

swixx – cultural worlds in Switzerland

A Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia programme

For two years, the programme "swixx – cultural worlds in Switzerland" organised by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia has been encouraging reflection on the role that foreign artists resident in Switzerland play in the Swiss cultural scene. From October 2004 to October 2006, swixx has lent support to their creative work and set up an interface for a great diversity of cultural influences. The programme also enabled the establishment of new promotional tools, among them the swixx competition in 2005, the promotion of young artists and the exploration of new forms of expression such as hiphop. It also brought together organisers and academics concerned with multicultural issues. In brief, swixx clearly showed that, as far as the world of art and culture is concerned, integration has already happened and has proved beneficial to the quality of art in Switzerland.

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Two years of swixx

swixx was launched in autumn 2004 with series of concerts throughout Switzerland. In 2005, over a dozen art and music projects from a great variety of artistic disciplines were rewarded with a commission for their artistic rendering a migration-related theme. Cooperation was set up with four Swiss cultural magazines. In 2006, four co-productions with Swiss festivals were staged (Stanser Musiktage; Pod'Ring in Biel/Bienne; Lucerne Festival; Festival di narrazione della Montagna in Arzo, Besazio, Meride and Tremona). Hiphop proved to be particularly representative of multiculturalism in Switzerland and so became one of the programmes focal points, with six Swiss cities organising hiphop-related events and workshops. A symposium on art as a cultural mediator was held in Renens at the end of August 2006. Renens, the Swiss municipality with the highest proportion of foreigners, became cultural capital of Switzerland for 30 hours. And it was chosen as host town for the swixx closing event of 20 and 21 October 2006.

Some swixx artists

Grants amounting to CHF 1 million overall were awarded in connection with swixx to nearly 200 cultural practitioners who met Pro Helvetia's criteria and are involved with the topic of migration. Here are some examples: Namusoke, a Swiss singer of Tanzanian origin, gave several swixx concerts and received a commission from Pro Helvetia's music division. The duo Com&Com have been commissioned by Pro Helvetia to compose a new folk song for Switzerland entitled "D'Schwiz La Suisse La Svizzera La Svizra". Thanks to Pro Helvetia, Hicham Alhayat will be finishing off his short film ("Il neige à Marrakech"), which highlights the difficulties encountered by a young Moroccan living in Geneva. Avni Krasniqi organised a breakdance competition ("Combat européen de danse contre la violence") in Neuchâtel with Swiss and international masters taking part, his contribution to the struggle against violence. Or there's Loan Nguyen, whose photo project portraying his Vietnamese father in Swiss exile at the end of the 1960s is now supported by Pro Helvetia. ("De Retour").

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In fulfilment of its political mission, Pro Helvetia – as well as swixx – organise cultural programmes that raise questions which, in the eyes of the Arts Council, are relevant to current conditions and issues in Switzerland. The Arts Council defines the thematic framework and ensures the collaboration of cultural practitioners in devising the programme. Only artistic and cultural themes that concern more than one of Switzerland's geographic and linguistic regions or interest groups are chosen. Besides thematic programmes, Pro Helvetia also organises country programmes that encourage cultural exchange. As a rule, a programme extends over one to two years.

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