

SOME RESPONSES ON SOME QUESTIONS

Description of project and its relevance to the pertinent institution

One of the great merits of “Robert Walser-Sculpture” by Thomas Hirschhorn (born 1957 in Bern, Switzerland, based in Paris), organized by the ESS-SPA (Expositions Suisses de Sculpture Bienne / Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions Biel) in 2019 (15.09.-8.09.2019), lies in its being a project that goes beyond the scope of all hitherto notions of sculpture – not only artistically but also owing to its political and social presence in the shape of a utopia to be experienced over 86 days. Thomas Hirschhorn is not only expanding his landmark project of non-object sculpture in public space – in the form of a production and presence project. At the same time it will be the largest production and presence project that he will make happen of the 70 art projects he will soon have produced for public places. This venture will be realized within the framework of the Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions, which has been taking place in the city of Biel since 1954. This platform has in the meantime acquired the status of an international “biennale” as it focuses on experimental forms of art exhibitions in public spaces and takes place on an irregular basis every four to five years. The last landmark edition was “Le Mouvement” in 2014, curated by Gianni Jetzer and Chris Sharp.

Thomas Hirschhorn will be constructing a sculpture in honour of Robert Walser, one of Switzerland’s great names in literature who was born in Biel. The “sculpture” will have the dimensions of a football field and will be erected on the biggest hub in the city, its central train station. This “sculpture” comprises a platform built of wooden pallets and around forty events that will be taking place daily over a period of 86 days together with Biel’s inhabitants. The latter planned and developed these events over the last two years jointly with Thomas Hirschhorn, and the venue will be a structure built by the artist and people from Biel. We are therefore dealing with a “sculpture” that is virtually a “grassroots” effort and is based on a special kind of participation and regional engagement. The thread holding all of this together is the investigation of themes and motifs from the life and work of the author Robert Walser, viewing them from a contemporary perspective and exploring new approaches. This is what lies behind the motto of “Robert Walser-Sculpture”: Be an outsider, be a hero, be Robert Walser! The focus in fact lies on the marginalized existence of the author, whose situation is mirrored in the marginalization of each and every artist but also of a growing part of the population in their struggle against precarity. Thomas Hirschhorn sought to rethink this position in society, that is, not as a victim but as a chance of attaining a sovereign status in the world. To loosely paraphrase Robert Walser: “I am here in the world and this constitutes my standpoint”. All of this will be lived and experienced over 86 days during which all participants, including also the artist and the curator, will be present on location and productive. Based on the overlap and synchronicity of the highly diverse events and modes of experiencing, this sculpture will be constructed each day anew and recharged like a battery. In an intensity and scope that no longer exists in everyday life, it will be a site for unexpected encounters, for surprising exchange, and social interaction. This is what lends the project a utopian character, which is reflected in the formal and meaning-related ambitions. The rigorous orientation toward a “non-exclusive public”, to the “people on the streets”, confronts them with a novel form of art that is produced by people who likewise “come from the streets” or even live on them. The project not only dismantles the barriers between art and world in a unique way. Additionally it engenders processes of awareness that address children, sectors of the population where being cultivated has little to no relevance, as well as specialists, visitors from abroad, migrants, and local inhabitants.

What is the transformative aspect of the project. Please elaborate on the reasons why the area or theme of your application should to be transformed by the applicant institution.

Thomas Hirschhorn is one of those global artists who is intensely involved with the public sphere. His temporary public altars and kiosks as well as precarious monuments, where he includes the residents of a district in confrontations and explorations of leading intellectual figures for discussions over months, are famous. The residents of the districts, clubs, and other groups are included in the realization of a short-term “social sculpture”. The impact of these works is, however, long term, influencing awareness so that the core of their intellectual message is updated and made fertile for everyday life. In this way Hirschhorn has already been able to realize the *Gramsci Monument* (2013, New York), the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* (2009, Amsterdam), the *Bataille Monument* (2002, Kassel), and the *Deleuze Monument* (2000, Avignon). This new form of art in public spaces is so unique and convincing that its influence can be found worldwide and is widely discussed. Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions has already, since the 1990s, been taking on the shape of a platform for contemporary art forms in public spaces as well as themed exhibitions. Its ambition of exhibiting demanding artworks in outdoor spaces and discourses currently relevant is a significant reason to invite Thomas Hirschhorn. “Robert Walser-Sculpture” (2019) will be Thomas Hirschhorn’s first presence and production project in Switzerland while at the same time be a homage to the author Robert Walser. He will use the vessel of the sculpture exhibition for creating

multifarious confrontations and encounters, sculptural events, aesthetic experiences, and discourses related to Robert Walser and his work. During the "sculpture" the visitors will intensively engage with Robert Walser and Thomas Hirschhorn. Following its motto, the "Robert Walser-Sculpture" will help us to rethink marginalization and re-evaluate marginal existence as a sovereign position. At the same time Hirschhorn's project generates awareness of the democratic character of public space. Visitors are not merely passive consumers. This promotes cultural and political awareness, since today's public spaces are caught in a process of constantly expanding privatization and are losing their community-forging character. It is imperative for today's cities to put a stop to the trend toward privatization despite their dwindling financial resources. Indeed, critics believe that this development actually restricts our fundamental rights such as the right to demonstrate and freedom of assembly. Art in public spaces creates "public space." It is therefore a space in which people can discuss and exchange ideas that are not connected to consumerism. Art in public spaces should make all citizens conscious of the fact that a diversity of cultural events is open to them. Culture becomes democratic in this way and can be experienced beyond the walls of its institutions. "Robert Walser-Sculpture" meets these demands in an unprecedented way. It not only addresses all levels of society but also explicitly engages with a "non-exclusive audience". Thomas Hirschhorn wants to make art together with and for the people of Biel and thereby fulfils the prerequisites needed to retransform society from a hedonistic one into a community again seeking meaning in life. At the same time his art makes it possible to reflect on what art means and, in doing so, appeals to a broad audience. To help fostering awareness he will also conduct a daily special workshop about the quality and energy of art.

Art that is being sponsored by public funding is exactly what should serve to reflect on our times and on our society by means of art. A democratic society can only abide or grow by examining its own basis. A project like "Robert Walser-Sculpture" is in a position to accomplish a participative project that calls for opposition. Next to the site that is the centre of activities and point of departure – i.e. for the daily walks in the manner of Robert Walser – the sculpture comprises, in truly unique dimensions, collaborative groups working together with, assisted by, and for the residents of Biel. In addition to the actual built installation which serves as a platform for a "social sculpture" or, as Thomas Hirschhorn likes to call it, a "presence and productions project". Since June 2016 the search has been going on for finding and also building the collaborative groups. Diverse collaborations with institutions, private individuals, schools, and media partnerships have already been agreed on. Together with the people of Biel, funded by the state, myriads of artistic experiences will be "produced". These manifold experiences will be open to the residents of Biel and to visitors from all over the world for 12 weeks, daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thomas Hirschhorn's idea of a "vertical eternity" of art – claiming that a public artwork is not eternal because of its material resilience and rather due to the intensity of the aesthetic experience – will usher in self-discovery in Biel. This should find an echo lasting many decades and in this way evidence how very sustainable and profitable energy and funding invested in art can be.

How does the project address the most pressing needs of the creative ecosystem and timely challenges that art institutions are faced with, particularly but not exclusively in relation to the impact of new digital and virtual technologies.

Since Thomas Hirschhorn does not believe, that relevance in art is tied to the material, he has adopted another strategy: art without an object. What he produces daily with the inhabitants of Biel are, instead, events, encounters, and exchanges. In this way he hopes to revive the memory of Robert Walser and the legacy of the author with much more forcefulness than if his art would culminate in producing an object. That is why, when the exhibition is over, only personal memories will remain, photographs on websites and social media, together with a publication documenting the whole project and process. This is in a spirit much more in keeping with the new digital and virtual technologies than if the artist would produce an object for public space. Indeed, much of his project will be taking place on the appropriate social-media channels (which, incidentally, is already happening at www.robertwalser-sculpture.com, on Facebook and Instagram), while his imperative of actually being physically present on location – and his strategy of "non-programmation" – builds up a counter-strategy to virtuality. Both avenues together reflect on the dilemma faced by exhibition centres, and therefore a foundation that supports art in public spaces in such a radical way and makes it possible, like Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions Biel, is unconditionally worthy of support. Although the project is pursuing a contemporary approach, it is very difficult to promote a project that has abandoned the idea of art as an object. Why should a project receive funding if only ideas, emotions, and memories survive it? This hurdle must be compensated for by promoting communication and information about it and also through animated discussions about contemporary art in public spaces. Thomas Hirschhorn's project or the work of the foundation make these public discussions possible and are paving the way for an understanding of art that is not manifest in objects but in stored and collected data.

Please explain how the grant would complement the institution's mission and be a catalyst for its performance in one or more of the following areas: generation of new knowledge, growth of collection, social outreach, audience inclusion and engagement, new operating models, improved archival and/or restoration practices, networks of institutional collaboration, etc. (be as specific as possible).

Marcel Joray carefully thought out the basic concept of Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions in 1954 and was extremely forward-looking in his ideas. His idea was to present to the public a representative cross-section of the diversity of contemporary sculpture. Decisive for Joray in all of this were the issues of aesthetic experience and the emotions that sculpture is capable of exciting in us. In his eyes sculpture is a "social art par excellence", as he wrote in the press release for the exhibition in 1954. Joray's inquisitiveness and passion led him to also revive the summer exhibition every few years, each time in a new way. The whole series of exhibitions of art in public space in Biel paradigmatically reflect the transformations in local and international socio-political situations and the relevant developments and evolutions of artistic approaches and practices as well as the changing angles of how curators approach art and exhibiting. Since 1991 the exhibitions each pursue a theme, with the artists responding to the respective thematic focus, creating new works for the exhibition in plumbing the forms that evolve out of this context. Their works are provocative, playing with the elements of surprise and inspiration in their reactions to the selected site.

Thomas Hirschohorn's "Robert Walser-Sculpture" is totally in line with the guiding principle behind Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions Biel. It takes the idea of art in the public sphere, however, to a new level in divorcing itself from the idea of sculpture as an object and instead focuses on the idea of public discourse as its theme. From the political debate about public space new insights can be won about the function of society and public spaces in general. Public space is in fact the interface for an unimaginable diversity of private, economic, and political interests. Does public space belong to the cities, its inhabitants, the people who use it, rent it, tourists and visitors, or to nobody at all? "Robert Walser-Sculpture" supplies form to the search for answers to the question of whose interests and demands have more weight, and provides a platform for democratic debate. Social outreach and the inclusion of the general public are thematically crucial to Thomas Hirschohorn's concept of art; his principle of a "non-exclusive audience" clearly demonstrates this position. Additionally, in order to realize his "Robert Walser-Sculpture" a huge network had to be assembled, embracing both institutions as well as private individuals. We have been grooming this network since 2016 and the following will be part of it: Robert Walser Zentrum, Bern; Robert Walser Archiv; Robert Walser Gesellschaft (annual conference); Stiftung Robert Walser, Biel (www.robertwalserpreis.ch); Neues Museum, Biel (www.nmbiel.ch); Centre Pasqu'art Biel (www.pasquart.ch); Schweizerischer Alpenclub Sektion Biel, Gassenarbeit Biel, Stadtbibliothek Biel, Zentralbibliothek Solothurn, Oberstufenzentrum Mett-Bötzingen, Gymnasium Biel, Lokalint Biel (Offspace), Volkshochschule Biel-Lyss, Perron bleu, Bieler Tagblatt (media partner), Telebielingue.ch (media partner).

**Does the notion of community and inclusivity feature in the project/initiative?)
If the answer is positive, please elaborate how the Grant would further develop community-related endeavours.**

Despite Biel not being a large city compared to others in Switzerland it is unique because around 80 different languages are spoken. Biel is situated on a lake and has a Mediterranean flair; it is easy to get to by train from all of the nation's urban centres. It lies on the linguistic boundaries of German- and French-speaking Switzerland and is a seat of the watchmaking industry. Since the 1960s it has had to deal with economic crises, which motivated its inhabitants to form many self-help initiatives. At the same time the city is one of the large refugee distribution centres in Switzerland and therefore intimately acquainted with current migration problems. Together with the population mix, this historical situation offers a fertile ground for Thomas Hirschohorn's project. The art project integrates an entire city and engages with the latest in global problems expanding our consciousness at both a sensual and intellectual level. We believe that this is not only a unique opportunity for Switzerland but for the art world in general, that it will get immense aesthetic, social, and political feedback. In keeping with Thomas Hirschohorn's ambitions and energy we are in need of support of an effective and substantial kind. The budget encompasses wages for all the staff and collaborative partners in order to prevent the "exploitation" all too commonplace in many art projects. This not only formulates an aspiration but likewise implements it by socially responsible and socially compatible action.

In this context we cite the artist (ongoing interview since 2016): "I believe totally in equality in art, because I can and have been able to experience the same in communicating through the medium of art. It is in fact the reason I became an artist in the first place. This is the explanation for my commitment towards creating a work that does not exclude anyone and instead includes everybody, a work that does not intimidate anyone. This explains my strong will to lend form to

something that is so vulnerable, precarious, and instable, an artwork that is based on the conviction that there is such a thing as universality, justice, equality, and truth. I wish to imbue universal form into each and every work I create. And then I ask myself: 'Could it be that justice, that what connects us, brings us together, and equality, lie in precariousness – something that so many of us today share – and might not this be the 'political'? To assume as an artist that equality exists in art means that I believe that art can change things. Art – by means of its form, the priorities it sets, its assertions, its absolutes, and its beauty – has the power to change things. If I doubted this, if I did not believe that my art could not change anything, or if I believed that my work was only valid for an initiated audience, then I would no longer pursue it, as this would be plain cynicism. I make art because art claims to be based on equality and does this with insistence. There would be no point in me making art if I were to think that my work is based on inequality and that inequality would be an issue of the same. I am competent in things related to equality. This firm belief, this competency, has always been my guideline in my decision to make art. I have come to realize that art is about believing in something. It is about having a plan, an idea, and pursuing it, of having a mission. Even if this might seem absurd and anachronistic to some: Art is about everything!"

Does the project consider if at all a critical reflection on issues of sustainability in the institutional context? (be as specific as possible).

In answering these questions we must consider both the national and regional perspectives as well as the specific nature of Thomas Hirschhorn's project. Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions (SPA), as a foundation, has become nationally established in an institutional context despite the fact that the institutional infrastructure must be moulded anew each time to meet the demands of every new project. Since 1954 it has repeatedly realized large and widely discussed exhibitions for art in public spaces and is now the longest existing organization besides other comparable organizations such as Art en plein air, Môtier, and Bex & Arts: Triennale de sculpture contemporaine en plein air in Switzerland. Institutionally it is firmly established in the city of Biel because the city, the Burgergemeinde Biel, and the Canton of Bern are its sponsors and as such all are represented in the board of trustees. For Thomas Hirschhorn sustainability is something he strives to achieve not in a material way but in a vital and mental sense. His artwork is unique, site-specific, and temporary; it cannot be dismantled and then put up somewhere else. Sustainability does not comprise the physical presence of an artwork but is instead the remembrance of an event, the focus of its energy and collaboration, or the surprising encounters it made possible. But realizing such a project and its materialization on the whole is a political statement and has everything to do with sustainability. Thomas Hirschhorn employs methods of construction and materials that he can handle and use together with untrained people. In this way, during construction – as he has learned from own experience – people acquire confidence, can be proud of what they have achieved together, and this process generates a feeling of community. The materialization of the project, with only a few exceptions, is based on reusing materials and objects: Platforms are being constructed with rented used EUR-pallets. They will be returned after the project is over. Wood scrap will be used where possible for the panels. Many of the materials will be on loan from the local building and construction companies. The dismantled wood that cannot be reused will be shredded by a wood pellet company and used as wood pellets for heating. The computers of the library and editors of the daily newspaper will either be lent from other institutions or purchased second hand. Later they will be auctioned out to team members or given to them as gifts. A large company is sponsoring the project through loans of copying machines and printers, which will be afterwards returned. And the project is sustainable in the sense of compensating all those participating for their work. This is by no means a matter of course in the art world and is setting new benchmarks in ethical behaviour in the institutional art scene.

Could the model of the initiative or project be scaled up and replicated at other institutions?

This project is based on a model that can definitely be adapted to other situations and contexts or be interpreted anew for other venues with other people, just as Thomas Hirschhorn has done with all his presence and production projects. The site-specificity was, in each case, dictated by the different reference persons (Antonio Gramsci, Georges Bataille, Robert Walser, etc.) or abstract ideas (such as *feu éternelle*) that he chose. Subsequent to this he established collaborations with the people on site (see the biography of the artist). While he hones the principles of realization and materialization, the choice of location, communication etc. more each time, the principle on which the project essentially functions remains the same.

Are there any strategies to disseminate the project/initiative into wider social and cultural spheres?

This has been essentially going on since April 2016 by carefully beginning and nurturing public discourse in two languages and is additionally being fuelled by a variety of formats – newsletters, interviews, public discussions and press conferences. The discourse is not only taking place in artistic circles but, from the very beginning, was noticed by the broader public, as is evidenced by this press review (<https://www.robertwalsersculpture.com/news/>). At this link you can find a sampling of reactions by the press: <https://www.robertwalsersculpture.com/media-response/>). The documentation on the following website provides further proof of this: (<https://www.robertwalsersculpture.com/fieldwork/>). The widespread interest that this project enjoys even before its realization and the fact that it is exciting so much controversial debate – as the various letters to editors reveal – is proof of how Thomas Hirschhorn is succeeding, thanks to his strategies, in achieving a broad echo and how the discussion of values in regard to art in public spaces has reached a wider public.

Are there any subsequent initiatives or plans to ensure the lasting legacy of the project?

The website will, on the one hand, remain as an archive and information source, as is also the case of *Gramsci-Monument* at Dia Art Foundation (<https://www.diaart.org/program/archive/thomas-hirschhorn-gramsci-monument-project/year/2013/location/forest-houses>). On the other hand a publication is planned with the goal of comprehensively illustrating the project as a whole as well as the process that it initiates and nurtures. The ongoing legacy is an issue of networking among individuals who visited “Robert Walser-Sculpture” or were working for it and became acquainted there. Furthermore, the outcomes are already being examined in art theory and art history symposia. This was true for a conference that was co-initiated by curator Kathleen Bühler: PERFORMING REALITY (31 August, 1. September 2018, Kunstmuseum Bern) <https://www.republiquegeniale.ch/de/ganzes-programm/archiv/symposium-vkks-performing-reality-382-15.html>

The annual conference organized by the Vereinigung der Kunsthistorikerinnen und Kunsthistoriker in der Schweiz (VKKS) jointly with the Kunstmuseum Bern and Université de Fribourg addresses realism and artistic representation of reality, which has from the very beginning been laden with tension in its relation to physical reality, where documentary qualities, claims of truth, and social criticism converge or overlap. The conference took place on the occasion of Thomas Hirschhorn’s planned “Robert Walser-Sculpture” in Biel. It examined the different manifestations of performative realism as its point of departure and investigated various artistic strategies in the present and the recent past in this dynamic position in art.

What is the project's impact at a social, community and educational level? (if applicable)

A crucial aspect for Thomas Hirschhorn is to address the non-elite, non-exclusive audience, that is, the general public. As he explained above in his interview about the project, first and foremost he wishes to work with a non-exclusive audience. In saying this he specifies more precisely for whom he is making art. He coined the term of a “non-exclusive audience” because he did not want to make the mistake of assigning roles, that is, of working for an art or preferred audience, an elite one. This is something he rejects and therefore his concept of a “non-exclusive audience” is both to clarify this while also being a manifesto. On the one hand, it points out that everyone is part of art and can partake in it, and that those who become absorbed by art in some way and those who connect to it always perform an inclusive action. No one is ever excluded from art; exclusiveness is a category that would make it impossible for him to work with art. If it is applied to art, then this bespeaks misunderstanding art’s power. Hirschhorn firmly believes that art should not be misused as something that is elite and exclusive. The notion of a “non-exclusive audience” is, on the other hand, a manifesto stating that the artist wishes to steer his work clearly in a specific direction. He seeks to address people who have no idea about art and for whom it is a closed book. They are individuals he has yet to become acquainted with, it is an audience that largely has problems other than art – meaning that Hirschhorn is addressing the Other with his art. For Hirschhorn only the “non-exclusive audience” counts. “Making art political” means for him to work for the Others. It might be his neighbour, or a stranger who frightens him, someone who just happens to be there by chance. The Other is someone the artist has not thought about and is not expecting. For this reason Hirschhorn will always do everything possible not to ever exclude the Others from his work. However, the notion of a “non-exclusive audience” is not simply

synonymous with "everyone", "the masses", or "the majority". The "non-exclusive audience" is dynamism and momentum in moving toward the new, unfamiliar, the indeterminate, and the still as yet unfixed. He intends to include the Others by means of the form of his work. The questions he asks himself are: Can he succeed with his art in initiating a dialogue directly with a "non-exclusive audience" or a person-to-person debate? Will he be able to do this without help, cultural mediation, and explanations? Can he absorb the attention of a "non-exclusive audience" in his work? Has he made provisions in his work for the necessary openings and gateways that make it possible for a "non-exclusive audience" to access his art? Participation in art can neither be a goal nor a stipulation. However, it can be made to happen if the artwork provides space and scope for a "non-exclusive audience". Participation arises when Hirschhorn shares, as artist, something with others in his work and through his work. Only when he shares something of himself can he hope that the Others might share something of themselves with him. Only when this happens can we speak of participation.

Please briefly describe the accessibility, audience outreach, dissemination and inclusivity aspects related to the project.

"Robert Walser-Sculpture" is intended to take place in summer at the most central point in the city of Biel – at its central train station Bahnhofplatz. Daily 50,000 people frequent Bahnhof Biel, the city's main station, making it one of the 10 largest train stations in Switzerland. These commuters will be inevitably confronted with the "sculpture" and notice it when they pass by on their way to wherever. What is more, the train station in Biel is a key junction station, situated midway on the routes connecting Switzerland's east and west (Geneva – Lausanne – Biel – Zurich – St. Gallen) while also providing a direct connection to Basel via the Jura Mountains. Biel can also be easily reached from southern Switzerland via Lausanne. A national audience can therefore easily travel to "Robert Walser-Sculpture". A partnership with Swiss railways makes it possible to offer attractive specials when visiting the exhibition by train. The location of "Robert Walser-Sculpture" is also linked thematically to the work and life of Robert Walser, as Bahnhof Biel was the place where he first arrived on returning to his hometown after his frustrating attempt to get a footing in the German capital Berlin. Bahnhof Biel is featured in his writings. And finally, train stations are today places where the marginalized often hang about, that is, the kind of "non-exclusive audience" Thomas Hirschhorn explicitly wishes to address. "Robert Walser-Sculpture" is situated in Biel and for the people of Biel (ca. 60,000 inhabitants), because it transposes art into the city and into its streets, transforming the whole city into a space of reflection and experience through its active participation. The central location guarantees total access, and admission is free. The opening hours will be 12 hours a day, every day for 86 days. This applies to all age groups (a children's programme will take place 12 hours a day for 5 to 15 year olds). Events will be held in all languages spoken in Switzerland and visitors will have access to events at all times. This is the core of the project, where participation and collaboration have uttermost priority. Unbiased participation and involvement are imperatives for the artist, hence his rigorous implementation of "non-programmation" (see above). In non-programmation the times at which events are to begin are not announced beforehand. This is to ensure that visitors do not just come by to mechanically consume and listen to talks, discussions, lectures, or readings. Instead they must spend some time in the "sculpture" and become part of it themselves in order to find out when all those events will be taking place. In this way the artist wishes to initiate a myriad of surprising experiences among people with one another, among people who would otherwise not bump into one another anymore because they normally move in different social spheres.

Estimated overall cost of project – please attach a detailed budget with a breakdown of individual costs, including additional relevant public and/or private sources of funding.

Overall costs GBP 1,580,800 (CHF 2,000,000)

Planned sources of project funding (institutional, public, private or in-kind) – please indicate whether the funds have already been secured.

Secured funds GBP 1,016,500 (CHF 1,286,000)

Will the funding from the Outset Grant unlock other matching funding?

To be invited by Outset Grant is momentous for us and signifies international recognition. Its support is an honour for a work of art that strives to fulfil the mission of Outset, that is, accepting the challenge of re-thinking the world and, in doing so, promoting artistic discourse that can be shared by the wider public, by a non-specific audience that is not only art related. Outset's support would generally enhance faith in the project and motivate other foundations and patrons operating internationally to fund the project too. We regard this support as an incredibly vital catalyst for being successful in the fundraising that still has to be done and without which the realization of the project is at risk.

Are there any public programmes or events connected to the project?

"Robert Walser-Sculpture" is comprised, in its entirety, of programmes open to all of the public, that is, ca. 40 daily events taking place over 86 days. The "sculpture" is open 12 hours a day (from 10:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.) and free of charge for everybody. A bar, a canteen, a library, and two exhibitions within the "sculpture" are permanently open. One of the exhibitions showcases the intersecting success trajectories of the two brothers Robert Walser (author) and Karl Walser (painter); the other takes a look at Robert Walser from the angle of his suppression of his sexual urges as is evidenced in letters and excerpts of his writings, side by side with an actual dominatrix's report of her past experiences. Both shows have been integrated in the sculpture, as well as a studio with assistants, a place where visitors can become creative themselves. Additionally the Robert Walser-Zentrum from Bern will be opening its doors in Biel and also Gassenarbeit Biel (help in crisis situations and for the down and out) will be opening anew for 12 hours daily at the "sculpture". Among the daily events taking place will be the children's programme (12 hours daily); a theatre performance, two guided daily walks through Biel (Robert Walser was an avid walker and by practicing it himself he gathered his thoughts and could observe the outside world); a daily lecture on the city of Biel and its history; a daily lecture held by an international specialist on Robert Walser on the author's work and his relevance as a writer; a daily quality workshop run by Thomas Hirschhorn; producing a daily newspaper, a daily TV programme, and a daily social media feed; as well as a daily 12-hour reading from the works of Robert Walser in various languages. An exhibition opening will take place daily too (because the "sculpture" will be mounted daily anew), and language courses will be held daily, free of charge (German, French, Esperanto, Arabic calligraphy). Furthermore there will be a forum where readings take place and a writing room where people can retire to write. And a video will be made of "The World in Biel" (interviews with foreigners living in Biel and the reasons why they live there). And there will be a reading group for trainees and trade apprentices to encourage them to enjoy books (after all, Robert Walser was a trade apprentice himself and was terribly bored where he worked until he decided to begin writing.) The artist will also be present 12 hours a day and be producing, in keeping with his concept of a presence and production project. He is convinced that he can only motivate presence and production among others if he too is on site and producing. In this way the public can not only watch an artist at work but experience art in direct confrontation with reality, becoming even part of this reality, which is also the reality of art. Such a spontaneous conflation of art, the public, and reality is pivotal to the work of Thomas Hirschhorn and makes his art truly unique.

Is there a communications or PR strategy in place for the project?

The project itself defines a public relations and communication strategy that targets a wider audience without a large advertising budget. Media work is central to the overall strategy, which is based on the presence of the artist. The foundations have been laid for local and regional media partnerships, and negotiations with Swiss Television (SRF) are in progress. We have also set our sights on gaining the interest of ARTE and international art magazines. Our partners are going to put platforms and communication tools at our disposal.

"Robert Walser-Sculpture" will have a live studio with live streaming and produce a daily newspaper. Documentation of the project (since 2016) can be viewed on the website robertwalser-sculpture.com and is thereby simultaneously a mirror of the whole event and archive. A catalogue as a journal is planned in order to document "Robert Walser-Sculpture" and reflect on it, providing a solid foundation for its enduring and ongoing impact.

The PR supporting the project in its development since the beginning in 2016 through to today comprises reports from the fieldwork of Thomas Hirschhorn and Kathleen Bühler as well as public events and media releases, the project's website, newsletters, and the social media. The focus of the PR work was always on Thomas Hirschhorn's personal appearances.

Contact details of applicant (if different from the ones filled in when creating your Niio account).

Foundation Swiss Sculpture Exhibitions/Stiftung Schweizerische Plastikausstellung SPA/Fondation Expositions suisses de sculpture ESS, Biel-Bienne
Switzerland, Biel-Bienne