

Press Release – London, September 2016

An Introduction to the London Design Biennale 2016

The first Design Biennale to be held in London will take place at Somerset House from 7 to 27 September. Funded by the team behind the London Design Festival, the event reaffirms the city's reputation as the design capital of the world.

With over 30 countries participating, nations from six continents will present newly commissioned works that explore the theme 'Utopia by Design' - celebrating the 500th anniversary of the publication of Thomas More's inspirational text, 'Utopia'.

A prestigious global event and a new highlight of the cultural calendar, the world's best in contemporary design, design-led innovation, creativity and research will be presented side by side. The Biennale will see some of the most exciting and ambitious work from creatives specialising in a range of disciplines, as well as cultural bodies gathering in the capital for an exhibition exploring the role of design in our collective futures.

The London Design Biennale will be a centrepiece of UTOPIA 2016 – Somerset House's year-long programme.

In-between: The Utopia of the Neutral

Pro Helvetia and the Embassy of Switzerland are delighted to present, as part of 'CH+UK – Swiss Culture in the UK', specially commissioned works by a group of seven design studios that have each collaborated with a specialist industrial manufacturer to reveal a collection of objects that explore the dynamics between utopia and the everyday.

Against perception of the neutral as the static or indifferent, 'In-between: The Utopia of the Neutral' builds upon Switzerland's shared cultural environment to advance into an experimental space for collaboration, where the neutral is explored as a catalyst for dialogue and movement.

Drawing from the intrinsic relationship between design and industry, the collaboration process for 'The Utopia of the Neutral' taps into the gaps arising between increasingly isolated pools of expertise. These manifest in our daily life through their anonymous presence in objects and systems we interact with daily. It imagines the 'in-between' as both a space for unconditional visioning, and a process where new alliances and networks can continue to develop beyond the exhibition.

The collaborative approach hints at Max Bill's modernist utopia of the 'Gute Form' – a design movement from the 1960s that prescribed a set of criteria for collaboration between industry and design. At the same time it challenges the deeply rooted 'Gute Form' ideal by utilising the proximity of the niche and hidden as a future field for development to re-address what design can do to bridge multiple utopias with multiple realities, and ultimately stimulate new outlooks.

Isolated, adopted or reconfigured material ideas will question the value embedded in everyday objects, and speculate between common, preconceived and unknown notions of utility. The works in the exhibition will act as tools to adjust the hidden to wavelengths of human perception, stimulating the user's involvement while probing that which is individually interpreted and adopted as a fluid and neutral agency of design.

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/ DESIGNERS AND PARTNERS

Administering bodies

Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom
Pro Helvetia – The Swiss Arts Council

Designers

Sarah Kueng & Lovis Caputo; Adrien Rovero; Dimitri Baehler; Stephanie Baechler; Sybille Stoeckli; Dominic Plueer & Olivier Smitt; Joerg Boner.

Curator

Giovanna Lisignoli

Scenography

Damian Fopp

Graphics

Maximage

Supporting bodies

Industrial partners of the different design collaborations
Presence Switzerland; Pro Helvetia

Partnerships

Kueng Caputo, Sarah Kueng & Lovis Caputo, Zurich
with de Cavis AG, Duebendorf

Adrien Rovero, Lausanne
with Schott Suisse SA, Yverdon

Dimitri Baehler, in collaboration with 'Mouvement', Mathieu Rivier, Biel
with North Thin Ply Technology, Renens
and support from Simpex Electronics AG, Wetzikon

Stephanie Baechler, Geneva
with Meroz Ressorts S.A., Chêne-Bourg

Sybille Stoeckli, Lausanne
with Saurer (Embroidery), Arbon

Plueersmitt, Zurich
Dominic Plueer & Olivier Smitt
with Novaswiss, Nova Werke AG, Effretikon

Joerg Boner, Zurich
with Becomp, Fribourg

/ DESIGNERS' WORK

Work 1

LE SOUND A DISPARU

Kueng Caputo

Sarah Kueng & Lovis Caputo, Zurich

with de Cavis, Duebendorf



©Paola Caputo

At a time when we are pondering our consumption of resources, it seems reasonable to consider how material could be stretched further in the future. Sarah Kueng and Lovis Caputo have explored this concept by investigating hydraulic bound materials for industrial applications and adopting the idea of stretching materials with air.

Based on the notion that plaster 'stretched' with air only uses 7% of source material without affecting its basic properties, but considerably reducing its weight, tantalizing new perspectives for collaboration between the worlds of scientific research and the everyday arise. With 'Le sound a disparu', the design duo challenge the embedded preconception of everyday materials and propose a modular system of elements with which to adjust architectural qualities and improve often disregarded acoustic properties of public and social spaces.

Note to Editor

Kueng Caputo present a series of very light modular elements - which can be added to existing architecture. This intervention interacts visually with the space and improves acoustics by absorbing sound in its foamed structure. In addition, there will be a meteorite-type stone that will be hung from the ceiling. Visitors will be able to lift the 'meteorite' and compare its size and weight to normal plaster.

Work 2

MAGNIFY THE ORIGIN

Adrien Rovero, Lausanne

with Schott Suisse SA, Yverdon



©Paola Caputo

Adrien Rovero looks at utopia as a process of sighting. His approach builds on our ability to discover the magnitude of stimuli hidden within our immediate surroundings. He considers utopia a question of perspective, one that hinges around our ability to perceive and look at the world around us. If we aim for future visioning, then the everyday is the place to start.

Adrien Rovero has explored precision optical components intended for applications such as optics, metrology, sensors, lasers and medical engineering, and has created a series of conceptual arrangements combining glass and lava stone – two seemingly different manifestations of minerals whose state has been transformed by heat. By means of reflection, enlargement and illumination, the artefacts are turned into a series of metaphorical tools to reinvigorate curiosity, prompting us to uncover what is present, but perhaps invisible.

Note to Editor

Adrien Rovero presents a series of artefacts consisting of lava stones with different sized magnifying lenses (aspherical lenses), including magnifying rods and a light with a lava stone base.

Materials: Duran glass, polished and coated, aspherical lenses

Work 3

HYPER MODULAR

Dimitri Baehler in collaboration with 'Mouvement', Mathieu Rivier, Biel
with NTPT North Thin Ply Technology, Renens & Simplex Electronic AG, Wetzikon



©Paola Caputo

Contemplating a future where everyday objects will be participative, upgradable, partly designed and partly assembled with finished or semi-finished components, designer Dimitri Baehler collaborates with developer Mathieu Rivier from Mouvement to explore an idea of utopia that moves between dematerialisation, intuition and a symbiosis between technology and nature.

Hyper Modular is a luminous profile pushing the limits of assemblage technology of carbon, LED and micro mechanics. The minimal use of materials, combined with the light's flexible qualities, goes beyond known codes of modularity, envisioning future behaviours of objects we interact with daily. The almost invisible design of the light becomes an intuitive tool with which to design.

Note to Editor

Dimitri Baehler in collaboration with Mathieu Rivier will present a 5 - 6m* long suspended light feature, adapted with programmed mechanisms. The installation will create a luminous wave, exaggerating the concept of Hyper Modular. The moving light wave will be completed by one or two stand alone Hyper Modular flexible light profiles (prototypes).

Materials: carbon profiles & LEDs

Work 4

COMPLICATIONS

Stephanie Baechler, Geneva
with Meroz Ressorts S.A., Chêne-Bourg



©Paola Caputo

With 'Complications' - a term used in horology that refers to any function and feature in a timepiece beyond the simple display of hours and minutes - Stephanie Baechler investigates the intrinsic quality of custom-made micro precision springs used in watchmaking. Through the lens of 'tension', one of the functions of such mechanical springs, the designer turns the beauty of the micro-crafted inside out. She imagines a future where the normally concealed functionalities underpinning collectable value in time-pieces can exist as objects of beauty in their own right.

Stephanie Baechler presents a series of domestic jewellery sculptures. By combining enlarged springs made of brass with fragile ceramic rods, the functionality of 'tension' is exaggerated and at the same time liberated from its confines (such as casing or intended context) to highlight the precarious balance between resilience, fragility and desirability.

Note to Editor

Stephanie Baechler presents a series of enlarged complication springs in brass holding ceramic rods.

Work 5

IMAGINARY FABRIC

Sibylle Stoeckli, Lausanne
with Saurer Embroidery AG, Arbon



©Paola Caputo

Acknowledging the proposition that human creativity is one of our most precious attributes, Sibylle Stoeckli envisions a utopia that brings about a new dynamic in the relationship between the hand and the machine-made. In her investigation, she looks at the tradition of embroidery in the context of highly efficient embroidery production systems, focusing on the polarity between democratisation of embroidery and the resulting alienation from autonomous, creative processes.

Sibylle Stoeckli has designed a fabric with an irregularly positioned, machine embroidered, cross-shaped buttonhole pattern, which can be used according to individual requirements. The simple, universal buttonhole becomes a multi-layered metaphor: on the one hand for the endless possibilities, which its “neutrality” suggests, on the other for a place where opposites can meet. The fabric becomes a tool for individual appropriation aimed at stimulating our ability to imagine and create.

Note to Editor

Sibylle Stoeckli presents a roll of fabric, embroidered with a buttonhole pattern.

Materials: 100% European linen; 100% cotton, embroidered with a buttonhole pattern

Width: 155 cm Buttonhole size: ø 18 mm

Work 6

BENCH NO. 2

Plueersmitt , Dominic Plueer & Olivier Smitt, Zurich
with Nova Werke AG, Effretikon



©Paola Caputo

Plueersmitt approach the notion of utopia by examining how an object's presence is perceived through the depth and material properties of the outer layer. Fascinated by the particular haptic and optical manifestation of zirconium oxide, a technical ceramic used for both industrial surface-enhancing 'nano' coatings and organic tissue replacement for teeth or bones, the designers probe the material's protective and life-prolonging properties against the ordinariness of familiar objects.

Bench No.2 consists of an almost architectural steel skeleton, which serves as a vehicle for the typically concealed ceramic-like material to be exposed. By way of displacement, the material's primary function of durability is turned into an interface for human interaction, drawing attention to the dimension of surface as connective membrane.

Note to Editor

Plueersmitt present a bench, coated through thermal sparying with zirkonium oxyid.
Length: 1000mm Width: 155mm High: 492mm

Work 7

IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE CAPSULE, IF YOU DARE

Joerg Boner, Zurich
with Bcomp Ltd, Fribourg



©Paola Caputo

Joerg Boner investigates design-inspired solutions that arise from advances in technology that are becoming increasingly formless and at the same time more powerful. The effective design of these technological tools does not just consider how they work, but rather how they take into account a broad range of issues, including a future where the concept of waste is outmoded. Joerg Boner has engaged with latest developments in plant-based, renewable materials to align their properties with sustainable electronic components.

'It's time to leave the capsule, if you dare' combines flax and natural resin with LED technology. With its familiar archetypal shape and organic skin-like surface, the object assumes the appearance of a universal protective form. An ancient renewable material becomes a carrier for a recent developed light technology. The proposition mediates between dematerialisation and performance, demonstrating the potential for synergy between 'neutral' and renewable sources and energy efficient technology.

Note to Editor

Joerg Boner presents an LED light reflector that has been molded with flax.
Materials: LED, flax fabric, 300 gsm

/ BIOGRAPHIES

Designers

Kueng Caputo

Sarah Kueng (1982) & Lovis Caputo (1981)

Sarah Kueng and Lovis Caputo have worked in partnership since they were both students of design at Zurich University of the Arts from 2004 to 2008. They have produced limited edition objects for Salon 94 in New York, Etage Projects Copenhagen and Helmrinderknecht in Zurich, and have developed exhibition designs and installations in Switzerland and abroad. The designer duo teach regularly while practising design with an experimental approach that is driven by a meticulous observation of the material world and attention to social attitudes.

www.kueng-caputo.ch

Adrien Rovero

Adrien Rovero holds a Master's in Industrial Design from ECAL/University of Art and Design in Lausanne. Active in the realms of furniture, lighting and exhibition design, he opened his studio in Renens in 2006. He has designed numerous objects for high-end brands as well as exhibiting in renowned design galleries. He has also designed exhibitions for institutions including the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Grand-Hornu Images (Belgium), the Manufacture de Sevres (France), the mudac in Lausanne and the Villa Noailles (France). Adrien Rovero's work plays with a vocabulary of assemblage and repurposing of materials, references and meanings.

www.adrienrovero.com

Dimitri Baehler (1988)

Dimitri Baehler, a graduate of ECAL in Lausanne (2006) and the Design Academy in Eindhoven (2009), was a finalist at the Design Parade in Hyeres (2013) and twice nominee for the Swiss Design Award (2014 and 2015). He has participated in projects across cultural contexts such as Hors Pistes Ouaga, Burkina Faso, and Ishinomaki Laboratory, Japan. He undertook a ceramic residency at EKWC in the Netherlands and has led design workshops for brands such as Boisbuchet, USM and ISDAT Toulouse. Dimitri Baehler's work is often considered spontaneous, radical and poetic. From industrial design to the self-made, unique works and installations, his particular sensibility reflects the creative context in relation to development and use of objects.

www.dimitribaehler.ch

Sibylle Stoeckli (1979)

Born in Lausanne, Sibylle Stoeckli began studying visual arts at ECAL in Lausanne in 1999. Guided by her eclectic approaches and the diversity of her interests, she transitioned to the Industrial and Product Design Programme where she graduated in 2004. In 2005 she received the Swiss Federal Design Award. Sibylle Stoeckli navigates between her textile label Louise Blanche and her studio where she develops scenography, product and furniture design. In 2013, she embarked on her 'Global Design Research' project with the intention of investigating wider cultural perspectives shaping design and craftsmanship.

www.sibyllestoeckli.com

Stephanie Baechler (1983)

Stephanie Baechler lives and works in Geneva. She has a Bachelor degree in textile design from the University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU) in Lucerne and a Fashion Master's degree from Artex in the

Netherlands. She has worked for Swiss textile company Jakob Schlaepfer in St. Gallen and as a design assistant and fabric developer for fashion designers including Hussein Chalayan in London. In 2014 she won a ceramic residency in Switzerland and at the European Ceramic Workcentre (EKWC) in the Netherlands, where she explored the topic of fashion by transforming ephemeral movement into static and frozen material expressions.

www.stephaniebaechler.com

Plueersmitt

Dominic Plueer (1980) & Olivier Smitt (1983)

Dominic Plueer, a graduate of the Design Academy Eindhoven, Netherlands (2009), and Olivier Smitt, who graduated with a BA in Art and Design from the FHNW in Basel (2008), both worked with renowned design studios before joining forces and pursuing their interest in challenging preconceived notions and rituals around the perception of conventional objects. Their approach focuses on incorporating the user's imagination and encouraging research into a new level of use and purpose, becoming recognizable as neutral objects of utility.

www.plueersmitt.com

Joerg Boner (1968)

Joerg Boner initially trained as a cabinet maker and later studied design at the "Schule für Gestaltung" in Basel. Since opening his own studio in 2001, his work has won numerous awards. Joerg Boner was awarded the Swiss Grand Prix Design (2011). As designer, author and teacher at ECAL in Lausanne (2003-2014), Joerg Boner's distinctive approach in combining technical knowledge with aesthetic and functional means has made him a point of reference within Swiss design. His work is produced by Louis Poulsen (Denmark), Nestlé (Switzerland), Wogg (Switzerland), Fontana Arte (Italy), ClassiCon (Germany) and Nils Holger Moormann (Germany) amongst many others. Many of his works are part of museum collections such as the Design Museum Zurich and the V&A in London.

www.joergboner.ch

Curator

Giovanna Lisignoli

Originally from the Grisons, Switzerland, Giovanna Lisignoli studied visual communication at the University of the Arts in Zurich. She then moved to London where she began working with creative agencies, developing extensive experience in corporate branding with experiential projects across commercial and cultural spheres.

This subsequently led to independent creative consultancy work where she managed multidisciplinary teams to deliver visitor experience projects for global brands. As a result of these practices, Giovanna began to further investigate contemporary design from a curatorial perspective with an MA in Curating Contemporary Design run by the prestigious London Design Museum and Kingston University.

Her unique approach to curation focuses on collaboration and exchange, often bringing together the most diverse contexts. Projects have included regeneration strategies to revive local craftsmanship culture, temporary design gallery projects and self-initiated collaborative programmes. Ultimately, Lisignoli's work has resulted in forward-looking design propositions with longevity, social impact and cultural relevance remaining at the heart of her curatorial interests.

giovanna@happenprojects.com

/ NOTES TO EDITOR & CONTACTS

Key details

London Design Biennale, 7–27 September 2016 at Somerset House in partnership with Jaguar

#LDB16 | @londonbiennale | www.londondesignbiennale.com | £15/£10 concessions

About the Embassy of Switzerland

There is a long tradition of close cultural ties between Switzerland and the UK. The Embassy of Switzerland helps promote Swiss artists and culture across all creative fields throughout the UK.

About Pro Helvetia

Pro Helvetia – The Swiss Arts Council supports and disseminates Swiss arts and culture. It has a worldwide reach through its offices abroad and stimulates cultural production with its initiatives.

About CH+UK – Swiss Culture in the UK

CH+UK is an ongoing initiative by the Embassy of Switzerland promoting Swiss artists and culture across all creative fields in all areas of the UK.

About the London Design Biennale

The inaugural London Design Biennale is at Somerset House from 7 to 27 September 2016, bringing installations, artworks and design proposals from 37 countries and territories to the heart of the capital. The exhibits address the Biennale's 2016 theme, 'Utopia by Design', and explore questions and ideas about sustainability, migration, pollution, cities, social equality and much more.

The Biennale will occupy the entirety of Somerset House, including the famous Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court. Situated on the banks of the River Thames in the heart of London, the former royal palace is a world famous cultural centre and is one of London's most visited attractions with more than 3.2 million visitors in 2015.

Sir John Sorrell, Ben Evans and Dr Christopher Turner are president, executive director and director respectively of the London Design Biennale. The Biennale's International Advisory Committee and Jury comprises Paola Antonelli, Adelia Borges, Ian Callum, James Lingwood, Jeremy Myerson, Jonathan Reekie, Martin Roth, Victor Lo, Ana Elena Mallet, Kayoko Ota, Richard Rogers and Paula Scher.

The curated, three-week long Biennale is an independent event which will overlap the London Design Festival, complementing its citywide programme of commissions and partner events every two years. The London Design Biennale would like to thank Jaguar, headline partner for 2016, for their generous support.

MEDIA CONTACT

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