



# Media release

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## **‘Passing the cities through the lens of women’ Swiss Embassy’s visual art exhibition tells women's stories in a poetic way**

**Beijing, January 27<sup>th</sup> - Today, the Swiss Embassy in Beijing inaugurated a solo exhibition of photographs and videos by Swiss visual artist Catherine Gfeller with a spotlight on women’s perspectives and voices by creating a dialogue and bridge between women and cities. A panel discussion focused on the role of women in city development took place during the event. Ambassador of Switzerland to China Jürg Burri attended the opening and gave a speech.**

From 2016 to 2019, the artist Catherine Gfeller travelled to different cities in China, where she met quite a lot of women with different backgrounds. She followed them and wandered on the streets of Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Chengdu, Beijing, and interpreted these Chinese cities in a more subjective and dreamlike way through the lens of women. The exhibition, named ‘Passing the cities through the lens of women’, includes more than 30 photographs, text and video works, each of which poetically presents the relationship between women and their cities.

From the standpoint of the artist, women's voices are very important in today's Chinese society. During the filming process, Catherine Gfeller learned how these women perceive the new ways of life and find an anchor in their cities. Women's vision, the dilemmas they face, their unique spirit - the artist uses specific artistic concepts to bring them closer to each other. ‘The moment I pressed the camera shutter, I felt like I became part of the city,’ said the artist.

‘Ms. Gfeller cares very much about people, especially women in cities. Women's issues are a global topic and I hope that more women's voices will be heard,’ said Ambassador Burri at the event, ‘Switzerland started late when it comes to gender equality, but thanks to strong political representation and a powerful women's movement, the society is progressing and transforming rapidly. I look forward to the implementation of the gender equality strategy, adopted by the Federal Council, the first national-level strategy for gender equality in all areas of life. The aim is to achieve true equality by 2030.’

Catherine Gfeller attended today's guest panel with Ning Ying, Chinese director, Li Jingya, Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture and Design, Beijing Jiaotong University, and Qi Yan, Executive Director of Three Shadows Photography Art Centre in Beijing. Each of the four women guests presented their professional and personal perspectives on urban change and development, as well as the role of women in this process. British freelance dancer Amy Grubb and Chinese musician Liang Ning from the St. Gallen Symphony Orchestra in Switzerland brought exquisite dances and cello performances to the event.

Catherine Gfeller specializes in photography, especially landscapes. She creates photographic artworks obtained through montage, collage and superimposition, and mixes urban motifs and metaphors in the mediums of photography, video, sound and textual installations, as if in a world reinterpreted from reality.

The event, with the spotlight on 'gender equality', is part of the Swiss Embassy's yearly public diplomacy campaign of 'Diversity & Me' in 2023. The exhibition of Catherine Gfeller's photography works will be open to the public from now to 31st March alongside the Embassy's outside wall.

### **'Diversity & Me' Campaign**

'Diversity & Me' is the theme of the Swiss Embassy's public diplomacy cultural activities for 2023, celebrating one of the greatest strengths of Switzerland: cultural and societal diversity, and encouraging dialogues between different voices and cultures. During the past year, the Embassy has successfully organised events such as the first edition of Romansh Language Week in China, the 'Blinde Kuh – Sensory Parcours in the Dark' experience week, the 3rd Swiss Film Festival, the Swiss Italian Week, and has actively promoted topics in the areas of gender equality, disability, age, LGBTQI+ and social mobility, etc.

### **Visual artist Catherine GFELLER**

Catherine Gfeller is a Swiss artist who lives and works in Montpellier, Paris and Switzerland. In 1991, she obtained a Master's degree in French Literature and Art History at the universities of Neuchâtel and Lausanne, then a Master of Fine Art School of Visual Arts in New York and a Certificate of aptitude for secondary school teachers (CAPES). She started photography in the eighties, focusing on landscapes, and travelled to all the continents to find her motives.

In 1995, thanks to a national grant, she was able to pursue her research in New York where she lived until 1999. Fascinated by the megalopolis, she transformed city scenes into Urban Friezes. She then moved to Paris where she received the HSBC Foundation Prize for Photography. Gradually, the human figure inhabits her compositions. Women protagonists are staged in a game of multiple imbrications.

Catherine Gfeller is regularly invited to create subjective city portraits (Sevilla, Johannesburg, Beirut, Kyiv, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Madinah, Riyadh). In dialogue with the inhabitants and the spirit of the place, she interprets their testimonies through an imaginary vision, nourished by both observations and inventions.

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**Embassy of Switzerland in China official website:** <https://www.eda.admin.ch/beijing>

**Embassy of Switzerland in China Weibo:** [@瑞士驻华大使馆](#)

**Embassy of Switzerland in China WeChat:** 别样瑞士 SwissChat

**Official website of Catherine Gfeller:** [www.catherinegfeller.com](http://www.catherinegfeller.com)



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