

Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich and Helmhaus Zürich

24 February – 17 April 2017

Eternal Present

Contemporary Art from the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich

Zurich is preparing for a major exhibition of artwork on paper as Helmhaus Zürich and Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich join together to host the “Eternal Present” exhibition. Visitors will be able to view some 400 contemporary prints, drawings and photographs courtesy of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, which this year will be celebrating 150 years since its foundation.

Never before have so many works from Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich been on view at any one time. This exhibition will focus on the works of 45 artists from the last 20 years. Most of the artists are originally from Switzerland – some new, some established – while others are international stars. Spanning two locations, the exhibition provides an overview of recent artwork in a medium that, in its combination of form, subject and artistry, recalls great tradition – and is always yielding new innovations and surprises.

Thanks to the collaboration with Helmhaus Zürich, the works on paper of Graphische Sammlung have a chance to be viewed from three new perspectives. First through Linda Schädler, Head of Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich since spring of last year, and second through Simon Maurer, Head of Helmhaus Zürich, who together selected the artworks on display. And third through the eyes of all the visitors to the two exhibition locations, who now have the chance to discover the prints, drawings and photographs on display first-hand.

The exhibition title – “Eternal Present. Contemporary Art from Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich” – comes from a book by the Swiss architectural historian Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968). For the purposes of the exhibition, the curatorial team has applied the phrase to the limitless potential of art collections to be topical. At both exhibition sites, each room presents a reference piece originating from the 15th to the 18th centuries. This lends a historical juxtaposition that inevitably leaves the visitor with a range of questions: Are there common topics that art addresses again and again over the centuries? How have the techniques used evolved during that time? And what might we expect to see over the next 500 years?

A collection gains its vibrancy from the engagement it generates. Linda Schädler and her predecessors at the Graphische Sammlung – not least Paul Tanner, who initiated this collaborative project – have collected diligently over the years. That engagement is now paying dividends as the public has the opportunity to wrestle with questions that speak to our own present, past and future. The exhibitions at Helmhaus Zürich and Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich are thematically grouped. In the historic setting of ETH Zürich, the focus is on how, as artists struggle with just what their role should be, even private concerns can take on a political dimension. In Helmhaus, the exhibition begins with an investigation of identity and the body, transitioning to groups of conceptual works and considerations of the historical past and finishing with an examination of nature and architecture.

Events

Both exhibition locations will be hosting an array of accompanying events addressing artworks on paper. Over lunchtime, there will be a total of six artist discussions, and in the evenings there will be expert talks with philosopher Jürg Berthold (in Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich) and tattoo artist Heiko Lüthi (in Helmhaus Zürich). These will explore topics such as graphic art as a process, the struggle to select pieces for the exhibition, and transience and immortality. There will be guided tours to shed light on the context of the works on display, as well as workshops for children and young people to encourage them to create their own work (in Helmhaus Zürich). At a parallel event at the same venue, travel writer and photographer Rudolph Jula will be presenting a commented photographic essay about his encounters with refugees from the Syrian border via the Balkan route to Switzerland itself. For detailed information on all events, please consult the accompanying invitation.

List of artists exhibited

20th/21st centuries

Yann Amstutz, Emmanuelle Antille, Ian Anüll, Silvia Bächli, Baltensperger + Siepert, Marc Bauer, Christiane Baumgartner, Louise Bourgeois, Daniel Brey, Pablo Bronstein, Jake und Dinos Chapman, David Nicholas Chieppo, Silvie Defraoui, Peter Emch, Sylvie Fleury, Francesca Gabbiani, Gilgian Gelzer, Florian Graf, Mireille Gros, Fabrice Gygi, Alexander Hahn, Pascal Häusermann, Candida Höfer, David Hominal, San Keller, Per Kirkeby, Zilla Leutenegger, Alois Lichtsteiner, Lutz&Guggisberg, Jean-Luc Manz, Francine Mury, Raymond Pettibon, Boris Rebetez, Mario Sala, Matias Spescha, Albrecht Schnider, Kerim Seiler, Roman Signer, James Turrell, Luc Tuymans, Christian Vetter, Cécile Wick

Historical references

Niccolò Boldrini, Jacques Callot, Albrecht Dürer, Hendrick Goltzius, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Marco Ricci, Giuseppe Scolarì

Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich

From old masters to contemporary Swiss art, both prints and drawings, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich is one of the largest and most prominent collections of its kind in Switzerland with a fine collection of artwork. It enjoys an international reputation and includes many famous names such as Dürer, Rembrandt, Vallotton and Picasso alongside greats such as Louise Bourgeois, Fischli/Weiss and Robert Gober.

The collection has grown over the decades as a result of ongoing purchases and numerous donations, and has become far more than the study collection that was originally intended. Today it continues to grow and highlight the latest national and international trends. In addition to a main area of focus on the old masters, it also includes sizeable groups of works comprising Swiss prints and drawings from the 19th to the 21st centuries.

As part of a university, Graphische Sammlung considers it important to further the academic development, research and digitalisation of its collection, and to stimulate interdisciplinary debate. To this end, it aims to encourage intensive dialogue, primarily within but also outside of ETH Zürich, through collaborations and events.

Useful information

Opening times	Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich: daily, 10 a.m.–4.45 p.m., closed from Good Friday to Easter Monday Helmhaus Zürich: Tue–Sun 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Thu 11 a.m.–8 p.m., Mon closed; Good Friday to Easter Monday 11 a.m.–6 p.m.
Entry	free (for both institutions)
Web	www.gs.ethz.ch www.helmhaus.org