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Art and Cultural Promotion with Passion

Regina Michel, Executive Manager and Curator of the ZF Art Foundation, will retire on May 1, 2026, after 30 successful years

The ZF Art Foundation is inextricably linked to the commitment of Regina Michel. For thirty years, the art historian, curator, and journalist has been dedicated to supporting artists in the fields of art, music, and film within the framework of the ZF Art Foundation—initially as a freelance curator and later as Executive Manager. Regina Michel's responsibilities included planning and implementing the funding concept, designing the residency scholarship including the call for applications, exhibition, and catalogue, as well as developing the new ZF Fellowship for Artists, RE-SEARCH. As a member of the jury, she helped select the scholarship holders as well as the winners of the ZF Short Film Award. As a journalist, she was also responsible for establishing and organizing press and public relations, including the website and social media channels.

The sustainable promotion of contemporary art is particularly close to Michel's heart. "A scholarship is only as good as the museum exhibition and the catalogue," was already the conclusion of her concept for the residency program in 1996. Over the past three decades, she has curated more than 40 exhibitions of the ZF Art Foundation at the Zeppelin Museum, including the anniversary exhibition "25 Years of the ZF Art Foundation" spanning over 500 square meters. She was the author, editor, and co-publisher of all catalogue and anniversary publications of the ZF Art Foundation.

Enabling Art and Communicating Art

Michel's central intention has been to enable art and to communicate art. As a curator, she actively supported the respective art projects of the Artists in Residence and made many projects possible in the first place. Through her wide-ranging network—including contacts with the water police, the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the Institute for Lake Research, and the Wissenswerkstatt—she consistently found ways and obtained permits to realize even challenging projects. Notable challenges included getting Florian Graf's massive lighthouse sculpture over six meters high to float on Lake Constance; catching plankton with and for Riikka Tauriainen for the video installation *Ecotone Encounters* and recording original underwater sounds; or, together with Nevin Aladag, collecting water samples from the research vessel of the Institute for Lake Research at the deepest point of the lake.

Art education and mediation are especially important to Regina Michel, particularly bridging the gap between audiences and artists and reducing apprehension—because art should not exist solely in an ivory tower. Educational offerings were diverse: studio visits, artist talks, and curator-led tours were just as much a part of the program as visits to public masterclasses during the "Young Masters Pianist Festival," film discussions, and insights into the "workshop" processes of winners of the ZF Short Film Award. The goal was to allow people in the Lake Constance region to experience art, music, and film up close. Special attention was also always given to ZF employees, leading Michel to build both an internal and external circle of supporters and friends.

A Networker by Conviction

Building and fostering networks was always one of her priorities. In 2000, she was among the founding members of "Kunst-Freitag Friedrichshafen." For 25 years, the Artists in Residence presented their project ideas at Kunst-Freitag in the ZF Tower studio. Beyond supervising and supporting the Artists in Residence, she cultivated friendships, organized annual networking meetings and studio visits, supported artists' integration into other funding programs, and established contacts with experts in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. She also prioritized the foundation's networking and representation in committees and associations and was active in the Working Group of Art and Cultural Foundations, the Association of German Foundations, and the advisory board of the Zeppelin Museum Art Foundation. She is a member of the Association of German Art Historians, the Friends of Kunstmuseum Bregenz (KUB), the Friedrichshafen Art Association, JazzPort, and others.

For 24 years, Chairman Matthias Lenz and Executive Manager Regina Michel worked together closely and with mutual trust. In recent years, her focus has been on ensuring a secure future for the foundation beyond the departure of the established leadership team, while adapting to the current situation.

The promotion of art and cultural projects is secured in the long term: as a non-profit foundation, it is legally required to use the returns from its endowment funds promptly in line with its purpose—supporting art and culture. However, during an interim period, the foundation will streamline personnel, and the position of Executive Manager will not initially be filled. This is made possible by expanding cooperation with regional partners: RE-SEARCH, the ZF Fellowship for Artists with the Zeppelin Museum; the ZF Music Award with Peter Vogel of birdmusic; and the ZF Short Film Award in cooperation with the Friedrichshafen Film Festival. During the interim phase, the foundation will be managed by the Chairman of the Foundation and Talina Palmer, formerly executive assistant, who will be responsible for foundation organization and event management going forward.

Regina Michel studied art history, classical archaeology, and Byzantine studies at Philipps University Marburg and the University of Hamburg, graduating in 1990 with a Master of Arts under Professor Wolfgang Kemp. She curated her first exhibition as early as 1984 at the Free Academy of the Arts in Hamburg as part of the Hamburg Jahnn Weeks: "Hans Henny Jahnn – Zum 90. Geburtstag und 25. Todestag."

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Press Images:



Regina Michel, Executive Manager and Curator of the ZF Art Foundation until April 2026;
Photo: Albert Kunzer



Regina Michel and Matthias Lenz in the open ZF Tower Studio during Petra Kaltenmorgen's residency,
Artist in Residence 2003, Kunst-Freitag 2003; Photo: Albert Kunzer



Regina Michel and Norbert Bauer, Artist in Residence 2007, at the opening of his exhibition; Photo: Albert Kunzer



Sebastian Fischer, SFPS Berlin, and Regina Michel at the exhibition opening "25 Years of the ZF Art Foundation," 2015; Photo: Albert Kunzer



Opening of the anniversary exhibition "25 Years of the ZF Art Foundation" with Regina Michel, Claudia Emmert, Wolfgang Meighörner and Matthias Lenz (from left, starting center of image), 2015; Photo: Albert Kunzer



Regina Michel, curator of the anniversary exhibition (left), in conversation with Claudia Emmert, then director of the Zeppelin Museum (right), at the anniversary exhibition "25 Years of the ZF Art Foundation," 2015; Photo: Albert Kunzer