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Swiss culture on the international stage

From art to literature, from design to the theatre, from film to music – Switzerland consistently produces talent that is the envy of the world, helping to put Swiss culture on the international stage.

The federal government is strongly committed to supporting these cultural exports. Through funding, grants and culture drives, it enables Swiss artists to present their work around the world. This not only strengthens Swiss cultural heritage but also promotes cultural interaction and understanding across the international divide. The Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia also supports the dissemination of works from various cultural fields as well as Swiss performances at important international events such as the Venice Biennale of art and architecture and book fairs (see box). There is one exception: the Swiss Films foundation is responsible for promoting the Swiss film industry abroad on behalf of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC).

Hollywood success

Swiss films enjoy an excellent reputation and have won major awards at prestigious events like the Berlinale and the Cannes Film Festival, highlighting the quality and variety of Switzerland's movie industry. In particular, 2017 was an outstanding year that saw two Swiss features each nominated for an Oscar. Timo von Gunten's "La femme et le TGV" and Claude Barras's "My Life as a Courgette" not only dazzled international audiences but also cemented Switzerland's reputation as a country with a flourishing film culture. Triumphs like these are of huge importance. They not only underline the country's artistic excellence and creative talent, but also Switzerland's cultural diversity and its ability to tell stories that will resonate in other countries. This helps to showcase Swiss culture around the world and strengthen Switzerland's standing in world cinema as well as enhancing Switzerland's national identity.

Beautiful Swiss books

The Swiss Culture Awards, presented every year by the Federal Office of Culture in the fields of art, design, literature, music, thea-

tre, dance, and film, also act as an important advertisement for Swiss culture abroad. Not only do they pay tribute to outstanding talent in Switzerland, but they also give Swiss culture a better profile around the world. "The Most Beautiful Swiss Books" award, which is affiliated to the "Best Book Design from all over the World" interna-

The Swiss Culture Awards, presented every year by the Federal Office of Culture in various fields, act as an important advertisement for Swiss culture abroad.

tional competition, is an impressive example. The international competition in Leipzig, which is organised every February by Stiftung Buchkunst (the German Foundation for Book Design), saw Switzerland scoop

The Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia

Through involvement in events, projects and translation work, the Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia helps to showcase Swiss cultural practitioners abroad. This includes funding public presentations, organising promotional events for international hosts, appearing at international exhibitions and networking events (e.g. Venice Biennale and Avignon Theatre Festival), and producing promotional material. The six Pro Helvetia liaison bases in Cairo, Johannesburg, Moscow, New Delhi, Shanghai and South America foster relations with local partners and cultural institutions, act as intermediaries on the ground, and offer residential, research and exchange programmes that allow artists and cultural practitioners from Switzerland to gain a foothold and engage with international audiences.



"My Life as a Courgette" won Best Fiction Film at the 2017 Swiss Film Awards and was nominated as best animation at the Oscars. Film stills: FOC/provided



"Art in architecture and public space 1968–2008" by Susi & Ueli Berger – winner of the "Golden Letter" at the 2023 "Best Book Design from all over the World" competition in Leipzig. Photo: provided/FOC

The successes of **Swiss cinema on the international stage underline Switzerland's cultural diversity and its ability to tell stories that will resonate in other countries.**



Sophie Hunger. Photo: Jérôme Witz



Jossi Wieler, Swiss Grand Award for Theatre/Hans-Reinhart-Ring 2020. Photo: FOC/Gneborg



Uriel Orlow, Swiss Grand Prix for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim 2023. Photo: FOC/Florian Spring

many awards this year. Out of 560 titles that were submitted by 30 different countries, prizes went to four books that had also won awards in "The Most Beautiful Swiss Books" competition. The connection between the two competitions provides a global platform for Swiss books and an opportunity to showcase the quality of book design in Switzerland.

Based abroad but proud to be Swiss

The film score for the Oscar-nominated animation "My Life as a Courgette" was incidentally produced by Berne musician Sophie Hunger, who won the 2016 Swiss Grand Award for Music. Sophie Hunger is one of numerous Swiss Culture Award winners who are proud to be Swiss but live and work abroad. Hunger lives in Berlin and also has an apartment in Paris. Her beguiling pop music features songs in Swiss-German, German, French and English. She pushes the envelope and defies categorisation with each new album, deftly flitting between the genres of jazz, folk, rock, pop and chanson.

Theatre director Jossi Wieler, who won the Swiss Grand Award for Theatre/Hans Reinhart Ring in 2020, has earned acclaim both at home and abroad. Wieler was born in 1951 in Kreuzlingen (canton of Thurgau) and lived from 1972 to 1980 in Israel, where he studied stage directing at Tel Aviv University. In 1980 he joined the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf as assistant director, going on to direct numerous productions at theatres in Germany and Switzerland, in cities including Heidelberg,

Bonn, Stuttgart, Basel, Hamburg, Munich, Zurich and Berlin. Wieler now lives in Berlin. He has been a key international player in musical theatre for a quarter of a century. His many theatre productions in Germany and Switzerland have won numerous national and international awards. The Stuttgart Opera was also voted Opera House of the Year under Jossi Wieler's leadership in 2016. Wieler's international reputation underscores the importance of his work in a European context.

The 2023 Swiss Grand Prix for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim went to Uriel Orlow. Born in 1973 in Zurich, Orlow studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and the Slade School of Art in London, and at the University of Geneva, before receiving his PhD from the University of the Arts in London. He now lives and works in Lisbon, London and Zurich. Orlow, who has presented his work at numerous international survey exhibitions, including the 54th Venice Biennale, Manifesta 9 and 12, Genk/Palermo, and biennials in Berlin, Dakar, Taipei, Sharjah, Moscow, Kathmandu and Guatemala, enjoys an excellent reputation in the world of art. His work has been shown at many museums and art venues internationally, including the Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Whitechapel Gallery and the ICA in London; the Palais de Tokyo in Paris; Les Complices, Helmhaus and Shedhalle in Zurich; as well as in Geneva, Ramallah, Marseille, Cairo, Istanbul, Mexico City, Dublin, New York, Toronto, Melbourne and elsewhere.

Sophie Hunger, Jossi Wieler and Uriel Orlow, as well as Frédéric Pajak (resides in Arles, France; Swiss Grand Award for Literature 2021) and Etienne Delessert (lives and works in Lakeville, Connecticut, USA; Swiss Grand Award for Design 2023), are just some of the many Swiss Culture Award winners who are unequivocally Swiss but whose activities have taken them far and wide.

(FOC)

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Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date.

The next voting date is 3 March 2024.

Everything you need to know about these voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by parliament and the Federal Council, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's VotInfo app.



Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiatives had been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for signatures in brackets):

- Federal Popular Initiative "For food security – by strengthening sustainable domestic production, more plant-based food and clean drinking water (Food Initiative)" (13 December 2024)
- "No to a Switzerland of 10 million! (Sustainability Initiative)" (4 January 2025)
- Federal Popular Initiative "For the effective protection of constitutional rights (Sovereignty Initiative)" (17 April 2025)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German at www.bk.admin.ch/ > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



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