

## Art Safiental - Biennale 2024

### What if? Songs from Tomorrowlands

July 6 – October 20, 2024

In the summer of 2024, the voices of thirteen artists will be heard in the Alpine valley of Safiental, located in the Canton of Grisons, Switzerland. Akin to mountaineers calling to each other from mountain tops, the tales of different futures and speculative scenarios will bounce off the peaks and reverberate within the valley, amplifying the visions of these imagined tomorrows. What songs will we hear? And which ones would we like to sing along with?

The Safiental valley was shaped by the Rabiusa River, whose name translates as “raging”, and is now tamed by hydropower. The land, largely cultivated wherever the hillsides are not too steep, is dotted with dispersed settlements. To the north, the valley is bordered by the famous Rhine Gorge, a colossal wound ripped open ten thousand years ago by a landslide. In this landscape, the catastrophic is as palpable as the cultivated. The romantic and the technological meet in unexpected infrastructures.

In the site-specific exhibition *What if? Songs from Tomorrowlands*, artists react to this territory, looking at the Safiental valley and the Alps as a crucible for human and natural activity. The temporality of the landscape is expanded and connected with other places and times through the resonance of local and global voices, memories, and myths. In this context, “What if?” is more than just a rhetorical question, and songs are not only understood as melodies. They are tools that encourage us to go beyond the familiar and connect to ourselves, all kinds of other living beings, and the environment through new affiliations and identities, shaped by the exchange and transformation of alternative knowledge and stories. “What if” is thus understood as world-making, inviting us to seek collective healing and harmony, driven by the idea that *hope is a muscle* (Björk) that must constantly be exercised.

*What if? Songs from Tomorrowlands* refers to a relational point of view: one that listens to the whispers and collective chants from possible futures in a time of multiple choices, crises, opportunities, and catastrophes. Together, we set out to reflect on and act upon the present through the lens of the times to come – by asking ourselves in the future perfect tense (Harald Welzer): What will we have done, and what will we have left undone? How do we want to be remembered, and how can we become “a good ancestor” (Roman Krznaric)?

The thirteen voices spread across the valley, ricocheting across the meadows, forests, and rocky outcrops, reverberating questions, hopes and fears. This songbook of utopian and dystopian spells is nourished by dreams, imagination, and the speculative worlds of science fiction. In Safiental, the changing mountainous environment encourages us to question our sense of collective belonging and the way we relate to the world around us. Echoing the chorus of this increasingly sticky melody, it prompts us to practice the “What if?”.

**Curators:** Anne-Laure Franchette, Josiane Imhasly, Johannes M. Hedinger, Joanna Lesnierowska

**Artists:** Ravi Agarwal & Paulina Lopez (IN, CL) / Paloma Ayala (MX/CH) / Magali Dougoud (CH) / Hemauer/Keller (CH) / Monica Ursina Jaeger (CH) / Vibeke Mascini (NL) / Ernesto Neto (BR) / Ola Maciejewska (PL) / Quarto (BR/SE) / Stefanie Salzmann (CH) / Renae Shadler & Team (AUS/DE) / Andrea Francesco Todisco (CH) / Huhtamaki Wab (JP/UK)

**Artist Residency:** Farah Mulla (IN) / Sujit Mallik (IN)

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