

Edition VFO

Julian Charrière – After the Smoke Cradle

23.01. – 28.03.2026



Julian Charrière, *After the Smoke Cradle (Lava / Vog / Stone)*, 2025, lithography, 40 x 30 cm each

Edition VFO presents *After the Smoke Cradle*, a new body of work by Julian Charrière. The exhibition features 99 photolithographs in an immersive installation. These works originate from the landscapes Charrière encountered while climbing volcanoes for his sound piece “*Stone Speakers*” (2024). While on site, he collected mineral samples, including volcanic ash, lava, obsidian, and sulfur, which were later ground in the studio and transformed into pigments for the printing inks.

Three motifs are shown in the exhibition, each varied 33 times to create a progression from light to dark, overexposed to black, and clear to obscured. Repetition becomes the method; the longer one moves through the space, the more perceptible the minimal shifts in grain, tone, and color mixture become. In each work, the photographic image converges with the material trace of the place from which it originates. The prints not only depict landscape, but are also formed from it.

Developed in 2025 at the Zurich Print Institute (ZPI) based on large-format printing sessions, the series treats lithography not as mere image transfer, but as a precise practice of contact and pressure. Lithography, especially in the hands of a master printer, does not simply reproduce an image; it engineers a choreography of contact: stone and paper, ink and water, pressure and release. The image is not laid on the sheet, but rather coaxed into it through a sequence of calibrated acts. Charrière’s series makes this procedural truth visible. The prints are built in layers, often six to eight, each one a thin deposition, a time-stratum, a decision that cannot be undone but can be overwritten by the next pass.

The photograph has long promised evidence: ‘this happened,’ ‘this was there.’ Charrière has consistently complexified that promise. His images seldom accept the role of mere documentation; rather, they behave like thresholds, places where the visible is haunted by what exceeds it: heat, radiation, extraction histories, glacial durations, and oceanic pressures. In these prints, photography is neither rejected nor celebrated. It is made porous.

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Formally, the 99 sheets serve as an exercise in attention. The works resist the “see-once-and-move-on” gaze, refusing the quick overview. Recurrence, minimal deviation, and tonal drift make looking itself the subject. Rather than foregrounding the spectacular natural event itself, the exhibition highlights its echo and residue – what remains when an event seems long past.

An artist’s book presenting the series as a continuous sequence in book form will be published in early March by About Books to accompany the exhibition. This publication pairs the 99 works with short aphorisms by Prof. Dr. Paul Harris (also known as Pierre Jardin) and two introductory essays. The dust jacket itself is produced lithographically using the blended palette of ground stone pigments employed throughout the project, thereby extending the material logic of the works into the book object.

In collaboration with the Zurich Print Institute (ZPI) and Steindruckerei Wolfensberger.

Curated by David Khalat.