

## 5 - INVESTIGATE, COLLECT, CATEGORISE

How can the arts and popular traditions, in part immaterial, be studied, safeguarded and presented? Folklorists have been preoccupied with this question since the creation of the discipline, and museums would appear to be the saving grace for vanishing heritages. As the field becomes progressively institutionalised, the methods of survey-collection, classification and analysis of data and objects are being developed. Museums of folklore and ethnology followed by those of society or of civilisation, stand out and fascinate artists through their staging of everyday life. Furthermore, folklorists' methods provide a model for artistic creation. From the 1970s, contemporary art has integrated an anthropological dimension: field surveys, collection of objects, exhibition of situations draw a portrait of "the artist as folklorist".

## 6 - TOWARDS PLANETARY FOLKLORE?

If, by definition, folklore is linked to a defined territory or group, it now circulates openly on a planetary scale, between industry and tourism. With poetry or with irony, artists are the observers and the actors of this new geography. Intended as feedback, oral transmission, in the absence of technology, and like a place of syncretism, a common ground for mankind, far from the first closed definitions of the term, folklore constitutes a material that artists seize by virtue of its capability to reenchant the world and to evolve over time. As Joseph Beuys said, folklore has the power to take us on a journey between the past, present and future, and paradoxically, to open universal horizons.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### CENTRE POMPIDOU-METZ OPENING HOURS

Every day, except Tuesdays and 1st May

#### 1st April to 31 October

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday  
10:00 – 18:00  
Friday, Saturday, Sunday  
10:00 – 19:00

#### 1st November to 31 March

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday,  
Friday, Saturday and Sunday  
10:00 – 18:00

### Tickets

On-site at Centre Pompidou-Metz and [centrepompidoumetz.fr](http://centrepompidoumetz.fr), Digitick, TicketNet and France Billet networks

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### Group reservations

[centrepompidou-metz.fr](http://centrepompidou-metz.fr)  
Tickets

### Handicap-accessible

for more information:  
[accessibilite@centre-pompidou-metz.fr](mailto:accessibilite@centre-pompidou-metz.fr)

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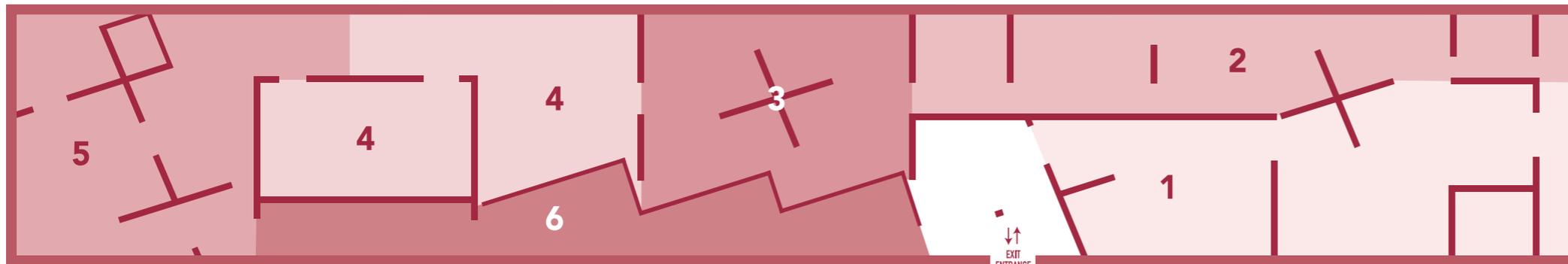
# FOLKLORE

21.03 → 21.09.20

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Centre Pompidou-Metz  
100 ans

## GALERIE 2



1 - A search for origins?

2 - Ambiguities and paradoxes

3 - A pool of forms

4 - Exploring the immaterial

5 - Investigate, collect, categorise

6 - Towards planetary folklore?

Associated with tradition, and therefore apparently opposed to the notion of avant-garde, the world of folklore, which means “the knowledge of the people”, infiltrates large areas of modernity and of contemporary creation in different ways. Subject to multiple controversies as well as many quarrels about its definition, the term designates as much an object of study as a discipline, going back to the beginnings of European ethnography. Far from the clichés of being backward-looking and artificial, artists have been able to find a source of inspiration and a regenerative power, as well as an object of critical analysis or of contention in folklore, including in its most immaterial forms. This exhibition recounts the various links that unite art and folklore, exploring open modernity, the story of the constantly evolving knowledge of man and society, and also a critical contemporary art which is reinvesting, including politically, in the field of folklore in Europe today.

### 1 - A SEARCH FOR ORIGINS?

As early as the 19th century, many artists searching for traces of the past looked for folkloric expressions, in their native regions - which they had often left - or in lands they explored during their travels. Folklore appears to play a role as an antidote against academism in the same way as “primitivism” and becomes a source of rich inspiration for the renewal of modern art. This gave artists the illusion of touching a deep past which would neither be spoiled by industrialisation nor by social conventions and cultural norms. This vision of folklore as a relic of an archaic and natural state is deeply rooted in the history of the discipline.

### 2 - AMBIGUITIES AND PARADOXES

Folklore is regarded as reflecting the popular tradition of a region or a country, transmitted from generation to generation, whether it is the language, costume, rituals and customs, know-how or lifestyles. However, folklorists’ studies and testimonials demonstrate that it was heavily stereotyped and oriented, even entirely concocted at the time of the emergence of national identities in Europe in the 19th century. Thus, it became an ideological and nationalist, then economic lever with the development of tourism. What remains truly authentic in folklore? Does it consist of invented traditions, of fictions? Is it frozen in time or can it be updated depending on changing conditions in society? Since the 19th century, it is frequently associated with nationalistic claims and is often instrumentalised by rhetoric from both ends of the political spectrum. The questions of identity and of authenticity are at the heart of many critical approaches among contemporary artists, who question the ambiguities and paradoxes of folklore.

### 3 - A POOL OF FORMS

For artists, folklore constitutes an inexhaustible repertoire of techniques, forms and motives, symbols of an abstract and codified vision of the world. For the folklorist, the concept of “motif” is not limited to the visual arts and their applications, such as furniture or costumes, it is also found in music and the spoken word. Besides, it reaches further than aesthetic quality, since it is described, analysed, interpreted and is subjected to comparisons in order to capture its permanence and its specificity within a given group. Apart from the question of its study, there is the question of its collection and safeguard. The aesthetic dimension of design appears to prevail among modern artists, particularly in the studios that sought to bring together the visual and decorative arts and handicrafts in the early 20th century. These artists, driven by an appropriation approach, also contribute to its preservation by building repertoires on which to draw in order to regenerate art.

### 4 - EXPLORING THE IMMATERIAL

Folklore differs from folk art by its fundamentally immaterial dimension. Etymologically defined as “the knowledge of the people”, it brings together elements such as dialects and languages, tales and proverbs, music and dances, customs and beliefs... Rituals dedicated to nature, pagan ceremonies or even superstitions attracted the attention of artists of the post-war era because of their conceptual and social character. The Surrealists saw folklore as the expression of the natural tendency of people for the irrational or, according to Benjamin Péret, the reflection of a “poetic awareness of the world”. If oral transmission seems to be the common denominator of these elements, peddling also played an early role in the flow of ideas and customs, amongst others, through the popular images of almanacs or shepherds’ calendars. From the ancient Pausanias to the famous Brothers Grimm, folklorists see in the storytellers the precursors of their discipline.



Facilitators, identifiable by their badge, are on-hand to answer your questions about the exhibition.