

CHRISTOPH KÖPFLI

The life story of Christoph Köpflí is marked by tensions and ruptures that find an unexpected harmony in his art. Raised in a strictly conservative environment, and already destined by his father — a follower of Opus Dei — for the priesthood, he learned early on to navigate between worlds. Thanks to a dedicated teacher, he was able to attend a Catholic high school; however, transferring to a public school placed him in a milieu shaped by social privileges, one that remained foreign to him.

The feeling of “standing between two worlds” defined his youth: a conservative background on one side, teachers discussing Marxism and socialism on the other. In 1980, during the “hot summer” of youth unrest in Zurich, he became involved in protests against a cultural policy that invested millions in the opera while denying young people a center of their own. At the time, Köpflí was studying economics — funded by the very state he simultaneously criticized — and actively participated in occupations and negotiations. At the same time, he played the saxophone, founded the band Oohoo Troop, and performed at the Willisau Jazz Festival.

After his studies, he worked for the Swiss Red Cross, traveled the world, earned a PhD, and eventually found himself stuck in the administrative apparatus. Files, forms, procedures — there was no room for creativity. It was only an overseas assignment in India that opened new horizons for him. The intensity of colors, sounds, and scents left a profound impression. Yet even there, he encountered the dark side of development work: millions disappeared into bureaucracies, his critical report was suppressed, and he was marginalized.

At the same time, his marriage broke down, and he struggled with burnout, depression, and hospitalizations. In this existential crisis, he turned to art: painting, music, improvisation. He began to reinvent himself — learning self-care, finding expression through sound, and embracing the freedom of experimentation.

Today, Christoph Köpflí creates, among other things, audiovisual spaces where everyday life and magic overlap. He combines electronic beats with scanned household objects, transforming them into light shows. The mundane becomes a canvas for something larger; the private, the universal. Where his life was full of ruptures, art produces a flow: improvisation, transformation, and a continual renewal.

Text: Maria Sorensen