

## PETRIT HALILAJ IS THE WINNER OF THE 2021 EDITION OF MMAT ACQUISITION PRIZE

### MMAT Acquisition Prize 2021: the awarded artwork

Following the first and second edition of **MMAT Acquisition Prize** in 2019 and 2020, Mauro Mattei Art Trust Collection announces the winner of the **third edition of its Acquisition Prize:**

#### **Petrit Halilaj**

*Abetare (Clouds)*, 2019

Steel sculpture.

Enlarged reproduction of a drawing found on the school tables of the Primary School "Shotë Galica" Runik, Kosovo.

320 × 253 × 4.5 cm

The series *Abetare* comprises enlarged steel embodiments of pencil engravings made by generations of Kosovarian elementary schoolchildren on their classroom desks. The desks were taken from the Primary School "Shotë Galica", where Halilaj studied as a child. During a visit to his former school in 2010, Halilaj witnessed and documented its demolition in favor of a modern building.

The work of Petrit Halilaj centers on the history of his home country Kosovo and his personal experiences fleeing war and migrating across lands and cultures. In *Abetare*, the artist recalls the experience of his childhood before war took over his country in 1997, celebrating the limitless imagination of children that is infused with playfulness and innocence.

*Abetare* was displayed for the first time on the occasion of Halilaj's solo exhibition at Kölnischer Kunstverein in April 2015. In 2017, Halilaj continued this project and elaborated on the table series, shown at the Second Edition of the Mario Merz Prize in Turin, where his presentation won the prize.

### The 2021 edition: selection criteria and the Committee choice

After having focused in 2019 on the artists capabilities of working collectively in an urban environment and in 2020 on the artists giving the most significant contribution to the dialogue on the new digital art fruition as a matter of art investigation on a global scale, the 2021 **selection criteria** have taken on a different angle. This edition's selection criteria have been focused on awarding whom among the artists born from 1985 to 1995 has the greatest potential in terms of artistic career based on one specific element: the capability to combine artistic research on the most relevant current social and political issues with a solid presence in the art market and simultaneously with a significant institutional visibility.

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The Committee has been invited to propose a shortlist of international artists who have more successfully integrated their artistic practice with the most sensitive issues of our recent times: from gender identity to race conflicts, from world-spread diasporas up to immigration.

The short list has been the following:

- Nora Aurrekoetxea
- Lena Marie Emrich
- Nicholas Grafia
- Petrit Halilaj
- Aneta Kajzer
- Miriam Kongstad
- Ser Serpas
- Marianna Simnett

The Prize has been attributed to the artist who has had the most distinguishable relevance not only in terms of quality of artistic practice but also in terms of institutional presence and market appreciation during 2020: Petrit Halilaj.

The Committee has evaluated the intrinsic value of the artwork and has also carefully considered it in the specific ecosystem into which it has been conceived and realised.

Petrit Halilaj's *Abetare* is an artwork capable to ignite a debate about the most relevant issues and dynamics of the world we live in as well as triggering a meaningful discussion on our social and political environment. The Prize has never been conceived to be a "political" award but has selected the artist who has been working deeply beyond the aesthetics and the formal art production with an eye to the present and on the confusing and troubled current times.

## **The 2021 Selection Committee**

The 2021 Selection Committee has been formed by four international art professionals selected among the most actively engaged in supporting emerging artists worldwide and chaired by MMAT's founder Mauro Mattei:

- Valeria and Marco Curina (founders of Marval Collection, Milan)
- Valeria Biamonti (art advisor and collector, London)
- Georgie Pope (Curator at Independent Collectors, Berlin)

## **The Awarding Ceremony**

The Selection Committee announced the awarded artwork on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2021: the awarding ceremony has taken place in London on the same day and presented not only Petrit Halilaj's *Abetare* but also the winners of the two previous editions: *The Pathfinders* by the

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Lisbon based collective ABCC and Catch of the day by the London based artist Mary Stephenson.

## About MMAT

MMAT is a not for profit organization with an active philanthropic role, consistent with it's founder Mauro Mattei constant engagement in supporting contemporary art both as longtime patron of Contemporary Art Society in London and as a Club GAMEC supporter in Italy.

MMAT is focused on young and emerging artists: all the acquisitions are coordinated by the Scientific Committee of the Trust, composed by a curator, an art advisor and an art collector, selected among the most experienced and competent in their respective fields of activity. MMAT wants to foster collaboration and dialogue among all the players actively supporting art and artists (museums, foundations, collections and other art trusts).

## About MMAT Acquisition Prize

**MMAT Acquisition Prize** is conceived as an itinerant award aimed at supporting emerging art in all its forms. The main purpose of the Prize is to allow young artists and their projects to grow with a view to discovering, valorising and highlighting the best of the new trends of international contemporary art.

MMAT Acquisition Prize doesn't have a fixed focus in terms of medium, nor it has a predetermined **Selection Committee**, as its purpose is to be nomadic and adaptable to

different contexts and countries. The Prize is paired each year with **different art events, festivals, fairs or exhibitions** with an innovative, experimental and international approach.

The Selection Committee is **headed by** MMAT founder **Mauro Mattei**, joined every year by a different jury of members (curators, art critics, art advisors, collectors etc.) connected to the Prize's context. The awarded artist's artwork becomes part of the Mauro Mattei Art Trust Collection with the goal to valorise and support the work of artists born in the 80's and 90's.

## The 2019 and 2020 editions

The **2019 edition** took place in the context of **FEA Lisboa**, an international artists studio festival held during Arco in Lisbon. The Selection Committee was composed by **Mauro Mattei** and **Andrea Baccin** and **Ilaria Marotta**, founders of **CURA. Magazine** who have selected one awarded project from the 28 artists studios and artist run spaces involved in the FEA Festival which counted 144 artists participating.

The winner of the first MMAT Acquisition Prize has been **The Pathfinders**, a collaborative collective project conceived, curated and hosted by **ABCC** (Alexandre Camarao and Bernardo Simões Correia).

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**The 2020 Edition** paired a totally digital initiative: Preview London on Artland where three international galleries showcased a number of their artists: **Bosse & Baum (London)** **Clima Gallery (Milan)** and **Damien & The Love Guru (Brussels)**.

The 2020 Selection Committee has been formed by **four international collectors** selected among the most actively engaged in supporting emerging artists worldwide and chaired by MMAT's founder Mauro Mattei: **Francesco and Sveva Taurisano** (Collezione Taurisano – Naples), **Sarah Bibas Zolotoff** (London), **Tobias Arndt** (Brussels). The awarded artist was **Mary Stephenson** (1989, London) of Bosse&Baum with the painting *Catch of the Day*.

For more information:

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*Petrit Halilaj, Abetare (Clouds), 2019*