

Media release

Basel, 9 May 2023

Yann Stéphane Biscaut is the winner of the 2023 Helvetia Art Prize

The 2023 Helvetia Art Prize has been won by Yann Stéphane Biscaut (b. 1998), a graduate of the Visual Arts Master's programme at Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD). An award for young artists, it carries prize money of 15,000 Swiss francs and the opportunity to stage a solo exhibition at the LISTE Art Fair in Basel.

Yann Stéphane Biscaut (b.1998) is the winner of the 2023 Helvetia Art Prize. The winner holds a Master's degree from Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD). In his work this Cameroon-born artist questions the historical memory of his double identity through the painterly construction of landscapes. Through this classical medium he addresses highly relevant sociopolitical issues, opening up a fresh and very personal perspective on the classical genre of landscape painting.

The series "Drift" (2023) by Yann Stéphane Biscaut is part of the Plattform23 exhibition. It can be seen at Espace Arlaud in Lausanne until 25 June 2023.

Landscape as a means of communication

In his three-part installation "Drift", Yann Stéphane Biscaut allows different worlds from different times and geographical locations to merge into hybrid dreamscapes. The artist uses foam to underpin the canvases, thus giving the three different-sized paintings an object-like presence. In "Un arbre à palabres" (2023), the largest of the three works, threatening storm clouds with ghostly shadows meet vast fields under blue skies. Low-flying albatrosses hang almost completely motionless in the midday heat, while imaginary creatures fall from the gentle clouds of a prairie-like section. The rhythmic reading of the painting's varying depths and textures is further enhanced by the uneven, padded background.

A clash of different realities

The focus of Biscaut's painting lies in a field of tension stemming from his research on the diasporic culture of the Caribbean philosopher and writer Edouard Glissant, and his understanding of the concept of "creolization". Glissant speaks of an intermediary and spiritual space that opens up between the place we originally came from and our increasing affinity with new geographical areas. The young artist's painting reflects this encounter between different realities along a geographical and spiritual journey.

In his landscape paintings, the artist draws from this dreamlike state between memory and fantasy. In doing so he illuminates an intimate reflection on themes of rootedness, identity and our understanding of place and time. Between landscape painting and shaped canvas, the "Drift" installation makes direct reference to the history of the medium of painting. But not only that: Biscaut's landscapes also open up a portrait of the artist himself and give us an insight into his own diasporic identity.

Jury of the 2023 Helvetia Art Prize

This year's Helvetia Art Prize jury consists of Kathleen Bühler (Kunstmuseum Bern), Victoria Mühlig (Musée d'art de Pully), Joanna Kamm (LISTE Art Fair Basel), Maja Wismer (Kunstmuseum Basel) and Nathalie Loch (Helvetia Art Department).

Start-up assistance as part of cultural commitment

With the Art Prize, Helvetia Insurance supports young artists at the beginning of their career. The Helvetia Art Prize is aimed at the graduates of Swiss universities of applied sciences in the field of fine arts and media art. The prize is a double form of assistance: On the one hand, Yann Stéphane Biscaut receives prize money of 15,000 francs, and, on the other hand, the opportunity to present his work to an international specialist audience and the general public with a solo exhibition at the LISTE Art Fair Basel 2024. Since being founded in 1996, the LISTE has been committed to actively promoting galleries and artists in the young and middle generations.

The Helvetia Art Prize is a key aspect of the international insurance group's commitment to art. The prize has been awarded each year since 2004. Initially known as the Nationale Suisse Art Prize, it has been named the Helvetia Art Prize since the merger of Helvetia and Nationale Suisse. Helvetia, which also insures art, has one of the most important collections of contemporary Swiss art, stretching back 80 years. The collection focuses on paintings, drawings and photography. Since 2015 Helvetia has had its own, publicly accessible display space in the form of the Helvetia Art Foyer at its head office in Basel. Here, thematic exhibitions featuring works from its own collection or solo presentations by artists are staged.

Plattform23

7 May to 25 June 2023

Opening hours:

Wed – Fri: 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Sat / Sun: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Espace Arlaud

Pl. de la Riponne 2B

1005 Lausanne

www.plattformplattform.ch



Figure: "Un arbre à palabres", oil on canvas, foam, wood.

This media release is also available on our website www.helvetia.ch/media.

For further information please contact:

Eric Zeller
Communications Manager/Press officer

Phone: +41 58 280 50 33
media.relations@helvetia.ch

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Helvetia is the leading all-lines insurer in Switzerland. In the Europe segment comprising Germany, Italy, Austria and Spain, the company has firmly rooted market positions for generating above-average growth. In the Specialty Markets segment, Helvetia offers tailored special insurance and reinsurance cover worldwide. With a business volume of CHF 11.1 billion, Helvetia

generated IFRS net income after tax of CHF 614.4 million in the 2022 financial year. The shares of Helvetia Holding AG are traded on SIX Swiss Exchange.

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