

16th Biennale
de Lyon

manifesto
of fragility

PRESS RELEASE

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The 16th Lyon Biennale of
contemporary art
14 Sept - 31 Dec 2022

Curators: Sam Bardaouil
and Till Fellrath

Professional Previews
12 - 13 Sept 2022

Artistic Director: Isabelle
Bertolotti



Lyon Biennale unveils the visual identity of its 16th edition manifesto of fragility

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, curators of the 16th Lyon Biennale, consider their project's visual identity to be a fully-fledged component of it. They have thus handed the job of creating it to Safar Design Studio, who, working as artists, will articulate the curatorial and artistic vision of *manifesto of fragility* in this identity.

VISUAL DIRECTION BY STUDIO SAFAR

The visual direction builds on the curators' theme, and their seemingly contradictory pairing of fragility and resistance. We are using flowers—specifically the practice of preserving them—as a point of departure that ties to Lyon's rich horticultural history dating back to the 16th century. Whether as an art form such as the Japanese Oshibana, or as a form of scientific study and archiving, pressing flowers gives an extended lifespan to nature's most ephemeral and captivating creation.

THE LAUNCH CAMPAIGN

The campaign introduces the curators' thematics: fragility, resistance, and cycles of history in the form of six short video collages centered around the flower motif. Each video is composed of old and new footage and narrated in a different language such as French, English, German, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin. The series intends to welcome a very wide pool of audiences that is equally inclusive of the people of Lyon, as it is of the plethora of residents, immigrants, and tourists from different ethnicities or backgrounds.

On commenting on the visual identity, the Biennale curators said: "Studio Safar's response to our curatorial concept creates at once a lucid yet dreamy landscape of still and moving images, and soothing and disturbing sounds. The flower, within the context of Lyon, has a particular agency. Not only does it connect to the city's herbarium, one of the largest in the world, but also to the motifs that were printed and to the luxurious textiles that made Lyon a wealthy centre of silk production for centuries. Colonial histories, artistic production and systems of labor all converge in this ostensibly naïve object to make a statement about fragility, resistance, and history."

The images oscillate between personal remembrance, raw seduction, and contemplative abstraction. Text, image, and sound betray a gradual layering of complexity and depth. The intimate merges with the eccentric yielding a shifting panorama of intense moments ranging from the vulnerable to the bold. The soundtrack of the video opens with "The Swan," the thirteenth movement of *The Carnival of Animals* (1922) by the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns, performed by theremin virtuoso Clara Rockmore in 1977. The choice of the theremin, an electronic instrument that delivers a hauntingly tender sound, is controlled without physical contact. The instrument's association with avantgarde music of the 20th century, specifically because of its idiosyncratic nature, and its elusive position between the classic and the contemporary, evokes the cyclical nature of time that lies at the heart of the curator's conceptual framework for the Biennale. The video concludes with "I Lose" by Gila from the album *Trench Tones* (2019), with a slow and heavy baseline both in sharp contrast and in surprising harmony with Rockmore's fading delicate notes. The seemingly conflicting yet perfectly complimentary tracks vividly express the curatorial positing of fragility as a site for generative resistance: vulnerability and political action, a manifesto of fragility.

[DISCOVER THE VIDEOS →](#)

ABOUT STUDIO SAFAR

Studio Safar, co-founded by graphic designers Maya Moumne and Hatem Imam, is an internationally recognized design and art direction agency. It creates cross-cultural and interlingual exchanges with distinct visual propositions. Working in collaboration with creative producers in diverse fields like cinema, literature, illustration, and photography, the team of designers at Studio Safar is innovative in its research. It creates a dialogue with localized histories of visual design and attempts to restore connections to visual cultures and practices disrupted by colonialism. These references nourish and expand contemporary impulses that can be found in their production of visual identities, exhibitions, websites, and publications, including the self-published biannual design magazine, *Safar*, which fosters creative relationships and discourses on cultural production and design tendencies in the global South.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are Directors of Hamburger Bahnhof: Museum for Contemporary Art in Berlin, and Founders of the multidisciplinary, curatorial platform artReoriented, which they launched in New York and Munich in 2009. They are curators of the Lyon Biennale 2022, the French pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2022, and were affiliate curators at Gropius Bau in Berlin from 2017 until 2021.

As an independent voice, Bardaouil and Fellrath have collaborated with more than 70 institutions worldwide and curated exhibitions in leading international museums, including Center Pompidou in Paris, Villa Empain in Brussels, Kunstsammlung NRW in Dusseldorf, Tate Liverpool, ARTER in Istanbul, Gwangju and Busan Museum of Art in South Korea, Saradar Collection in Beirut, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, SCAD Art Museum in Savannah, Moderna Museet in Stockholm and Reina Sofia in Madrid. In 2016 they were curatorial attaches for the Sydney Biennale. At the Venice Biennale they were curators of the National Pavilions of Lebanon in 2013 and of the United Arab Emirates in 2019. From 2016 to 2020 they led the Montblanc Cultural Foundation in Hamburg as chairmen.

Bardaouil and Fellrath founded artReoriented to rethink traditional models of cultural engagement. Their work focuses on inclusivity of artistic and institutional practices as well as a revisionist approach to art history. They are internationally recognized curators and award-winning authors whose practice is rooted both in contemporary global art and in the field of classical modernism. They have held teaching positions at various universities, including the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg. Their diverse cultural and academic backgrounds enrich their inherently collaborative model. Bardaouil, born in Lebanon, holds a Ph.D. in art history and a Master's degree in advanced theatre practice. Fellrath, born in Germany, holds two Master's degrees in economics and political science, and is currently professor for design-related sciences at the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg.

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