

“Irene Kopelman. In Search Of Glaciological Traces”

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 (*1974) accompanied various expeditions to the Swiss Alps. She spoke to the experts and learned how the constantly changing forms of glaciers are scientifically recorded. The results of her artistic explorations take the form of exquisitely delicate drawings, as well as books describing her participation in the expeditions and offering a fresh analysis of the concept of representation.

Her participation in expeditions and her willingness to adapt to the rhythms of the field trips as well as to the topographical situations are an essential part of her work. The speech will elaborate how Kopelman is referring to scientific approaches and in what way her artistic research is differing from them. Since depicting mountains has a very long tradition in Switzerland, her drawings will – in the second part of the speech – be compared with eighteenth and nineteenth century works: for example with drawings and watercolors of famous mountain painter Caspar Wolf (1735-1783), or of Hans Conrad Escher von der Linth (1767-1823). Are they addressing the sublime in their work or are they questioning it by straddling the boundary between art and science? Finally, it will be asked what Kopelman 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.

Dr Linda Schädler, ETH Zürich, Graphische Sammlung