

Zurich Art Prize 2020

Amalia Pica

Round table (and other forms)

29.10. –
17.1.2021

MEDIA ORIENTATION
27.10.2020, 11 am

OPENING DAYS
29 and 30 October,
11 am – 5 pm: free admission

This year, the *Zurich Art Prize*, awarded annually by Museum Haus Konstruktiv and Zurich Insurance Group Ltd, goes to Amalia Pica (b. 1978 in Neuquén, lives and works in London). The Argentine-British artist is the thirteenth winner of the renowned award. Endowed with CHF 100,000, the prize comprises an CHF 80,000 budget for the production of a solo exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv and CHF 20,000 in prize money.

Amalia Pica's installations, sculptures, drawings, films and performances are characterized by a simple and playful language of forms and multilayered content. The themes that Pica often incorporates into her artwork include verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as civic participation. How does communication work on the basis of language, symbols, objects and gestures? How do these relate to political and societal structures? And how can such structures be made visible, or even changed, by artistic interventions?

At Museum Haus Konstruktiv, under the title *Round table (and other forms)*, Amalia Pica presents a newly produced work, along with an earlier one. In both works, the artist purposefully explores the role of joy and pleasure in coping with the pressure that builds up as a result of bureaucratic structures or monotonous office work. Thus, on the first two floors of our building, an inspiring show has been developed, which wittily reflects on the form and function of office paraphernalia (conference tables, A4 paper sheets, plastic wallets and office stamps) as well as on their organizational power with regard to our social fabric. To no small extent, Pica's (thought) experiment resonates in the time of COVID-19, which has also profoundly changed our everyday office life.

The exhibition begins with 14 conference tables, placed in the entrance hall on the museum's first floor. Rather than industrially produced pieces in modest shades of gray or brown, these are custom-made products comprising powder-coated table legs fitted with rollers, along with rectangular, semi-circular and trapezoidal tabletops. Their surfaces, coated with high-quality Formica laminate, feature geometric patterns in selected colors and combinations. They virtually cry out for constant kaleidoscopic rearrangement in new formations – beyond the round table of the meeting room.

As part of the concept of this piece, entitled *Rearranging the conference table*, Pica provides scope for the impulse to shift the tables, in that she has added a performance element to the installation: Every day when the museum is open (Tuesday to Sunday) between 1 and 1:30 pm, a performance lasting about 5 minutes takes place, in which two museum guards combine the tables to form new geometric arrangements. The performers move the tables according to configurations determined by Pica in advance, going through a certain number of variations during the course of the exhibition. Pica's choreography was created partly in response to the specifications formulated within the museum's precautionary measures, especially the distancing rules. This 'table-turning' can thus be understood, on the one hand, as adherence to the rules that regulate our everyday life and, on the other hand, as playing with them.

Both as a stand-alone artwork, and as a supplement to the conference tables with modified form and function, Pica presents the short film *Rehearsing the conference table*, which she made in collaboration with cinematographer Rafael Ortega. Using stop-motion technique, this nine-minute film shows animated prototypes of the tabletops. They are arranged by three pairs of hands on a natural wooden board in manifold variations – with an at times hypnotic rhythm. One of the sequences shows the configurations realized in the performance, revealing the moving images' additional function as a guide for the performed rearrangements.

On the first floor, the setting, comprising installation, performance and film, is supplemented by a special soundscape, which belongs to the film but also acts as a soundtrack for the entire exhibition: Typical office noises can be heard. The recording, a file from the Internet, has been downloaded thousands of times over the past months for the purpose of making the home office sound like one's normal office workplace, either prompted by feelings of nostalgia for pre-pandemic times or to increase concentration. The intensity of this ambient sound has been modelled according to the rhythm of a 40-hour week: On five days of the week, the exhibition space is filled with the sounds of the keyboard, telephone, printer and coffee machine, as well as conversations between work colleagues, all of which become quieter during lunchtime in accordance with the reduced intensity of work. They are never completely silent though, not even on weekends, when the atmospheric sounds of an almost empty office can be heard. After all, the increase in home-office work has caused the boundaries between daily work routine and leisure time to become even more blurred; typing and telephoning are always happening somewhere, even if only in a subdued manner.

The installation *Joy in Paperwork: The Archive* (2016) is presented on the museum's second floor. Arranged in a grid that takes up the entire surface of the two longitudinal walls, this is a series of A4 paper sheets marked with stamps that are normally used for bureaucratic processes. Pica began to 'draw' with such stamps in order to counter the tedious bureaucracy of her naturalization process in Great Britain with fun escapism. In hundreds of drawings, words such as PAID, RECEIVED, CANCELLED or PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL are juxtaposed, superimposed and arranged in sequences, thus forming partly figurative and partly decorative motifs. The fact that Pica was not allowed to leave Great Britain while the naturalization process was ongoing, and thus throughout the entire duration of the work process for *Joy in Paperwork*, takes on new significance against the current backdrop of limited freedom to travel, such that many can now relate a little more easily to Pica's experience. The question arises as to what strategies we as a society can find for developing something joyful out of the restrictions of the present situation.

In 2003, Amalia Pica graduated from Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires with a bachelor's degree in fine arts. From 2004 to 2005, she was artist in residence at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam.

Pica can look back on a wide range of solo exhibitions, including *Amalia Pica*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla, ES (2020); *Private & Confidential*, The New Art Gallery Walsall, UK (2019); *(un)heard*, Cc Foundation, Shanghai, CHN (2018); *please open hurry*, PICA – Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, AUS (2017); *ears to speak of*, The Power Plant, Toronto, CAN (2017); *A un brazo de distancia*, NC-arte, Bogotá, COL (2017); *Katachrese*, Kunstverein Freiburg, GER (2016); *Amalia Pica en el MNBA*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Neuquén, ARG (2013); *A∩B∩C*, Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, MEX (2013); and *Chronic Listeners*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, SWI (2012).

In addition, she has participated in numerous group exhibitions, such as *And Say the Animal Responded?*, Fact Liverpool, UK (2020); *Fly me to the Moon – The Moon Landing: 50 Years On*, Kunsthau Zurich, SWI (2019); *Concrete Contemporary*, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, SWI (2019); *Monuments to Us*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA (2018); *Soundtracks*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA (2017); *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand*, Kunsthalle Wien, AUT (2016); *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2014); *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes*, MOCAD, Detroit, USA (2013); *Project Space: Ruins in Reverse*, TATE Modern, London, UK (2013); and *World Event*, Kunsthalle Basel, SWI (2008).

Moreover, Amalia Pica participated in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011), the 11th Gwangju Biennale (2016) and the 12th Shanghai Biennale (2018). Her works are present in renowned collections such as the Tate Collection in London, and at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

PUBLIC GUIDED TOUR IN ENGLISH

Sun 22 Nov, 11.45 am – 12.45 pm: with Linda Christinger

DIGITAL PROGRAM

Our digital program is independent of our opening hours and accessible from all over the world. Whether as a preparation, as a supplement or to deepen your visit at Museum Haus Konstruktiv. Further information: hauskonstruktiv.ch

The Zurich Art Prize is a cultural engagement
by Zurich Insurance Group Ltd



PRESS CONTACT

Flurina Ribí Forster, +41 (0)44 217 70 98, f.ribi@hauskonstruktiv.ch

ZÜRICH ART PRIZE

The *Zurich Art Prize* was set up in 2007 by Museum Haus Konstruktiv together with Zurich Insurance Group Ltd, patron partner of the museum, and now has a strong international presence. Each year, an independent artist is honored, who operates at the interfaces where the cultural heritage of constructivist-concrete and conceptual art, on the one hand, meets contemporary trends on the other hand. Since 2017, the prize donated by Zurich Insurance Group Ltd has consisted of a CHF 80,000 budget for the production of a solo exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv and CHF 20,000 in prize money for the artist.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Each year, Sabine Schaschl, director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv, invites six curators, critics and art experts to each nominate one artist, who has already made an impression as a visible force on the international art scene, and who demonstrates an intellectual extrapolation of the constructivist-concrete and conceptual heritage within contemporary art. The nominations for this year's award came from: Jacqueline Burckhardt, art historian and editor of the periodical art publication *Parkett* (until 2017); Andreas Fiedler, director of KINDL in Berlin; Vít Havránek, pro-rector at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and former director of tranzit.cz; Helen Hirsch, director of Kunstmuseum Thun; Andrea Schlieker, director of exhibitions and displays at Tate Britain in London; and Chris Sharp, curator at the project space Lulu in Mexico City.

SHORTLIST 2020

Alongside Amalia Pica, the following were also nominated for the 2020 *Zurich Art Prize*: Svenja Deininger (b. 1974 in Vienna, Austria), Zhanna Kadyrova (b. 1981 in Kiev, Ukraine), Suki Seokyeong Kang (b. 1977 in Seoul, South Korea), Matt Paweski (b. 1980 in Los Angeles, USA) and Raphaela Vogel (b. 1988 in Berlin, Germany).

JURY 2020

The composition of the jury was as follows: Sabine Schaschl, director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv (chairperson); Tobia Bezzola, director of Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana in Lugano; Carin Gantenbein, head of professional liability at Zurich Insurance Company Ltd in Zurich; Friedemann Malsch, director of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz; and Stella Rollig, director of the gallery Belvedere in Vienna.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 2019: Leonor Antunes (b. 1972 in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 2018: Robin Rhode (b. 1976 in Cape Town, South Africa)
- 2017: Marguerite Humeau (b. 1986 in Cholet, France)
- 2016: Nairy Baghramian (b. 1971 in Isfahan, Iran)
- 2015: Latifa Echakhch (b. 1974 in El Khnansa, Morocco)
- 2014: Haroon Mirza (b. 1977 in London, UK)
- 2013: Adrián Villar Rojas (b. 1980 in Rosario, Argentina)
- 2012: Mariana Castillo Deball (b. 1975 in Mexico City)
- 2011: Mai-Thu Perret (b. 1976 in Geneva)
- 2010: Ryan Gander (b. 1976 in London, UK)
- 2009: Tino Sehgal (b. 1976 in London, UK)
- 2007: Carsten Nicolai (b. 1965 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, now Chemnitz, Germany)