

Support for Speakers

Art production and presentation requires a vast array of support structures. These include facilities, industrial capabilities to manufacture chemicals and materials, and distribution infrastructures. These support structures normally stay invisible. In this exhibition by Michael Schmid, these processes, materials and constructions are foregrounded.

These structures also include gallery architecture, frames, and other exhibition-building devices. Schmid first asks the viewer to think about the exhibition space itself, about the fact that the Kunstverein Göttingen does not have a permanent home and must alternate between two venues. To highlight this fluid spatial condition, Schmid took the floor plans of the Kunstverein's two venues and merged their contours, creating a drawing with a continuous outline. He then used this drawing to produce a photogram on a sheet of color photographic paper (*Kunstverein*, 2026); that is, the drawing left its trace when placed on the photographic paper and then exposed to light.

The photogram is accompanied by various forms of support materials presented as artworks. One sees several panels of Wiener Geflecht, or Viennese Braiding, a type of rattan wickerwork, stretched on canvas stretchers (*Untitled*, 2026). It is a type of early industrial material that became popular with the advent of modernity, enabled by the colonial expansion. An important reference here is a chair by Marcel Breuer, which combined a tubular steel frame with rattan, whose strict geometry formed a part of modernist visual language that led to emergence of minimalism, whose legacy Schmid's pieces are in a dialogue with. This rattan wickerwork used for modern furniture is exhibited for its materiality, its elegant, proto-industrial structure, its minimal seriality. The use of Wiener Geflecht also nods to a strand in post-war sculpture that foregrounded the quality of industrial materials. Donald Judd and Richard Artschwager come to mind.

The repeating structure of Wiener Geflecht is echoed in the black and white photographs of mysteriously organic hexagonal grids (*Untitled*, 2026). Are they beehives, or some kind of molecular structures? Their repetition suggests an affinity with the rattan panels. They are in fact close-ups of the metallic grill from the server cabinet at the nearby Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftliche Datenverarbeitung. In other words, they are representations of the outer shell of the machines for storing and processing information, lots of them images; the device expected to play supporting roles, not to draw attention to itself. Schmid had an access to the server through his long-term collaboration with the University of Göttingen's Chair of Materiality of Knowledge.

The way these photographs were printed is also significant. Initially, the metal grill was photographed with a digital camera. Schmid selected one picture from these digital images and converted it into an analogue negative. He used this negative to produce the exhibited images as contact prints; the negative was placed directly on the photographic paper when printing, without using an enlarger. He used a mask to crop the image, and for each contact print, he manually repositioned the negative beneath the mask, resulting in subtle variations. This process created a tension between

repetition and uniqueness, between reproduction and originality, much like the repetition and minimal alteration one can see in braided rattan. The affinity with Wiener Geflecht on the level of production is clear. Like printing analogue photography in a darkroom, braiding of the wickerwork is a semi-mechanized process where the work by the machine is controlled and complemented by the human hand. The rattan must be wetted in order to braid them, which is strangely analogous to the several bathes a photo print must go through. Darkroom printed photographs and the tightly braided plant material share their subtle irregularity and nearly-imperceptible unpredictability.

The kinship between these contact prints and the photogram is also clear. Equally important is the fact that contact prints are normally for preparatory work. They are meant to be a reference for the photographer to decide which picture to print with using an enlarger. They are another type of support material that is usually kept invisible.

There are also the corkboards, the material used for pinning pictures and notes (*bouquet*, 2026). Framed, here the corkboards themselves are the pictures, protected from the pins by the glass. The colors of the two corkboards are faintly different because one of them was exposed to sunlight before it was framed. Now behind the UV filtering museum glass, its coloring process is suspended, like a photographic print placed in a stop bath.

Throughout, the key notion that occupied Schmid is “Halbzeug”, various types of pre-fabricated, semi-finished industrial materials. They are not raw, they are heavily engineered, and they are flexible. They also rarely draw attentions to themselves. Pre-woven rattan wickerwork sheets and rolls of corkboard are examples of Halbzeug. One could say that emulsion-coated photographic papers are also a type of Halbzeug. Drawing from the post-war avant-garde’s focus on industrial materiality, Schmid synthesizes this sculptural tradition with the approach of conceptual photography, its questioning of image making. He presents analysis and repurposing of various supports, including architecture, furniture and presentation materials, and contact prints. In this exhibition, the status of pictorial surface, the space where works are being viewed, and the boundary between the functionality of materials and their aesthetic quality are all interrogated.

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