

Zurich, 25 July 2018

Press Release

## **RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co)** **what do we want to keep? (was wollen wir behalten?)**

29 August – 28 October 2018

Opening: Tuesday, 28 August 2018: doors open 6 p.m, speech from 6.30 p.m.

**These days, we regularly see top ten charts and ratings that rank the highest-profile and most expensive artworks around the world. But how have such league tables come into being, and how have they shaped a canon that defines the status of an individual artist? RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co) have taken up the challenge of answering these questions while delving into the collection of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich. The result is an installation featuring video, works on paper, spatial pieces and prints from the Collection. The exhibition space has been transformed into a study area for researching, reading, looking and lounging.**

“what do we want to keep? (was wollen wir behalten?)“ – the title of the exhibition poses the question to which **RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co)** have gone in search of answers. Marie-Antoinette Chiarenza and Daniel Hauser have undertaken an intensive probe not only of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich and its works, but also of the place itself and the evolution of the collection since it was founded 151 years ago. Such an approach is typical of the two artists, who have been producing art together since 1983. They create autonomous works as well as site-specific ones. Sometimes these aspects are intertwined and sometimes they contrast with one another. The same goes for the collection. The exhibition, curated by Dr. Linda Schädler, head of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, presents some earlier works by RELAX such as the 2008 photograph **“the artists just before the peak of their career”** showing Chiarenza and Hauser in an ironic take on the trope of the self-portrait of the artist, which addresses the question of when somebody can be deemed to have succeeded in the art world and accepted into the established canon. Works like these are juxtaposed with others created especially for the exhibition, such as the 2018 series **“canon? 17 covers for art magazines”** which highlights how and why somebody makes it onto the cover of an art magazine and which magazines are among the most influential players in the art world. At the same time, the 1984-2005 work **“die belege, les quittances, the receipts”** shows that the canon invariably has a direct effect on the financial value of art and thus represents an economic factor. The work in question features receipts for expenses incurred by RELAX in

connection with their exhibitions. A “reality curve” visually illustrates the relationship between the respective budget and the floor area of the exhibition space.

In the course of their research into the topic of the canon and how it is established, RELAX also sifted through the collection to determine which forms of representation are particularly frequent, and which are missing. Are there self-portraits of female artists, or are these the exception? How is the topic of gainful employment treated in relation to women, and are there any examples of this in the collection? In their installation, which includes texts, images and video, and which also integrates works from the Graphische Sammlung, Chiarenza and Hauser examine the structure of the collection and query the artistic positions that have been acquired and exhibited over the years. They research how and to what extent these choices have influenced the emergence of a canon, and vice versa. In doing so, they dare to propose an alternative way of seeing, putting forward a new interpretation that, by definition, also involves, in turn, a process of selection and omission. In this regard, they admit that “we are bound to fail, because the only valid choice is an illusion”. Nevertheless, their explicitly unconventional choices call the traditional and conventional canon into question.

This exhibition sheds an entirely new light on the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich. It raises questions. It encourages visitors to immerse themselves in the themes addressed by the artworks, written documents and video on display. In doing so, RELAX also casts a glance back to the beginnings of the collection, 151 years ago, when the collection of prints and drawings was founded as a classic repository of works intended for the purposes of scholarship, teaching and mediation. This aspect has been reanimated by RELAX, turning the exhibition space into a place of study where art is not only viewed and appreciated, but where it can also be researched.

The importance of establishing a canon is by no means the sole preserve of the visual arts. It is well known that this is also a crucial factor in science, expressed in terms of which publications are specifically consulted or quoted, and how often. The **exhibition** acknowledges this with its artistic intervention in the **ETH Library Infocenter** (on Level H) highlighting league tables and in-demand publications.

A broad-based **fringe programme** with the focus on dialogue invites discussion and debate about the established canon of art, while expanding awareness of the structure and significance of an internationally renowned collection.

A **publication** is scheduled to coincide with the end of the exhibition.

## Practical Information

Curator	Dr. Linda Schädler, head of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich
Events	During the exhibition there will be <b>guided tours</b> as well as two evening discussions in the <b>In Focus</b> 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. to 4:45 p.m. Closed Monday, 10 September 2018, from 12 noon (due to the city's traditional "Knabenschiessen" festival)
Entrance	free
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