

FOLKLORE

Exhibition – Galerie 2

From June 12 to October 04, 2020



PRESS RELEASE

Friday, 12 June 2020

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Vassily Kandinsky, Die Raben, 1907

Linogravure, 43,8 x 28,1 cm

Paris, Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art

moderne

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Dist. RMN-GP

Who knows that Wassily Kandinsky started his career as an ethnographer in Russia? That Constantin Brancusi's great grandfather was a traditional wood churches builder in Romania? That Natalia Gontcharova developed an abstract painting inspired by Spanish costumes? That Joseph Beuys declared seeing in folklore a tool for the comprehension for the future, or that Marcel Broodthaers intended adding a "folklore section" to his Modern art museum - Département des Aigles?

Associated with tradition, and therefore in appearance opposed to the notion of avant-garde, the world of folklore, subject to multiple controversies, infiltrates in different ways large areas of modernity and of contemporary creation. Far from the clichés of being backward-looking and artificial, artists have been able to find in it a source of inspiration, a regenerative power; as well as an object of critical analysis or of contention.

From the early stages of modern art to the most current art, this exhibition, conceived by the Centre Pompidou-Metz, in collaboration with the Mucem (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations), recounts the relationships, sometimes ambiguous, that artists nurture with folklore, from the formal borrowing to the imitation of a method, from fascination, to critical irony. Concentrating essentially on one definition and a European history of the term, the Folklore exhibition also offers an encounter between the history of art and the history of human sciences, because it unveils simultaneously the invention and the progressive institutionalisation of a discipline, notably thanks to the resources of the Mucem, the heir to the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions.

The definition of folklore generated and still generates today important controversies: the term, created in England in the middle of the 19th century, and meaning literally "the knowledge of the people", whipped up intense quarrels at the heart of the intellectual and scientific circles, because of ideological recuperation or of the amateurism of self-proclaimed specialists - to such a point that we sometimes have considered the folklorist as an artist and vice versa.

The exhibition opens on the fantasy of a search for origins, the appeal of an "exoticism of the interior", or of supposed archaic throw-backs which guide Paul Gauguin, Paul Sérusier and les Nabis in Brittany at the end of the 19th century, Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter when they establish themselves in Bavaria or indeed Constantin Brâncuși, recalling the craft traditions of his native country. The paradoxes rapidly come to the surface from a domain frequently associated with nationalistic claims, or instrumentalised by a political discourse – tensions at the heart of the initiatives of artists such as Jimmie Durham, Valentin Carron, Melanie Manchot or Amy O'Neill.

The exhibition continues with the folklore which also constitutes for artists a pool of forms and an inexhaustible repertoire of motives and techniques, having contributed to the renewal of the vocabulary of the visual arts, as the work from the Bauhaus workshops and of Sophie Taeuber-Arp are there to illustrate, or the paintings of Natalia Gontcharova amongst others. However, this formal reappropriation should not allow us to forget that the motives and symbols contain from time to time a subjacent language: in this way, the works of Július Koller or of Endri Dani also take on, in the same way as certain folkloric expressions, a subversive aspect.

The term "folklore" is fundamentally tied to the immaterial and to the oral tradition: dialects, proverbs, music, dances, rituals, beliefs, superstitions and fantastic creatures. It is this more conceptual than material content in folklore which interests numerous post-war artists, amongst whom Joseph Beuys or Constant, or more recently Michel Aubry or Susan Hiller, who are also present at the centre of the exhibition.

Even though during the course of the 1970's the anthropological dimension of art came to the fore on the international scene, artists borrowed from ethnographers their research and data collection methods, followed by classification and reconstitution, and would notably be fascinated by this new everyday museography, as Marcel Broodthaers, Raymond Hains and Claudio Costa bare testify, just as more recent generations, Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, Pierre Fischer and Justin Meekel, leading here to provide a clear picture of "the artist as folklorist".

Finally, the era of globalisation which accompanies a tendency towards uniformisation, in which are perpetuated, newly created folklores for the tourist industry, the exhibition will explore the paradoxals "new geographical areas of folklore" which like populations, continue to move around with them and never cease to be reinvented by artists: Bertille Bak, Corentin Grossmann, Pierre Huyghe, Johanna Kandl...

Presented in Metz and then in Marseille, between 2020, 10th anniversary year for the Centre Pompidou-Metz, and 2021, the exhibition Folklore will be punctuated with associated events (concerts, projections, shows), which will be spread out as the four seasons go by, as an echo to the natural rhythms celebrated in numerous folklores.

Curators: Jean-Marie Gallais, Head of Programming Centre Pompidou-Metz, and Marie-Charlotte Calafat, Head of the History Department Mucem

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OPENING HOURS
Every day, except Tuesdays and May 1st

01.11 > 31.03
MON. | WED. | THU. | FR. | SAT. | SUN.: 10 am – 6 pm

01.04 > 31.10
MON. | WED. | THU.: 10 am – 6 pm
FR. | SAT. | SUN.: 10 am – 7 pm

EXHIBITION ADMISSION
Individual Admission: 7€ /10€ /12€ based on the number of exhibition spaces open the day of your visit
Group Rates (from 20 people): 5,50€, 8€, 10€ based on the number of exhibition spaces open the day of your visit