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„Tides of Light“ – Gezeiten des Lichts
Photographs by Sonja Maria Schobinger

Like ebb and flow, light moves through the works of Sonja Maria Schobinger. From her early self-portraits as a means of self-assurance for a young woman finding her place in the world, to her more recent photographs of sun-drenched treetops and dissolving flower petals.

At the beginning stands the search of a young woman for her own space in this world. The black-and-white photographs powerfully convey her critical and searching gaze—on herself as a young woman, on her personality, and on her first home, both inside and out. It becomes clear that from the very beginning of her artistic journey in the mid-1980s, Sonja Maria Schobinger has been a photographer. In the darkroom, she first explored the possibilities of analog photography through silver gelatin prints with curiosity and experimentation. Later in her artistic search, she delved into the world of digital photography, only to return again and again to traditional artistic techniques, such as drawing—though practiced using the tools of a computer screen. The camera is a significant technical instrument to tentatively explore the world and the self. Yet it is not the technical aspect of photography that interests her (today). Her quest is for the substance beyond matter; she illuminates fleeting moments with great nuance and captures their transience in her images.

Sonja Maria Schobinger's long-term (research) projects have evolved over decades into thematic groups: early self-portraits in *Coming of Age*, *Anthemis Nobilis*, *Still Lifes*, *Flowers*, and *Trees*.

In the long-term project *Anthemis Nobilis*, we see a female body—the artist's own—surrounded and protected by plants. For this body of work, Schobinger interwove images of her body with plant photographs taken by Josef Hanel "I. H.", who was born in 1865 in what is now the Czech Republic. These historical, hand-colored glass slides were entrusted to her for her artistic use by brothers Bert and Walter Siegfried. The female body is more sensed than seen—its contours wrapped in various plants: mistletoe, blackberries, strawberries, violets, and delicate branches from different trees. The artist searches in her compositions for the essence of each plant and its harmonious counterpart. The result is a series of fragile image-layerings that challenge the viewer's eye without distorting perspective. These layers generate a certain visual tension. At the same time, by combining historical botanical photography with analog images from *Coming of Age* using digital techniques, the work expresses different layers of time: past and present, the capturing of a moment and the documentation of change over time. The plants, with their unique and specific qualities, provide a protective covering for the vulnerable body—offering both protection and healing. At the same time, they embed the human organism into the forces of nature and the cycle of life.

The still life photography in the series *Still Lifes* draws on historical models from Flemish painting, while the tree photographs reference Japanese color woodcuts. At the same time, both make contemporary statements through light and color contrasts as well as unusual vessel shapes. The genres of painting, drawing, and photography merge. It seems as though the artist is searching for the essence of life itself—the formative forces beyond matter. Though the blooming branches and floral bouquets are arranged in vessels from various cultural contexts, they seem to grow out of and beyond them. Light reflects on the surface of matter, while at the same time that matter dissolves into the transparency of the petals.

In the moment a petal is backlit, or the shimmering canopy of a tree becomes translucent, light—the immaterial—becomes visible. And here we again encounter the photographer behind the lens, who sensitively and precisely illuminates the magic of the moment and explores the mysteries of being.

Dr. Astrid Bextermöller, Kunstvermittlerin, Kunsthistorikerin, Helvetia Kunstversicherungen, Basel

Sonja Maria Schobinger, born 1970, has lived in Basel since 1998.

After completing her education as a graphic designer, Schobinger studied photography at the Zurich University of the Arts and later worked as a curator and photography specialist for historical image archives.

She is the mother of two adult sons.

The Artist is represented by Fabian and Claude Walter Galerie.

2025
Galerie Fabian & Claude Walter

2021
Galerie Carzaniga, Basel

2019
Galerie Carzaniga, Basel

2018
Krebsforschung Schweiz, Bern

2017
Galerie 94, Baden

Galerie Isabelle Gabrijel, Berlin

2016
Galerie Monika Wertheimer, Oberwil

2026

Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter, Zürich, 40 Years of Fabian und Claude Walter Galerie

Bucherer Boutique Basel

Ateliers Ouverts 2026, Oslo Ateliers, Basel

2025

Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter, Zürich, Klang und Kunst

Art Salon 24, Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter, Zürich

Photo Basel 24, Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter

2024

Art Salon 24, Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter, Zürich

Photo Basel 24, Galerie Fabian und Claude Walter

2023

Bildhalle Zürich

Nomadic Art Project, IPFO Olten

Photo Basel 2023

Galerie Monika Wertheimer

2022

Art Basel 22, Galerie Carzaniga

Galerie Cahn, Basel

2021

Art Basel 21, Galerie Carzaniga

2020

National Taiwan University,

Institute of Plants and Biology, Taipei

Card Blanche, FAT, Art Fair, Schaffhausen

Villa Art Show Day, Galerie Carzaniga

Art fair Taichung, Gallery Sun, Taiwan

2019

Wop Art, Lugano, Galerie Carzaniga

Card Blanche, FAT, Art fair, Schaffhausen

Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Carl Spitteler, MAGO, Geschichtsbilder - Frauenbilder - Spiegelbilder

Visarte Basel, Ausstellungsraum M54, Basel

Mact/Cact, Bellinzona, Territori, Osmose tra arte e collezionismo

Verein für Originalgrafik Zürich, Neue Editionen

2018

Kunst 18, Zürich, Art fair, Verein für Originalgrafik

Card Blanche, FAT, Art fair, Schaffhausen

Photo Basel, Galerie 94

2013

Shades of Time, Kunsthaus Zug

1997

Am Anfang, Card Blanche von Hans Danuser,
Museum Helmhaus, Zürich

2021

Art Collection of the University Hospital Basel,
maternity ward, Switzerland

2020

Art Collection of the City of Zurich,
Switzerland

2019

Hoffmann La Roche Art Collection,
Basel, Switzerland

2018

VFO Verein für Originalgrafik,
Zürich, Switzerland

Art Collection of the University Hospital Basel,
Dept. Surgery, Switzerland

2017

Art Collection of the University Hospital Basel,
maternity ward, Switzerland

2016

Art Collection of the University Hospital Basel,
maternity ward, Switzerland

Hoffmann La Roche Art Collection,
Basel, Switzerland