

# COSMOS

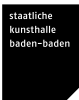
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## ULRIKE OTTINGER

STAATLICHE KUNSTHALLE BADEN-BADEN

FEBRUARY 19–JUNE 19 2022

EXHIBITION GUIDE



Baden-Württemberg

MINISTERIUM FÜR KULTUR, HOCHSCHULEN UND KUNST

## COSMOS OTTINGER

Ulrike Ottinger is one of the most important artists in Europe. As a painter, filmmaker, and photographer, she has created an artistic universe. The Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden presents the Ottinger cosmos in the eponymous show. Using scripts, film props, objects, costumes, fabric collages, and photographs, the exhibition introduces visitors to Ottinger's work from the past 60 years.

Restagings of her unique works such as *Freak Orlando* (1981) or *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984), as well as examples of her diverse artistic output in various media, from photography to painting, form a storyline that follows the role of memory in Ottinger's work and shows her narrative process. Her research-based, investigative approach can be explored through her studies, notebooks, and drafts. But it is not only her transdisciplinary method that is still groundbreaking today: Ottinger was and is a pioneer of queer art-making, post-colonial critique, and artistic engagement with fascism, persecution, and genocide. These questions are all the more urgent today: how do we historically situate contemporary feminist, queer, and aesthetic debates? And how does one situate these debates within a museum setting?

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ulrike Ottinger was born in Constance, Germany, in 1942. From 1962 to 1968, she lived and worked as a freelance artist in Paris. In the epoch-making year 1968, she moved back to Constance, where she founded a film club and a gallery. Since 1973, Ottinger has lived in (West) Berlin and made numerous well-known feature films and documentaries. In addition to her cinematic works, her oeuvre also includes extensive photographic works and theater productions.

Ottinger has received numerous awards for her film work. Among others, the Montréal Audience Jury Prize, the Federal Film Award (Visual Design) for *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* (1989), the German Film Critics Award for the documentaries *China. The Arts – Everyday Life* (1986), *Prater* (2008) and *Chamissos Schatten* (2016) and in 2020 the Berlinale Camera as part of the 70th International Film Festival. Since 1997 Ottinger has been a member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, since 2019 of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which annually presents the Academy Awards (“Oscars”), and since 2020 of the Bayerische Akademie der Künste. In 2010, she was presented with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2011, the city of Berlin honored her artistic oeuvre with the Hannah Höch Prize. Concordia University Montreal awarded her an honorary doctorate of fine arts in 2018. In 2021, the state of Baden-Württemberg honored her with the Hans Thoma Prize.

## EPISODE 1: FEAST OF THE PERSECUTED

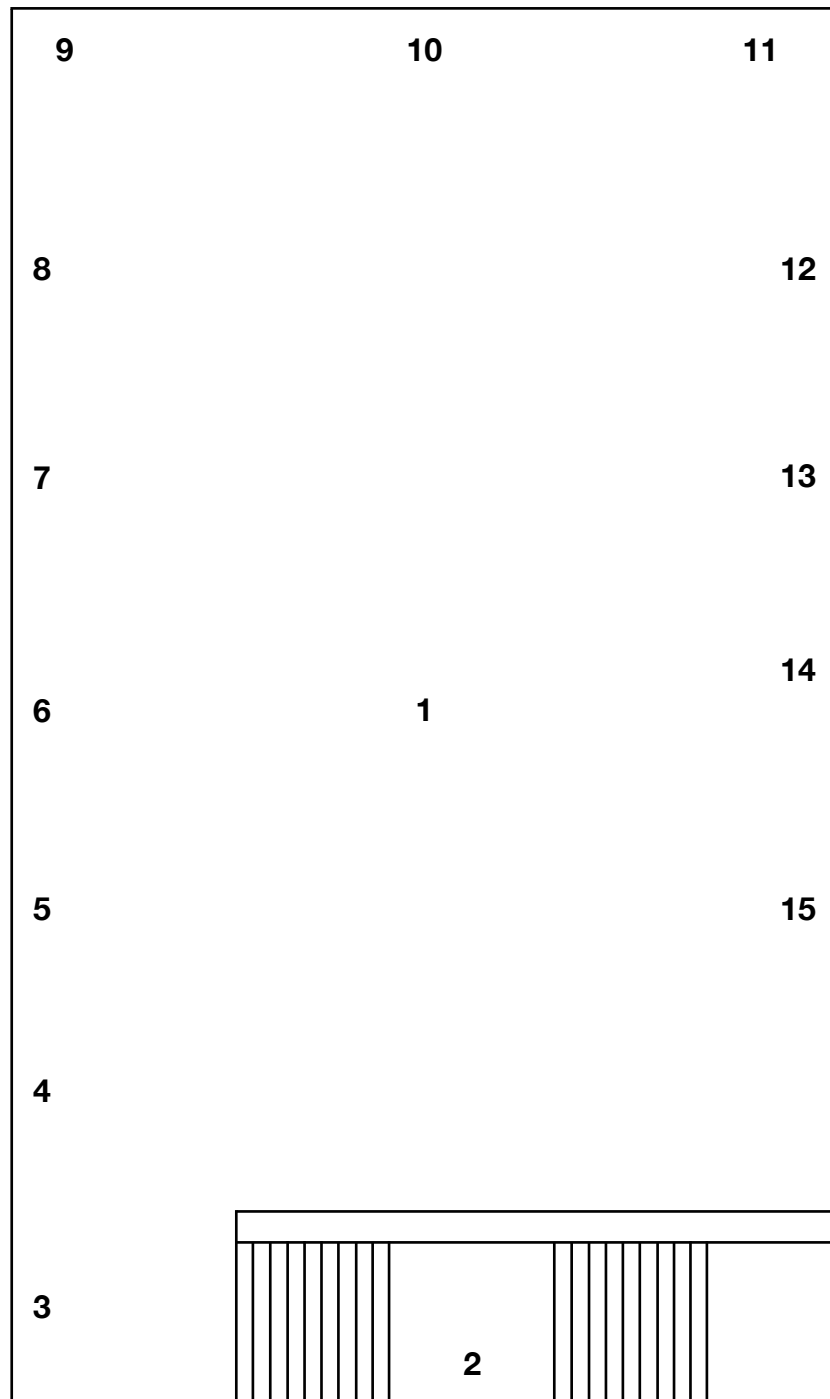
The exhibition begins with an immersive introduction to the various stages of Ulrike Ottinger's artistic work. In the stairway, the viewer's eye is caught by the visual score, which refers to a central part of Ottinger's working process: research. Ottinger creates her own aesthetic, historical, and art historical archives in order to approach themes from all angles. Opening up image archives, notebooks, sketches, and scripts, *Cosmos Ottinger* provides a special insight into the creative process of the avant-garde filmmaker. The first ideas, inspirations, and realizations for her films are recorded here. In the course of the multimedia exhibition tour, ideas and connections that emerge here become visible in the works.

On the wall of the staircase are photographs taken during the production of films, as well as historical documents, some of which served as a source of inspiration. The historical images show, among other things, people of small stature and persons captured through an exoticizing European gaze. To what extent these images were created under free circumstances is difficult to judge today. But they also document the violence inherent in the Western gaze.

With arms raised and a wine glass in her hand, Helena Müller, goddess of the tree of life, department store announcer, and mother of the miracle birth, welcomes both the persecuted and the visitors. It is the only work created specifically for the exhibition at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden. With it, a scene from *Freak Orlando* (1981) leaps from the movie screen into three dimensions. The *Banquet of Persecuted Scientists and Artists* (1981) becomes an installation. Tapestries depict major figures of the artistic counterculture: Allen Ginsberg, Walter Mehring, Tristan Tzara, and Valeska Gert are also guests.

The fabric collages at the onset of the exhibition recall Ottinger's formative time as a young, aspiring artist in Paris. The collages are thus also related to her film *Paris Calligrammes* (2020), in which she describes her past experiences from today's perspec-

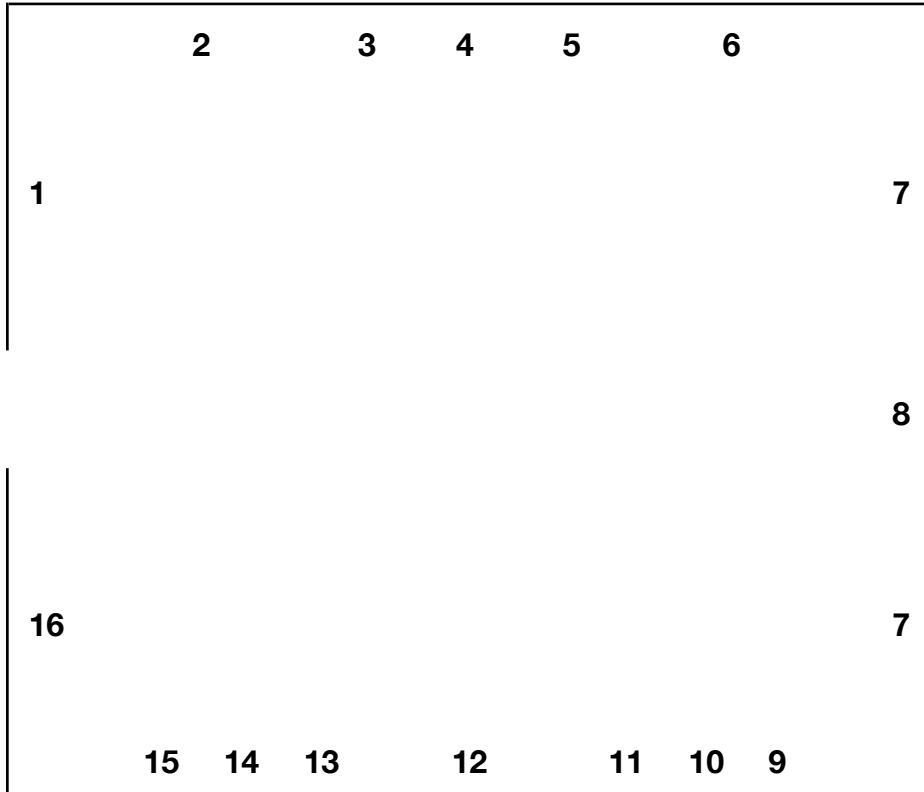
tive. For example, in the multi-part work *Journée d'un GI* (2019), a contextual reference to the political unrest of the 1960s, which accompanied the horrors of the Vietnam War, can be discerned. By depicting the everyday life of an American soldier, the work criticizes the downplaying of the war as it is still portrayed in the media today. In the middle of it all is Ottinger, whose speech bubble remains empty, rendered speechless in the face of the events. Her empathetic and creative way of reacting to political events and injustices is also evident in *Cosmos Ottinger*: the visitors are invited to inscribe the names of today's politically persecuted persons with chalk on the blackboard at the end of the hall. In this way, Ottinger's work is meant to remain alive, to change in dialogue with the audience.



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| 1 | The Banquet of the Persecuted<br>2022   Installation<br>360 x 750 cm                   | 8  | Kybernetisches Modell /<br>Modèle Cyernétique /<br>Cybernetic Model<br>2019   Textile collage<br>175 x 210 cm                     |
| 2 | Freak Orlando<br>Visual Score<br>1981   Photograph<br>200 x 680 cm                     | 9  | Femme Mannequin – Les<br>Jambes sous l’eau /<br>Female Mannequin - Legs<br>Under Water<br>2019   Textile collage<br>181,5 x 76 cm |
| 3 | Dieu de Guerre /<br>God of War<br>2019   Textile collage<br>243 x 157 cm               | 10 | Main signée<br>2019   Textile collage<br>400 x 140 cm   |
| 4 | Soldier<br>2019   Textile collage<br>66,5 x 86,5 cm                                    | 11 | Photomaton / Photo booth<br>2019   Textile collage<br>173 x 70 cm   |
| 5 | Dynamo<br>2019   Textile collage<br>138 x 187 cm                                       | 12 | Allen Ginsberg<br>2019   Textile collage<br>150 x 207 cm  |
| 6 | Journée d’un G.I. /<br>Journey of a G.I.<br>2019   Textile collage<br>360 x 360 cm     | 13 | Valeska Gert<br>2019   Textile collage<br>165 x 140 cm  |
| 7 | L’age de Pierre / The<br>Stone Age of Pierre<br>2019   Textile collage<br>138 x 187 cm | 14 | Walter Mehring<br>2019   Textile collage<br>123,5 x 110 cm  |
|   |  | 15 | Tristan Tzara<br>2019   Textile collage<br>146,5 x 122 cm   |

## EPISODE 2: DOUBLE FIGURES

The Siamese twins Lena-Leni welcome the visitors to Freak City. Played by Delphine Seyrig and Jackie Raynal, they represent a wonderful apparition with whom the main character Orlanda Zyklopa, played by actress Magdalena Montezuma, falls in love with in Ulrike Ottinger's film *Freak Orlando* (1981). The character Orlanda Zyklopa alludes to Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* and its main character, who lives through several eras with different genders. Thus, the world history of the freaks is told in five episodes, starting from ancient history, through the Middle Ages, the 18th century, the turn of the century, and ending with the present. Mr. Orlando, alias Orlando Capricho, Orlando Orlanda, and Orlanda Zyklopa, has adventures including being reborn, a tragic love story with the Siamese twins Lena-Leni, hosting a banquet for persecuted scientists and artists, and participating in the Festival of the Ugly. The names, which change from episode to episode, are an expression of the motif of gender fluidity that runs continuously through Ottinger's oeuvre. In view of current discussions about queer feminism, gender justice, and a social sensitization towards gender identities, it becomes clear that questions and issues that the artist dealt with 40 years ago are more relevant than ever.



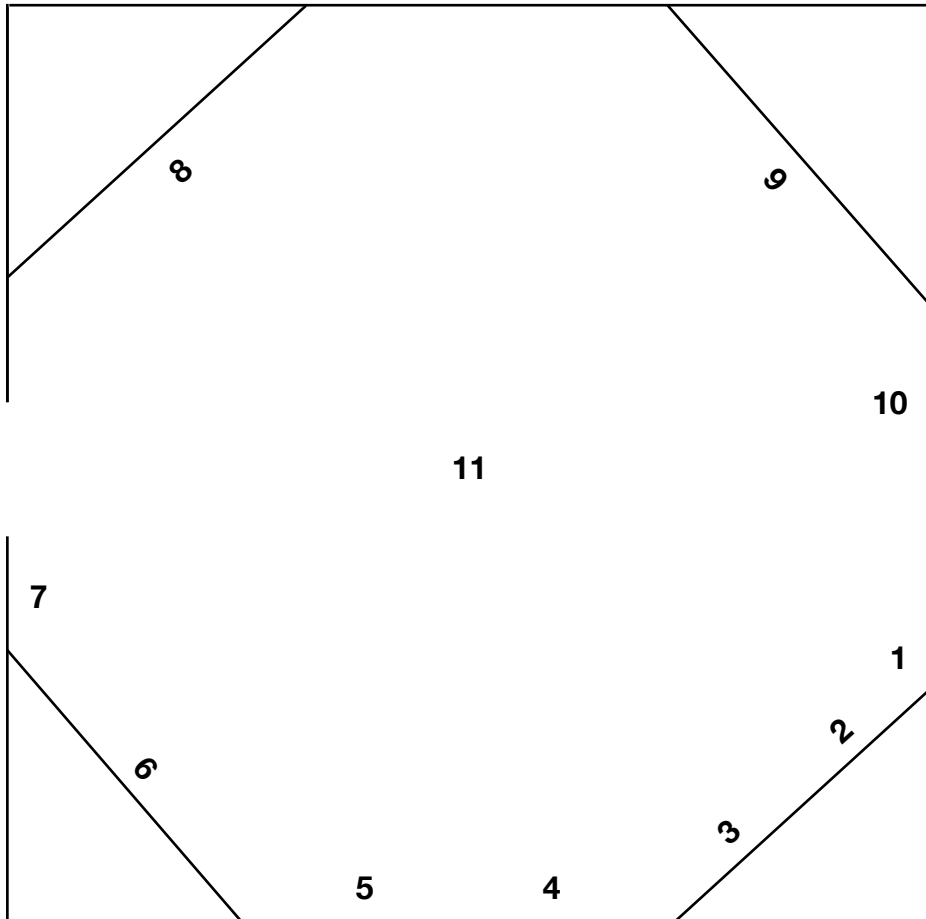
- 1 The Banquet of Persecuted Scientists and Artists – Goya Episode  
1981 | Photograph  
79 x 91 cm
- 2 The Banquet of Persecuted Scientists and Artists – Goya Episode  
1981 | Photography  
79 x 91 cm
- 3 The Messenger of the Inquisition – Goya Episode  
1981 | Photograph  
65 x 100 cm
- 4 The Infatuation of the Old – Goya Episode  
1981 | Photograph  
65 x 100 cm
- 5 Monks with Harpies – Goya Episode  
1981 | Photograph  
62 x 92 cm
- 6 The Feast of the Circus Artists  
1981 | Photograph  
70 x 100 cm
- 7 The Siamese Twins Lena-Leni  
1981 | Photograph  
150 x 100 cm
- 8 Freak City  
1981 | Neon sign  
86 x 230 cm
- 9 At the Shrine of the Holy Bearded Lady Wilgeforte  
1981 | Photograph  
33 x 50 cm
- 10 Miss Mausi and Mister Paulchen  
1981 | Photograph  
60 x 40 cm
- 11 Circus in Gropius-Stadt – Mackay Taylor  
1981 | Photograph  
40 x 60 cm
- 12 In Front of the Basilica, Double Head Contemplating Other Mythical Creatures  
1981 | Photograph  
80 x 120 cm
- 13 Olympic Stadium: Galli el Primo and Giant Woman  
1981 | Photograph  
40 x 60 cm
- 14 Pilgrims of St. James  
1981 | Photograph  
60 x 40 cm
- 15 Sacred Sales Week – Holy Bearded Lady Wilgeforte at the Shopping Center with Her Foster Mother, a Hair Sensation  
1981 | Photograph  
39,5 x 60 cm
- 16 Femme Trônc  
1981 | Photograph  
90 x 60 cm

## EPISODE 3: CONSPIRACY PHANTASMS

While Ottinger's surreal filmic worlds appear to be enchanted, the works also address contemporary historical events related to crises, war, fascism, and persecution. The Goya episode of *Freak Orlando* (1981) features stagings inspired by the series of etchings *Desastres de la Guerra* (1810-1814) by Spanish painter Francisco de Goya (an excerpt of the film runs in Room 7). The victim of the Inquisition wears the hat and the shirt of shame inscribed with the absurd accusation „Because she knew how to make rats.“

Suffering caused by institutions and the abuse of power are also evoked by the photographs of the psychiatrist in the underworld, guarded by Castor and Pollux, and of people bound and maltreated. Inspired by *Desastres de la Guerra*, the torture scenes were created in the rooms of a brewery, which Ottinger reinterpreted as a torture cell. The photograph in which a hermaphrodite accompanied by a bearded woman and a dwarf stands at the reflective lake in Kohlebergen is also an allusion to the story of Narcissus. Here it becomes apparent how Ottinger works with historical and mythical figures, placing them within the industrial landscape of the time.



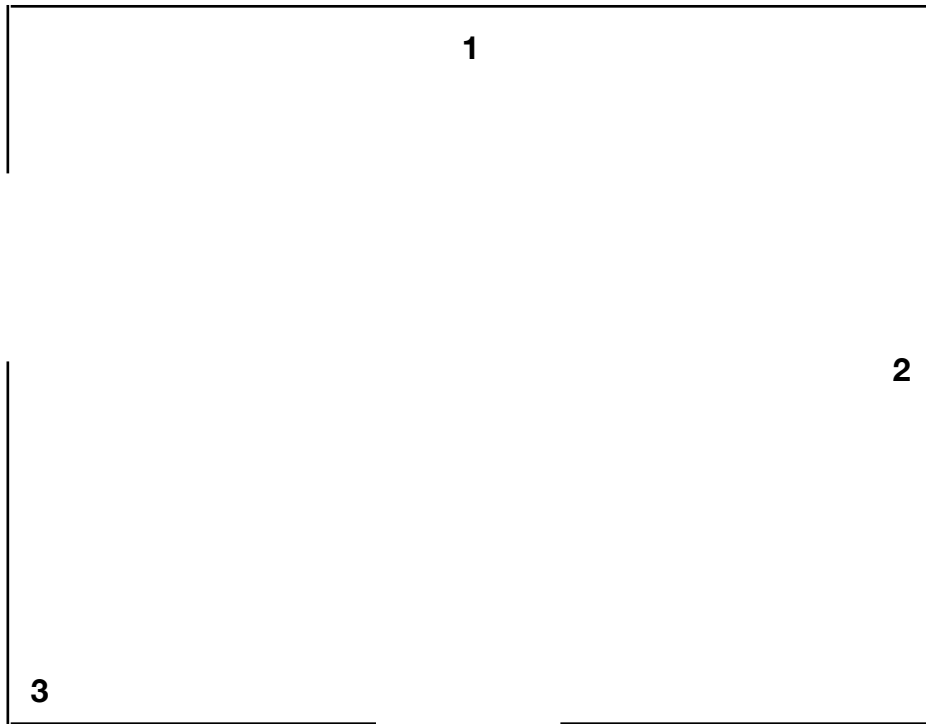


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| <p>1 Disasters of War: Goya Cycle<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>40 x 60 cm</p> <p>2 The Torture of the Holy Tribunal<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>40 x 60 cm</p> <p>3 The Torture of the Holy Tribunal<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>40 x 60 cm</p> <p>4 The Victim of the Holy Tribunal<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>80 x 120 cm</p> <p>5 Because She Knew How to Make Rats – Goya Episode<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>120 x 80 cm</p> <p>6 Narcissistic Hermaphrodite Accompanied by a Dwarf and a Bearded Woman<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>90 x 60 cm</p> | <p>7 Shrine of the Destroyed Goddess Who Did Not Want to Become the Successor of the Stylite<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>80 x 120 cm</p> <p>8 Psychiatrist in the Underworld Guarded by Castor and Pollux<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>120 x 80 cm</p> <p>9 Flagellants<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>43 x 60,5 cm</p> <p>10 Disasters of War: Goya Cycle<br/>1981   Photograph<br/>60 x 40 cm</p> <p>11 Because She Knew How to Make Rats<br/>1981   Costume</p> |
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## EPISODE 4: DISTORTIONS

As dark and eerie as *Verzerrungsstudien* [Distortion Studies] (1980-1981) and the multi-part work *Maskierung* [Masking] (1981) may seem, they refer to Ottinger's central working process: the study, here for the film *Freak Orlando*. These are the first studies with the actress Magdalena Montezuma. The distortions were created through the positioning of mirrors and mirror films into which she gazes. The absurd, comical, grim, and surprised facial expressions executed by the actress are grimaces that take on a new surreal dimension through the use of photographic techniques. From a technical perspective, the staging of light, shadow, and mirrors play a significant role here. Distorted mirrors appear frequently in Ottinger's films, especially in the Berlin trilogy, consisting of *Ticket of No Return [Bildnis einer Trinkerin]* (1979), *Freak Orlando* (1981), and *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984), because according to the famous parable of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, we only become integrated personalities when we recognize ourselves in our entirety in the mirror. But what if we are distorted, broken, and shattered by oppression and persecution? The face of the actress is covered by a mask, only her wide-open eyes can be seen. Tied with a rope and wrapped in a tight-fitting costume, she sits trapped in a chair.

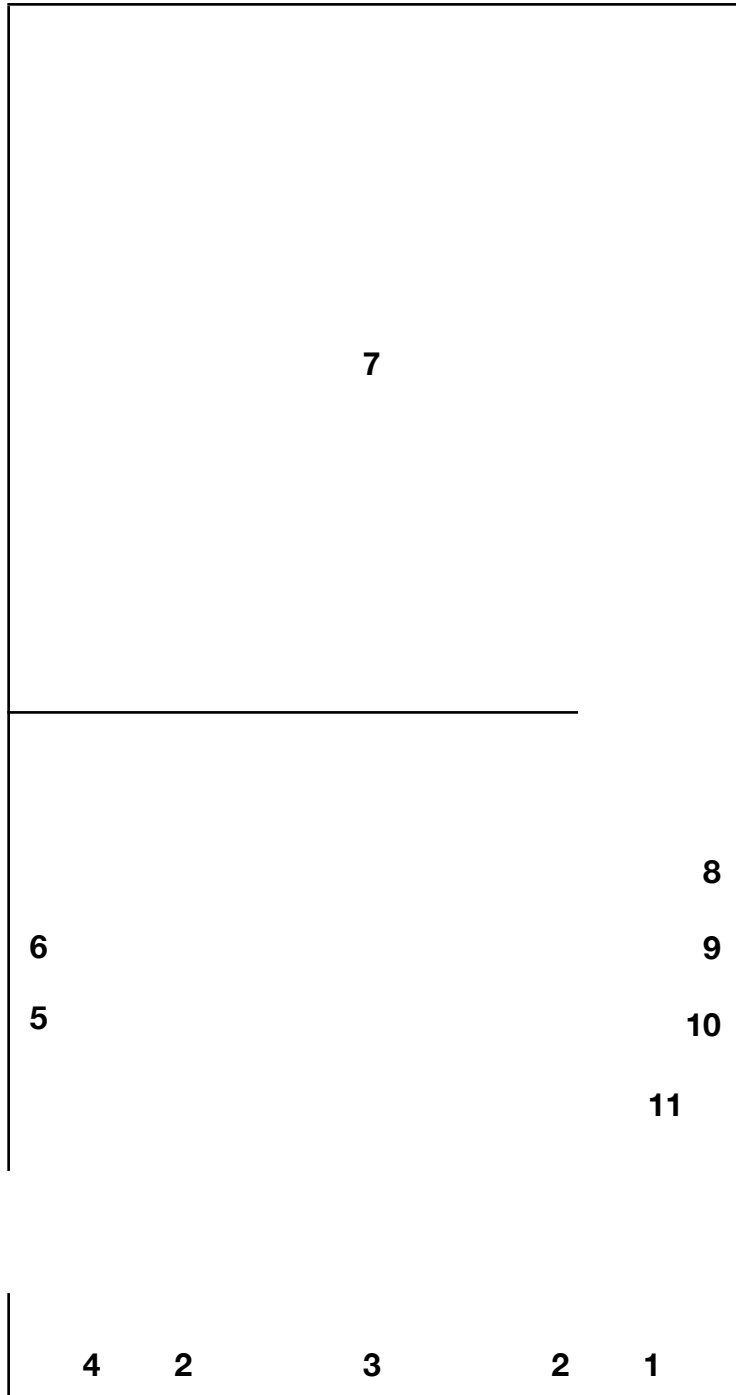
- 1 Distortion Study  
1980 | Photograph  
61 x 39 cm
- 2 Distortion Study  
1980 | Photograph  
150 x 100 cm
- 4 Masking / Masquerades  
1980 | Photograph  
40 x 53 cm



## EPISODE 5: COLONIAL OPERA

Opera and Ottinger? Ottinger, who has always been interested in the marginalized, the persecuted, and the freaks, is producing an opera, this elitist art form of the European aristocracy? Yet it is precisely this irony, inherent in the disconnect between form and content, that distinguishes Ottinger's thinking: she queers the classical forms of Western high culture, she blurs boundaries, dissolves roles. The room shows props and parts of the set of her film *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984), from which an excerpt is shown next door. The three soldiers from the film guard the screening rooms in full gear. The equipment, however, is unusual on a second glance: the armor is made of film canisters and cooking utensils. The fusion of elements read as female and male, as the transgression of gender boundaries is a recurring feature in Ottinger's films. For example, while in *Madame X - An Absolute Ruler* (1978) the protagonist appears with luxuriant chest hair, in *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* the actress Veruschka Gräfin von Lehndorff plays the dandyish, self-absorbed, and rich art figure Dorian Gray, created by Dr. Mabuse, empress of an international press corporation. With her creation, the media tycoon wants to increase circulation and fulfill all the readership's dreams before destroying Gray before their eyes. But then the journalistically praised and popular character turns against its creator.

The opera backdrop is part of a central scene in the film. With its baroque design, it is reminiscent of an opera from the colonial era. In the film, it is placed in a natural landscape, creating a special kind of three-dimensional stage setting. The backdrop leaves an interpretive frame for the (ir)reality of the scene and draws attention to socially accepted notions of the body, which are broken by the female occupation of roles read as male.



- 1 Opera: Spanish Infante Don Luis de la Cerda and Andamana, Princess of the Blissful Islands  
1983 | Photograph  
42,5 x 62,5 cm
- 2 Opera Framework  
1983 | Painting on canvas  
two parts, 120 x 380 cm
- 3 Cloud  
1983 | Object  
93 x 120 cm
- 4 Opera: Spanish Infante Don Luis de la Cerda and Andamana, Princess of the Happy Islands  
1983 | Photograph  
50 x 68 cm
- 5 Costumes for Three Soldiers of the Grand Inquisitor of Seville in the film Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press  
1983
- 6 Opera: Ecstatic Monk in Desert  
1983 | Photograph  
100 x 150 cm
- 7 Opera: The Conquest of the Happy Island from Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press  
1983 | Film  
22:33 min
- 8 Opera  
1983 | Photograph  
60 x 90 cm
- 9 Opera  
1983 | Photograph  
69 x 98 cm
- 10 Opera  
1983 | Photograph  
48,5 x 95,5 cm
- 11 Costume for "Narrator" in the film Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press  
1983

## EPISODE 6: GOYA EPISODE

An excerpt from one of Ottinger's best-known films: *Freak Orlando* (1981), whose production is shown photographically in Room 2. Orlando Caprichio alias Orlando Orlanda alias Orlanda Zyklopa realizes that she (or: he?) has fallen for the special travel offer of a department store. Now Orlando falls into the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, but narrowly escapes incarceration in the Correction House. But in the end, Orlando is deported to the so-called „new world“ along with all sorts of traveling folk and the enemies of righteous work.

1 Goya Episode: Freak  
Orlando  
1981 | Film  
19:53 min

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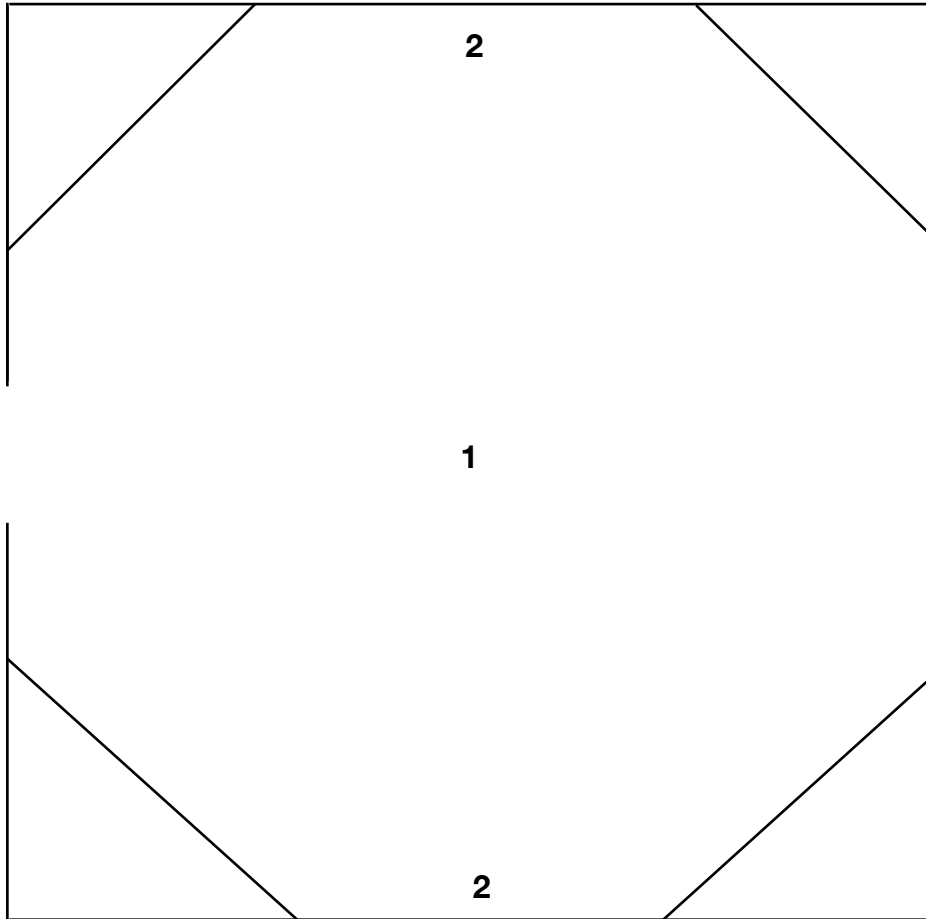
## EPISODE 7: OSSUARY EUROPE

Ottinger created her *Europe Tent* as a traveling object for the European Capitals of Culture. It was first shown in 1987 at the Museum van de Tropen in the Netherlands. It is now making its most recent stop at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, after being exhibited on the occasion of the Hans Thoma Award ceremony. Through its alternately printed and painted sides, the tent fans out different levels of the myth. In Ottinger's own words: „What name would our continent probably bear today if it had not been for the enchanting Phoenician princess Europa, whose extraordinary beauty was spoken of on all the Mediterranean coasts? Fueled by Cupid's arrow sent by Aphrodite, Zeus, the father of the gods, was seized by wild passion and transformed himself into a bull to approach and abduct the coveted Europa. Thus the myth of Europa was born. The Greek poets were the first to tell us about it, and to this day artists have not ceased to deal with Europa and the bull. Beckmann painted the ‚Rape of Europe‘ at the beginning of the Nazi regime, Gustave Moreau its symbolist variant. I photographed the ‚Slaughterhouse of Europe‘ and brought together, among other aspects, the African influences bordering on the Mediterranean in the Europa tent.“

The photographs of the ossuary came about in the context of research for the planned but as yet unrealized film *The Blood Countess*. The ossuary in the Czech town of Sedlec near Prague is located in the basement of the Church of All Saints.



- 1 Europe and the Bull  
1987 | Tent object
- 2 Ossuary Sedlec  
1998 | Photograph  
various dimensions

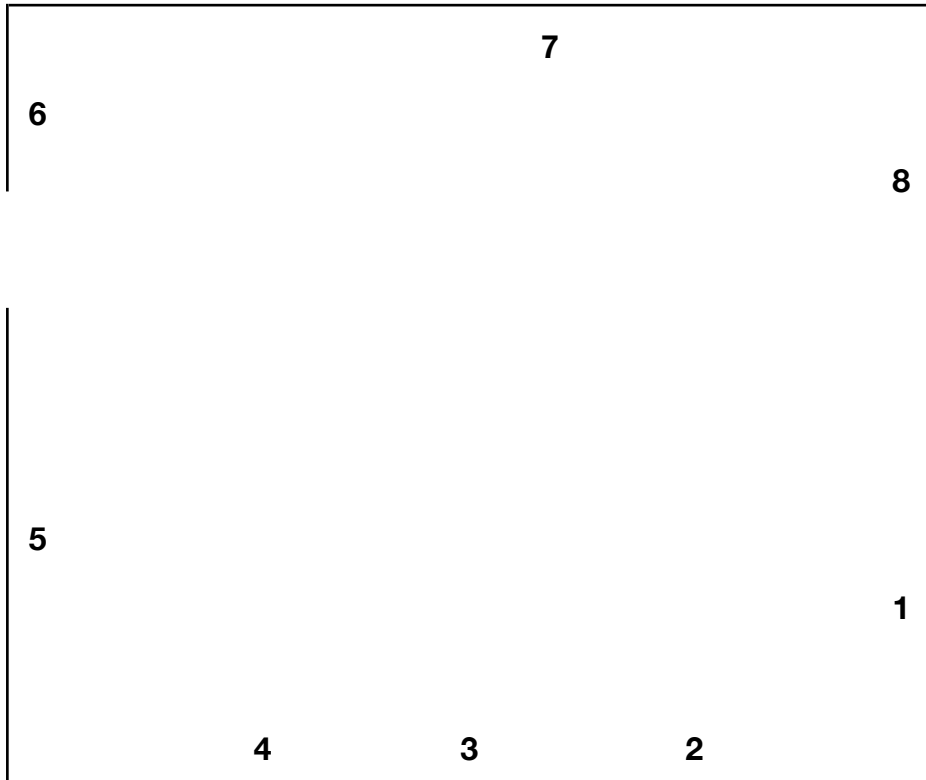


## EPISODE 8: PARIS POP

When she was twenty years old, Ottinger moved from Constance to Paris with the firm goal of becoming a great artist. It was at this time that she created her first paintings: loud and striking Pop Art, which today are counted among the most important European examples of this art-historical epoch. These richly colored paintings reflect the burning social and political issues that defined the 1960s and Ottinger's thinking at the time. During this period, she sharpened her eye as a painter, which also informed her cinematic compositions.

With the four-part work *Bubble Gum* (1966), the artist succeeded in creating a humorous bridge between high culture and commodity aesthetics. While the painting here is considered a medium of high culture, the motif of the young person blowing gum contradicts an elitist demeanor. In *Liebesperlen* (1967), too, the focus is on a consumer product. The colored sugar pearls, sold in a scaled-down replica of a baby bottle, call attention to the seductive promises of advertising.

Che Guevara appears in an unusual pose: in *Le Penseur* (1967), he lies on a garish green-and-red striped sofa with a jar of maté tea. Nonetheless, his thoughts lie with those in power, floating in a dark green thought bubble. Green tones also dominate the works *Pentecôte* (1966), *Ordre majeur* (1965/1966), and *La vie quotidienne* (1965/1966). The paintings, all created between 1965 and 1966, reflect Ottinger's engagement with militarism and cybernetics. Affecting her deeply, she processed impressions of the Vietnam War both in her paintings and cinematically. At the same time, student groups were showing solidarity with the colonized by protesting. War, flight, persecution, colonialism: these are all themes shaking society today that are dealt with in art.



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| <p>1 <b>Ordre majeur / Main Order</b><br/>1965/66   Oil, paper on wood, layered<br/>145 x 115 cm</p> <p>2 <b>Pentecôte / Pentecost</b><br/>1966   Oil on wood and paper<br/>Ø 100 cm</p> <p>3 <b>La vie quotidienne / Daily Life</b><br/>1965/66   Oil on wood<br/>180 x 240 cm</p> <p>4 <b>Noire et blanc et café crème / Black and White and Café Crème</b><br/>ca. 1967   Acrylic<br/>Ø 119 cm</p> | <p>5 <b>Le penseur (Che Guevara) / The Thinker (Che Guevara)</b><br/>1967   Oil on wood<br/>152,3 x 178 cm</p> <p>6 <b>Punktum</b><br/>1965/66   Oil on wood<br/>70 x 65 cm</p> <p>7 <b>Bubble Gum</b><br/>1966   Oil on canvas<br/>100 x 400 cm</p> <p>8 <b>Liebesperlen / Love Pearls</b><br/>1967   Oil on canvas<br/>170 x 100 cm</p> |
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## KINO

A selection of Ulrike Ottinger's films will be shown in parallel to the exhibition on a weekly basis at the Moviac cinema in Baden-Baden. With a ticket from the Kunsthalle you will receive free admission on the following dates:

Saturday, 19.02.2022, 5 p.m.	Freak Orlando
Sunday, 20.02.2022, 4 p.m.	Paris Calligrammes
Sunday, 27.02.2022, 4 p.m.	Portrait of a Drunkard
Sunday, 06.03.2022, 5 p.m.	Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press
Sunday, 13.03.2022, 5 p.m.	Under Snow
Sunday, 20.03.2022, 5 p.m.	The Korean Wedding Chest
Sunday, 27.03.2022, 5 p.m.	Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia
Sunday, 03.04.2022, 5 p.m.	Madame X - An Absolute Ruler
Sunday, 10.04.2022, 5 p.m.	Twelve Chairs
Sunday, 17.04.2022, 5 p.m.	Prater
Sunday, 24.04.2022, 5 p.m.	Laocoon & Sons: The Story of the Transformation of Esmeralda del Rio
	Berlin Fever – Wolf Vostell
	Superbia – The Pride
Sunday, 01.05.2022, 5 p.m.	Exile Shanghai (Part 1)
Sunday, 08.05.2022, 5 p.m.	Exile Shanghai (Part 2)
Sunday, 15.05.2022, 5 p.m.	Paris Calligrammes

## IMPRINT

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Costume installation and fabric works: Dr. Barbara Schröter, Vera Weyrauch  
Scene painting: Karo Godles  
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