

Zurich, March 2014

**Press Release: MIREILLE GROS - OUVRIR LES ARCHIVES****7 May – 6 July 2014**

Opening: 6 May 2014, at 6 p.m.

Delicate tendrils and mysterious shadowy plants, cell-like structures and velvety ferns, growing and flourishing as far as the eye can see. The works of Basel based artist Mireille Gros (born 1954) are undoubtedly a hymn to nature, as the famous French curator Marie-Laure Bernadac, as one of her most ardent patrons, once stated in an interview. It was a visit to the rainforest of the Ivory Coast in 1993 that first prompted Mireille Gros to explore issues of primary developmental forms. Further travels in Mali and in China followed – always with a lively interest in the local culture and natural surroundings, which included collecting native plants and flora. The artist channels her fascination for universal, (primordial) forms and the inherent processes of nature into a distinctly processual oeuvre in which she thoroughly absorbs things and waits for the work to emerge, grow and develop.

Indeed, in her works on paper, Mireille Gros takes an extremely spontaneous approach. Her incredibly scintillatingly colourful cycles of works and technically complex one-off pieces raise questions about experimentation in the process of engraving. Since the mid-1990s, Mireille Gros has regularly made use of the generous and professional services provided by the *Atelier de gravure* in Moutier. She frequently works here on her wide-ranging cycles of experimental prints. Together with the printer Michèle Dillier she has devised a new form of print involving a combination of organic matter such as plants pressed directly into the soft-ground block and fantastical embellishments by the artist herself. From an unconventional and situatively determined viewpoint, Mireille Gros reflects on possible variations during the ongoing course of the printing process itself, integrating the oxidation traces of the printing plates and deploying variously coloured *chine collé* layers to create a certain visual depth, while at the same time working with hand-tinted overprinting. She lets herself be inspired by pure chance. Yet at the same time, she is painstaking in her choice of paper and sometimes includes manual colouring of the paper as part of her intuitive decision-making process.

The Department of Prints and Drawings at the ETH includes more than one hundred works by Mireille Gros. This exhibition presents a retrospective overview of the works by this artist from the past twenty years. These include not only prints, but also drawings and artist's books. In particular, the exhibition showcases and opens the series of books, now encompassing 144 volumes, under the title *La vie en gros* – an unprecedentedly opulent treasure trove of experimental drawing, verbal notes, dried flowers and cutting-edge ideas. In Book 29, the artist notes, "Every day, a plant or flower disappears. Every day I invent a new plant." The public will find much to mull upon in the implementation of this artist's many-faceted credo.

For further information and visual material, please contact:

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The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication: MIREILLE GROS – OUVRIR LES ARCHIVES, with a text by Alexandra Barcal, published by Michael Imhof Verlag, Petersberg, 2014; c. 70 pages, 49 colour plates, CHF 24.-, ISBN 978-3-7319-0051-1. A special limited edition of 12, including an original print, is also available at a price of CHF 280.-