



PRESS RELEASE

## **Mario Merz Prize**

International Art and Music Prize

**January 29, 2015**

**Finalists Exhibition and Concert**

**and**

**Opening Call for entries for the second edition**

Art Section - Finalists Exhibition Opening:

Lida Abdul, Glenn Ligon, Naeem Mohaiemen, Anri Sala and Wael Shawky

29 January at 6pm

Fondazione Merz (Via Limone 24 – Turin)

Music Section - Finalists Concert:

Paolo Boggio, Arturo Corrales, Vassos Nicolaou, Cyrill Schürch and Vito Žuraj

29 January at 8.30 pm

Biblioteca Civica Musicale Andrea Della Corte - Villa La Tesoriera (Corso Francia 186 – Turin)

The Mario Merz International Prize—which was officially presented on November 9, 2013 at the Mole Antonelliana, a Turin landmark—has been created to both commemorate **Mario Merz** and launch a forward-looking art project. Through the expertise of a close International network of professionals, it seeks to bring attention to significant artists while also involving young composers in an innovative contemporary music project.

Associated with the **Fondazione Merz**, the Prize is promoted by an **organizing committee** and supported by an esteemed **International Honors Committee**. Its aim is to create a new network of exhibition programs and music activities in **Italy** and **Switzerland**. The pairing between the two countries originates from their common ground, both being productive cultural and artistic hubs. Furthermore, Switzerland is the country that gave birth to Mario Merz while Italy adopted him, becoming his creative centre.

Firmly believing that **art represents boundless freedom of thought** and promotes self-determination as well as the free circulation of culture and ideas, the Prize is dedicated to those artists and musicians who show a pure will to carry out their artistic research beyond the hardship and obstacles determined by political, social, or geographical background.



Considering that the art processes of the past 20 years have particularly focused on historical, social and political changes and bearing in mind the tragedies that yet afflict mankind, the Prize intends to spotlight artists and composers whose work and individual paths convey qualities of generosity of thought, social awareness, and innovative research.

**In 2014 the two pre-selection panels drew up a shortlist of 5 finalists for each section of this first edition of the Mario Merz Prize. The finalists' work will be featured in a group exhibition and a concert, both taking place in Turin on January 29.**

The Prize has received the **Presidential Medal of the Italian Republic**, and is supported by the **Swiss Embassy** in Italy, the **Italian Embassy in Switzerland**, the **Regione Piemonte**, the **City of Zurich** and the **City of Turin**. It is awarded biennially.

### **The Mario Merz Prize Finalists Exhibition**

**From January 29 to April 12, 2015** the exhibition spaces of the **Fondazione Merz** in Turin (Via Limone 24) will display a selection of works by the finalists. The exhibition project is curated by **Beatrice Merz** and includes a **new publishing project** covering the Prize.

The number of entries was remarkable, with **701 nominators** and **512 nominees**, among which were selected the five finalists **Lida Abdul, Glenn Ligon, Naeem Mohaiemen, Anri Sala and Wael Shawky**.

Jurors **Claudia Gioia** (independent curator), **Beatrix Ruf** (director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam) and **Marisa Merz** had the challenging task of selecting the five finalists for the art section.

### **Art Section Finalists**

**Lida Abdul** (Kabul 1973) lives and works in Kabul and Los Angeles. In 2005 she was the very first Afghan artist to represent her country at the Venice Biennale. Her work has been shown in several biennials, such as San Paulo Biennial 2006, Gwangju Biennial 2006, Moscow Biennial 2007 and Sharjah Biennial 2007 and dOCUMENTA XIII in 2012.

**Glenn Ligon** (New York 1960) lives and works in New York. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and prizes, including the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant 1997, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship 2003, Skowhegan Medal for Painting 2006 and the Studio Museums Joyce Alexander Wien Artist Prize 2009. He has exhibited at dOCUMENTA 2002 and at the Whitney Biennial in 1991 and 1993. He has had several solo shows in public



institutions, including the Whitney Museum in 2011, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Studio Museum of Harlem New York in 2012.

**Naeem Mohaiemen** (London 1969) lives and works in Dhaka and New York. He is a writer and a visual artist whose work for the most part explores the condition of immigrants and minorities. He has taken part in various international projects. His studies and his artistic and literary production have brought him to work in different parts of the world, where he received support and recognition, as from the Sharjah Art Foundation in 2011.

**Anri Sala** (Tirana 1974) lives and works in Berlin. He has been awarded many prizes including the Prix Gilles Dusein 2000, Young Artist Prize – Venice Biennial 2001 and the Absolut Art Award 2011. His work has been shown in major museums, such as the Dallas Museum of Art 2002, Tate Gallery 2004, Serpentine Gallery 2011, Centre Pompidou, 2012. In 2013 he represented France at the Venice Biennale.

**Wael Shawky** (Alexandria, Egypt, 1971) lives and works in Alexandria. He received numerous awards for his work including the Grand Nile Prize Cairo Biennial 1996, Honorary Award Rita Longa International Symposium 2001, Islamic World Arts Initiative, Arts International 2004 and International Messa Grant 2005. His work was exhibited at Kunst-Werke in Berlin, Istanbul Modern and DOCUMENTA XIII in 2012, and Serpentine Gallery in 2014.

### **The Mario Merz Prize Finalists Concert**

**On January 29, 2015**, the finalists' scores will be premiered in the wonderful 18<sup>th</sup> century setting of **Villa La Tesoriera** (corso Francia 186) in collaboration with the **Biblioteca Civica Musicale Andrea Della Corte**. The concert will be directed by **Willy Merz** and performed by the Ensemble **DE SONO Futura** in collaboration with the **DE SONO Association**.

The music section recorded a significant number of entries, with **202 nominators** and **132 nominees**. Pre-selection jurors, **Gianluca Cascioli** (pianist), **Stefano Pierini** (composer and lecturer at the Centro di Formazione Musicale in Turin) and **Philip Samartzis** (sound-designer and lecturer at the University of Melbourne) faced the challenging task of short-listing the five finalists: **Paolo Boggio, Arturo Corrales, Vassos Nicolaou, Cyrill Schürch** and **Vito Žuraj**.

### **Music Section Finalists**

**Paolo Boggio** (Vercelli 1964). Winner of numerous national and international competitions ("2012 Karol Szymanowski International Competition for Orchestra", "Premi Internacional por Orquestra – Ciudad de Tarragona 2004", "The 14th Ivan Spassov Symphonic orchestra composition competition"). His works have featured in major music festivals, including "Torino Settembre Musica" and "4th Portland Chamber Music Festival" and performed by national and



international orchestras and ensembles, such as the "I Pomeriggi Musicali" Orchestra, Turin Philharmonic Orchestra, Krakow Philharmonic Orchestra, Trio Debussy, New York North/South Ensemble.

**Arturo Corrales** (El Salvador 1973). Composer, conductor, guitarist, professor, and architect, he studied in his homeland as well as Geneva, Lugano and Paris. He co-founded the Vortex Ensemble for the creation of new music and has participated in several international festivals as composer, lecturer and conductor. Despite the experimental quality of his works, his music shows ethnic and popular influences and a constant concern with form and time-space perception for a «liveable and human music». He is currently professor of composition and analysis at the *Conservatoire Populaire de Musique* (Geneva) and is working on a doctoral thesis about «Musical Figures».

**Vassos Nicolaou** (Cyprus 1971). He studied at the Academies of Music in Cologne and Frankfurt, at the Paris Conservatory and at IRCAM. His music has been performed, among others, by the Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble musikFabrik, New World Symphony, and by renowned soloists such as Peter Eötvös, Emilio Pomarico, Beat Furrer, Johannes Kalitzke, Franck Ollu, Tamara Stefanovich, Johannes Schwarz and Pierre-Laurent Aimard. Winner of several awards and competitions, including the Giga-Hertz Special Award, the Tremplin Prize by IRCAM Ensemble Intercontemporain, Bernd Allois Zimmerman Prize from the city of Cologne and the Villa Massimo Fellowship in Rome.

**Cyрил Schürch** (Luzern 1974). He is an award-winning composer and pianist. Published by Carus-Verlag, his scores have been widely performed, most recently by the Hermitage State Orchestra in St. Petersburg, Ayre Flutes in London, and the Moores Concert Chorale in Houston. He received his PhD in music composition at the King's College London, and a BM and MM in composition and piano at the UH Moores School of Music. Schürch has been commissioned a piece for Europa Cantat 2015.

**Vito Žuraj** (Maribor 1979). He studied composition in Ljubljana (Marko Mihevc), Dresda (Lothar Voigtländer) and Karlsruhe (Wolfgang Rihm). In 2009/2010 he was fellow at the International Ensemble Modern Academy. He has collaborated, among others, with the New York Philharmonic, RSO SWR Stuttgart, hr-Sinfonieorchester, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien and Scharoun Ensemble Berlin. He took part in renowned festivals such as Salzburger Festspiele, Manifeste Paris, Ultraschall Berlin, Takefu Japan and Gaudeamus Muziekweek Utrecht. He was awarded the prize for the 57th City of Stuttgart Composition Competition and holds a lectureship for instrumentation and Gregorian chant at the Karlsruhe University of Music. In 2014 he was artist in residence at the German Academy Rome Villa Massimo.

## The winners



The public is invited to vote when visiting the exhibition or after the finalists' concert. Voters will also have the possibility to listen to the scores and view the artwork by logging onto the prize website [www.mariomerzprize.org](http://www.mariomerzprize.org) and cast their vote online.

To evaluate the works and determine the winners there will also be a **Jury of Experts**. Members of the Final Jury for the Art Section are: **Manuel Borja-Villel** (Director of the Museo Nacional Centro de arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), **Massimiliano Gioni** (Head Curator New Museum, New York – Art Director Fondazione Trussardi, Milan), **Lawrence Weiner** (artist) and **Beatrice Merz**.

Members of the Final Jury for the Music Section feature: **Dieter Ammann** (composer), **Thomas Demenga** (cellist and composer), **Alexander Lonquich** (pianist) and **Willy Merz**.

**The winning artist's work will be featured in a solo show to be set up in the exhibition spaces of the Fondazione Merz in Turin.** The artist will also receive support to create a new project. The exhibition, accompanied by a publication, will subsequently be showcased at the recently established **Merz Foundation Switzerland**.

For this first edition, **the winning musician will be commissioned a music piece for a gallery space and a composition**, which will be performed by **the DE SONO string orchestra**. **The latter will premiere in Torino at the beginning of the 2015-2016 season**, within a programme of contemporary music and traditional repertoire. **Accompanying the winner's score is a new composition by Willy Merz** for piano duo and orchestra to be performed by **Alexander Lonquich** and **Cristina Barbuti**, and the Concert K 271 *Jeunehomme* by W. A. Mozart for piano and orchestra to be performed by **Alexander Lonquich** and by the **Archi-DE SONO Orchestra**.

**The winners of this first edition will be announced by end of April 2015**

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