

EXPO

WRITER

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The art world is fixated on the unique. But the pursuit of original work doesn't have to end with high-profile auctions and speculative bids for 'Starry Night'. Print makers such as Edition VFO in Zürich create limited-edition prints by artists to decorate our homes, offices or workspaces with. So is this the happy medium for the visually inclined? We follow one artwork onto the walls of 11 happy art buyers to find out.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Philip Frowein

SPECIAL EDITIONS

Interior architect Zoé Ramseier has hung her print of *Sendetafel* by Swiss artistic duo Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs in her living room, just above the dining table. “What I loved about this piece was the contrast between the intensity of the colour gradient and the softness of the sky behind it,” she says. “Art doesn’t have to be beautiful but it should create emotions. This print creates questions as soon as you enter the room.” Ramseier started collecting art from an early age. “I was lucky because I grew up with art all around me as both my parents are in creative industries. But everyone should have the possibility to encounter art throughout their day, regardless of their level of income.”

Much of the art market is fixated on the unique, on the chance to own a painting or a sculpture that nobody else will ever have. But the world of print editions invites you to imagine a slightly more democratic version of that beast. Would you like to be one of perhaps 10, 100 or maybe even 1,000 owners of a numbered and signed artwork? Are you happy to share the love? After all, you’ll probably never go to another home and see the edition that you own on its wall. What would be the odds of that? Well, perhaps a little higher if MONOCLE got involved and decided to see where the prints from one edition have ended up.

Sendetafel was created in 2021 in an edition of 25 and originally sold for CHF1,060 (€1,080 at today’s exchange rate). Frame included. The striking artwork features a billboard attached to a vast metal structure, which looms over a rocky terrain. In the background a summer sunset is soft pinks and blues. But there is something unsettling about the image. Each print is identical expect that the billboard’s surface colours change in every version. Onorato and Krebs use a collage-style printing process to pull off this trick. And to do that they worked with Edition VFO, an edition publisher and gallery in Zürich.

Founded in 1948, the organisation’s initials stand for Verein für Originalgraphik, or the Association for Original Prints. Managing director David Khalat explains that editions, and their popularisation, are at the core of his mission. “With the advent of digital printing, traditional printing techniques suffered and there was an erosion of communities centred around the craft,” he says. “Our job as an association is to bring them back and to show why editioned works are vital to enriching contemporary art.”

Though much more has to be done to encourage the revival of printmaking, Khalat says that editions are having a moment. “There is a renewed interest in the craft of printmaking and editions across all fields, including art,” he says. “Now that people have become used to all the possibilities that digital works offer, they’re looking back and mixing in older print techniques.”

All the *Sendetafel* editions have been sold but as Khalat leads MONOCLE around Edition VFO’s gallery, he points out other works that, he says, hold the same sense of magic. “There is a tactility to the paper. Just like with a painting or a sculpture, you can feel someone else’s presence in the work,” he says. “When the piece is developed at the press, the materials also make their mark, from the stones used in lithography to paint in monographs.” Editions can be unique too.

Edition VFO is not toiling alone. Other edition publishers include Graphicstudio in Tampa, Borch Editions in Copenhagen, Counter Editions in the UK and Los Angeles-based Gemini GEL. Now, though, Khalat and his team have taken advantage of this renewed interest in the medium in order to establish the Zürich Print Institute. Based in the city, the centre works with masters of lithography, screen printing and etching, connecting them with other artists who want to collaborate on new editioned works. The institute will also make space for the equipment that the labour-intensive processes require. “Creating print editions needs a lot of investment. You need chemicals, dark rooms, light-sensitive plates and presses,” says Khalat. “And that isn’t even mentioning the community that springs up around the practice: the master printers, artists, apprentices, framers and others all working on it together.”

That sense of community, united by its appreciation of edition prints, makes itself apparent as MONOCLE travels around Zürich, tracking down the owners of the various *Sendetafel*. Up in her attic flat in the centre of the city, Annik Hosmann explains her connection to the print, which hangs above her sofa. A journalist at Zürich-based daily newspaper *Tages-Anzeiger*, Hosmann first met Khalat through work and was one of the first to arrive on the morning that Onorato and Krebs’ editions went on sale in 2021. “I love noticing works online and reaching out to the artists to buy from them directly,” she says. “It’s fun to interrogate the concept of what a collection is or who a collector might be. In the end, I decided that it’s something fun and something that can add unexpected twists to my life.”

Down by the banks of Zürichsee, Silvia Schmid shows MONOCLE into her home. The interior of her spacious villa is packed with original artwork so it takes a moment to point out her *Sendetafel* hanging in the corridor between the dining room and kitchen. Schmid is the president of Edition VFO and is passionate about the role that the institution can play. “I became involved with the institution because I love how democratic it is,” says Schmid. “It gives the opportunity to young people to get to know all of these different artists.” — 



David Khalat

“When making print editions, masters always try to plan how it will look in the end,” says the managing director of Edition VFO. “But when it goes to press, you have to let go. This loss of control is positive: the materials with which you’re printing come forward. Compared to the glossy surface of a digital print, you can see traces of the oil, air bubbles and other elements from the printing process.”



The collectors



Zoé Ramseier

Through her work as an interior architect, Ramseier has become particularly drawn to abstract artwork. “In *Sendetafel*, I particularly like the way in which architecture is joined to the gradient of colours,” she says.



Bruno Margreth

Margreth is a graphic designer and founder of About Books, an independent publishing company with a focus on contemporary art, culture and architecture. “Through my work as a book designer, I’m very close to different print techniques, so I enjoy following Edition vfo’s output,” says Margreth.



Laura d'Incau

D'Incau once worked at Edition vfo alongside Khalat. There is also a connection with the artists: her sister attended the same photography class as the pair. “The purple and silver colours on my edition caught my eye instantly,” says D'Incau. “When I'm choosing prints, I choose pieces that touch my heart or fit with the rest of my collection. When I was 20, I bought three prints. It all started from there.”



Silvia Schmid

After being a stay-at-home mother for many years, Schmid decided to study art communication. One thing led to another and she is now president of Edition vfo. Now that her children have families of their own, she has to ensure that her art collection is child-proof.



Michael Arnold & Mirjam Frei

“We love collecting editions because they combine art and craftsmanship,” says Arnold. “Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs’ work struck us as special because every edition is unique in itself, with the colours of the screen changing in every print. Our piece has a wonderful tension between melancholy and promise, which drew us towards it.”



Ralph Steinbrüchel

After studying communication design at Central Saint Martins in London, musician and graphic designer Steinbrüchel relocated from his native Germany to Switzerland. “I enjoy collecting in general but am particularly drawn to the craftsmanship that comes hand in hand with editions,” he says. “*Sendetafel* combines photography with the process of printing in a beautiful, unique way.”



Raphael Rogenmoser

Rogenmoser is a digital strategist for the creative and cultural industries.
 “I love the neon quality to the colours in this print,” says Rogenmoser.
 “I’ve admired Krebs and Onorato’s work since the early years of their career
 and enjoy buying editions from artists with whom I have a personal connection.”



Kathrin Wolf & Gianluca Ambrosetti

Wolf and Ambrosetti’s choice of their *Sendetafel* print was influenced by Ambrosetti’s
 work as CEO of Synhelion, a green-technology company converting sunlight into
 fuel. “Selecting a piece of art for us is often a matter of chemistry,” says Wolf.
 “With this print in particular, it reminded us of Synhelion’s solar towers when they
 catch the rays of the setting sun in those poetic moments between night and day.”



Annik Hosmann

When Hosmann was first looking at different editions at Edition vfo, she couldn't decide which one to choose but then she was struck by the contrast of orange and blue. "I love the feeling of buying something from an artist and realising that it has a history behind it," she says. "That's how I got into Edition vfo."



Judith Meier

Meier is registrar at the Zürich canton's Art Collection, which has been collecting works created in the region since 1908, amassing about 20,000 pieces. The works are then loaned to exhibitions and institutions around the city.