

Harald Naegeli — Graffiti in a Museum!?

31. August – 16. October 2022

Einleitung

Several dozen spray figures by Harald Naegeli populated the parking garage at ETH Zurich after the late 1970s. Since 2021, an extensive renovation of the garage has taken place. Although some figures had to give way to the redesign, a large part will be retained. On the occasion of the reopening of the ETH Garage in the fall of 2022, the Musée Visionnaire put together an exhibition with objects (e.g. by Ruggero Tropeano Architects) that document the complex renovation process. As an exclusive novelty and real museum sensation, three cut-out Naegeli graffiti are on display. They were removed from the wall by a team of conservators as part of the conservation work. The largest piece measures 290 x 230 cm and weighs 450 kilograms! In addition to this complex process, further conservation processes of Naegeli's art and work related to his art took place in the ETH Garage. This work includes photographs by Pascal Sigrist; a selection of his photos is on exhibition in the MV.

The exhibition "Graffiti in a Museum!?" addresses the question of art in public space and asks how the ephemeral art of graffiti can be conserved, whether it should be conserved at all, and what happens when graffiti is taken out of its context. Does graffiti belong in a museum?

As a supplement to the exhibition, we offer guided tours through the ETH Garage in order to experience the existing works on site.

Dates and registration:

www.museevisionnaire.ch/agenda

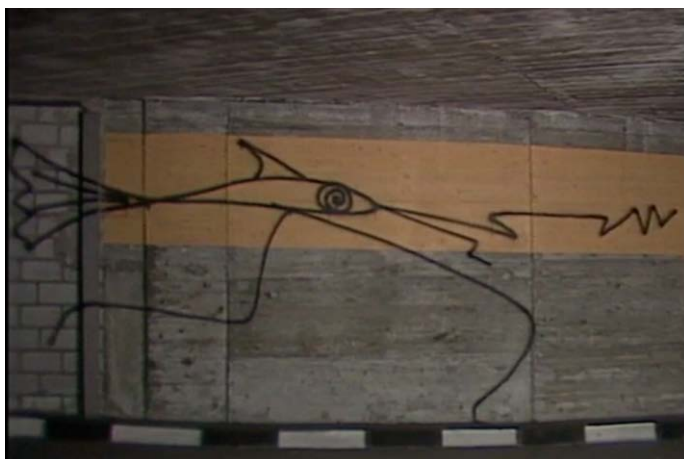
Naegeli and the ETH Garage

When Harald Naegeli roamed Zurich at night as a phantom in 1977, he was always drawn to the ETH Garage, situated below the main building on Rämistrasse. Even in later years, Naegeli visited the garage regularly and created new creatures or added to existing or faded graffiti. In 2019, the inventory of ETH Zurich listed around 37 figures. In no other place in Switzerland has such a large number of figures by Naegeli been preserved in such a dense space. Before the renovation (June 2021 to September 2022), the 37 inventoried graffiti were photographed by the ETH and thus recorded in their original spatial context.

The wide variety of measures and approaches in dealing with the transience of the works in the ETH Garage demonstrates the interest in preserving the graffiti not only of ETH Zurich, but also the interest of Naegeli himself, of construction workers, and of fans and visitors.

1. REPAINTED

About 20 years ago, parts of the garage had to be repainted because the walls were damaged. There was a running fish by Naegeli from 1978 on one of the walls. Instead of painting over the figure, the painter decided to preserve the work. Using black paint, he traced the spray lines with a brush and thus became the first conservator. If you compare the old photos with today's photos, you can see slight deviations from the original in the tail fin and tongue of the fish. The identity of the bold painter remains unknown to this day.



©Archiv Harald Naegeli



©Pascal Sigrist

2. RESPRAYED

Some graffiti has faded over the years due to water damage and exhaust fumes. On a later visit to the garage, Naegeli touched up where he felt it was necessary or transformed some characters into new beings. In 2007, for example, an abstract figure on wheels became a primal woman (“Urfrau”), a favorite subject of the artist.



©Archive Harald Naegeli

3. FILMED: LIVING ARCHIVES

During the 2021 Naegeli exhibition in the Musée Visionnaire, over 600 children and young people visited the ETH Garage. As part of workshops and guided tours of the museum, they dealt with Harald Naegeli and his ephemeral art form and pursued the question: What will remain of this work and the place since both will soon look completely different? In the short film “Living Archive”, the filmmaker Evelyn Steigeisen captured the experiences of the students in the garage and the creative examination of Naegeli’s figures.



©Manuela Hitz

4. COPY, PASTE

The concrete wall in front of the exit to Rämistrasse showed three figures in the late 1970s. One of them, the woman on the right, faded. Here, Naegeli did not retouch the original. The wall had to be replaced during the current renovation work. The spider and the eye were cut out of the concrete, put in temporary storage and then reinserted into the new concrete wall at almost the same place.



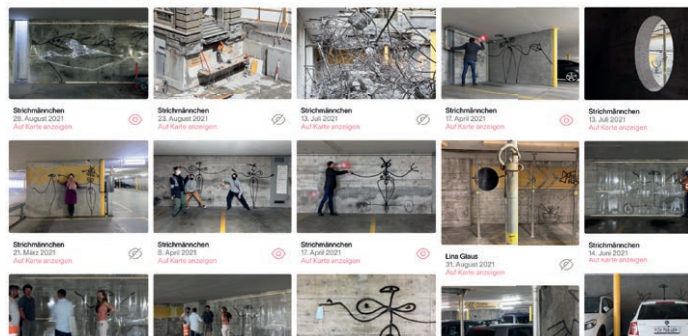
©Pascal Sigrist

5. PHOTOGRAPHED: THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The platform www.sprayervonzurich.com was created as a digital supplement to the Naegeli exhibition in the Musée Visionnaire in 2021. It is a digital archive where people who took snapshots of Naegeli’s art can upload their photos and share this ephemeral art form, gradually creating a virtual Naegeli museum. Before the refurbishment, the ETH Garage with its numerous figures was a popular place for motif searches. It is therefore not surprising that several hundred photos of this place have been shared on the platform, including real gems from the 70s and 80s. The digital archive is constantly updated and visitors are cordially invited to add to the documentation of Naegeli’s work. Even if a figure has already been recorded, every additional image is welcome — as a different, personal view of the work.

Alle Bilder zum Standort »ETH Parkgarage«

Hast du eigene Bilder zu diesem Standort und möchtest sie diesem Online-Archiv zur Verfügung stellen? Dann [gehe zur Karte](#) und lade deine Bilder dort hoch. Wir freuen uns auf deinen Beitrag!



6. DETACHED

Before the renovation, the conservator Tobias Hotz and his team were commissioned by ETH Zurich to remove three pieces of graffiti from the plastered walls. In a complex process, the team removed three plastered areas of different sizes from non-load-bearing walls made of aerated concrete blocks and transported them to the ETH workshop where the back walls were reinforced with a thin layer of concrete. The three detached graffiti come from the ETH Zurich Baukultur collection and are kept in its storage space for building material.

You can find out more about the renovation of the garage, the conservation and archiving of the graffiti in a slide show and in a conversation with Tobias Hotz, the architect Ruggero Tropeano and Agnese Quadri (ETH Archives) on September 21, 2022 in the Musée Visionnaire.

www.museevisionnaire.ch/agenda



Harald Naegeli with Linus Wettstein and Tobias Hotz ©ABN

Pavilion: News from the Studio

In addition to the well-known works in public space, Naegeli has been creating an extensive body of drawings and graphic work in private. This work was shown for the first time in Switzerland in three separate exhibitions in the Musée Visionnaire in 2021.

As a sensuous counterpoint to the documentary works in the exhibition, Naegeli's «Blitz Collages» will be shown in the pavilion. They are minimalist works in black and white that were created from 2021 to 2022. The fine lines and pointed forms are arranged in tense compositions and show Naegeli's meditations on surface and space. He uses Japanese washi tape for this, which he cuts on a base or directly on the carrier. Some collages are created in one go while others are reworked by Naegeli over several weeks, during which he takes down the dates of his creative process on the collages' back.

Naegeli already made collages during his early phase (1966–1972), initially inspired by his Dadaist role models Hans Arp and Kurt Schwitters. Later, he produced abstract, minimalist works that he called «Absolute Collages». You can find out more about the collages in the publications accompanying the 2021–2022 exhibitions at the Musée Visionnaire that are available in the shop.

Public guided tours through the exhibition: Sunday, September 4th and October 2nd, at 11:15 a.m.

Private tours and private Naegeli walks on request.



©ABN



©Pascal Sigrist

Naegeli in Zurich's Parking Garages

Did you know that it is not only in the ETH Garage that you can find graffiti by Harald Naegeli but that there are more parking garages in Zurich featuring his works? Works from the 1970s can be found in the Sihlquai, Jelmoli, and Hohe Promenade parking garages.

Further information at www.sprayervonzürich.com.

Concept: Manuela Hitz, Anna-Barbara Neumann, Yvonne Türler

Curation: Manuela Hitz, Anna-Barbara Neumann

Text: Anna-Barbara Neumann

Translation: Dr. Nina Zimnik (eng.)

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MUSÉE VISIONNAIRE
Predigerplatz 10, 8001 Zürich
+41 (0)44 251 66 57
info@museevisionnaire.ch
www.museevisionnaire.ch

#museevisionnaire
#aufdenspurendessprayers