

WITCHES! About body, knowledge and power

Museum im Kulturspeicher (MiK) Würzburg
October 7, 2023 to January 14, 2024

Exhibition opening: Friday, October 6, 6:30 p.m.
Press event: Thursday, October 5, 11:00 a.m.



Christiane Möbus, Das unnötige Verlöbnis der Frau Holle mit dem Schamanen, or A New Life, 1971/72, Photo: Renate Altenrath, © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2023

The witch is one of the most colourful figures in fairy tales, myth and popular belief. From the 15th century to the present day, this theme has also been used to shape a wide variety of images of femininity in art: the ugly old woman as well as the young, seductive femme fatale. The witch was and is a fascinating motif in works since Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the male perspective on the subject has been contrasted with a female, positive view, for example by the Jewish artist Teresa Feodorowna Ries or the expressive dancer Mary Wigman, which found further development in the feminist art of the 1970s. Cruelty and oppression, depravity and seduction, physicality and spirituality resonate in the artistic representations just as much as the breaking of conventions and female self-assertion.

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The unbroken fascination for the ambivalent figure of the witch is contrasted with a brutal historical reality: With the witch hunts, thousands of innocent people were tortured and cruelly murdered in Europe. Although Würzburg was a centre of persecution in the 17th century – Prince-Bishop Philipp Adolf von Ehrenberg had hundreds of people condemned as witches in only four years from 1626 to 1630 – the dark chapter of the city's history has hardly been present in the public consciousness so far.

Now there are plans for a witch monument in the city; the exhibition "WITCHES!" is also intended to stimulate discussion and pose questions about the origins and mechanisms of stigmatisation and social exclusion and about the image of women manifested in the figure of the witch from early modern times to the present. Historical depictions are juxtaposed with approaches by contemporary artists and show the relevance of the topic for the present.

An accompanying catalogue to the exhibition will be published by Wienand-Verlag in autumn 2023. We expect to present the new copies to the public at an event in November. We will be happy to inform interested parties about details of the catalogue release via our e-mail newsletter. Subscribe free of charge at: kulturspeicher.de.

With works by:

Hans Baldung Grien, Johanna Braun, Pieter Bruegel d.Ä., Fritz Cremer, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Maya Deren, Albrecht Dürer, Francisco de Goya, Otto Greiner, Karl Hofer, Alfred Kubin, Eileen Lofink, Ana Mendieta, Erwin Misch, Christiane Möbus, Michael Müller, Christa Näher, Caspar Walter Rauh, Teresa Feodorowna Ries, Fritz Roeber, Christian Rohlf, Rachel Rose, Ulrike Rosenbach, Hans Schäufelin, Matthäus Schiestl, Cindy Sherman, Clara Siewert, Max Slevogt, Penny Slinger, Gustav Adolf Spangenberg, Carl Spitzweg, Linda Stupart, Angelika Summa, Hans Thoma, Jan van de Velde, herman de vries, Mary Wigma

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Press release and press images can be found at kulturspeicher.de/presse

