content of their project. In the comments, some explain that they prioritize simple, direct, and effective discourse and form in order to stand out in a saturated context and increase their chances of winning. Others say that they deliberately reduce the complexity, subversiveness and experimental dimensions of their projects. The context is also unsuitable for certain practices, such as performance or more subtle works. Artists thus prioritize the originality of their work, aesthetics/form, and response to context, rather than provocation, audience participation, or economy of means (minimalism).

PROXIMITY TO THE ART FAIR

The proximity of the Swiss Art Awards exhibition to Art Basel is considered not ideal by 36% of respondents. While almost half were unsatisfied with the setting and conditions of the exhibition (47%), which mimics the nearby art fair with booth-like spaces, 37% of respondents recognized the positive impact of this context in terms of visibility. Indeed, over 12,000 people visit the exhibition, many of whom are art professionals. Despite this seemingly favorable environment for networking, most finalists (64%) deplore the lack of contact with art professionals. Only half of finalists (47%) said the experience had a positive impact on their professional network.

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

Although half (51%) see the competition as perpetuating discrimination against certain participants and as unfair/not equitable (56%), most (54%) do not wish its abolition. So, while aware of the problems created by this system, artists feel dependent on it. This situation resembles the complex mechanisms identified as Stockholm syndrome, whereby victims identify with the mechanisms of oppression in order to ensure their survival.

“The fact that women are less represented, less supported, less considered, that their works are less sold, that they are less awarded, is a fact, no one learns about it. The consequence, in addition, is that to increase their visibility, they must be put in competition. For the Ministry of Culture to acknowledge this reality is one thing, an exception that is supposed to reassure us all. Acknowledging the demands of artists in general, of all genders, is another. (...) It is up to elected officials to dare to debate the issue of artistic work at the Assembly; it is up to artists to stop excessive individualism, to block and dare to refuse, to say NO to their precariousness by asserting their rights. Today, it is an emergency, and even a duty.”²³

- Open letter "Award".

²³. Open letter "Award", published anonymously on documentations.art, March 19, 2019. <https://documentations.art/en/award/>

ON REDISTRIBUTION AND FAIR PRACTICES

The 2020 Swiss Art Awards, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, instantiated an interesting transformation of the event. For the first time in its history, the prizes were canceled and the money was divided between the finalists, who each received a total of 10,000 francs for their respective projects. The exhibition was decentralized and the artists' projects could take place anywhere in Switzerland or online. The 2020 catalog text even spoke of a "first successful step towards the future."²⁴ This hybrid, three-month, relocated format "gave a boost to regions that normally attract less attention." In addition, the FAC Chair asserted that "finalists should be able to choose a framework that suited their current situation and their practice."²⁵ The finalists were also able to invite someone for a conversation. A space for dialogue and consultation was even created between the jury and the artists to understand their needs. These changes, that were "born out of necessity"²⁶ in 2020, are just as necessary in 2024. Why were all these efforts to create a more flexible event, better adapted to the different needs of artists and practices, a one-off? Why not change the format and name again and relaunch the "International Festival of Swiss Art"?²⁷

As more and more artists graduate from art schools,²⁸ it would logically follow that more and more artists would receive support. According to our study, this is not what the Swiss Art Awards offer. By validating the legitimacy of a select few at the expense of others, the current system makes the carrot increasingly unattainable for the majority, to the benefit of a minority. The current configuration of the competition, notably with its proximity to Art Basel and by not

²⁴ Léa Fluck, "The crisis of the century or a century of crisis" in *Swiss Art Competition 2020*, Swiss Confederation, Federal Office of Culture, 2020.

²⁵ Raffael Dorig, President of the Federal Art Commission, "The Swiss Art Awards 2020 as a decentralised festival of art" in *op. cit.*

²⁶ Léa Fluck, in *op. cit.*

²⁷ Raffael Dorig, in *op. cit.*

²⁸ The number of cultural workers in the strict sense has risen by over 30% in the last decade (from roughly 72,000 in 2010 to 98,000 in 2020). As in some other fields, the number of university graduates in the arts has risen significantly over the last 20 years (around 3,500 students in 2000/2001, 8,800 in 2010/2011 and 10,600 in 2020/2021)." *Culture Message 2025-2028*, Federal Office for Culture, Swiss Confederation, 29.02.2024, available here: <https://www.bak.admin.ch/bak/fr/home/themes/le-message-culture.html>

remunerating artists, reinforces a neoliberal ideology of art based on competition between individuals at the mercy of the market. The Swiss Art Awards, as a public entity, should not play the game of the art market which is highly competitive, excluding, and discriminating. We are aware of the necessity of such an event for the art scene in Switzerland and the synergies that can be generated, but we wonder why it continues to follow such a logic.

Art events are based on the ceremonial—exhibitions, openings, graduations, receptions, dinners, and parties—with art and artists as vectors of prestige and soft power. In this way, the politics use artists as stooges and artists need the politics to finance their practices. This creates an asymmetrical codependency. Denied the means for real autonomy, artists are trapped in a state of precarity that makes it possible to perpetuate the logic of competition.

We decided to carry out this survey on our own initiative, as we fit the profile of the selected artists: we work full-time in the sector, we are relatively precarious, even so we are over 35 years of age and therefore no longer part of the emerging scene. To this profile, we must add the fact that “in the cultural sector, women’s income are 17% lower than men’s (-12% in the economy as a whole),”²⁹ supporting the fact that our gender is an aggravating factor in our precariousness as art workers. We note that women constitute the largest group of respondents in our survey,³⁰ although the Swiss Art Awards’ applicant pool is approximately even in gender distribution.³¹ We imagine that this is because women are more affected by discrimination and thus more prone to participate in such surveys.

As a result, funding politics have concrete consequences, both on the social composition of the art world, and on the well-being of artists and their ability to imagine their future in this field. This reproduces the feeling of privilege of belonging to a scene in which *everyone knows everyone else*, which is a kind of tacit condition for even being aware of the prize and feeling legitimate in applying, let alone being selected and winning.

We believe public money should be used to repair inequalities rather than reinforce them, by creating platforms for dialogue and democracy and strengthening solidarities. In tune with its contemporary context and responsive to shifting societal dynamics, the Swiss Art Awards must lead innovative thinking and set a benchmark for equitable practices within Switzerland and beyond its borders.

²⁹. *Culture Message 2025–2028, op. cit.*

³⁰. 55% of women, 32% of men, 13% of non-binary people.

³¹. According to the administration. As mentioned, non-binary artists are not counted.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ETHICAL ART COMPETITIONS

The forthcoming Culture Message for the period 2025–2028, which governs the Swiss Confederation’s cultural policy, including the FOC— and thus the Swiss Art Awards— and Pro Helvetia, states that:

“Cultural policy undertakes initiatives to improve the income, social security, and situation of cultural workers. It contributes to ensuring their fair remuneration. It promotes equal opportunities between the sexes [sic] and for under-represented groups. It provides the framework conditions that guarantee respect for the physical and mental integrity of cultural workers in their working environment.”³²

The Swiss Art Awards and any art organizations should truly implement reforms in order to comply with these directives and ensure decent labor conditions for the artists they work with.

The results of our survey have confirmed our initial intuition, namely that art competitions reproduce inequalities prevalent in capitalist society. They even function as the matrix supporting a neo-liberal approach to art. By validating a model of art production and giving surplus-value to some artists, art competitions promote the market model fostering speculation at the expense of other practices, more collective and non-commercial. In order to end this, we need to rethink the whole system of competition between artists, with the ultimate objective of abolishing art prizes altogether.

As art competitions will continue to be part of artists’ careers for some time, to limit the reproduction of discrimination, and open them to all artists, here is a set of propositions drawn from the results of this survey:³³

³². Culture Message 2025–2028, op. cit.

³³. Some of which emerged during the workshop *Let’s shape the future of the Swiss Art Awards!* that we organized in the exhibition space during the 2023 Swiss Art Awards.

- **Provide a decent remuneration to the finalists in addition to and separate from the budget for the production of works and expenses.**
- **Organize regular training for jury members on different kinds of discrimination, on the present and historically constructed power relations and asymmetries, on colonial and imperial representations, and their current effects on society and in the art field.**
- **Engage in ongoing self-reflection, evaluation and improvement on assessment criteria and selection procedures to exclude normalizing and social preference effects.**
- **Regularly review the composition of commissions, notably concerning the presence of art professionals belonging to disenfranchised groups, make regular turnover.**
- **Provide complete information on assessment criteria and selection procedures. Organize information meetings where artists can ask questions before applying. Provide consulting sessions with art professionals.**
- **Provide and advertise the possibility of feedback for artists regarding the reasons they were not selected or did not win, and the possibility of feedback to the organizers by participating artists regarding their experiences. Discuss and implement changes based on those experiences.**

- **Provide and advertise the possibility of calling on neutral, benevolent support, external to the institution, for finalists, jury members, and staff, to ensure that legal standards for the protection of personal integrity are respected (conflicts, mobbing, discrimination, harassment).**
- **Clearly indicate accessibility information for people with disabilities at all stages of the competition. Work to make the competition and the exhibition as accessible as possible. Hire expert associations to ensure that these new measures are executed appropriately.**
- **Abolish monetary prizes. Along with an art professional prize, establish the possibility of other juries: audience prize, finalists' prize, children's prize, etc.**
- **Ensure that everyone can apply, as many times as they wish, whatever their age, disability, origin or background, but limit the number of times anyone can win to encourage a greater turnover.**
- **Find ways to create a friendly, welcoming, collaborative, and supportive environment for finalists, and opportunities for artists to meet each other, e.g. by organizing a dinner during the installation phase, proposing a platform for sharing transport and resources, etc.**

We would like to thank all the artists who responded to our survey, the staff of the Swiss Art Awards and the Federal Art Commission, the participants of our workshop, and all those who contributed to our project closely or remotely.

Amandine Gay is director, producer, author, activist, and a regular speaker on Afrofeminism, the cultural industries, intersectionality and adoption.

Following *Speak Up (Ouvrir la voix, 2017)*—her first self-produced and self-distributed film which gives voice to 24 Black francophone women—, she released a second feature length documentary *A Story of One's Own (Une histoire à soi, 2021)*. This archival film on transnational and transracial adoption from the perspective of 5 adult adoptees. In 2018, she launched "Adoptees Awareness Month," a series of events held every year in November—between France, Switzerland, Belgium and Quebec—to allow adoptees to flip the script and reclaim the narrative. In 2021, she published her first book, *A Chocolate Doll (Une poupée en chocolat)*, an autobiographical essay on adoption (with La Découverte in France & Remue-Ménage in Quebec). In 2022, she moved back to Montreal to start a Black-owned production company: Caïssa Productions.

EMULATION OR COMPETITION

*LEARNING TO PLAY
AS A TEAM¹*

AMANDINE GAY

¹ Translated extract from the text first published on June 13, 2015, on her blog badassafrorem. Original and complete text in French available here: <https://badassafrorem.wordpress.com/2015/06/13/emulation-ou-competition-apprenons-a-jouer-collectif/>

I realized not long ago that I'd once again indulged in one of my old weaknesses: a taste for competition. I must say that for a long time, it was a vindictive desire that had driven me and saved me from depression. I wanted to prove that not all adopted children become social outcasts. I wanted to become the polar opposite of my brother, so I set out to succeed in everything he had given up on: music, sports, school. I wanted to prove that not only were Black people no less intelligent, but that on the contrary, I was always the most erudite and top of the class. This obsession with revenge and excellence first carried me forward: I was able to get out of the countryside when I was discovered at the age of 12 and moved to play for the Bron Basket Club (BBC), then to the city where I joined the NoirAbie.²

Realizing that I'd never be an outstanding musician, I abandoned this potential career in favor of basketball, despite having spent six years practicing *solfeggio*, followed by three years playing the cornet. As for school, my consecration came at the age of 17: as soon as I had passed my baccalaureate, I entered Sciences-Po Lyon. At the time, I was still playing in the Nationale 3, still with the BBC, when I abruptly *discovered* the dark side of a life based on competition: I wasn't doing anything for myself. My only driving force was: against the rest of the world! Having achieved most of my childhood ambitions, I found myself completely lost.

I didn't know what I really liked, or who I wanted to become. I'd spent so much time proving (myself) my worth that I'd never really thought about my deeper tastes and aspirations. Shortly afterwards, when I turned 18, I finally had access to my DDASS³ records, which turned my brain inside out. I realized that all my skills, determination and commitment to dominating and transforming my body would never be a sufficient distraction. Like all children born anonymously, I was heartbroken.

² Given that we're often reduced to a homogeneous group of uncontrolled origins from over there, far away, under coconut trees, a group of black and North African friends and I started inventing a state that would be ours, NoirAbie (Arablack/blackab). It's also a reminder that many children of post-colonial immigration are the product of racial mixes between the Caribbean and the whole of Africa (including North Africa). Bron is a suburb of Lyon with a large North African and black population, so my transfer to a new basketball team meant the end of my social life as a village girl growing up in an almost exclusively white environment.

³ DDAS stands for Direction Départementale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales (Health and Social Affairs Departments). It was a French government body, dissolved in 2010, which managed child welfare and anonymous births.

Marianne Jean-Baptiste ⁴

And despite all my efforts to prove (to myself) that I was different, I completely lost it. I gave up professional basketball, shaved my head, embarked on an extended period of self-destructive partying, and the rest is history. And so began a long road of unlearning what had initially helped me and ended up eating me up from the inside: the spirit of revenge and competition. If I'm now able to formulate it clearly, that's partly due to my therapy sessions, but also thanks to a video of a lecture by Albert Jacquard.⁵ You didn't see that one coming, did you?! Neither did I, I have to admit. In his talk on science education in schools, Albert Jacquard explains the difference between emulation and competition, and it was one of the great epiphanies of my life.

"Competition is meeting the other with the desire to surpass them. While emulation is meeting the other and saying to yourself: there are things they do better than I do, I'm going to ask for help to do it better. This is how you improve yourself."

This idea of meeting the other rather than dominating them has changed my life. For instance, in the activist world, discussions are often more about convincing than about changing our own way of thinking. It's all about proving the other side wrong, rather than listening to what others have to say, or seeing how it might inform our own thinking. We seek above all to dominate them. We wait until it's our turn to speak, preparing a reply that we hope will settle the debate, and that's the very opposite of an encounter. That's one of the reasons I turned to writing and art in general. My artistic work is political in the sense that it questions community life and allows me to display my subjectivity.

⁴. In *Secrets & Lies* (1996).

⁵. French researcher, biologist, engineer and philosopher.

But it's still just a suggestion, I'm offering my opinions, you don't have to agree. What I like most about art is that it leaves room for interpretation, discussion and, above all, time. As far as I'm concerned, I rarely have sudden epiphanies.



Epiphany⁶

Most opinions I've formed are the fruits of films, lectures, plays, discussions with friends, pieces of music, visits to exhibitions, trips, etc. Eventually, all these experiences and bits of thought merge together, enabling me to form my own opinion. In a way, that's what I aspire to today: to be one of the many clicks that make something click. A work of art—whether it's a film, a text, etc.—can only suggest. It's up to the person who receives it to decide what to do with it. That's the kind of relationship I'd rather have with others in the future.

I am writing all this today because I recently realized that the precarious conditions under which my film⁷ was produced led me to fall back into my old patterns. After all, a taste for competition is ultimately the expression of an insecurity: the fear of not succeeding, of not being talented enough, of being dispossessed of one's work/ideas. These insecurities are often justified. I've been the victim of plagiarism concerning my film and writings. Also a production company, with more money and lawyers than me, made a takeover bid for one of my screenplays. But often (and this is also my case), it's stress and anxiety about not succeeding that make us feel threatened by the work of our peers. I think this insecurity is reinforced by the internalized image of the Excellent Black person.

⁶ Image: Wee-bay in *The Wire*, "The Hunt," season 1, episode 11, 2002.

⁷ *Speak Up (Ouvrir la voix)*, a documentary film about black women from European colonial history in Africa and the West Indies, released in October 2017.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE ⁸

We learn from an early age that there won't be room for everyone: one *Harry Roselmack*, one *Audrey Pulvar*, one *Aïssa Maïga*, one *Christiane Taubira*... In short, in every field/industry/prestigious school, only one Black person can manage to bypass the glass ceiling, that's it, otherwise it becomes *communitarian*⁹ or *ghetto*. On a personal note, I was the only *Black person* in my class at Sciences-Po Lyon, *the first Black person* in the staff team at the Lyon Auditorium—who hired one Black woman and one Arab for the first time ever after getting a slap on the wrist for their lack of diversitayyy—, *the first Black waitress* in a chic brasserie in the Marais, etc., etc., etc. So we learn about intra-community competition from the youngest age. If you want to be *the Black one* in the office/school/TV show, avoid showing solidarity with the other Black people who might steal from you the only spot allocated to your group. Worse still, we're so alienated that once through the gate, we close it behind us, bringing about our programmed annihilation. The very principle of the *Excellent Black person* is that the minute you are co-opted by the white world and agree to cut ties with the Black community, you are placed in a position of extreme precariousness. So either you're playing the whiteness game, and join the team of those "washing whiter than white" to keep your seat; or you'll be dropped as soon as another Excellent Black person appears on the market. Because once you've cut yourself off from your community, who's going to be there to support you when the whitewashers are no longer interested in you?

⁸ Image: *Highlander II: The Quickening*, 1991.

⁹ In French "communautaire" or "communautarisme" is nowadays used by reactionary forces to refer to non-white communities supposedly leading to division or conflict within society.



The very idea that making up the numbers is not a strength but a threat is at the heart of what prevents the French Black community from asserting itself in public and political spheres. To be clear, I'm not saying we should accept everything from the community because we are Black. What I am saying is that we need to think about how to empower each other, collectively. Forming networks, unions (in the film/entertainment industry, for example), creating coalitions that give us a voice, not because we're the latest exotic flavor of the moment, but because we're part of the political landscape and have ways of exerting pressure (boycotting, for example, which only makes sense if the call is widely answered).

It is this aspect of shared responsibility for the community that I would like to put back on the agenda of Black people who hold even the smallest amount of power, starting with myself. Some practices must stop, and others that we can learn from—because while I don't idealize the United States, I have to admit that intra-community solidarity practices have proven their worth among African-Americans. Here's the list of rules I've set myself, it's non-exhaustive, it will evolve throughout my life, and can be adapted according to each person's pursuits:

1) I will not participate in the precarization of my community.

This means that when you reach a certain degree of financial autonomy and comfort in your life (which I hope will soon be my case): you don't give unpaid internships to sistas and bros; you don't organize events with exclusionary entrance fees, etc. An example, for my film, which was made in full pirate mode—because let me remind you: I'm receiving assistance as I have no money of my own—, I only sought out people who were not in a precarious situation, since I was asking them to work for free. I made this choice even though it made my second principle quite difficult.

2) I make films with a gender-balanced team, in which over 50% of the technicians and crew are non-white.

It's only by working together that we'll overcome our precarious situation. With equivalent skills, I'll systematically favor non-whites. That's what I call: THE BOTTOM-UP QUOTAS. When we have the means to wipe out employment discrimination, it's up to us to prioritize our own people.

3) I ask to be interviewed by non-white journalists.

Same principle: give jobs to members of my community AND confront editorial teams with the whiteness of their staff. THE BOTTOM-UP QUOTAS.

4) I don't take credit for and/or participate in the invisibilization of the work by members of my community.

Non-white bloggers, activists, researchers, journalists regularly have their work stolen and/or exploited. So when I write a paper for which I am paid, even for my blog, I carefully check before publishing whether others have already addressed these issues. That way, I can quote them and contribute to the visibility and recognition of their work. WE NEED TO CELEBRATE AND SUPPORT THE WORK OF OUR COMMUNITY. REMINDER: There is plenty of room for everyone and each of our points of view is unique. The more we are to address a certain topic, the better!!!!

5) When I'm invited to speak, I squeeze in other non-whites.

When I'm contacted for an event, I try to include as many relevant people as possible. Not only because it's great to be surrounded by friends, but most importantly, to prevent perpetuating the myth of the Excellent Black woman. As the mainstream media love to reduce collective struggles to individualities, it would allow me to avoid becoming "the face of Afrofeminism."

**6) When I'm invited to speak
and unable to take part:
I GIVE THE PLATFORM TO OTHERS
WHO ARE QUALIFIED TO SPEAK.**

Same argument as above.

7) I am my sister's keeper.

If I am invited to participate in an event along with younger/less experienced speakers, I make sure they are not being ripped off. Expenses (transport and food) must be covered. A conference has to be prepared, it's a job, and any job deserves a payment. Giving free talks shouldn't be expected, and asking to be paid isn't rude, it's NORMAL.

8) FUCK YOU, PAY ME.

I'm not looking for validation from the white world, I'm not Saint Francis of Assisi, in short, I don't work for free: you already have access to my blog, my articles, my social media accounts and my films. All this is already a GIFT. Patting me on the back or sending me DMs so I can explain life to you isn't the way to help me out. It's by doing your share, so supporting and spreading the word about my work and, above all, not asking me to work for you unpaid. These are the basic principles I'm trying to stick to, because as the saying goes, "Alone I go faster; together we go further."

How Are Artists Chosen?
Exclusivity, Precarious Work and Asymmetries in Art Competitions

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