

Information

M. F. F. Museum für Fotokopie

25. März 2020

## A museum turns 35

### The Museum für Fotokopie celebrates its foundation

Back when photocopiers replaced the old office duplicators, there were certainly many office workers who clandestinely put their hands, their faces, or even their buttocks on the glass and pressed the button: "This is a delicate piece of machinery ..." Ned, the Xerox employee in the cult series "Mad Men" (Season 2 / Episode 1) warned a puzzled Peggy. "...you don't bang on the buttons; you don't sit on the glass. If you want it to work, you got to treat it with respect!" . For the series, set in the sixties, the first automatic copy machine "Xerox 914" was brought into the studio. The Xerox 914 is the forefather of all today's laser copiers and printers. In 1961, during the very first TV advert for the copy machine, Little-Debbie spontaneously put her doll on the plate and copied it, which demonstrated the foolproof act of photocopying. Today many households have a multifunction device, mainly serving as a printer, but also as a copier, scanner or fax. Most owners are completely unaware of the "unintended" possibilities of these useful gadgets.

The copy artist Klaus Urbons has been making sure that this and many other stories from office culture were not been forgotten, for 35 years. "Xerolore - the secret spontaneous use of the photocopier only makes up a very small part of the archive," says the founder of the museum "But it is still important because a number of artists also started to experiment with the first copying machines in the 1960s in order to investigate its possibilities. For example, the artist / designer Bruno Munari in Milan. In addition to Joseph Beuys, Anna and Bernhard Blume, Helen Chadwick, Pati Hill, David Hockney, Lieve Prins, Sigmar Polke, Sonia Sheridan, Wolfgang Tillmans, Timm Ulrichs and Andy Warhol, there was and is a whole bunch of lesser known artists, but not of lesser quality, who were dedicated to it for a period. "This part of art and media history is still rather neglected," explains Urbons, "also, it has something to do with the negative image of copies. The commercial art business has difficul-

ties accepting it. The joke is that artists use the copier to produce originals that are actually unique."

The M.F.F. Museum für Fotokopie has been collecting Copy Art and the tools: copiers and copy materials since it opened on March 29, 1985. It also researches the history of the two areas. Around a thousand works of art and around 150 copiers came together. Four books on research and mediation work done in the museum have been published so far: 1991 Copy Art - Art & Design with the photocopier; 1994 Electrography - analog and digital images (both at DuMont); 2016 Edith Weyde - how an inventor from the Rhineland changed the world (Edition Makroscope); 2018 The Magic of Copies - Chester F. Carlson and the invention of Xerography (German / English, Edition Makroscope at Amazon); 2020 appears: From analog copy to digital workflow - Stories of change in technology and art (Edition Makroscope).

In 2014 Urbons, together with Jan Ehlen, Jerome Krüger and Gabriele Klages founded the "Makroscope" ([makroscope.eu](http://makroscope.eu)) as a center for art and technology in Mülheim. After years of sleeping beauty, without its own rooms, the work as a public museum could be resumed and was brought to a new level thanks in part to funding from the Landschaftsverband Rheinland (LVR), the Leonard-Stinnes-Stiftung and the Investitionsfond of the Düsseldorf regional government.

The realignment of the M.F.F. manifests itself in close connection with other trades in the historical Makroscope building, which has been the property of the association with the same name since 2018. Built as the Hotel Terminus, then successively becoming the city library, Nazi headquarters and finally a stationery shop, the building now houses artist studios, event and rehearsal rooms. Lectures, workshops and exhibitions take place regularly in the museum. Mari Lena Rapprich has been on board as a curator and artist during various projects and exhibition concepts since 2018.

The aim of the museum is to link the history of art and technology with current content. In 2016, for example, the museum was dedicated to the inventor Edith Weyde, who had developed the first successful modern copying process at Agfa in Leverkusen in 1938. Agfa Copyrapid, better known as "Blitzkopie" was an incredible worldwide success. Edith Weydes invention also formed the basis for Edwin H. Land's Polaroid instant imaging process. The first book on the largely unknown life and work of Edith Weyde appeared in the Edition Makroscope which was created as part of the Shiny Toys Festival ([shinytoys.eu](http://shinytoys.eu)). "Doc" Florian Kaps, co-founder of the Polaroid-Rebirth company Impossible contributed a large-format

test Polaroid, and also the first Polaroid- and the first Impossible camera were presented together with Polaroid art at the exhibition.

In autumn 2018, a large international copy art exhibition took place in the CEPA Gallery in Buffalo / NY, with Urbons as curator and the M.F.F. worked as a lender. Under the title "Fast, Cheap & Easy - the Copy Art Revolution", the exhibition showed works by more than 100 artists from the sixties to the present day. The catalog, which was produced in proper style by copier, can still be downloaded free of charge:

[http://copymuseum.de/media/CEPA\\_FCE\\_PRINT\\_SM.pdf](http://copymuseum.de/media/CEPA_FCE_PRINT_SM.pdf)

As part of the anniversary on March 29, 2020, the museum will launch its own website. This is intended to provide an insight into the ongoing digitization of the art and technology collection as well as providing international accessibility in German and English language. Shortly thereafter, on April 23, 2020, another book will be published: "From analog copy to digital workflow" funded by LVR. Urbons provides a documentation of the almost forgotten history of modern office copiers, both from global and local points of view. As in all publication by M.F.F. art plays an important role here. A special highlight will be the "Global Art Fusion" from 1985, a joint action via fax machine from Beuys in Düsseldorf, Higashiyama in Tokyo and Warhol in New York, initiated by the Swiss artist Ueli Fuchser.

New formats have been and are being developed in M.F.F. "Tattoo Brunch" was created as part of the exhibition series christened "Kind of Copy", in which the focus was on carbon paper. If you think that it is hardly needed anymore, you are wrong, since tattoo artists still use the "carbon papers" to transfer their designs to the skin.

For the second time the "M.F.F. Edition", a box with copy art originals to promote the museums work was released. In the current edition "On Hands On" Jürgen O. Olbrich from Kassel used papers with embossed Braille. This made every sheet an original, although the old OKI simply "only" copied.

Klaus Urbons gives experimental lectures on the art, history and culture of the copy. He made several videos for Vimeo & YouTube and together with Gabriele Klages and Mari Lena Rapprich offers workshops and courses on various copy related topics.

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"We are lucky to work on an interface between art and technology, where both areas complement each other very usefully. In our museum artistic production and historical research go hand in hand. And that keeps things exciting."



Copying frame and direct photocopy on photo paper