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RE-SEARCH, the new Fellowship for Artists of the ZF Art Foundation, goes to Christelle Oyiri in 2025

In 2025, on the occasion of its 35th anniversary, the ZF Art Foundation will transition from the Residency for Artists to the ZF Research Fellowship.

The ZF Fellowship *RE-SEARCH* is a new multi-year funding program of the ZF Art Foundation. It explicitly supports the work of the Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen. The artistic exploration project *RE-SEARCH* is endowed with 30,000 euros per year and enables a contemporary artist to develop and produce innovative artworks in close dialogue with the Zeppelin Archive or the collections of the Zeppelin Museum. The goal is to develop site- and context-specific works that place the museum's collections in new interpretive contexts. The new ZF Research Fellowship replaces the Residency for Artists of the ZF Art Foundation, which has existed since 1996.

The ZF Art Foundation was established in 1990 as a foundation under civil law. The foundation's purpose is to promote art and culture. The funding is generated exclusively from the foundation's capital income and must be used promptly to fulfill the foundation's purpose. This enables sustainable art and culture promotion even in difficult times. The funding priorities are the ZF Residency for Artists, the ZF Music Prize, and the ZF Short Film Prize. The promotion of visual artists through a fellowship was already considered when the foundation was established 35 years ago: Artists contribute to the diversity and richness of our culture, they experiment, reflect, and question social processes. Artistic positions contribute to the expansion of cultural discourse and promote understanding and appreciation for different perspectives and life realities.

The Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen and the ZF Art Foundation have been closely connected for almost 30 years. The ZF Art Foundation supported opening exhibition "The Art of Flying" of the museum in 1996 with 570,000 DM, equivalent to more than 291,000 euros. At the same time, the foundation was able to rent suitable spaces on the third and fourth floors of the museum tower and award the ZF Art Foundation's residency fellowship in the ZF Tower Studio for the first time. The ZF Fellowship has provided visual artists with the freedom and resources to further develop their artistic positions. The combination of intensive creative work and museum exhibition, accompanied by a catalog, has created lasting resonance and contributed to artistic development.

From 1996 to 2024, 43 artists lived and worked as Artists in Residence of the ZF Art Foundation in the ZF Tower Studio in Friedrichshafen, using various media: painting, drawing, photography, object and sculpture, installation, performance, and action in public space – the diversity of art genres is impressive. Form and color, fact, fiction and imagination, boundaries and identity, environment and responsibility, or the engagement with National Socialism on Lake Constance – the themes addressed by the 43 Artists in Residence in the ZF Tower Studio in Friedrichshafen are diverse and still of great social relevance.

New forms of collaboration, interdisciplinary approaches, digitization, and globalization are changing artistic practice and the needs of artists. After almost 30 years of residency, an

update, a realignment of the fellowship program seemed sensible. The 35th anniversary of the ZF Art Foundation was a good occasion for a change. *RE-SEARCH* promotes artistic engagement with archives and collections. Artists can explore personal and collective histories in dialogue with archives, develop new narratives, and interpret historical events in new contexts.

The first ZF Fellowship *RE-SEARCH* goes to Christelle Oyiri in 2025. It enables the French artist to develop the work "Sky is the Limit" for the exhibition "Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography" in dialogue with the Zeppelin Archive. In "Sky is the Limit," the artist examines how information and spectacle are inextricably intertwined today, using the Hindenburg explosion (1937), and the 9/11 attacks (2001) as examples. For Oyiri, these aviation catastrophes symbolize an era of emotionally charged visual worlds in which the boundaries between reality and media staging become increasingly blurred.

Oyiri's multifaceted work questions how these media symbols shape our historiography and self-perception – while also revealing hidden fantasies of power, hubris, and imperial ambition. Her kaleidoscopic video installation combines archival material with a stylized visual language inspired by American filmmaker Brian De Palma. In doing so, she connects the disasters not only aesthetically but also philosophically: Each represents a moment of technological ambition culminating in tragedy—exposing the fine line between progress and hubris.

The work "Sky is the Limit" by Christelle Oyiri is one of the works specially conceived for the exhibition "Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography" by internationally active contemporary artists. Developed in close dialogue with the Zeppelin Museum's unique photographic collection, these works reframe the archive from non-Western and queer-feminist perspectives. In the face of today's flood of digital images, the exhibition poses the highly topical question of the power of images, their instrumentalization, and their truth content.

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Press Photos



Christelle Oyiri, *RE-SEARCH*. ZF Fellowship 2025, *Image and Power*: Christelle Oyiri
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