

Zurich, 14 November 2022

Press Release

**“On Observing the Printing. Documentation of lithographic printing processes”  
7–23 December 2022; 3 January–5 March 2023**

Opening: Tuesday, 6 December 2022, 6 p.m.

**The printing workshop of *Thomi Wolfensberger* (b. 1964) in Zurich is one of the foremost addresses for lithography, renowned far beyond the country’s borders. What exactly happens when artists enter into a dialogue with the printer there? An interdisciplinary research team spent three years observing the learned and intuitive processes, working steps and manual operations involved in the production of art prints, and documented these in a wide variety of ways. The study was conducted within the scope of the SNF project "Hands-on. Documentation of Artistic-Technical Processes in Printing" (2018-2021) by Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). For this, three Swiss artists. *Dominik Stauch* (b.1962), *Sabine Schlatter* (b. 1977) and *Michael Günzburger* (b. 1974) were invited to take up residencies lasting several weeks. The exhibition not only offers a real showcase of, but its participative aspect also forms the basis for an authoritative insight into this traditional printing process.**

In short, printing means transferring colour indirectly onto paper. The handling of that colour, in the form of paint or ink, involves a whole slew of specific actions. The colour has to be determined, and the paint or ink has to be mixed and applied to the stone. Then it is adjusted, tapped or beaten, to create a matte, opaque or smooth effect. Besides “printing colour” may also occur the process of “pulling out colour”. The SNF project has defined more than 700 specific terms relating to the lithographic printing process that describe the countless working steps and manual interventions undertaken by the printer and the artist in order to complete a lithograph.

The exhibition at the Graphische Sammlung presents a selection of the wide resulting range of artefacts, from templates and pull-out sheets to stencils, colour tests and proofs as well as the edition prints. Everything has been inventoried and archived in great detail. What is more, the project made it possible to view the entire printing process from many different angles. The project team has not only recorded the process by way of cameras and ethnographic notes, but has even developed a specific vocabulary to describe the individual processes involved. Finally, all the data collected has been fed into a user interface, providing the public with digital access to the entire inventory of the workshop with all its machinery, instruments and materials.

Last but not least, on this occasion, visitors even have the opportunity of getting directly involved. The exhibition allows people to explore some of the archived materials themselves by looking through the archival boxes provided, either alone or in the company of a specialist, to gain detailed insights into the printing process. A visit to our School of Observation also provides an opportunity for a broader discussion of any observations made and a chance to talk about the actual process of observing. This can foster a fuller understanding of the key aspects involved in the technical and creative process. It might even reveal some of the secrets of printing!

## Practical Information

Curatorial Team	Alexandra Barcal, conservator 20th–21st c., Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, Prof. Christoph Schenker, former director of the Institute for Contemporary Art Research, ZHdK
Events	At the SCHOOL OF OBSERVATION visitors will be able to explore the documented lithographic printing processes together with the participants in the SNF research project and other experts, and at the same time examine the - also subjective - insights they have gained. For more information, visit <a href="https://gs.ethz.ch/agenda/">https://gs.ethz.ch/agenda/</a>
User Interface	For an overview of the SNF project, visit <a href="https://hands-on.zhdk.ch">https://hands-on.zhdk.ch</a>
Publication	By an academic researcher who has observed the project from its inception: Kris Decker, <i>Maschinen unter Druck</i> , St. Gallen: Vexer Verlag 2022, 136 pages ISBN 978-3-907112-59-5, CHF 25.00. English edition as open access under: <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7024599">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7024599</a>
Opening hours	Daily 10 a.m. to 16.45 p.m. Closed <b>24 December 2022–2 January 2023</b>
Admission	free
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SNF Project	<p>The project “Hands-on. Documentation of Artistic-Technical Printing Processes“ has been funded by the Schweizerischer Nationalfonds (SNF). It was carried out at the Institute for Contemporary Art Research (IFCAR) of Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) over a period of three years (1 September 2018 to 31 August 2021). The project was conceived by <b>Christoph Schenker</b>, expert in artistic research and project manager, as well as by the artist <b>Michael Günzburger</b> and the art historian <b>Mara Züst</b>. Further team members included filmmaker <b>Piet Esch</b>, information scientist <b>Almira Medaric</b> and academic researcher <b>Kris Decker</b>.</p> <p>Project team members also included artists <b>Sabine Schlatter</b>, <b>Dominik Stauch</b>, <b>Maya RoCHAT</b> and <b>Lena Maria Thüring</b>. Specialist experts included restorer <b>Dorothea Spitz</b>, art historian <b>Joachim Sieber</b> and printer <b>Patrick Wagner</b>. Project partners were <b>Thomi Wolfensberger</b>, Steindruckerei Wolfensberger AG, and A/Z&amp;T, <b>Astrom / Zimmer &amp; Tereszkievicz</b>, Design &amp; Code. With the collaboration of Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK–ISEA), the Material-Archiv association, the Archives of Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), the media and information centre MIZ, ZHdK, and the Institute for the Performing Arts and Film IPF, ZHdK.</p>