

Zurich, 20 March 2018

Press release

## EXHIBITION

### IRENE KOPELMAN. ON GLACIERS AND AVALANCHES.

### IN SEARCH OF GLACIOLOGICAL TRACES

**25 April – 24 June 2018**

**Opening: Tuesday, 24 April 2018. 6.00 p.m., Doors open, 6.45 p.m. Speeches.**

**Climate change, deglaciation, and changing water levels: for decades, glaciologists have been studying glacial change and its impact on the environment. What happens when an artist joins the researchers? Argentinian artist Irene Kopelman accompanied an expedition. She spoke to the experts. She learned how the constantly changing forms of glaciers are scientifically recorded. And she made drawings. The results of her artistic explorations take the form of fascinating images reduced to structural outlines.**

**Irene Kopelman** (\*1974) is known for her drawings. They are produced in the open air, yet only loosely related to the places she captures with her pencil. This Argentinian artist, who divides her time between Amsterdam and Argentina, is not a solitary player in the midst of nature, but actually accompanies scientists on their expeditions. In 2010, she embarked on a sailing ship expedition to Antarctica and tried, during the expedition, to capture the mountainous horizons on paper – in spite of extremely difficult weather conditions with dense fog, icy winds, snowfall and heavy seas.

Two years later, she launched into another project relating to mountains. This time, the focus of her interest was to be the glaciers and avalanches of the Swiss Alps. A residency awarded by the Laurenz-Haus Foundation in Basel (2012-13) provided the opportunity of venturing into the mountains with scientists and researchers from the “World Glacier Monitoring Service” and the “Swiss Federal Institute for Forest Snow and Landscape”. Braving the elements, remote locations and weather conditions (which often hampered her drawing), she learned what she could from the specialists. Kopelman began to gain an understanding of the complexity of the glaciers and their constantly evolving forms, discovering how these have been analysed and catalogued by researchers. Her participation in expeditions and her willingness to adapt to the rhythms of the expedition as well as to the topographical situations, are an essential part of her work. This painstaking artistic research has resulted in exquisitely delicate drawings, as well as books describing her participation in the expeditions and a fresh analysis of the concept of representation.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Linda Schädler, Head of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich. It presents Kopelman’s drawings alongside several works from the collection of ETH Zürich, including early nineteenth century panoramas by **Hans Conrad Escher von der Linth** (1767-1823) and eighteenth century drawings and watercolours of glacier-covered mountains by **Caspar Wolf** (1735-1783). Even though these historical works may be widely

regarded as fine art, they have also provided important sources of information for scientists in the course of their research. Kopelman's works give an insight into the history of how the Alps are portrayed. This is a landscape, as Kopelman writes, "...contemplated by a great many philosophers, drawn and painted by scores of artists, interpreted, theorized, represented a billion times." She asks what she herself can contribute as an artist to such a long tradition of mountain scenes and what value art works still have today within the context of scientific research. And besides: what was it like for the scientists to have an artist making drawings accompany them on the expedition in this age of photography and digital recording media?

The **programme of events** explores such questions, and takes a decidedly interdisciplinary approach.

Among other things, there will be an **"In Focus"** discussion with Dr. Irene Kopelman, artist, and Dr. Samuel Nussbaumer of the World Glacier Monitoring Service of the Department of Geography, University of Zurich, who were on an expedition together. Along with Prof. em. Dr. phil. nat. Heinz J. Zumbühl of the Geographical Institute of the University of Bern, and Dr. Linda Schädler, Head of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, they will talk about Kopelman's artistic projects and address the ways in which art and glaciology can be linked. **(15 May 2018, 6.30 p.m., in English).**

There will also be a discussion between ETH glaciologist Dr. Matthias Huss of the Laboratory of Hydraulics, Hydrology and Glaciology, Andreas Greiner, doctoral candidate of the Chair for History of the Modern World at ETH Zürich and Dr. Linda Schädler concerning the challenges of a field study: "Results and Visualization Models on Expeditions under Difficult Circumstances." **(13 June 2018, 6.30 p.m., in German).**

Rounding off the programme of events, there will be thematically focused guided tours on Monday at noon that take a look at the pioneers of glaciological research, panoramic portrayals, the artist Caspar Wolf and geologist Arnold Escher.

## Practical Information

Events	The exhibition will be complemented by guided tours as well as two discussion evenings in the ongoing "In Focus" series. For details, see: <a href="https://gs.ethz.ch/en/agenda/">https://gs.ethz.ch/en/agenda/</a>
Opening hours	Daily, 10 a.m. – 4.45 p.m. Closed on Tuesday, 1 May (Labour Day), Thursday, 10 May (Ascension Day); Saturday - Monday, 19 – 21 May (Whitsun)
Entrance	Free
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