

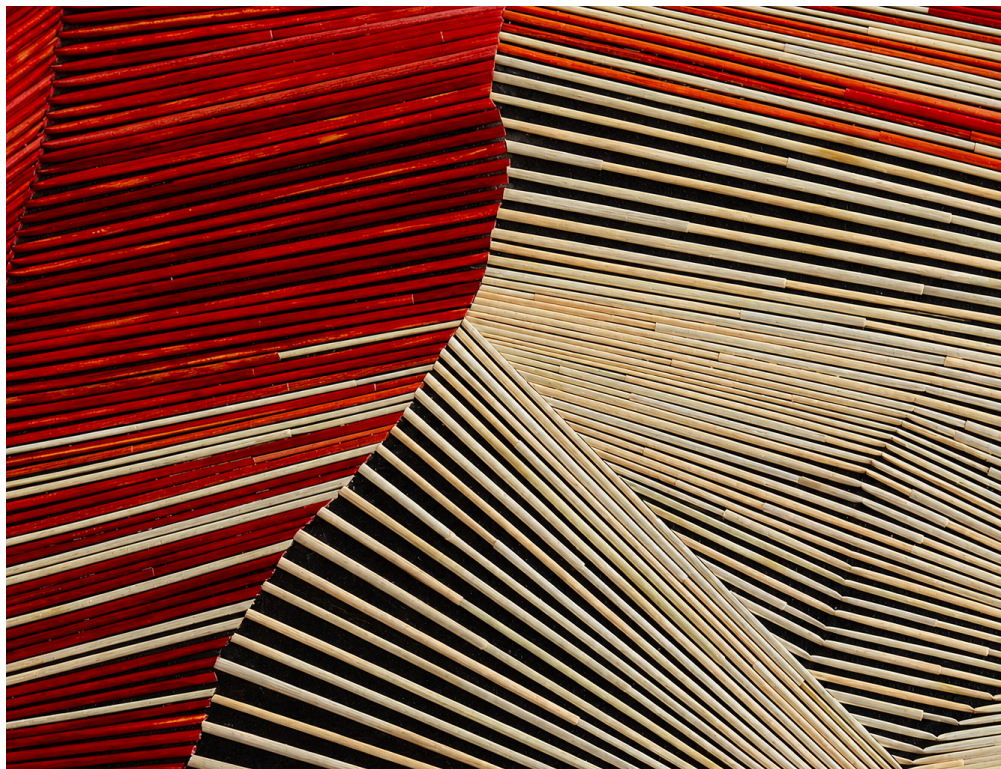
# Olaf Holzapfel

## Une réalité insolite

18.09.26 → 31.10.26

Press release

Olaf Holzapfel  
*Mercy*, 2026  
Rye straw on wood and Chinese  
ink  
(Detail)  
150 x 95 cm



Xippas Geneva

Rue des Sablons 6  
1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Tuesday to Friday:  
10am to 1pm and 2pm to 6.30pm  
Saturday: 12pm to 5pm

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**Opening Thursday, September 17, from 6 to 9 pm, on the occasion of La Nuit des Bains, as part of Geneva Art Week**

For his second solo exhibition in Geneva, Xippas presents *Une réalité insolite*, an exhibition by Olaf Holzapfel bringing together paintings and works made of straw. Through these bodies of work, the artist continues an inquiry he has pursued for several decades into the ways images constitute space and how matter, in turn, determines its forms.

In Holzapfel's work, the line is never simply drawn. It can be painted, calculated, assembled, or found within the very structure of a material. In his straw works, each stalk is simultaneously material and line. Its length, resistance, and irregularities directly contribute to the composition. Surfaces emerge that appear by turns flat and deep, abstract and almost architectural. The image does not represent a space located elsewhere: it materially produces it.

This question also runs through the paintings presented in the exhibition. Since his earliest works, Holzapfel has been interested in the transformations of our perception brought about by the emergence of digital spaces, and in the ways a virtual reality can find physical expression within the image. Rather than opposing the digital and the material, he considers these two realms as different ways of organizing and perceiving space. The volumes, lines, thresholds, and depths that structure his paintings thus find an extension in works made from plant fibres.

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Bringing together several periods of his practice, *Une réalité insolite* reveals the continuity of this research beyond the diversity of materials and techniques. Straw occupies a particular place within it. A familiar agricultural material, originating in a cycle of growth before being transformed through harvesting and human labour, it carries within itself a measure, a direction, and a temporality. Holzapfel does not use it as a symbol of a return to an allegedly untouched nature. Instead, he is interested in the techniques developed to transform natural materials, the knowledge transmitted through them, and the ways in which nature and culture mutually shape one another. In his work, traditional craftsmanship and digital design are therefore not opposing poles, but two systems of knowledge capable of converging within a single form.

In the new works conceived for the exhibition, this reflection continues through the motifs of the fold, the loop, and the ribbon. The line ceases to be a simple trajectory: it folds back, returns upon itself, and transforms the surface into space. These forms evoke an older genealogy of textiles and ornament, which were addressed, for example, in Sigmar Polke's "Dürer Loops", created in 1986 from a motif borrowed from Albrecht Dürer. The reference, however, does not function as a literal quotation. Rather, it allows Holzapfel to pose once again a question that runs throughout his work: how does a form circulate between different periods, techniques, and materials?

This circulation is essential to his practice. Wood, straw, reed, paint, and digital imagery do not represent separate worlds in Holzapfel's work. They constitute different ways of experiencing the same reality, shaped by transitions between surface and volume, interior and exterior, human construction and organic growth. *Une réalité insolite* emerges precisely from this shift in perspective: making perceptible, within what is familiar to us, the material, technical, and cultural structures that organize our experience of space.

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## GENEVA ART WEEK PROGRAMME

**Friday, September 18, 2026 · 10 am**

**Geneva Botanical Garden**

Guided walk through the Geneva Botanical Garden with **Olaf Holzapfel**, followed by a conversation with landscape architect **Marion Festal** exploring the connections between landscape, vernacular architecture, natural materials, and traditional craftsmanship, themes at the heart of the artist's practice. The morning will conclude at 12 pm with a convivial drink.

Free admission, registration required (conversation in English): [geneva@xippas.com](mailto:geneva@xippas.com)

**Saturday, September 19, 2026 · 11 am**

**Villa du Parc – Centre d'art contemporain, Annemasse**

Conversation with **Olaf Holzapfel** at Villa du Parc about his work *Swarm*. Produced by art-werk for the *(re)connecting.earth (03) biennial*, the straw sculpture was installed like a gigantic swarm on the glass façade of the Eaux-Vives train station. It now migrates to the façade of Villa du Parc, in its garden of century-old trees, for the final part of the exhibition *Ressources Sensibles*.

As he opens his solo exhibition at Xippas, the artist will be in conversation with **Bernard Vienat**, curator of the exhibition and director of the art-werk association, and **Julie Portier**, director of Villa du Parc. A drink will be offered after the talk.

Free admission, registration required (conversation in English): [geneva@xippas.com](mailto:geneva@xippas.com)

**Olaf Holzapfel** was born in Dresden in 1967. He lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He studied painting at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden before continuing his research at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, India, and later at Columbia University in New York. His work has notably been presented at the Venice Biennale (2011), documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), the Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur (2021), and Museum Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich (2024), where he was awarded the Zurich Art Prize. In 2026, his work is also being presented at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt a. Main and Villa Merkel in Esslingen.

Recipient of the Gerhard Altenbourg Prize in 2014, Olaf Holzapfel is represented in numerous public and private collections, including the Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kunstfonds of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Kunsthalle Mannheim, the Robelin Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon and Zurich Insurance (CH).