

London Design Biennale 2016  
Somerset House, London  
7 - 27 September

## Press Release – London, August 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 500<sup>th</sup> 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 silos of expertise that 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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**Administering bodies:**

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

**Designers:**

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

**Installation design:**

Damian Fopp

**Curator:**

Giovanna Lisignoli

**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*, Biel  
in collaboration with 'Movement', Biel  
with North Thin Ply Technology, Penthalaz-Cossonay  
and support from Simpex Electronics AG, Wetzikon

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

*Sibylle 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' biographies**

### **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](http://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](http://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 Parada 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](http://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](http://www.sibyllestoeckli.com)

**Stéphanie Baechler (1983)**

Stéphanie 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 Artez 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.joergboner.ch)

**NOTES TO EDITOR****Key details:**

London Design Biennale, 7–27 September 2016 at Somerset House

#LDB16

@londonbiennale

[www.londondesignbiennale.com](http://www.londondesignbiennale.com)

### 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 London Design Biennale is being produced by the team behind the London Design Festival. The curated, three-week long Biennale will overlap the Festival, bringing a new international element to London, complementing its citywide programme of commissions and partner events every two years.

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

The London Design Biennale would like to thank Jaguar for their headline partnership of the 2016 edition.

[www.londondesignbiennale.com](http://www.londondesignbiennale.com) | @londonbiennale | #LDB16

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