



Talking about wolves

The role of exhibitions on wolves
in natural history museums

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Klaus Robin

Il ritorno del lupo, 30.9.2021

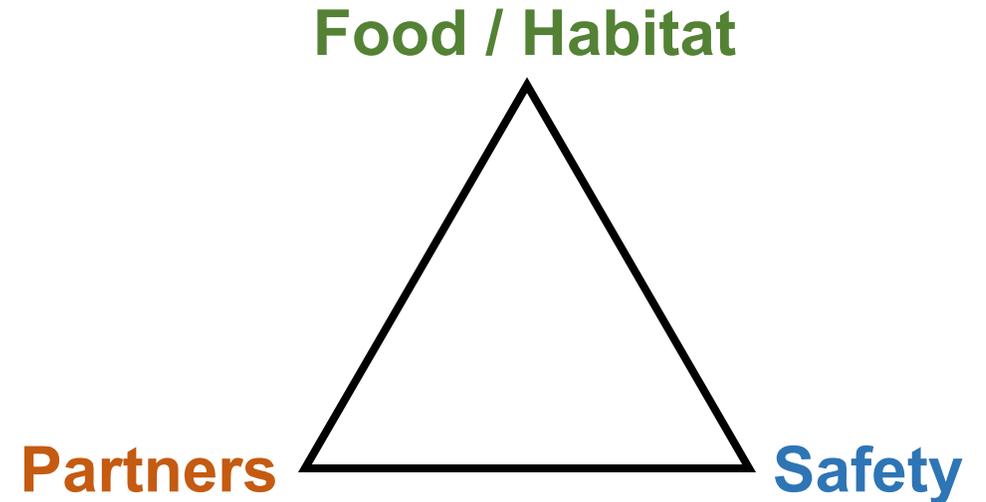
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Prerequisite: it's as simple as that ...



All living beings require three basic things:

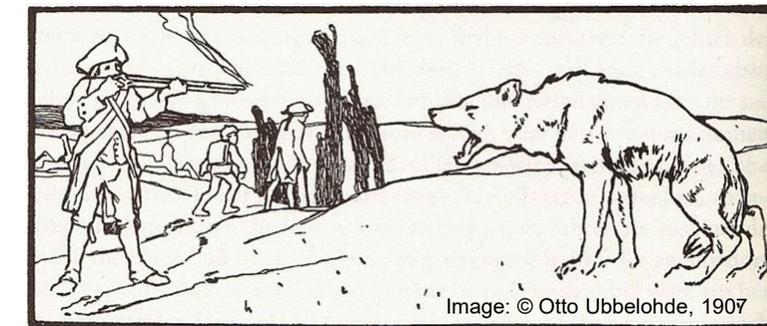
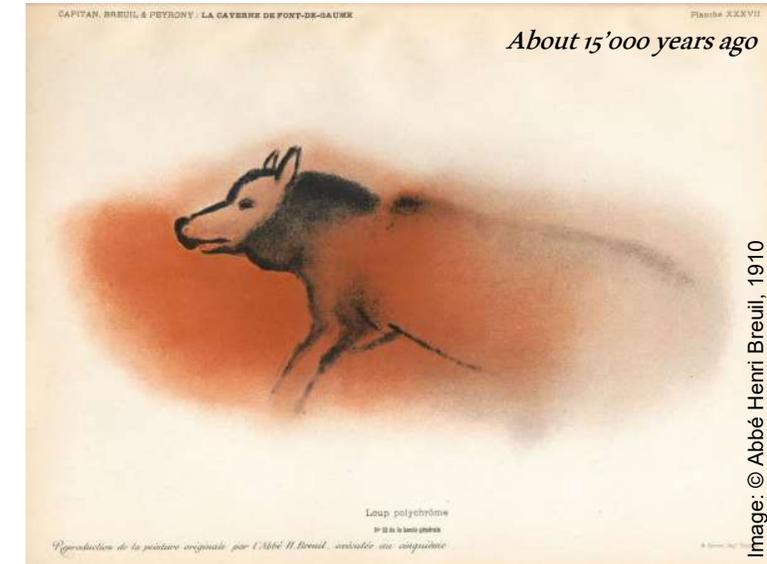


However, ...

- what if these needs overlap, interact or compete with each other?
- In relation to the wolf, we are stuck in the middle of this struggle today. «Both sides» have long left the ground of constructive discussion.
- The rapid development of the wolf population requires constant adjustments when assessing the situation, evaluating management choices and taking decisions
- What can – should – an exhibition on wolves tell us and achieve in this context?

Talking about wolves – why and how?

- Wolves fascinate, wolves frighten ...
wolves polarize
- Wolves provoke the blending of myths and facts
- Wolves have returned from the edge of extinction to become a successfully spreading species in Central Europe
- Wolves and mankind have a long common history, they will share their future – whether they like it or not
- What does that imply?
- Can expositions on wolves make a difference?
- And how can expositions succeed?



Whether it's about



or



Natural history museums tell the stories of life ...

- to all people, regardless of age, gender, profession, social status
- comprehensively, attractively, scientifically sound
- beyond personal or ideological views

Natural history museums provide the science-based platform ...

- to explore phenomena of nature and their impact on society
- to form opinions, based on facts
- to exchange ideas, to debate and to derive fields of action

... and thus, they are the extended arm of science into society

In relation to the wolf, this means (I)

What is the current situation in the area(s) of interest ?

- Identification of the involved stakeholders, their needs and concerns
- Distribution of the wolf, population size, structure and dynamics
- Habitat conditions and distribution of its natural prey
- Land use conditions and practices, types and distribution of livestock

What kind of animal is it?

- Explain the biology and behavior of the wolf
- Explore if the «new wolf generations» behave differently: is their behavioral plasticity greater than what we assume or know so far?

In relation to the wolf, this means (II)

Explain the history of its return

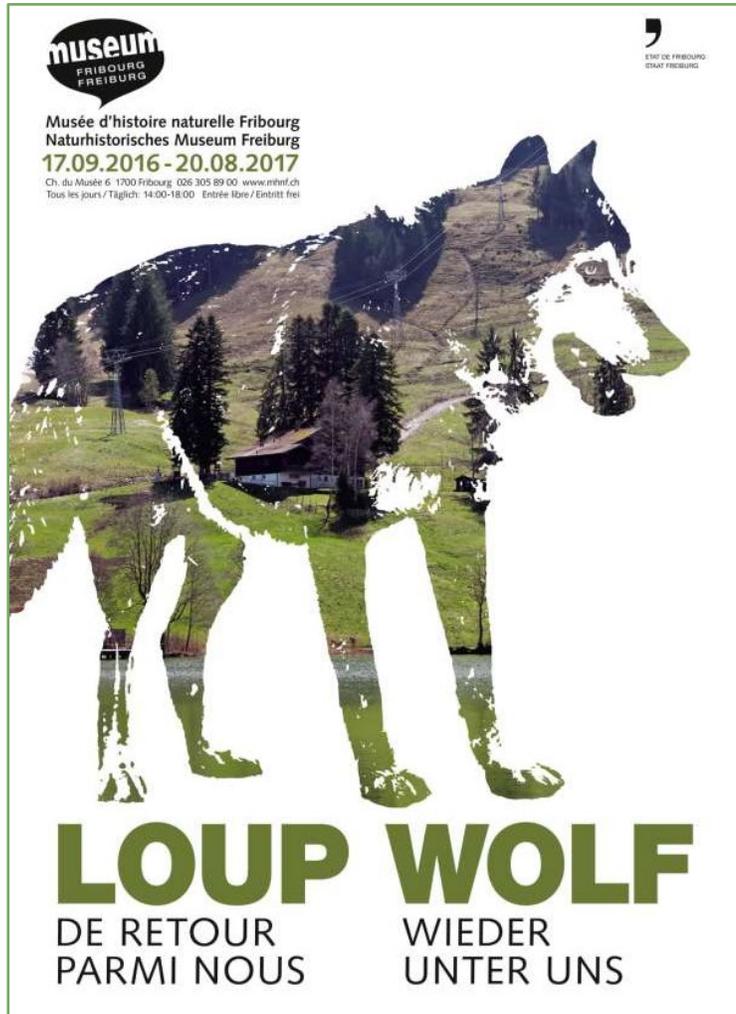
- what are the reasons for its successful return
- Land use history
- Implications for today's land use patterns

How to go on, how to co-exist with large carnivores?

- How do we as society want to react to the return of the large carnivores?
- Where and how much space do we want to give to the wolf, to large carnivores in general?
- Do wolves require a different approach, compared to other large carnivores? If yes, why and how?

Recent wolf exhibitions in Switzerland:

3 expositions – 3 facets, Lucerne 30.6.2018 – 28.4.2019



3 expositions – 3 facets: Lucerne 30.6.2018 – 28.4.2019

providing a holistic approach

Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg (Peter Wandeler)

«Wolf. Back again among us»

Concept – main messages:

- Co-existence of wolf & men
- Extinction and successful return
- Who is the wolf? Facts on biology and behaviour
- Management options
- Perception and acceptance: how much space are we willing to give to the wolf, to large carnivores in general?

Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern (Beat Haechler)

«The wolf is here. An exposition on humans»

Concept – main messages:

- The wolf is back – that's a fact! Hence, the wolf symbolises:
 - trespassing boundaries
 - the debate on ecological, economical, political values
 - humanisation: glorification vs. diabolization
 - monitoring & science

Natur-Museum Luzern (Klaus Robin & Britta Allgöwer)

«On the behavior of wolves. A picture documentary on behavioral research covering 70 years»

+ Book:

«Wolf. Eine Annäherung»

Concept – main messages:

- From evildoer to the object of behavioral research
- Depiction of the wolf over time: from Renaissance to modern recording methods of spatio-temporal patterns

Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg



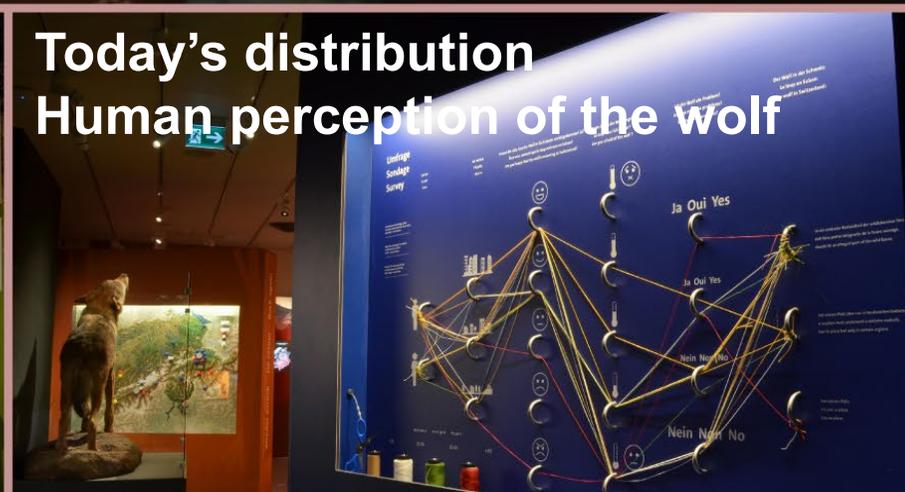
Habitat development
Return of the wild ungulates
Return of the wolf



Mankind & wolves
Cohabitation & domestication
Extinction history



Biology and behaviour of the wolf

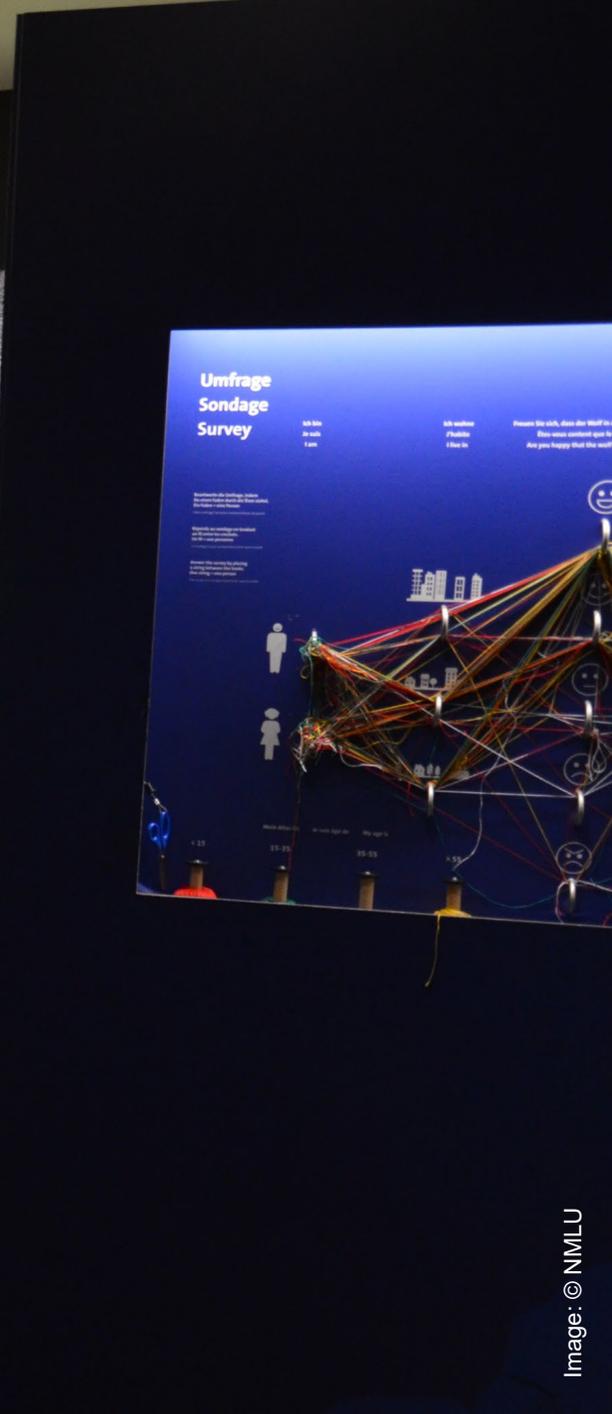


Today's distribution
Human perception of the wolf



Relevant objects
Interactive elements

Exhibition section Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg:
→ taxidermy specimens and biology are attractive for all ages



Impressions exhibition section Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg:
→ descendants of the wolf, management measures, current distribution



Visitors are fascinated by «real world objects»: taxidermy of a young male that was shot in 2017 in the canton of Uri by the game warden as it killed more than 25 sheep within a time span of 3 weeks. This is also a good example to explain over-predation.

Exhibition sections Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg

Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern



Wolf & Mankind share their history ...



Zeichne mit Deinem Finger einen Wolf!
Dessine un loup avec ton doigt!
Draw a wolf with your finger!

Geschichte · Histoire · History



... their present and future

Exhibition setup Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern

Wolf & Society:
migration, politics, humanisation, science

What do visitors
think of the wolf?

Visitors can listen to 8 stakeholders:
game warden, taxidermist, livestock protection dog breeder,
geneticist, shepherd, environmental pedagogue,
sheep farmer, conservationist

«the bad & the good»
symbolize the ambiguity
we face the wolf with

Impressions Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern: while listening intently, wolves can be observed



«THE GOOD»
neutral
presentation



«THE BAD»
scary
presentation

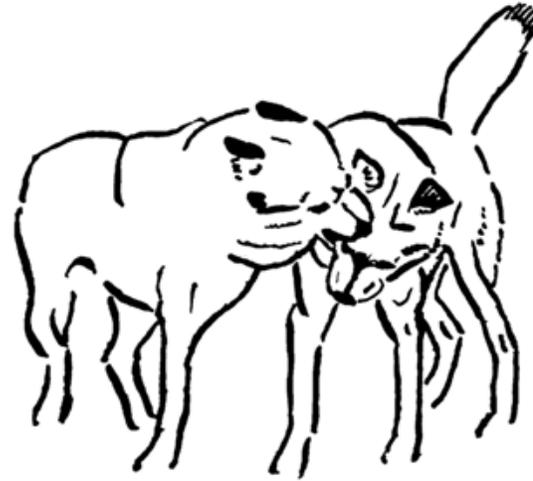
Impressions Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern: wolf & mankind – an intense relationship



Impressions Natur-Museum Luzern: depiction of the wolf over time ...



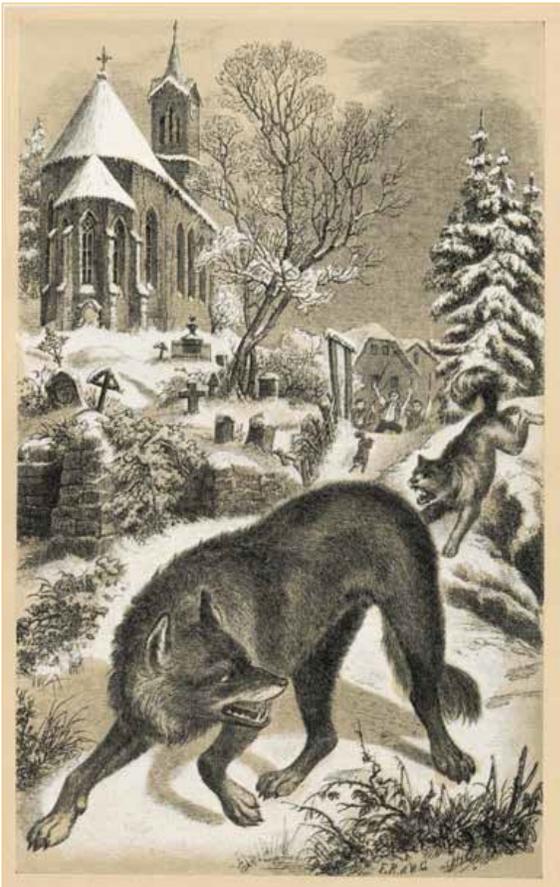
Drawing:
Conrad Gessner
1563



Sketches: © Rudolf Schenkel
1947, 1967



Drawing:
Anonymous in F. v. Tschudi
1890 (1st ed.), 1944 (last ed.)

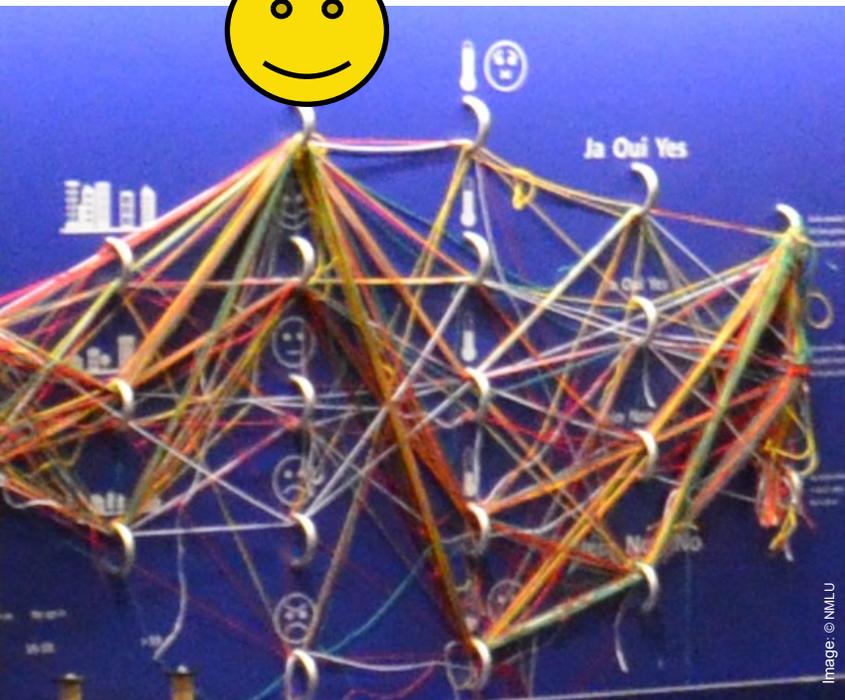


Images: © Klaus Robin 2018



And sometimes it helps to deliver the message
with a twinkle in the eye ...





Can exhibitions on wolves make a difference?

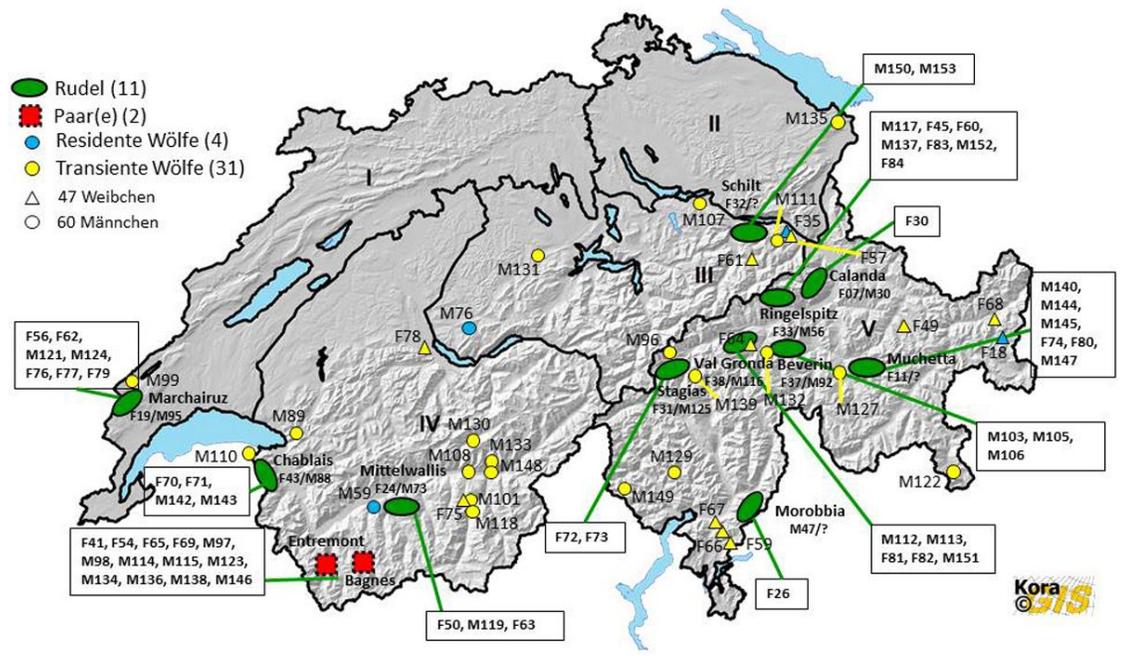
Not easy to quantify, however:

- So far approximately 300'000 visitors; 9 different locations in Switzerland (FR, BE, LU, VS, TG, GR 2x, ZH 2x)
- One more to come: JU
- Perception: Most visitors reacted positively, both to the exhibitions as well as to the presence of the wolf (but mainly urbanized visitor segment)

That was then in 2019 ...

Today, in September 2021 ...

We have a very different situation:



- Rapidly growing wolf population in CH: September 2021 → 15 packs
- Mai 2021: very narrow rejection of the revised Federal Hunting Law by popular vote. Its acceptance would have allowed the cantons to intervene sooner and independent from federal authorities
- Urban-rural gap is widening, especially between mountain farmers and city residents as well authorities.

Source: © KORA GIS – data aggregation over 24 months (2019-2020) www.kora.ch

How can future large carnivore expositions succeed?

→ What must be their main message?



There is only one way:

- Find a way to deal with the wolf and large carnivores in general
- In particular: build bridges between polarized groups
- Reach out to those who have not made up their minds yet
- No «wildlife romance», but respect for the animals and the human stakeholders
- Avoid pouring oil to the fire!

When planning and building an exhibition ...



Points to consider:

- Who are the addressees?
- Permanent or travelling exposition?
- How much space is needed or available?
- Who provides the content: inhouse and/or extern?
- Available staff: scientists, pedagogues, technicians?
- Available exhibition objects?
- How many languages?
- Scenography: inhouse or by external specialists?
- Available budget for the development and the operation of the exhibition?
- Duration of exhibition?
- Advertising, dissemination, rental rates?
- Support for the exhibition's borrowers?

When planning and building an exhibition ...

(the «small print» - la «piccola stampa»)



**Production costs FR, BE, LU
(cash, rounded):**

- FR: CHF 125'000.–
- BE: CHF 50'000.--
- LU: CHF 56'000.--
- Total: CHF 231'000.–

**In-kind contributions
(+/- equals the amount of cash):**

- All museums: ~ CHF 200'000.--

Total exhibition surface: 200 m²

➤ **Approximately CHF 2'300.-- / m²**

The Scenographers: important partners for successful exhibitions

Musée d'histoire naturelle FR
«Wolf. Back again among us»



Corrado Luvisotto

Art director, graphic artist

Grafix <https://grafix.ch>

Communication visuelle, Fribourg

info@grafix.ch

Alpines Museum der CH Bern
«The wolf is here»



Philipp Clemenz

Graphic artist, scenographer, teacher,

Atelier Philipp Clemenz, Lucerne

atelier@philippclemenz.ch

Natur-Museum Luzern
«On the behavior of wolves»,
Book: «Wolf. Eine Annäherung»



Martina Pelosi, Julia Reichle

Graphic artists

cyan Atelier für Gestaltung, www.cyan.ch

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Julia.reichle@cyan.ch

Don't hesitate to contact us: exhibition data are still available in G, F, and E



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