

Press kit

Chi va piano
Slow art with the Collections
Valais Art Museum
18 May–10 November 2019

‘Does a picture come into being all at once? No, it is built up piece by piece, the same as a house.

And what about the beholder: does he finish with a work all at once?’

Paul Klee¹

The Salon Suisse of the Biennale Arte Venezia 2019 has given carte blanche to Celine Eidenbenz, Director of the Valais Art Museum. Echoing this Italian programme devoted to slowness (entitled ‘ s l o w ’), the art museum will be following the lunar calendar, each month exhibiting a different work from its collection. Produced specifically for the exhibition, the work *Luna* by artist Marie Velardi sets the tempo with a lunar clock on display in the gallery. For a closer focus on this selection, specialists will be on hand at mindfulness workshops in French and German. Events will be held in Sion, including *Retours de Venise* (‘Back from Venice’) on 19 May, as part of International Museum Day.

The Salon Suisse at the Biennale Arte Venezia 2019

Organised by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia since 2012, the Salon Suisse runs in parallel to the exhibition in the Swiss Pavilion during the Biennale Arte and Biennale Architettura. Consisting of a series of performances, conferences and cultural events, the Salon Suisse provides an opportunity to explore and experience art in a reflective and stimulating atmosphere. All the events are to be held in Venice at the Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi over three weekends in September–November from Thursday to Saturday, except the opening event, which will take place at Accademia di Belle Arti, from 3 to 11 p.m. The other Autumn events will start at 10 a.m. / 4 p.m. / 6 p.m. / 7 p.m.

Detailed programme: see attached document and at <https://biennials.ch>.

¹ Klee, Paul, *Notebooks Volume 1: The Thinking Eye*, ed. Jürg Spiller, Lund Humphries, London, 1973, p. 78. Translated by Ralph Manheim from the German edition, ‘Das bildnerische Denken’ (Schwabe & Co., Verlag, Basel, 1956)

s l o w : slowness as a motto

On the *piano nobile* of Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi in Venice where the Salon takes place, *s l o w* questions the pace of creation and its intrinsic slowness. In an art world governed by the gaze and scopophilic aspects, slowing down would make way for heightened sensory experiences and better resistance to productivism.

From idleness to cultural restlessness, the 2019 Salon Suisse engages with slowness and art by considering topics such as impatience, speed gardening, burnout, mindfulness, the lunar calendar, repetition, taking time out, grounding, working in bed, laziness, hypnosis and the creative process, sensory experience, conviviality, resistance, night walking from the 1970s, waiting, old age and slow dancing. It brings together a range of participants from diverse backgrounds: artists, art historians, performers, musicians, cooks, choreographers, doctors and more. Through a participatory programme based on an interdisciplinary approach, *s l o w* fosters resonance, proximity and conviviality.

The Valais Art Museum, echoing the Venice programme

As museum visitors, we apparently spend an average of three seconds looking at a work of art. In today's world, when our phones can occupy our attention for several hours a day, and advertising images overwhelm us, we need to reconnect at a natural pace: *chi va piano va sano e va lontano* (who goes slowly, goes healthily and goes far), as the Italian proverb goes.

The *Chi va piano* exhibition offers visitors an opportunity to experience 'slow art'. Over a period of six months, the Valais Art Museum gallery known as 'Au Quatrième' will be presenting ten or so works one by one to be contemplated, taking the time to look at the details, linger and dawdle along. Comfortably seated in one of the armchairs provided, we are invited to immerse ourselves in this space to gauge the effects of time on observation. As in the rest of the museum, the artwork is free from traditional labels so as to promote a liberated, sensitive and uncomplicated approach. Going beyond the simple gaze, it is your whole being that is attentive to the comfort of the seat, the acoustics of the room, your own breathing. Once it has physical form, slow art becomes a sensory experience. How does our perception of the work change? What happens when we observe a work of art for five minutes, a quarter of an hour or even an hour?

Echoing the programme of the Salon Suisse of the Biennale Arte Venezia 2019 on the theme *s l o w*, this exhibition extends to the art museum's outdoor spaces, conducive to other slow pursuits such as reading, drawing, idleness and even napping.

The collection regulated by the lunar calendar with artist Marie Velardi

The works are changed over according to the pace of the lunar calendar, i.e. every 29.5 days during the full moon. The work by Swiss artist Marie Velardi (b. 1977) entitled *Luna* sets the tempo through a lunar clock placed in the room, whose single hand moves around the dial in keeping with the moon's cycle. Produced specifically for this exhibition, the work allows us to consider the celestial body from a perspective other than that of space exploration, at a time when we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Neil Armstrong's first step on the Moon.

Instructions

To appreciate a work of art, you need to spend time with it:

- 1) Sit comfortably in front of the artwork: find an armchair, footstool or mat in the room.
- 2) Expand your sensory perception: What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? What is your breathing like? How is the room temperature?
- 3) Be patient: feeling nothing can be part of the experience. Trust your first impressions.
- 4) Be selective: if you spent 15 minutes looking at all 5,417 works in our collection, it would take you about four hours a day over an entire year.
- 5) Take your time: we'd recommend you stay at least 10 minutes with each chosen artwork.

Exhibited works and changeover dates

The works in the collection exhibited in *Chi va piano* have been selected for their format, intensity, quality and development potential when viewed for a long time. Produced by renowned artists from a variety of periods such as Swiss artists François Boson (b. 1949), Alexandre Calame (b. 1810, d. 1864) and Nicolas Faure (b. 1949), Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz (b. 1930, d. 2017), Spanish artist Miquel Barceló (b. 1957) and French artist Sophie Calle (b. 1953), the works will be presented one at a time for a period of approximately one month, in keeping with the pace of the lunar calendar represented in the work *Luna* created by Swiss artist Marie Velardi (b. 1977). Featuring techniques as diverse as photography, painting, tapestry and installation, they are taken from the museum's reserves where they usually live.

The exhibition opens with a series by photographer Nicolas Faure focusing on the motorway landscapes of the Valais. Before moving on to slowing down, we look at the theme of speed and the excesses that result from it, in line with some artists' worship of them in the early 20th century by claiming 'We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed' (Marinetti, *Futurist Manifesto*, 1909).

Nicolas Faure (b. 1949)

Photographs featuring the motorway landscape in Valais, from the series *Autoland*, *Landscape A* and *Alles in Ordnung* (1996–2006)

Exhibition from Saturday 18 May to Sunday 16 June

Since the 1990s, Nicolas Faure has been creating a vast corpus of landscape photographs of contemporary Switzerland. In series focusing on motorway landscapes, the photographer looks at the developed land beside the motorway, to which busy motorists pay no attention: this 'nature', which seems wild to us, is in fact entirely created by human beings. Far from the romantic representations and the tourist image that has been meticulously constructed since

the 19th century, these images reveal the artificial design of the Swiss landscape. Opening this exhibition devoted to slowness, Nicolas Faure's works contemplate our need for speed in getting around.

François Boson (b. 1949)

...Alors la limpidité de l'air le transportera vers les espoirs d'un nouveau printemps..., 2005–2007, oil on canvas

Exhibition from Tuesday 18 June to Sunday 14 July

An artist who studied at the School of Fine Arts in Sion in the late 1960s, Boson developed his style in the wake of a return to figuration. Inspired by surrealism, 'Then the limpidity of the air will transport him to hopes of another spring...' is made up of three parts, like a religious altarpiece. Filled with objects and figures, references to the artist's personal mythology and art history, it depicts an enigmatic, dreamlike and disturbing world: a levitating egg as a symbol of life and rebirth, a suspended dress to express the memory of a body that is no longer there, a pear that will ripen before rotting, etc. A vocabulary the artist uses to express his relationship to the world, bridging the gap between an aspiration for life and freedom and the weight of his human condition. In this immensely blue sky, large rocks seem to hang above the figures: imminent danger or promise of elevation?

Sophie Calle (b. 1953)

There was a man I like, from the series *Histoires vraies* (1988–2003), diptych, black and white photographic print

Exhibition from Wednesday 17 July to Wednesday 13 August

This diptych is part of the series *Histoires vraies* ('True stories') initiated in 1988. In it, the artist confides thirty key episodes in her love life through thirty vignettes comprising a photograph and a brief text, like a public diary. By recounting her romantic relationships, hesitations and missed opportunities, Sophie Calle blurs the lines between exhibitionism and auto-fiction. The format may be reminiscent of a documentary, but the narrative is more like a story. Through these ambivalent devices, the artist plays with the boundary between ostentation and dissimulation, disclosure and mystery. The publications that accompany her work are an invitation to immerse ourselves in these self-narratives.

Miquel Barceló (b. 1957)

Crânes, melon, poisson, 1995, mixed technique on glued paper on canvas

Exhibition from Friday 15 August to Thursday 12 September

'Skulls, melons, fish' is a still life of the secular kind, a genre that Barceló has been revisiting in painting since the early 1990s and here pushes to the limits of gestural abstraction. The Spanish artist mixes organic materials into his pigments, then allowing them to oxidise directly on the canvas. Here, beneath the pictorial layer hide a cigarette butt and dead fly. A meticulous exploration of fleeting appearances in the plant and animal worlds, still life is also the privileged

genre of *vanitas* and *memento mori*, meditations on the passage of time, the vanity of earthly things and death – all central themes present in Barceló's oeuvre from the outset.

Alexandre Calame (b. 1810, d. 1864)

Torrent de montagne par orage, 1848, oil on canvas

Exhibition from Saturday 14 September to Sunday 13 October

Recently acquired by the Valais Art Museum, this painting of a 'Mountain stream during a storm' transports us into a Bernese Oberland (highlands) landscape with spectacular atmospheric effects. Alexandre Calame has rendered the structure of the rocks, the strength of the wind in the fir trees, the violence of the mountain stream and the light of a stormy sky with great detail. One of the greatest masters of romantic landscape painting, Calame has painted the unleashing of the elements as the storm approaches with virtuosity, suggesting a feeling of the 'sublime' – that mixture of vertigo, admiration and fear people sometimes feel when they witness the power of nature. Comfortably seated in our armchairs, what do we feel when we see the agitation of the figures at risk of drowning?

Magdalena Abakanowicz (b. 1930, d. 2017)

Structure de Kristine, 1975, sisal tapestries

Exhibition from Tuesday 15 October to Sunday 10 November

A pioneer in textile art – which she has been revisiting since the 1960s after studying at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts in Poland – Marina Abakanowicz was one of the initiators of the New Tapestry movement. Using new techniques and materials, the artist breaks away from the classical traditions of the Aubusson, Beauvais and Gobelins workshops, defying their rules to encourage viewers to use their own imagination. A jumble of folds and knots, entanglement of woven sisal fibres, gaps and undulating shapes give rise to three-dimensional, monumental objects, suggesting an organic, plant-sourced world. This textile artwork – which is a reference to Greek mythology and the weaving Penelope never finished so as to fool her suitors – gives us a sense of the long time it takes...

Events and Mediation

Sunday 19 May 2019, 5 – 8 p.m.: *Retours de Venise. The Salon s l o w in Sion*

Opening of the *Chi va piano* exhibition with the artist Nicolas Faure in attendance, followed by a discussion about 'cultural restlessness' with special guests.

A few days after the inauguration of the Salon Suisse of the 58th Biennale Arte in Venice, this international event offers an echo at the Valais Art Museum. To address the 'slow' theme chosen for this Salon, this programme will examine the issues of speed and hyperactivity.

This will happen in several phases:

- The opening of the exhibition *Chi va piano. Slow art with the collections* and presentation of the programme of the Salon Suisse in Venice, in the company of art historians and curators Céline Eidenbenz and Victoria Mühlig.
- A presentation by photographer Nicolas Faure beside his works featuring the Valais motorway landscape, the first to be exhibited at *Chi va piano*.
- '*La fébrilité culturelle*', or 'cultural restlessness', a discussion moderated by Véronique Ribordy, president of the not-for-profit organisation art contemporain valais | zeitgenössische kunst wallis. With Nicolas Faure, photographer, Lorenzo Malaguerra, Head of the Cultural Department of the City of Monthey and Director of the Théâtre du Crochetan and Victoria Mühlig, Curator at the Musée d'art de Pully.

The evening will end on a pleasant note with a slow food buffet and a video by artist Vidya Gastaldon produced for the Salon Suisse in Venice.

A collaboration with Pro Helvetia and the organisation art contemporain valais - zeitgenössische kunst wallis (acv-zkw.ch), formerly Label'Art.

Every 1st Sunday of the month from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m.: Slow tour in French and German

Grounding, allowing yourself to slow down, experiencing a tour where the space welcomes your body and senses. In interaction with an art historian or the artist, these guided strolls with breathing and meditation exercises offer the opportunity to experience a totally different relationship with the work on display.

Facilitator: Eric Roulier, mindfulness practitioner

Dates: 2 June (in French, with photographer Nicolas Faure), 7 July (bilingual French and German), 4 August (in French), 1 September (bilingual French and German), 6 October (in French, with artist Marie Velardi) and 3 November (bilingual French and German).

Sunday, 2 June at 2.30 p.m.: Slow tour with photographer Nicolas Faure and mindfulness practitioner Eric Roulier.

Wednesday, 2 October 2019, at 5 p.m. *Dancewalk* - Ultra Valais. A stopover at the Valais Art Museum with Virna Signorelli, hypnotherapist

The Valais Art Museum is proposing a refreshing stopover for *Dancewalk* by dancer and choreographer Foofwa d'Immobilité, organised by édhea, the Valais Art School. This 'dance trip',

which will set out from the Rhone glacier and finish at Lake Geneva, will take place from 28 September to 6 October 2019.

The Valais Art Museum will host this stage of *Dancewalk* in its exhibition and outdoor spaces. At this event, hypnotherapist Virna Signorelli will offer a guided session featuring slow art with a work chosen from the exhibition *Chi va piano. Slow art with the collections* and/or *Looking at the landscape*.

Programme:

- Refreshments and screening of the video *Group Walk* featuring a performance with Hamish Fulton
- Guided session with Virna Signorelli, hypnotherapist
- Slow food buffet on the museum's terrace with the artists

Sunday, 6 October at 2.30 p.m.: Slow visit with artist Marie Velardi, who produced the artwork *Luna* specially for the exhibition, together with Eric Roulier, mindfulness practitioner.

Saturday, 9 November 2019, Nuit des Musées: Kashmir Yoga session with the artist Vidya Gastaldon.

Other:

Retours de Venise: Salon s l o w in Meyrin

Saturday, 17 August 2019, 3–9 p.m., Jardin Alpin, Meyrin

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