

Media release

Basel, December 8, 2023

Singular Monotype and Counterproof

December 9, 2023–April 14, 2024, Kunstmuseum Basel | Hauptbau, Zwischengeschoss
Curator: Marion Heisterberg

Reproduction was the primary purpose of the development of printing technologies. The first possibilities revolutionized society, and today much of our everyday lives are enabled not least through shared – i.e. duplicated – images. But there are also printing techniques that are not used for reproduction. In the exhibition *Singular. Monotype and Counterproof*, the Kunstmuseum Basel explores the question: What is the point and the fascination of the one-off print?

Impressionists such as Edgar Degas (1834–1917) and Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) appreciated the light effects and blurring that could be produced with monotype and counterproof techniques. Surrealist artists such as Hans Arp (1886–1966) celebrated the strange pictorial worlds that could be created thanks to the randomness of one-off printing processes. In monotype (from the Greek: *mono* = alone, only, one and *typos* = print), the ink is applied by hand with a brush or other object directly onto a smooth printing surface, rather than a pre-prepared plate. When this inked surface is pressed against the paper, it is never entirely predictable how much of the color will end up on the paper and where. This interplay of deliberate design and random result gives monotypes their special charm.

The counterproof is a special variant of the one-off print where the inking surface is itself also paper, which is then pressed onto another sheet to transfer the ink, like the impression made on blotting paper. Such a “blotted line” gave the hand drawings of Andy Warhol (1928–1987) the appearance of serial production. By describing the print as the actual work, Warhol also challenged the prevailing concept of the aura and originality of a work of art.

Even today, artists continue to deliberately choose the monotype as a means of artistic expression. Zilla Leutenegger (b. 1968), for example, aptly processed her experience of social isolation during the Coronavirus pandemic using one-off printing.

The exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel shows around fifty works in the Kupferstichkabinett collection from the 19th century to the present day. The selection is supplemented by a small number of works on loan from private collections in Basel.

With works by Otto Abt, Hans Arp, Walter Bodmer, Edgar Degas, Jean Dubuffet, Franz Fedier, Lenz Klotz, Zilla Leutenegger, Renée Levi, Alois Lichtsteiner, Claes Oldenburg, Camille Pissarro, Maja Rieder, George Sand, André Thomkins, Andy Warhol and Walter Kurt Wiemken.

Accompanying program:

February 6, 2024, 12:30 p.m.

From color blobs to fantasy landscapes:

Monotypes from Edgar Degas to Claes Oldenburg

Rendez-vous at noon with curator Marion Heisterberg (in German)

February 14, 2024, 6:15 p.m.

Exhibition talk with the artist Renée Levi (in German)

February 07/ February 14 / February 21./ February 28., 2024, from 5-8 p.m.

Mittmach-Mittwoch: Printed Once – Printing and counterproofing techniques for young adults 14 and up

Location: Hauptbau, Atelier Bildung und Vermittlung

March 13, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Guided tour of the exhibition with curator Marion Heisterberg (in German)

Imagery and information on the exhibition

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

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