



*Biennale
Gherdëina 9*

*The Parliament
of Marmots*



Biennale Gherdëina 9

*announces participating
artists for*

The Parliament of Marmots

curated by Lorenzo Giusti

31.05 — 01.09.2024

Urtijëi/Ortisei and Gherdëina/Val Gardena

Press preview

29th and 30th May 2024

Opening

31th May – 2nd June 2024

Ortisei, 4 December 2023. The **ninth edition of the Biennale Gherdëina - The Parliament of Marmots** - curated by Lorenzo Giusti and organised by the Zënza Sëida association chaired by Eduard Demetz, will take place from **31 May to 1 September 2024**. The press preview will take place on 29 and 30 May and a public preview follows from Friday 31 May to Sunday 2 June 2024.

The exhibition – which has brought international contemporary art to the unique setting of the **Dolomites**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, since 2008 – will take place once again in various venues around **Ortisei/Urtijëi St. Ulrich** as well as expanding into the surrounding areas of **Val Gardena Gherdëina Gröden**.

Artists confirmed to take part can be announced as:

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Talar **Aghbassian**, **Atelier dell'Errore**, Alex **Ayed**, Nassim **Azarzar**, Ismail **Bahri**, Yesmine **Ben Khelil**, Ruth **Beraha**, Chiara **Bersani**, Alessandro **Biggio**, Julius **von Bismarck**, Nadim **Choufi**, Elmas **Deniz**, Esraa **Elfeki**, Andro **Eradze**, Marianne **Fahmy**, Valentina **Furian**, Daniele **Genadry**, Eva **Giolo**, Shuruq **Harb**, Arnold **Holzknicht**, Michael **Höpfner**, Ingela **Ihrman**, Nadia **Kaabi-Linke**, Katia **Kameli**, Le **Deunff**, Linda **Jasmin Mayer**, Femmy **Otten**, Sara **Ouhaddou**, Eva **Papamargariti**, Diana **Policarpo**, Lin May **Saeed**, Helle **Siljeholm**, Tobias **Tavella**, Markus **Vallazza**, Karin **Welponer**.

www.biennalegherdeina.org

Small in size, yet maturing over the years to become one of the most eagerly awaited events on the global art scene, this edition of the Biennale Gherdëina, **curated by Lorenzo Giusti with Marta Papini as associate curator**, borrows its title from one of the most **enchanted Ladin myths** of the Dolomites, which tells the story of the **Fanes**: a meek and peaceful people whose kingdom extended beyond the seven mountains to the edge of the world. The secret of their prosperity lay in their **alliance with the marmots** that inhabited the plateau of the same name. When the alliance was broken because of a princess who was ashamed of the pact with the animals, the Fanes met with misfortunes and conflicts that inevitably led to the downfall of their kingdom.

The origin of these archaic Ladin myths, which have survived the oral tradition and the strains of modern rewrites, dates back to proto-history, to the time of the transition from hunting to animal breeding and agriculture. Their function was to describe the complex relationship of these communities with the theme of the 'soul' – the soul of nature, of the world – whose presence permeates all beings, all the main 'entities' of wild nature.

These archaic myths, which share certain key figures with Mediterranean culture, do not speak of creation (of human beings or empires) but of transformation, celebrating nature, the cycle of life and the intimate and profound relationship between all species. In this perspective, the mountains and the Dolomites – remnants of gigantic coral reefs that surfaced 250 million years ago – transform from being a barrier to a crossing point and thus a point of encounter and contamination.

And it is precisely of contamination that this ninth edition of the Biennale Gherdëina aims to speak, superimposing new contemporary stories onto ancient legends, embracing a widespread geographical territory. Through various formats – new productions, performances, solo and group exhibitions, collaborations with regional institutions and with workshops open to the public – the event will gather the contributions of artists from various parts of continental Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, bringing together a multi-cultural community in Val Gardena.

"There are three pivotal themes in this edition of the Biennale Gherdëina," explains **Lorenzo Giusti**: *"the wild*

as a creative dimension, multi-speciesism as a trajectory of becoming, and the mountain as a meeting ground and narrative dimension. The artists who will gather in Val Gardena all base their research on the concrete experience of the forest, of walking, of isolation, of the mountains, of matter, of the body, of connection with various animal species and empathy with the natural world. By de-conceptualising the idea of nature in favour of an existential dimension of artistic experience, will give voice to a diverse artistic community, representative of a vast cultural area that will connect the Dolomites with continental Europe, North Africa and the Middle East."

Together with the new productions in the various Biennale venues – in Ortisei, Pontives, Selva Val Gardena *The Parliament of Marmots* will present a retrospective exhibition in two venues (the Sala Trenker in Ortisei and Spazio Zero at GAMEC in Bergamo) dedicated to **Lin May Saeed** (1973–2023). A German artist of Iraqi origin, Lin May Saeed brought the theme of animals to the heart of her research. An activist for the defence of various living species, the artist questioned the reasons behind the conflict between animals and human beings in her practice in order to imagine a future free from the principles of exploitation and the abuse of other species.

In addition to the retrospective and in collaboration with the GAMEC in Bergamo, *The Parliament of Marmots* will feature a group exhibition of works produced over the last ten years that will deal with the theme of the wilderness in relation to the phenomena of anthropisation, land consumption and ecological collapse. The exhibition, together with the accompanying *film programme*, will tell of 'more than human' events - in the words of anthropologist Anna Tsing - acts of resistance and spontaneous alliances, in the knowledge that *'no organism can become itself without the assistance of other species'*.

At the end of the Biennale Gherdëina, the exhibition will move to GAMEC in Bergamo as part of the joint programme *Thinking Like a Mountain*, under the artistic direction of Lorenzo Giusti, with Sara Fumagalli and Marta Papini as associate curators and Valentina Gervasoni as head of magazine.

'Thinking like a mountain' is an expression coined by the American forester and environmental writer **Aldo Leopold** following an encounter with a **pack of wolves**. In

his posthumous collection of reflections, *A Sand Country Almanac* (1949), Leopold writes: “*Only the mountain has lived long enough to be able to listen, impartially, to the howling of the wolf.*” For the author, ‘thinking like a mountain’ means being able to appreciate all the elements of the living and their profound relationships: an invitation to **transcend the anthropocentric point of view** in order to contemplate the ecosystem as an organism endowed with balance and harmony, in which the territories are a treasure chest of regenerative processes to be safeguarded.

The visual identity for Biennale Gherdëina 9 has been crafted by **xxy studio** in Milan. The chosen typeface features a distinctive alternation, with vowels presented in a round font and consonants in italics. This design choice aims to evoke the rich cultural, linguistic, and social diversity of the locations that host the Biennial. The corporate identity incorporates a specially commissioned artwork by Atelier dell'Errore.

Further information on the artists:

Talar **Aghbassian** (1981), **Atelier dell'Errore** (2002), Alex **Ayed** (1989), Nassim **Azarzar** (1989), Ismail **Bahri** (1978), Yesmine **Ben Khelil** (1986), Ruth **Beraha** (1986), Chiara **Bersani** (1984), Alessandro **Biggio** (1974), Julius **von Bismarck** (1983), Nadim **Choufi** (1994), Elmas **Deniz** (1981), Esraa **Elfeki** (1989), Andro **Eradze** (1993), Marianne **Fahmy** (1992), Valentina **Furian** (1989), Daniele **Genadry** (1980), Eva **Giolo** (1991), Shuruq **Harb** (1980), Arnold **Holzknicht** (1960), Michael **Höpfner** (1973), Ingela **Ihrman** (1985), Nadia **Kaabi-Linke** (1978), Katia **Kameli** (1973), Laurent **Le Deunff** (1977), Linda Jasmin **Mayer** (1986), Femmy **Otten** (1981), Sara **Ouhaddou** (1986), Eva **Papamargariti** (1987), Diana **Pollicarpo** (1986), Lin May **Saeed** (1973-2023), Helle **Siljeholm** (1981), Tobias **Tavella** (1990), Markus **Vallazza** (1936-2019), Karin **Welponer** (1941).

Lorenzo Giusti is an Italian art historian and curator, a mountain enthusiast and lover of walking in natural spaces. Currently the director of GAMEC in Bergamo, he has curated several solo and group exhibitions of both historical and contemporary authors, working with public and private institutions, including Art Dubai, the Venice Biennale, Artissima Turin, Vienna Curated by Festival, Palazzo Grassi-Punta della Dogana in Venice, OGR Turin, Shenzhen Animation Bi-

ennale, MAN Nuoro, FRAC Corse, Triennale Milan, Palazzo Strozzi in Florence and many others. His particular interests lie in the relationship between historical avant-gardes and contemporary languages, as well as the relationship between ecological thinking and the visual arts. He is the creator and co-editor of the digital platform Radio GAMEC, founded in 2020 in Bergamo during the pandemic.

Marta Papini is an independent curator, feminist and mountain lover. She is currently a member of the selection committee of the Future Generation Art Prize. In 2020–22 she was Artistic Organiser of *The Milk of Dreams*, at the 59th Venice Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani. She has curated, co-curated and organised numerous personal and collective exhibitions in public and private institutions such as Venice Biennale, Venice, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, La Quadriennale, Rome, Artissima, Torino, Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art, Prato, Galerie Hubert Winter in Vienna. She writes about contemporary art for *Icon* magazine.

Zënza Sëida is a non-profit organisation committed to the spread of contemporary culture and aimed at promoting, promulgating and producing contemporary art as a fundamental tool for growth and development in South Tyrol. One of its main activities is the Biennale Gherdëina. Founded by Doris Ghetta in 2008 and located in the unique setting of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Dolomites, the Biennale Gherdëina commissions and produces contemporary artworks, exhibited in Ortisei and the surrounding area. The Biennale Gherdëina fosters dialogue between innovation and the renowned tradition of wood sculpture in the valley, which was the original starting point for the event. Edition after edition, the dialogue with other artistic and geographical traditions has expanded, and today the Biennale Gherdëina is a major institution in South Tyrol, hosting local, national and international artists, thinkers and audiences who engage with the fascinating traditions of the Val Gardena.

Biennale Gherdëina 9

The Parliament of Marmots

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Marta Papini | associate curator

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Sabine Gamper | curatorial assistance

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