



Olga Fröbe-  
Kapteyn –  
Tiefes Wissen  
06/30–10/01/23  
Monia Ben  
Hamouda, Kerstin  
Brätsch, Olga  
Fröbe-Kapteyn,  
Hylozoic/Desires,  
Mountain River  
Jump!, Sriwhana  
Spong  
Kunsthalle  
Mainz



We are currently living in an age of numerous sea changes, when thinkers, activists, artists and researchers are all asking themselves what a more liveable and equitable future might look like. They are challenging dogmas and producing new knowledge which acknowledges the limitations of academic disciplines and the problems with Western epistemologies, while also aligning itself with holistic world views or systems of knowledge in various cultures. A core part of this involves looking back into history to expose whatever has been forgotten, overlooked or eliminated. We can discover approaches to art that have long been marginalised on account of the artists' socio-cultural contexts, gender or ethnicity. Whether in the form of outsider art, arts and crafts, ritual artefacts or practice-based research, they have not found a place in the mainstream art discourse.

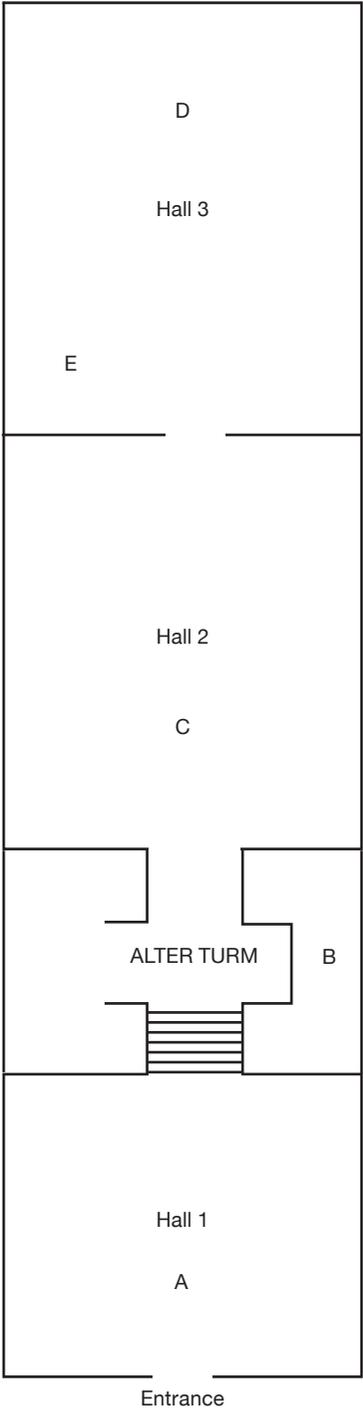
Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (b. 1881, London, Great Britain; d. 1962, Ascona, Switzerland) is one of these artistic figures. Her life as a woman, researcher, entrepreneur and artist is fascinating. In the culturally and politically inauspicious years leading up to World War II she explored theosophy and East Asian philosophy, set up a huge archive of images, and promoted exchange between various disciplines many decades before transdisciplinarity was on everybody's lips. In 1933 she founded the interdisciplinary Eranos Forum in the Swiss town of Ascona. The annual conferences that Fröbe-Kapteyn initiated as a way of discussing humankind and the history of spirituality and culture still take place. At the same time, she started an extensive collection of illustrations of artefacts and symbols taken from the cultural history of almost every region around the globe, which were intended as a means of interpreting visionary dreams. Her pictorial works, the powerful geometric Meditation Drawing Screenprints and the later works on paper that became known as the Visions, based on her interactions with the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, are just one part of her extensive activities. The works are an expression not only of Fröbe-Kapteyn's quest to harmonise spiritual, humanistic and scholarly knowledge beyond the boundaries of disciplines and cultures, but also of her fascination with the world of images. As she is supposed to have said, "The most profound things in human life can only be expressed [...] in images."

This exhibition at Kunsthalle Mainz provides the first ever comprehensive insight into Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn's artistic oeuvre. The primary thing to remember is that her artworks served as tools for spiritual and psychological exploration. She used a polymorphic visual system to look for answers about the world order and sought to achieve certain effects and outcomes based on the notion that shapes have psychoaffective

significance – not as a spectacle, she believed, but because pictures have the capacity to act; in fact, she was convinced that they possess healing and revitalising powers.

In this exhibition, five contemporary artists span the link through to the present day, with works by Monia Ben Hamouda, Kerstin Brätsch, Hylozoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soin & David Soin Tappeser), Mountain River Jump! and Sriwhana Spong, who look at counter-concepts to a kind of knowledge that has been shaped by rational, white, patriarchal and colonial attitudes. Their art creates spaces and narratives which invite the viewer to encounter these alternative forms of knowledge – whether subconscious, corporeal, natural, spiritual etc. – which are for the most part not produced and reproduced using words, language and concepts. Ritual practices in history and the present day often form the starting point for this knowledge. Just as Fröbe-Kapteyn before them, these artists treat art as a tool for research, healing, communication, and so on, while also adopting anti-colonial approaches that are critical of power. What becomes absolutely clear in the process is that the principle of *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) is no longer really appropriate for our age. Instead, the effect of art – and of images in general – is foregrounded. Fröbe-Kapteyn created her works in order to research spiritual and scholarly ideas, which makes them a potential source of inspiration for such contemporary pursuits. Her holistic and post-humanistic worldview anticipates much of the debate about the expansion of categories with respect to both art and thought.

Our thanks to the Eranos Foundation for the loan of works by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn. The exhibition scenography was devised in conjunction with Belle Santos.



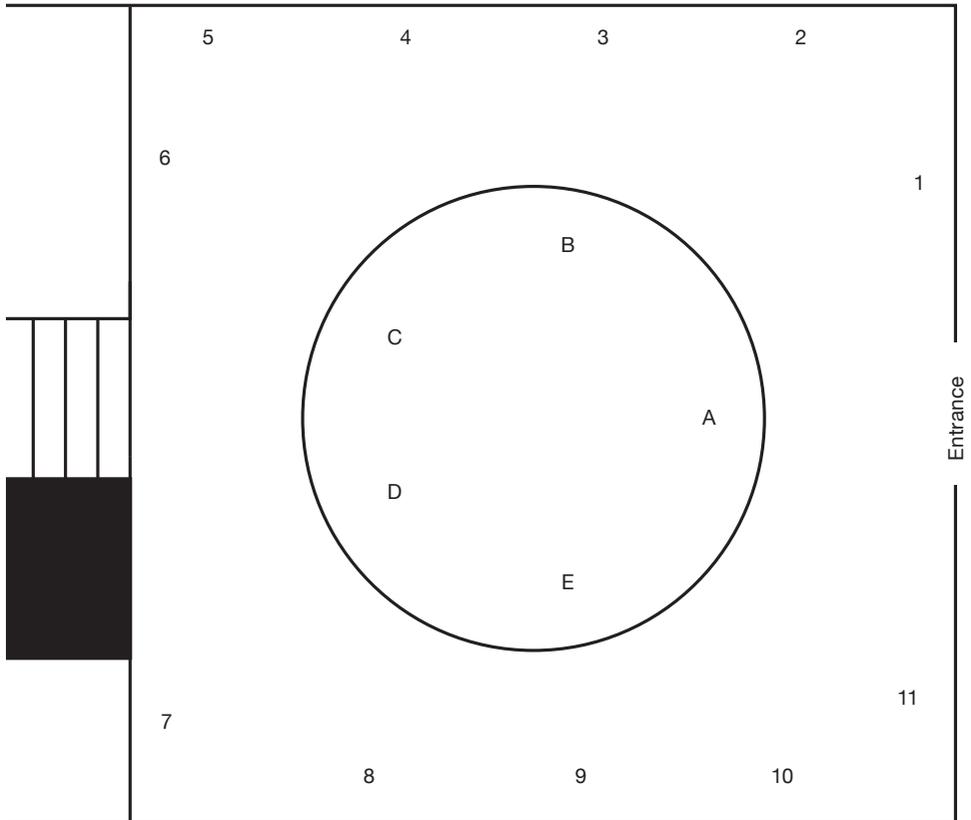
A, C, D:  
Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn

B:  
Mountain River Jump!

E:  
Sriwhana Spong

Entrance

# Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn



- 1 *The Breath of Creation*
- 2 *Planes*
- 3 *Reincarnation*
- 4 *Ohne Titel*
- 5 *The Grail*
- 6 *The Central Spiritual Sun*
- 7 *The Chalice in the Heart*
- 8 *The Grail*
- 9 *Ohne Titel*
- 10 *Sattva or Rhythm*
- 11 *The Light of the Soul*

All works:  
1926–34, Mixed media on cardboard,  
60,5 × 47 cm, framed  
Eranos Foundation, Ascona

## A

Inwards, counterclockwise:

*Transmutation of Pain*, 29,5 × 22 cm

*Ohne Titel*, 27,5 × 20,2 cm, framed

*The Hill of Vision*, 29,7 × 21,8 cm

*Meditation*, 29,8 × 22,5 cm, framed

*Planeten-Tanz*, 29,4 × 21,4 cm

*The Indwelling Presence*, 29,4 × 21,8 cm, framed

*Ohne Titel*, 29,4 × 21,8 cm, framed

All works:

1926–34, painting on cardboard

Eranos Foundation, Ascona

## B

Inwards, counterclockwise:

*Ohne Titel*, c. 1937, 41,5 × 29,5 cm

*Serie IV (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 35,2 × 24,6 cm

*Serie IV (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 25 × 35 cm

*Serie II (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 35 × 25 cm

*Serie II (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 35 × 25 cm

*Serie IV (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 24,6 × 35,2 cm

All works:

Mixed media on paper

Eranos Foundation, Ascona

## C

Inwards, counterclockwise:

*Die Kreuzigung*, 30,5 × 22,5 cm, framed

*Die Feuer der Laufferung*, 30,5 × 22,5 cm, framed

*Initiations*, 26,6 × 22 cm, framed

*Entering the Stream*, 29,3 × 22 cm, framed

*The Mystery of Polarity*, 20 × 14,8 cm,

*The Holy Grail*, 29,5 × 22 cm, framed

*Polarität. Das Fassong*, 30,5 × 22,5 cm, framed

*Sangreal*, 20 × 14,8 cm

All works:

1926–34, painting on cardboard

Eranos Foundation, Ascona

## D

Inwards, counterclockwise:

*Ohne Titel*, c. 1937, 41 × 29,5 cm

*Serie IX (ohne Titel)*, c. 1935, 35 × 25 cm

*Serie IX (ohne Titel)*, c. 1936, 35 × 25 cm

*Serie VI (ohne Titel)*, c. 1935, 35 × 24,6 cm

*Serie VI (ohne Titel)*, c. 1935, 35 × 24,6 cm

*Serie V (ohne Titel)*, c. 1934, 35 × 25 cm

All works:

Mixed media on paper

Eranos Foundation, Ascona

## E

Inwards, counterclockwise:

*Serie X (ohne Titel)*, c. 1936, 42 × 29 cm

*Serie X (ohne Titel)*, c. 1936, 42 × 29,5 cm

*Serie X (ohne Titel)*, c. 1936, 42 × 29 cm

*Serie X (ohne Titel)*, c. 1936, 42 × 29 cm

All works:

Mixed media on paper

Eranos Foundation, Ascona

Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn's art focuses on the effect of pictures and on using pictures in order to search for knowledge. Viewed from this perspective, art goes hand in hand with the pursuit of psychological, spiritual and philosophical matters. Yet only now is Fröbe-Kapteyn gradually being rediscovered as an artist, and the exhibition at Kunsthalle Mainz, comprising around sixty works from the body of works known as the Meditation plates as well as selected works from the Visions series, is the most extensive show about her to date. Her oeuvre encompasses around 500 works (200 Meditation plates and 300 Visions), with certain motifs being repeated in the Meditation series either identically or with slight variations. Fröbe-Kapteyn organised most of the drawings in the Visions series in albums and dated them. They comprise a kind of psychological diary in pictures, which means they have far closer personal

associations than the Meditation drawings, with their universal, abstract visual language.

In Hall 1 we introduce Fröbe-Kapteyn's art with examples from both groups of works. The display was developed in conjunction with the scenographer Belle Santos. We have added colour accents and smaller spatial arrangements in order to create an inviting atmosphere, where visitors can think about the impact of these works and of pictures and symbols in general. It is less about making a specific statement about the works and more about our individual experiences of them, as well as the notion of pictures that have been created in order to have some sort of effect on us.

On the walls you will see Fröbe-Kapteyn's Meditation plates, which were executed between 1926 and 1934 as tools for her (then) theosophically inclined exploration of both the world and of human beings. The Theosophical Society was a spiritual movement which proved highly popular in intellectual and artistic circles in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Relying on a blend of Indian Hindu religions and Western traditions such as Rosicrucianism, it propagated the idea that understanding could be achieved through thought and knowledge rather than solely by means of religion. We know very little more than that about how precise Fröbe-Kapteyn was in her concept for and application of the Meditation drawings. In formal terms they seem to link the dynamism of Futurist or Art Deco works with an esoteric semiotics (the theory of signs) – an analytical visual idiom that aims to achieve visual effects. The pictures are notable for their immense precision and rigid geometry. Everything seems to follow a certain regularity, almost like a diagram. Physicality, figuration and narrative have been completely eliminated. The colour spectrum is defined by gold, red, blue and black – and here it is important to bear in mind that gold and lapis lazuli have always been regarded as valuable pigments. In medieval works of art, for instance, they were used to symbolise anything that was superhuman or holy. At an iconographic level, Fröbe-Kapteyn brings symbols together from very different sources: Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islamic and Aztek elements meet abstract geometrical natural forms and motifs from theosophical, neo-Platonic and mystical traditions – and in most cases this is all in one and the same picture.

The smaller works in the display cases show how Fröbe-Kapteyn operated with groups of works and produced variations on a specific theme such as the Grail or pyramidal forms. Sometimes there are only minimal differences between individual works. It is believed that Fröbe-Kapteyn presented these works to the public at the lectures she gave

around this time. However, no manuscript has survived that might give us a clue about the exact nature of her talks. The small size of the works, most of which are framed, indicate that she gave them to like-minded acquaintances or used them as a meditation aid in the course of psychotherapeutic treatment.

In the three other display cases you can find selected examples from the body of work known as the Visions. This creative phase lasted from 1934 to 1938. The motifs were taken from the “active imagination” technique for conjuring up images from the subconscious, which had been developed by Carl Gustav Jung as a central method for his work in analytical psychology, alongside dreams, symbols and myths. This makes Fröbe-Kapteyn’s drawings visual interpretations of a mental state, illustrating the search for inner visions and fantasies. In contrast to the Meditation drawings, the works are dated and organised in series.

Fröbe-Kapteyn primarily used charcoal, pencil and a little colour for the very first drawings. But by the third album, which she filled from autumn 1934 onwards, the colour takes on an ever-greater significance. Most of the motifs are elaborately detailed, while elsewhere the application of colour leads to the supposition that a picture had to be painted quickly. We often see the artist herself in the pictures, in and around Casa Gabriella at the Eranos headquarters in Ascona, Ticino, or in imaginary landscapes, in front of a temple, or in the form of a serpent. Water and rivers, elephants, lotus and mandala shapes, the yin-yang symbol and temples are all recurring elements. According to the active imagination technique, interpreting the picture represents a process of experiencing the self, which is supposed to be helpful in developing one’s personality. In her letters and notes, which have not yet been exhaustively examined, Fröbe-Kapteyn gives her thoughts on the Visions, and she probably also discussed some of them with other people such as Jung.

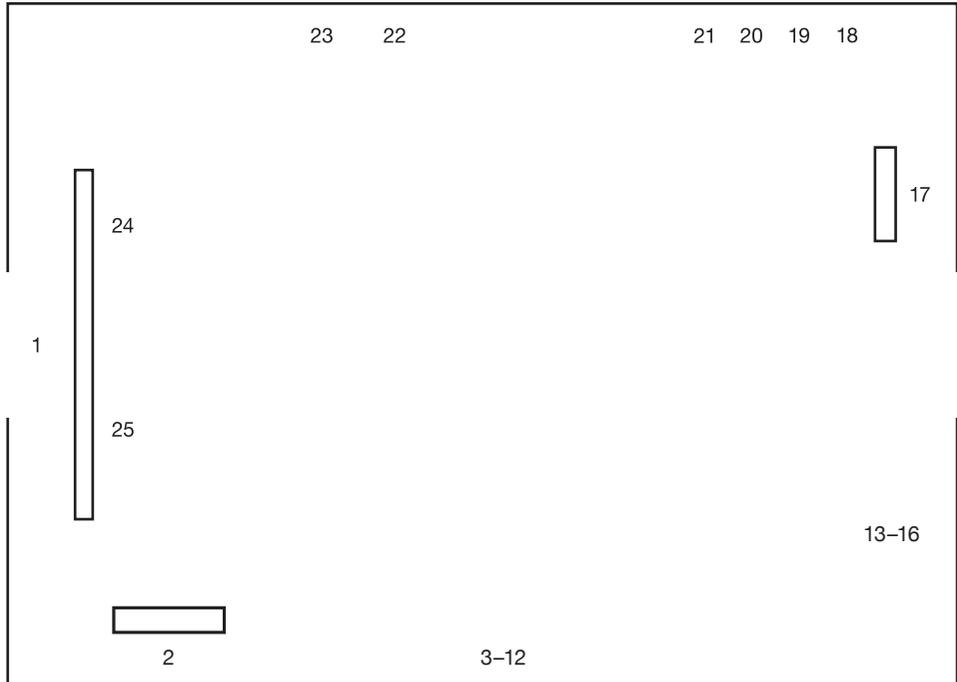
# Mountain River Jump!

*Yijing (I Ching) · Mandala*, 2023, video installation with instructions, single-channel video, vertical 16:9.  
Courtesy of the artists

The Chinese artist duo Mountain River Jump! (Huang Shan & Huang He, both born 1985, live in Foshan, Guangdong, China) deals with Chinese mythology as a subversive practice in today's China. In the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province, where the artists live, divination has a tradition that goes back thousands of years, but was successively suppressed by the communist system. By transferring these traditional rituals and other spiritual practices into the sphere of art, Mountain River Jump! creates places of remembrance and preservation, but also of resistance. Currently, the artists are completing post-graduate studies in analytical psychology with a focus on C. G. Jung. Their work at Kunsthalle Mainz proposes a contemporary and unorthodox form of divination. It visualizes the interplay between a mandala pattern and the 64 hexagrams of the Yijing (I Ching) system, attempting to construct a dialogue that connects aesthetic and metaphysical ideas with the real-life situations of the visitors. For we are invited to turn active ourselves and use the video sequence of pictorial cards as an oracle.

The Yijing (I Ching) is a collection of line characters and associated sayings. It has been considered a book of wisdom for over two thousand years. Besides philosophical concepts about nature and the universe, the Yijing explains all kinds of ways of thinking and situations that may arise in our daily lives. Mandalas are diagrams used in Buddhist and Hindu practices to internalise complex religious contexts. In Jung's theories, it serves to access the human psyche and the subconscious. However, both Mountain River Jump!'s interpretation and processing of these traditional symbols is unorthodox in many ways. They emphasise the female, unearthy feminist and queer aspects of Chinese mythology and pursue their „divination consultancy“ as an artistic practice.

# Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn



1 *The Extension of Consciousness – The Flower of the Soul*, 60,5 × 47 cm, framed

2 *The Heart of the World*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed

All works:

1926–34, mixed media on cardboard  
Eranos Foundation, Ascona

3 *THE CENTRAL SPIRITUAL SUN*

4 *THE WAY OF THE CROSS*

5 *THE LIGHT OF THE SOUL*

6 *THE CHALICE IN THE HEART*

7 *THE GRAIL*

8 *THE MYSTERY OF LIFE*

9 *KETHER, THE CROWN*

10 *ETERNAL ENERGY*

11 *THE CREATION*

12 *THE COSMIC INCARNATION*

13 *THE PORTAL OF INITIATION*

14 *REINCARNATION*

15 *OM MANI PADME HUM*

16 *THE DIVINE BREATH*

All works:

c. 1930, screenprint on wove paper,  
65 × 50 cm framed

Courtesy Gerrish Fine Art

- 17 *Ohne Titel*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed
- 18 *Solar system*, 36,5 × 28,5 cm, framed
- 19 *Golgatha*, 36,8 × 30,8 cm, framed
- 20 *Golgatha*, 36,6 × 22,6 cm, framed
- 21 *The Sacrifice*, 36,8 × 30,8 cm, framed
- 22 *The Portal of Initiation*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed
- 23 *Ohne Titel*, 45 × 32,5 cm, framed

- 24 *Ohne Titel*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed
- 25 *The Sign of Life is the Cross*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed

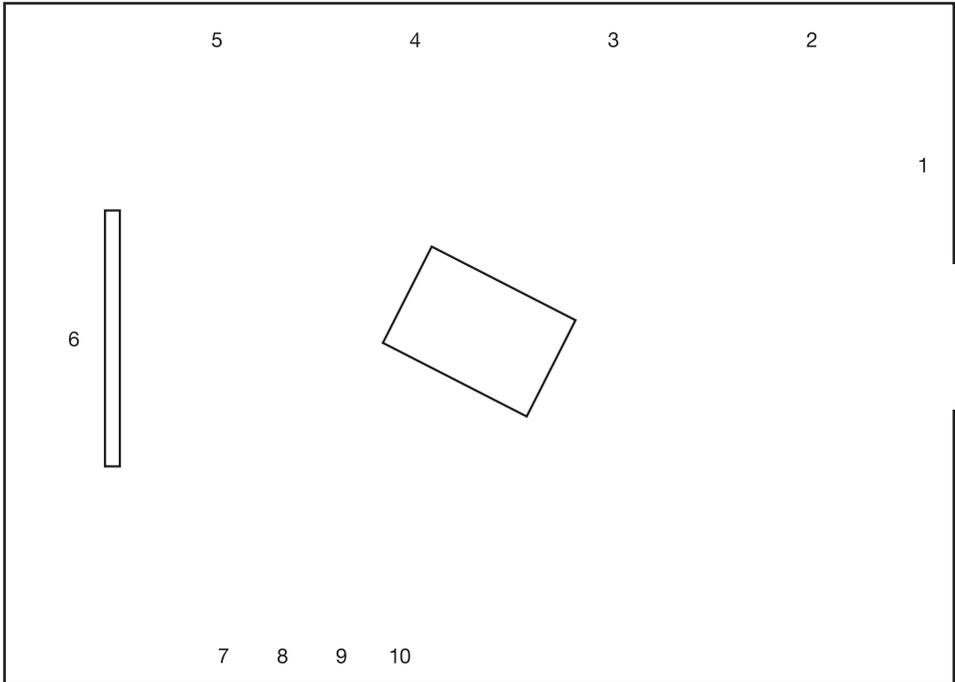
All works:  
1926–34, mixed media on cardboard  
Eranos Foundation, Ascona

The reactions that Fröbe-Kapteyn received to her expressive and rigidly systematic Meditation Drawing Screenprints were more than mixed. Philosopher of religion Alfons Rosenberg thought that they emanated a “frightening coldness”. C. G. Jung, who would become an influential figure for Fröbe-Kapteyn, was supposedly equally unimpressed by the pictures, and even dismissed them altogether. For the first few years after Eranos had been established they hung in its conference room, but Fröbe-Kapteyn removed them altogether once she had managed to secure Jung as a regular guest. They were subsequently replaced by representative illustrations from the Archiv für Forschung zu archetypischem Symbolismus (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism), a collection amassed by Fröbe-Kapteyn of around 6,500 pictures from diverse cultures and eras which would serve as source material for Jungian research into archetypes. Work on the Meditation plates henceforth shifted into the private domain, and a glance at Fröbe-Kapteyn’s correspondence reveals that while these pictures were initially a recurring topic, later on they were scarcely mentioned.

Fröbe-Kapteyn was most likely initially extremely interested in the works being distributed, as evidenced by a fourteen-part group of serigraphs that she commissioned the Turin publisher Vincenzo Bona to produce, probably in 1930. We are presenting the complete series here based on the originals, some of which were lost in the war. It is also unclear how many sets were printed, but estimates tend to assume there were about a hundred.

Where there can be absolutely no doubt is about Fröbe-Kapteyn’s skills as an artist and craftswoman, and her experience and knowledge of symbols and ornamentation. Building on her extensive training in arts and crafts and the history of art, over time she developed a highly individual syncretic visual language. The same picture might show a stylised lotus blossom superimposed on a cross or an Om symbol in Devanagari script.

# Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn



- 1 *Ohne Titel*, 84,7 × 64,5 cm, framed
- 2 *Ohne Titel*, 97 × 76,5 cm, framed
- 3 *Ohne Titel*, 97 × 76,5 cm, framed
- 4 *Ohne Titel*, 97 × 76,5 cm, framed
- 5 *Ohne Titel*, 97 × 76,5 cm, framed
- 6 *Duality*, 90,9 × 65,5 cm, framed
- 7 *Polarity*, 60 × 50 cm, framed
- 8 *The Light of the Soul*, 60 × 50 cm, framed
- 9 *The Aspirant*, 60 × 50 cm, framed
- 10 *A Symbol for Fire*, 60 × 50 cm, framed

All works:  
1926–34, mixed media on cardboard  
Eranos Foundation, Ascona

As with many female artists who did not achieve much recognition during their lifetime, Fröbe-Kapteyn was not particularly interested in her own historiography. While the story and activities of the Eranos conferences are well documented, we are left in the dark about many aspects of Fröbe-Kapteyn as a person and about her ideas as an artist. We do know, however, that she really identified with her work. She apparently surrounded herself with her own picture collection, even in her bedroom – a collection with which, according to her friend Cary Banes, she wanted to write “a new history of art”. Following on from her intense preoccupation with “great mother” imagery, above all in her representations of female deities, she saw herself as something of a mother to Eranos. From a contemporary perspective, she limited her own contribution to “care” work rather than creating and designing, in a manner consistent with a patriarchal view of the sexes. She only rarely invited women to give talks at her conferences.

One of the final works in the exhibition in Hall 3 is called *Duality*, possibly as a reference to this worldview. It was supposedly while working on this geometrical drawing in 1927 that she came up with the idea for the conference room, which she subsequently had built on her property in Ascona – and thus Eranos was born. The term *eranos* comes from the Greek for a banquet or shared meal to which all the participants bring a dish. Fröbe-Kapteyn later called the drawing her first Eranos mandala, which she used to illustrate the concept of the conferences. It belongs with one of the Visions that shows her together with C.G. Jung, as well as schematic mandalas presenting conference themes and participants. Fröbe-Kapteyn sought contact to thinkers who, just like her, did not restrict their belief to rational thought as the only valid approach to knowledge, and who attempted to incorporate forms of expression that were then held to be archaic, intuitive and symbolic.

# Sriwhana Spong

*Instrument I (Sevgi und Bengisu)*, 2022, bronze, plastic bottle caps, cymbals, terahertz stones, antique keys, goat bells, jingle bells, decorative bells, clapper bells, wooden juniper beads, rocks, shells, earrings, pebbles, glass marbles, 18 pieces.

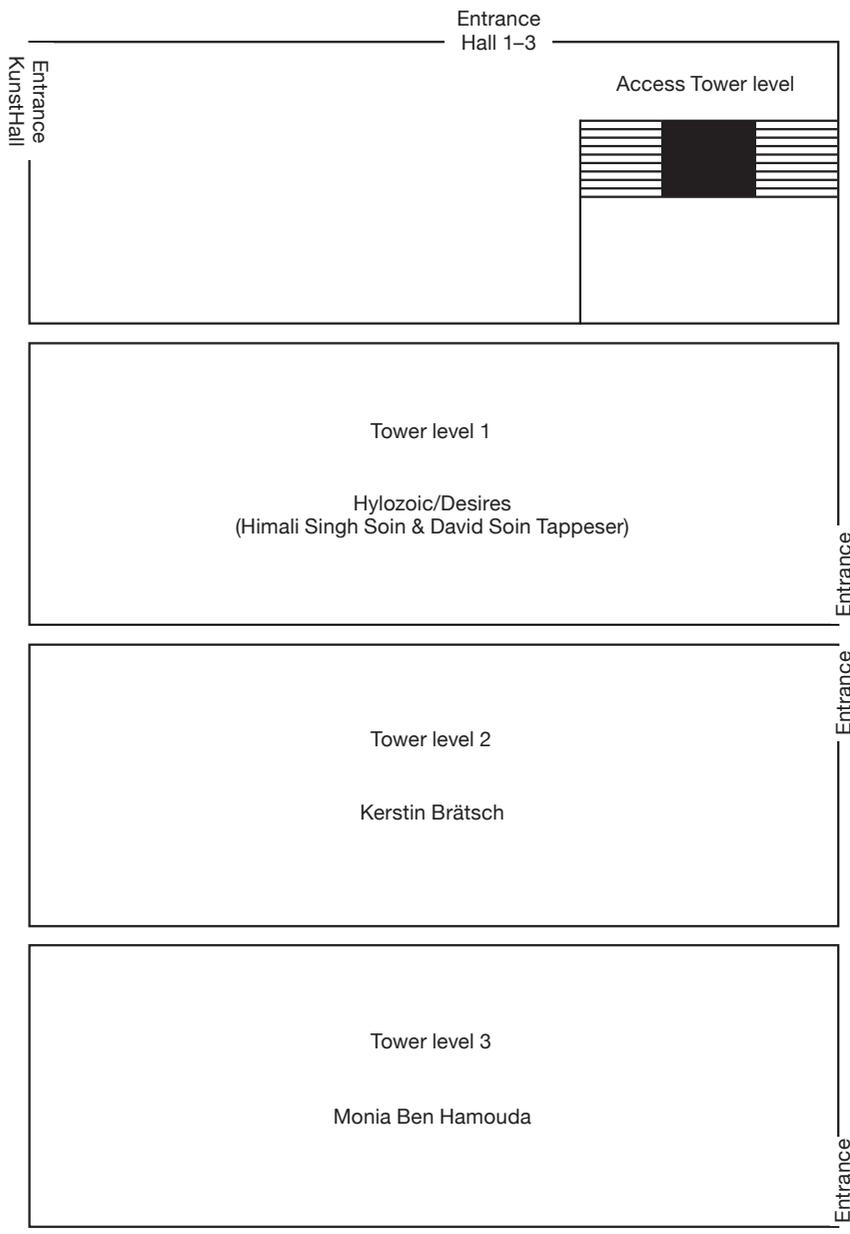
Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett

Upon entering Hall 3 of the Kunsthalle Mainz, our gaze is directed towards the floor and the 18 pieces created by London-based artist Sriwhana Spong. Beyond this visual perception, the bronze objects do not reveal their intent. Their inner mystery is only alluded to in the title of the work: *Instrument I (Sevgi and Bengisu)*. They are made from plastic bottle caps, cymbals, terrahertz stones, antique keys, goat bells, jingle bells, glass marbles and other types of chinking and jingling objects. *Instrument I* is part of an ongoing series of instruments - Spong's "personal orchestra" - as she calls it.

Sriwhana Spong is of New Zealand and Indonesian descent. Her work brings together notions of place, history, ritual and the body. A *gamelan* is an indigenous Balinese orchestra, consisting of percussive instruments – the inspiration for her growing collection of instruments. Each instrument is named after someone that played an influential role in her personal and artistic development. Bengisu for instance refers to Bengisu Üstay, who was involved in the creation of the bells. Together, she and Spong researched and selected the contents of the objects and developed the performance *Hiçbir bedel, hiçbir koşul istemedim – Undoubtedly, I am a high-frequency energy* which constitutes an activation of *Instrument I*, first performed during the Istanbul Biennale 2022. This activation of and with the objects forms an important part of Spong's artistic process, uncovering the power of collective experience entwining her personal orchestra, performers and audience. During the exhibition at the Kunsthalle *Instrument I* will be activated in several sessions with sound artists from the School of Music in Mainz.

Spong's work is multi-sensory across various mediums such as sculpture, film, writing, performance, dance, and sound. Lately, she focuses on body, language, and sound. In her practice, she is driven by the intention to break up dominant gazes – too often male - and dogmatic narratives in art history, in sciences and in spiritual practices above all

expressed through language. In order to find new ways of knowing, of expressing and new modes of authorial subjectivity she draws inspiration from women writers and mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen or Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya. The objects in Hall 3 for instance refer to “fallen fruit” – an image that Spong draws from the accounts of a dream by Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya. Whereas in the dream, the fallen and rotting fruit symbolizes something useless and spoiled, Spong emphasizes their complex character and beauty. Another way in which this inspiration is expressed throughout the whole exhibition at Kunsthalle Mainz, is in the wall labels. They are created in *Elizabeth Ignota*, a font designed by Sandra Kassenaar and especially commissioned by Sriwhana Spong. Kassenaar's sketches, based on Hildegard von Bingen's *Litterae Ignotae*, used in her own invented language, are grafted onto *Elizabeth-Antiqua*, one of the first typefaces to be developed by a woman, Elizabeth Friedlander, like vines with thin coiled tendrils, appearing to wrap around the letters and almost obscure them.



# Hylozoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soin & David Soin Tappeser)

As *Grand As What*, 2021, 3-channel video installation (16:50 min). Courtesy of the artists.  
Commissioned and produced by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and the 13th Shanghai Biennale

As *Grand As What* is a 3-channel video set between the Vesuvius volcano and the Indian Himalayas, and tells the story of a search for a lost *bla*, a subtle life force that runs through the world-body that has lost itself amid the crisis of the present moment.

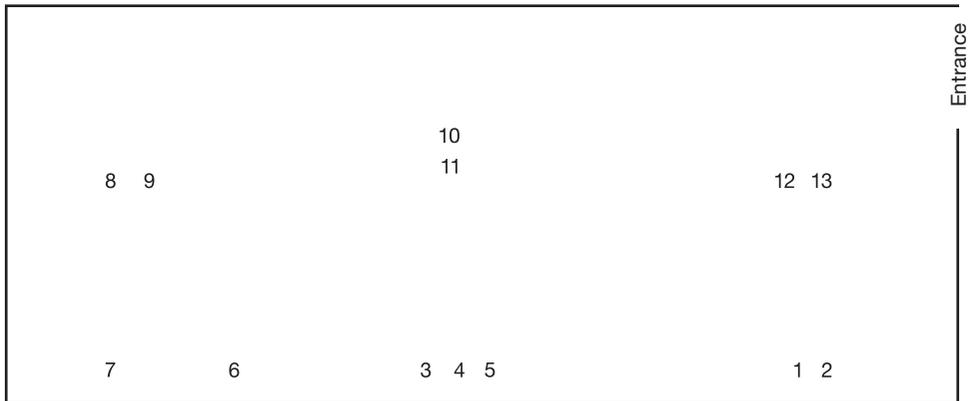
The artists, disguised as spirits of the earth, conduct a series of five rituals to reactivate the energy centres of the world. A drummer calls upon *li*, a spirit manifestation of the human and non-human consciousness, to conduct a series of remedial rituals that recall *bla* into our bodies and into the planet. The palm-leaf masked figure embarks on a journey of grounding, circulation and regeneration, following the chakras of the body and the elements of the planet. With the help of the resonance of sound and the force of love poetry, they seek to reinvigorate the collective self and learn from the tremulous temporality of the catastrophic.

The concept of *bla*, a term borrowed from Tibetan medicine, but one which translates into *prana*, or *qi*, *ruh* or *mana* across cultures, denotes the force that holds together, to oneself, to each other, to the world. Perhaps life itself. The loss of *bla* then implies a state of confusion, an inability to make meaning, the incapacity to inhabit a multiverse and a single atom at once.

*Li* allows us to flit between the meridians of the body and the meridians of time, drawing deterritorialized, seismic lines from the Himalayan mountains to the Vesuvian volcano. *Li* becomes a medium through which to give sentience to a community of oppressed, silenced voices, forming a commons of otherness.

As *Grand As What* is a reimagination of the structure of the *kalachakra* mandala, a geomantic diagram in which the body, the city, the earth and the universe mirror each other in a grand cosmic architecture. Each chapter represents a different chakra, an energy centre associated with a particular element, colour, odour, constellation and body part, as well as a different stage in the sequence of rituals to retrieve the lost *bla*.

# Kerstin Brätsch



- 1 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Hugin (Gedanke) & Munin (Gedächtnis)*, 2020, colored pencil and graphite on paper, optimum acrylic artist's frame, 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.
- 2 *calibrator*, 2020–2021, oil on paper, optimum acrylic frame, 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist
- 3 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Death*
- 4 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Hekate (The Triple-Bodied Woman)*
- 5 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Scotia (Darkness)*

All works: 2020–2021, colored pencil and graphite on paper, optimum acrylic artist's frame, 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist

- 6 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Rand der Welt; \_Soulmate; \_Pele's Curse (Frau, Weckerin)*, 2020–2022, colored pencil, oil, crayon, carbon black, lacquer, graphite and collage on paper, optimum acrylic artist's frame, three parts, each 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery

- 7 *PARA PSYCHICS\_Radical Intersection (Sphere III) and\_Path of No Distinction (Sphere II)*, 2020–2021, colored pencil and graphite on paper, optimum acrylic artist's frame, two parts, each 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery
- 8 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Vielleicht manipulierter Hund? (Vision)*
- 9 *PARA PSYCHIC\_". . . that difficulty and ease produce the one (the idea of) the other" (Shaman)*
- 10 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Darkening (Squirm)*
- 11 *PARA PSYCHIC\_"Eine Art Stoßerei, die nicht die vorgebahnten Wege (oder die offenen Spuren) nimmt, sondern die Hirnsubstanz durchdringt, in dem sie unaufhörlich neue Wege schafft." (Sphere I)*
- 12 *PARA PSYCHIC\_"Its upper part is not bright, and its lower part is not obscure" (Underworld)*
- 13 *PARA PSYCHIC\_Psykhe*

All works: 2020–2021, colored pencil and graphite on paper, optimum acrylic artist's frame, 42,8 x 35,2 x 4 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.

In level 2 of the tower we come across a spatial installation with distinctive coloured lighting, containing works from Kerstin Brätsch's series Para Psychics. An artist who lives and works in New York and Berlin, Brätsch frequently traces the relationship between her core medium painting and the body. While this body can be understood as social, physical and mental, the Para Psychics, as their name suggests, achieve access to the metaphysical/supernatural level or the (consciousness-) expanding mental level, reflecting her interest in mysticism, tarot and herbal medicine.

In 2020, the Covid lockdown interrupted Brätsch's otherwise collaborative methodology with other artists and artisans in New York. While in self-isolation she began her series of 100 coloured pencil drawings on paper and continued working on it until 2022; thirteen of these works are now exhibited at Kunsthalle Mainz. She presents the results to us as collages which have gone through a seemingly endless process of drawing, etching, cutting out and pasting over. On the one hand, the works and their title are a fragmentary reflection of Brätsch's reading list during the pandemic. Yet they also emphasise the debate around the notion of an "entangled life" that Merlin Sheldrake presents in his eponymous book on fungi: a network that transcends organisms and creates life. The result is an intuitive, organic creativity.

The forms and colours are fluid yet contrast with each other markedly. They stand for themselves, and despite – or perhaps because of – this they create the space for multifaceted images and associations. The works challenge the viewer to an interplay, a dialogue; that is how they enter into a direct interaction. The accents of light caused by the golden yellow, turquoise and salmon coloured film hung from the windows, as well as the transparent frames and the works positioned randomly around the room enhance the complexity and versatility of the process of looking at the paintings. Just as multiple potential perspectives are revealed in the room, so too are the multiple potential images revealed in each work.

# Monia Ben Hamouda

*About Telepathy and other Violences (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency)*, 171 × 138 × 0,03 cm

*Figuration Demon (Disappearing jinn)*, 190 × 88 × 0,03 cm

*“In order to me to write poetry that isn't political, I must listen to the birds, and in order to hear the birds, the warplanes must be silent” (Flying jinn)*, 207 × 150 × 0,03 cm

*“In order to me to write poetry that isn't political, I must listen to the birds, and in order to hear the birds, the warplanes must be silent” (Flying jinn II)*, 220 × 153 × 0,03 cm

*Releasing (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency)*, 137 × 113 × 0,03 cm

All works: 2023, laser cut iron, spice powders.

Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

The works of Tunisian-Italian artist Monia Ben Hamouda reflect her dual heritage and with it the question of her own identity unfolding between two worlds. As the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher the artist reflects the cultural influences of her upbringing in her works and the role language plays in grasping these experiences. Her work can be seen as an attempt to find a particular personal visual language to talk about the history of art, religious approaches to images, languages, misunderstandings, and the view of Islam as a violent religion and a violent community, and, eventually, also the history of her family that is also related to migration.

The two dimensional steel sculptures that are suspended in the third tower level of Kunsthalle Mainz are cut into shapes that abstract traditional Islamic calligraphy. They create a mesmerizing pattern of linework while emphasizing aniconism – the ban on iconography in Islamic tradition. With her works Ben Hamouda (re-)claims freedom from the confines of tradition but embraces them at the same time. She invites the visitors to enter into a physical dialogue with the works, walking around the pieces, experiencing them physically and spiritually from different angles.

The metal figures trace abstract shapes of ambiguous calligraphic strokes and seem to materialize in the room as if they transcended the rules of installation. Even if you are able to distinguish the contours of a hand...or maybe a claw? – the laser-cut figures are not quite discernible, teetering between Islamic calligraphy and pictural abstraction. They display a hybrid of text, animals and figures while being powdered with spices.

Cumin, turmeric, chili powder and cinnamon are dusted on the sculptures – flavourings often used in Arab cuisine – leaving vibrant hues

and intense smells in the exhibition room. The scent of these spices evokes memories, reminiscing of Tunisian cuisine and with that referring to the artist's heritage. Below the sculptures the seasonings have gathered into a subtle dune, accumulating in a mix of nuances. Visitors find themselves in the midst of the traces of Ben Hamouda's very personal shamanic healing process: the spices are the final element in her artistic process, creating a multi-sensory experience and introducing the ancient idea of their healing power. Spices are used in medicine, cooking and numerous spiritual practices, but Monia Ben Hamouda focuses on the idea of healing and recovery within conflict, introducing a political and social aspect.

## BIOGRAFIE OLGA FRÖBE-KAPTEYN

---

Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn was born in 1881 as the daughter of Dutch parents living in London. Her mother dedicated her attentions to social reform movements and women's rights. Her father was supposedly a passionate photographer who kindled Fröbe-Kapteyn's interest in pictures. In 1900 she moved with her father to Zurich, where she initially attended the school of arts and crafts and trained in sewing, embroidery and jewellery design; at the time this was a common route into art for women, who were less than welcome at the art academies. It was a path also trodden by figures such as Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943). Fröbe-Kapteyn subsequently studied art history at Zurich University from 1906 until 1909, which was when she married the flautist and conductor Iwan Fröbe. However, her husband would then lose his life in a plane crash only a few years later in 1915. Returning to Zurich after a period in Berlin, Fröbe-Kapteyn organised a literary salon in the Swiss city. In 1920 she moved to Casa Gabriella in Ascona with one of her twin daughters, where they lived in seclusion. The other daughter, who had a learning disability, remained in an institution in Germany. Later, to Fröbe-Kapteyn's great distress, she fell victim to the Nazi's "euthanasia" programme of mass murder. Fröbe-Kapteyn is said to have had a vision in 1927 for a conference room on her property, which would later lead to the founding of Eranos. She initially worked with the English theosophist Alice Ann Bailey from 1928 to 1932, and together they set up a school for spiritual research in Ascona.

Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn ultimately became known as the organisational and financial might behind the Eranos conferences, rather than as an artist who produced what is now viewed as a remarkable oeuvre. The conferences took place in Ascona every summer from 1933 onwards, attracting historians, theologians, natural scientists, mythologists and psychologists from around the world. The themes were drawn from the fields of analytical psychology, art history, theology, Islamology, Sinology, archaeology and biology. One of the most important thinkers was the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, who became an influential companion to Fröbe-Kapteyn, especially when her conference themes began to deal with his research into universal symbols and archetypes (which Jung described as "ancestral forms"). Although she was herself perceived as unapproachable and eccentric, her thought revealed a great deal of individuality.

The process of creating pictures provides an important key for understanding Fröbe-Kapteyn's worldview. It is fitting that she spent more than



Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn and a guest in the Lecture Hall of Casa Eranos in 1929. In the background, a selection of her "Meditation Plates". (Photographer unknown. © Archiv Haus Foerster, Marianne Foerster-Stiftung in der Deutschen Stiftung Denkmalschutz, Bonn. All rights reserved).

a decade combing through libraries and archives in Europe and the United States in order to create a comprehensive collection of over 6,000 images of symbols and archetypes. They supplement Jung's writings on the subject and can now be found in the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism at the Warburg Institute in London. The archive project was based on C.G. Jung's concept of the "collective unconscious", according to which a universal part of the human spirit contains memories and symbols that we have inherited from our ancestors and can be found in various epochs and symbols. Fröbe-Kapteyn arranged the pictures in her collection in eclectic categories that were based on Jung's definition of the archetype, including the Trinity, masks, Navajo sand painting, fish and three-headed gods. The most famous archetype is the "great mother", with around 300 pictures, representations and sculptures of female deities from around the world, which were comprehensively analysed by the German-Israeli Jungian student Erich Neumann in a study that has little scholarly credibility today. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn died in 1962 in Ascona.

It is only in recent years that Fröbe-Kapteyn's works have gradually been rediscovered. In 1978, the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann showed thirteen Meditation plates for the first time in his exhibition on Monte Verità as a melting pot of alternative lifestyles. But it was not until 2015 that her works were shown to the public once more, in the exhibition *La Grande Madre* curated by Massimiliano Gioni at Fondazione Trussardi in Milan. Most recently, a small group of Meditation drawings were included in the survey exhibition *Woman in Abstraction*, portraying the achievements of female artists in the history of abstraction. The show at Kunsthalle Mainz is the most comprehensive presentation to date of works by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn.

---

## Heute FREitag

This Sunday, admission to the Kunsthalle is free from 1–6 pm. Come by, take a look at the current exhibition and take part in our free programme.

Sun 16/07

2 pm family tour and hands-on activity for young and old people

3 pm guided tour

4 pm family tour and hands-on activity for young and old people

Sun 13/08

2 pm guided tour

2.30 pm tour in Ukrainian

2.45 pm tour in Arabic

3.30–4.30 pm hands-on activity for everyone

Sun 10/09

2 pm tour in easy language with interpretation into German Sign Language

3 pm inclusive!\* hands-on activities for young and old people

Cost:

1–6 pm free of charge

Supported by:



Rheinhausen  
Sparkasse

---

## Artist Talk

with Monia Ben Hamouda und Yasmin Afschar  
(Interim director Kunsthalle Mainz)

Fri 30/06

6 pm

Cost:

included in admission

---

## Activation Instrument I (Sevgi and Bengisu)

Improvisation with the work of Sriwhana Spong by Wingel Mendoza, Juan David Bermúdez and Danbi Jeung - performers from the Mainz region

Wed 05/07

Wed 16/08

7 pm

Cost:

included in admission

---

## Tell me!

Tour for people with dementia and their families

We invite you to a joint tour through the exhibition. In the spirit of participatory mediation, the focus will be on the visitors' stories and associations with the artworks.

Wed 19/07

4 pm

Cost:

free of charge

Registration until 17/07 at

weber@kunsthalle-mainz.de or 06131/126938

With the kind support of the Rotary Club  
Mainz-Aurea Moguntia.

---

## Screening of Sriwhana Spong's a *hook but no fish*

Wed 26/07

7 pm film screening

8 pm talk about the exhibition with Marlène

Harles (Curatorial assistant Kunsthalle Mainz)

Cost:

included in admission

---

## Guided tour with interpretation into German Sing Language

Fri 18/08  
5 pm

Cost:  
included in admission

Registration until 2 days before the event at  
mail@kunsthalle-mainz.de

We are happy to provide an FM system on  
request.

---

## FILMZ evening of anticipation

As the first feature film festival in Rhineland-Palatinate, FILMZ - Festival of German Cinema presents current German-language productions from Germany, Austria and Switzerland every year. To ease the wait until the start of the festival, FILMZ and Kunsthalle Mainz invite you to an evening of anticipation with a eclectic selection of films.

Wed 30/08

6 pm exhibition tour with Marlène Harles  
7 pm film program (will be announced on the  
respective homepages)

Cost:  
included in admission



---

## Reflections

Feminist tour with Yana Prinsloo (Theater  
Studies, JGU) und Marlène Harles

Wed 06/09  
7 pm

Cost:  
included in admission

---

## Curator Tour

with Yasmin Afschar

Wed 20/09  
7 pm

Cost:  
included in admission

---

## Public Tours

The public tours of the exhibition will take place  
on the following dates at 2 pm:

Su 02/07, 09/07, 23/07, 30/07, 06/08, 27/08,  
03/09, 17/09, 24/09, 01/10

Cost:  
im Eintritt enthalten

---

## Family tours

You want to see something new? Join us with  
your parents, siblings or grandparents at the  
Kunsthalle Mainz. We invite families to a joint  
discovery tour through our halls. There is always  
something to experience. We offer various  
hands-on activities for everybody!

The family tours take place on Sundays at 2 pm:  
Su 20/08, 17/09

Cost:  
included in admission

Children under 6 are free of charge

Kunsthalle Mainz  
Am Zollhafen 3–5  
55118 Mainz  
T +49 (0) 6131 126936  
Kunsthalle-mainz.de

Tue, Thu, Fri 10 am–6 pm  
Wed 10 am–9 pm  
Sat, Sun and public holidays  
11 am–6 pm  
Closed on Mondays

Adults  
6 euros

Concessions  
4 euros

Groups of 10 or more people  
4 euros per person

Groups of at least  
10 concessions  
3 euros per person

Children under 6  
Free admission

Families  
14 euros

Annual ticket  
25 euros

Tours and events included in the  
entrance ticket  
(unless otherwise stated)

Pre-booked tours for groups  
available upon request

**Concessions (with proof)**

For trainees, unemployed, volunteers on an official scheme,  
school students, severely disabled, students, pensioners

**Notice about photography:**

Please note that photographs will be taken during our events.  
In attending these events you have agreed to their publication.

Kunsthalle Mainz is supported by

Mainzer Stadtwerke AG  
Mainzer Fernwärme GmbH  
Mainzer Verkehrsgesellschaft mbH  
Landeshauptstadt Mainz

The exhibition was realized with  
the kind support of:



Rheinland-Pfalz  
MINISTERIUM FÜR  
FAMILIE, FRAUEN, KULTUR  
UND INTEGRATION



MVB  
Mainzer Volksbank

**IMPRESSUM**

This brochure was produced on the occasion of the exhibition

*Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn – Deep Knowledge*

Curated by: Yasmin Afschar

Editing: Yasmin Afschar, Marlène Harles, Emilia Kaufhold,  
Lina Olbert

Graphic design: Harald Pridgar

Translations: Nicola Morris

**Team:**

Yasmin Afschar (Interim director)

Stefanie Böttcher (Director on parental leave)

Marlène Harles (Curatorial assistant)

Anna Marquis (PR, administration)

Lisa Weber (Head of Art Education)

Emilia Kaufhold (FSJ Kultur)

Lina Olbert (Assistant for Press & Social Media)

Install Team: Lars Daigger, Sina Ebert, Christian Jabkowski,

Oliver Kelm, Lorenz Kerkhoff, Martina Lang, Toni Salazar,

Leonard Schlöder, Danijel Sijakovic, Jakob Villhauer, Emil Wudtke