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Vera Isler & Philipp Gasser
HOMMAGE AUX ARTISTES

22.1.-7.3.2025

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About the exhibition

«Hommage aux artistes» explores the interplay between tradition and innovation in image production. In Philipp Gasser's works (2022–24), a world emerges where staged images are no longer created with conventional cameras but are generated using the possibilities offered by artificial intelligence. At first glance, the displayed works resemble classic photographs, but closer inspection reveals a narrative style marked by an alienation reminiscent of the exaggeration seen in cinema. This lends the images a captivating yet sometimes unsettling quality.

Gasser's images step into a dialogue with the works of Basel artist and photographer Vera Isler (1931–2015). Isler left behind an extensive oeuvre of photographs featuring both renowned and lesser-known artists. Her most famous formal portraits have been widely exhibited and published (e.g., *Face to Face I* and *II*; *Rollenwechsel*). In addition, Isler created countless relaxed, joyous and playful portraits that have never been published. In this exhibition, some of these unpublished images, originally created on color slide film, will be shown for the first time.

Vera Isler

Swiss artist Vera Isler (b. 1931) first introduced her photographic portraits of artists in 1992 with the publication of *Face to Face*. Since then, she continued to create striking portraits of prominent figures in the international art scene, culminating in the release of *Face to Face II* in 2011 (Tinguely Museum and MMK Salzburg). Isler's portraits are distinguished by their remarkable directness. Avoiding sophisticated equipment, flash, or assistants, she chose to photograph her subjects not in a controlled studio environment but in their own ateliers or exhibition settings. This approach fostered a sense of informality and ease, allowing Isler to present her subjects as equals, engaging with them on their level.

Although her portraits exude a casual and personable quality, they were thoughtfully staged and meticulously curated to achieve this effect. Most of her works were rendered in black and white and often presented as life-sized prints, further enhancing their immediacy and impact.

Alongside her black-and-white project, Isler experimented with Kodachrome slide film, playfully collaborating with artists to create an endless series of vibrant and dynamic photographs. Until now, these images have never been published or presented to a wider audience.

Before turning to photography, Vera Isler explored a diverse range of media and techniques, focusing on the intersections between art and natural sciences. Her early work was rooted in three-dimensional art, and in the 1970s, she used disposable medical packaging to create reliefs and objects she called *Programmations*. She later visualized DNA in her innovative series *Genetics*. During this period, Isler's works addressed themes that remain deeply relevant today. It was only around 1980 that Isler began her journey into photography. She initially focused on series documenting the U.S. queer scene and the youth movements of the early 1980s, capturing their "AJZs" ("autonomous youth centers") in her book *Kunst der Verweigerung* (Art of Non-Compliance). Later, her photographic attention shifted to portraits of elderly individuals. After 1992, however, her primary focus was on capturing portraits of photographers and artists.

In the last years of her life, Isler expanded her artistic repertoire to include video and film recordings. True to her nature, her work

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continued to be driven by a constant urge to experiment and explore new creative possibilities. A diagnosis of breast cancer in 1998 marked a major turning point in her life. Isler insisted on undergoing a double mastectomy. In 2000, she published her biography, *Auch ich* (Me Too). In 2011, *A Flash of Light, Please!*, a documentary film about her life, was released.

Philipp Gasser

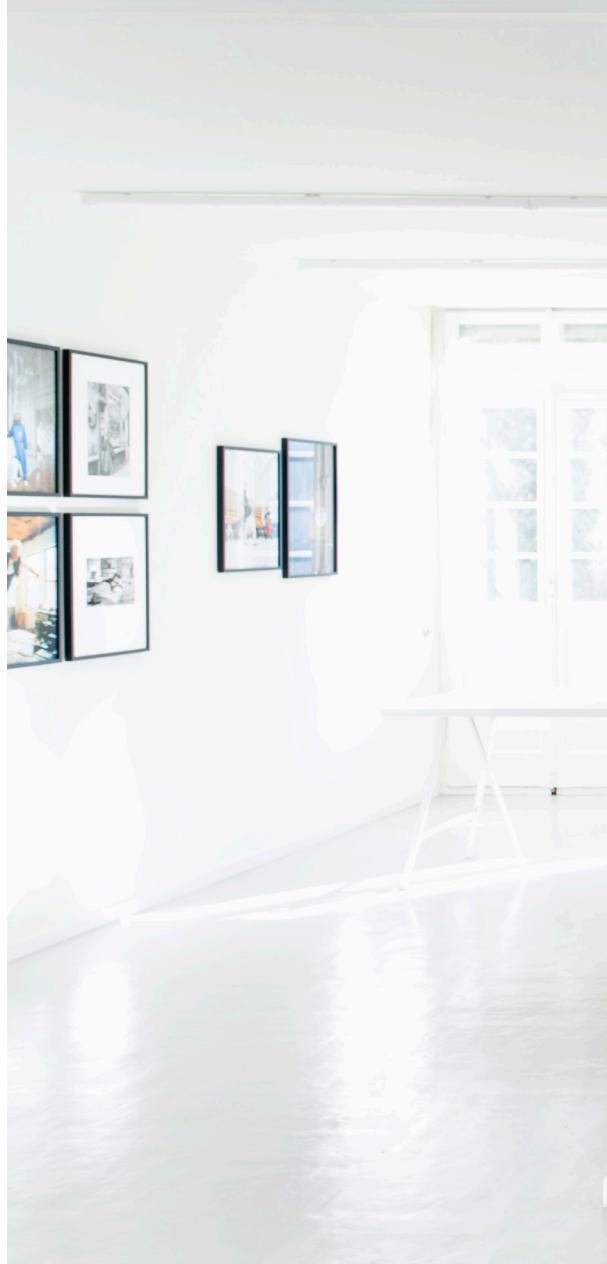
Philipp Gasser's current artistic practice is characterized by works that are almost entirely created without the use of camera optics, yet they exhibit a strikingly photographic and realistic quality. Utilizing a wide array of digital tools, Gasser meticulously creates images and videos portraying scenes such as landscapes, courtyards, natural phenomena like clouds, and people within their surroundings. His work explores and intentionally obscures the boundaries between reality and fiction. Instead of aiming to depict objective reality, Gasser seeks to challenge and influence the viewer's perception, evoking reflections on how his moving images resonate with their audience, the memories they trigger, and the emotions they elicit.

Philipp Gasser is a media artist. Between 1989 and 1992, he studied audiovisual design with a focus on experimental video at the Basel School of Design. From 1995 to 2023, he lectured on digital media at the *Institute of Art* (HGK FHNW) in Basel. His artistic portfolio encompasses various aspects of video art, including pioneering applications of virtual reality and augmented reality techniques. In addition to his personal artistic practice, Gasser collaborates with numerous artists and institutions, producing commissioned works. His creations are represented in significant public and private collections. Among his contributions to the *Haus der Elektronischen Künste* (HEK) are notable works such as *Der, der kommt, ist nicht der, den du erwartest hast* (1999), *Der moderne Mensch* (2000), and *Clouds of the Second Kind* (2016). In 2016, the artist monograph *Wie grüß' ich einen Alien*, edited by Markus Stegmann, was published by Verlag für moderne Kunst, providing an in-depth exploration of Gasser's creative journey.

"Though Philipp Gasser predominantly employs video as his chosen medium, his artistic sensibilities are deeply rooted in illustration. Beginning his career as an illustrator for various print media, he quickly transcended the conventional boundaries of the field, transforming his exceptional technical skills into profound artistic inquiries. This evolution—seamless and inherently logical in retrospect—imbues his works with a unique independence, free from the constraints of graphic conventions. With subtlety and nuance, Gasser engages with societal issues, offering unexpected perspectives and fresh viewpoints. His interventions are marked by a refined complexity, eschewing overt dramatics while maintaining a thought-provoking depth."

(Markus Stegmann)

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List of works

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Vera Isler
Pipilotti Rist, Studio Basel
1993
56.2 × 84.1 cm
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'500



Philipp Gasser
Red, Yellow and Blue
2022-24
41 × 41 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'100



Philipp Gasser
Magenta Pink
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Philipp Gasser
Der Riesenwurm
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Philipp Gasser
Die Wolke
2022-24
84.1 × 84.1 cm
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'100



Vera Isler
Greer Lankton
1986
35 × 50.4 cm
42 × 62 cm (framed)
Original C-print
CHF 3'000



Vera Isler
Nam Jun Paik,
Kunsthaus Zürich
1991
50 × 33 cm
62 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'000



Philipp Gasser
The Male Sculptor
2022-24
41 × 41 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'100



Philipp Gasser
The Media Artist
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400

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Vera Isler
Marina Abramovic, Kunsthalle Wien
1992
50 × 35 cm
62 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'000



Philipp Gasser
Thilo Berlin
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Vera Isler
Yvette Troispoux
1991
33.6 × 22.9 cm
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Silver Gelatine Print
CHF 2'800



Vera Isler
Nan Goldin
1991
17.8 × 26 cm
42 × 52 cm (framed)
Silver Gelatine Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'800



Philipp Gasser
Kurz und Lang
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Philipp Gasser
The Flying Artist
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Philipp Gasser
Blue Extravaganza
2022-24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Philipp Gasser
Die Holzbildhauerin
2022-24
41 × 41 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'100



Philipp Gasser
The Collection
2022-24
41 × 41 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'100

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Vera Isler
Hannah Wilke
1982–84
30 × 50 cm
42 × 62 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'000



Vera Isler
Keith Hearing
1985/2001
25 × 50 cm
42 × 62 cm (framed)
Original C-print, signed and dated
CHF 3'500



Vera Isler
Eva Aeppli
1996
29.7 × 19.9
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Silver Gelatine Print
CHF 2'800



Philipp Gasser
Steinbildhauer mit Ente
2022–24
52 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 1'400



Vera Isler
*Mario Merz,
MMK Frankfurt*
1991
34 × 50 cm
62 × 42 cm (framed)
Fine Art Print
Ed.: 3 + 1 ap
CHF 2'000

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