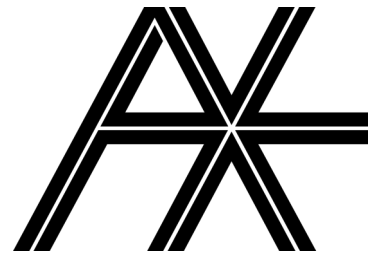


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Shamiran Istifan Manor Art Prize 2026

Press Release
Aarau, July 2025

Shamiran Istifan (*1987) is the recipient of the Manor Art Prize Aarau 2026, which is awarded every two years to support young Swiss artists. The prize comes with a solo exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus as well as a publication, both scheduled for spring 2026.

In her installation works, Shamiran Istifan explores the complexity of social coexistence. She addresses the questions of identity and belonging that play a central role for generations raised in two cultures. She uses various media such as video, sculpture, and textiles, aesthetically drawing on the symbolism, mythology, and pop culture of a cultural space shaped by the diaspora. Istifan was born in Baden and belongs to the Assyrian-Aramaic community, a minority from the Middle East. Prior to pursuing her artistic career, she taught at schools and worked as a journalist. This is reflected in her art, since Istifan includes her own observations and research in her work.

Works like her video installations *Ex Amore Vita: Ladies' Room* (2021) and *Trip to Jerusalem* (2022), as well as the sculpture *The Lease Is Almost Up* (2025), shown at this year's *Swiss Art Awards*, reveal, in a complex yet direct way, how class, gender, and belonging shape politics, society, and our interpersonal relationships.

In *Ladies' Room*, the artist uses three washbasins and a video clip to stage a public toilet, showcasing it as a social safe space and place of belonging for a specific community. In *Trip to Jerusalem*, on the other hand, she satirically comments on the complexity and fragility of our globalised world. Chairs covered in shiny metallic fabric and a video clip attached to them remind us of the children's game "Musical Chairs", or "Reise nach Jerusalem" [Trip to Jerusalem], as it is called in German. The work integrates elements from reality-TV culture and subtle references to cosmetic surgery to remove ethnic features. The piece reflects both the permanence of cultural codes as well as the objectification of female bodies.

Lastly, Shamiran Istifan also addresses cultural symbols and the consequences of certain power relations based on gender, class, and belonging in her latest sculpture, *The Lease Is Almost Up*. She plays with the structures on the front and back of the 14th-century Tarlati altar, drawing attention to blind spots in remembrance and archiving.

The exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus for the Manor Art Prize features new productions as well as updates to existing artworks.

A commitment to the young Swiss art scene

The Manor Art Prize, which celebrated 40 years in 2022, is one of the most important prizes for the promotion of contemporary art in Switzerland. It was created in 1982 by Philippe Nordmann to provide a platform for young Swiss artists. It is awarded by a jury of experts annually and alternately in the cities of Aarau, Basel, Biel, Chur, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Lugano, Schaffhausen, Sion, St. Gallen and Winterthur. A glance at the list of prize winners shows that the Manor Art Prize has paved the way to an international breakthrough for a whole series of artists. Manor sincerely congratulates the Manor Art Prize winners and wishes them every success in their artistic careers. www.manor.ch/de/u/kunstpreis

The award will be presented to Shamiran Istifan on the opening night of her exhibition in spring 2026. In addition to the exhibition, the award also includes a publication.

Shamiran Istifan

Shamiran Istifan was born in Baden in 1987. After completing a bachelor's degree at the Zurich University of Teacher Education (2013), she went on to earn a master's degree in trans-disciplinarity at the Zurich University of the Arts (2020). Today, she lives and works as a visual artist in Zurich.

Solo exhibitions: Gnossienne Gallery (Frieze London) (October 2025); *Precious Pipeline*, Rose Easton, London (2022); *Law & Order*, Kulturfolger, Zurich (2021); *G by Destiny*, All Stars, Lausanne (2021); *Micro Entities*, Material, Zurich (2020).

Group exhibitions (highlights): *Swiss Art Awards*, Art Basel (2025); *Malerbuch*, Kunsthaus Zurich (2024); *Don't Worry I Won't Forget You*, Forma Arts, London (2024); *Flugblatt Nummer Vier*, Tropez Humboldthain, Berlin (2024); *Zurich Biennale*, Kunsthalle Zurich (2023); *Gold Digger x Vista in the Sky*, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai (2023); *Between Two Rivers for In the Green Escape of My Palace*, Studio Chapple, London (2022); *City of Zurich Awards*, Helmhaus Zurich (2022); *Ex Amore Vita*, After Hours, Paris (2022); *As We Gaze Upon Her*, Warehouse 421, Abu Dhabi (2021); *Ex Amore Vita*, Independent Iraqi Film Festival, Baghdad (2021); *Werkschau*, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2021); *Nour el Ain*, Karma Gallery International, Zurich (2021); *Mariam*, Bagno Popolare, Baden (2018).

Awards and scholarships: Exhibition of works by the Canton of Zurich (2021); Studio scholarship from the City of Zurich (2022); Swiss Art Award (2025).

Additional Information

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