

SACRÉ 101

An Exhibition Based on *The Rite of Spring*

15 February–11 May 2014

With contributions by Eleanor Antin – Marc Bauer – Dara Friedman – Millicent Hodson/Kenneth Archer – Karen Kilimnik – Xavier Le Roy – Marko Lulić – Royston Maldoom – Sara Masüger – Vaslav Nijinsky – Silke Otto-Knapp – Christodoulos Panayiotou – Yvonne Rainer/Babette Mangolte – Lucy Stein – Alexis Marguerite Teplin – Julie Verhoeven – Mary Wigman

Curated by Raphael Gygax,
Curator, Migros Museum
für Gegenwartskunst

With the exhibition project “Sacré 101—An Exhibition Based on *The Rite of Spring*,” the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst traces the interplay between dance and the visual arts in a sustained engagement with Igor Stravinsky’s ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*). The work features revolutionary music and choreography, and its premiere in Paris one hundred and one years ago is regarded as one of modernism’s great breakthrough moments. This ballet, in which a virgin sacrifices her life to the god of spring and dances herself to death, has lost none of its fascination. In addition to a selection of *Le Sacre* dance documentation—some of the material is presented in an exhibition setting for the first time—the show features works of art, most of which were created specially for the occasion by the invited artists, that engage with the ballet, its context, and its history in a wide variety of ways, while focusing on the iconography, as well as on aspects regarding the content. Xavier Le Roy and Alexis Marguerite Teplin contribute performance pieces that are integral parts of the presentation, which also includes the American artist Eleanor Antin’s seminal work *Recollections of My Life with Diaghilev 1919–1929* (1977–1978) and the graphic oeuvre of Vaslav Nijinsky (ca. 1919); both have never been displayed in Switzerland.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a JRP|Ringier catalogue published in cooperation with the Center for Movement Research at the Free University of Berlin / Gabriele Brandstetter including essays by Gabriele Brandstetter, Lynn Garafola, Nicola Gess, Raphael Gygax and Sigrid Weigel.

Since the 1970s, **Eleanor Antin** (*1935) has been among the key figures in the feminist art movement, drawing attention with her mainly performance-based works. Her work revolves around issues of the construction of identity, exploring categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, and sexuality. For *Recollections of My Life with Diaghilev 1919–1929* (1976–78), the artist invented the figure of Eleonora Antinova, the first dark-skinned prima ballerina to be accepted by the Ballets Russes. The work consists of photographs showing Antinova in her most famous roles, and diary entries describing her life with Sergei Diaghilev. In addition to using Antinova as a field for projections, satirizing the legendary status of the Ballets Russes and their productions, Antin uses this framework to stage a play on historicity, memory, and its subjective perception.

Marc Bauer’s (*1975) work deals with the representation of history and memory, taking historical events and their documentation, reworking them in a drawing-based process, and placing them in new contexts. In a group of works consisting of drawings on paper, a portfolio, and a wall drawing, he addresses various moments in the life of Vaslav Nijinsky: his relationship with his lover Sergei Diaghilev; his work on the ballet *Le Sacre du printemps*; his time around 1919 in St. Moritz where (mentally ill) he wrote a journal before giving his final dance performance at the Suvretta House; and his stay at the Bellevue psychiatric clinic in Kreuzlingen. These historical events, which occurred several years apart, are condensed in Bauer’s installation, creating a subjective reading of Nijinsky’s biography.

Technological and structural aspects of film are the focus of interest in the work of **Dara Friedman** (*1968), which features a wide range of film techniques such as slow-motion and loops. In the two-channel video *RITE* (2014), made for this exhibition, Friedman examines the filmic documentation of *Le Sacre du printemps*. Her experimental set-up is based on the *Sacre* choreography that already featured in her film work *Play* (2013). As such, the work extends the long reception history of *Le Sacre*, the complex composition of which has never ceased to pose challenges for choreography and documentation.

Working together, dance historian and choreographer **Millicent Hodson** (*1945) and art historian **Kenneth Archer** have specialized in reconstructing masterworks of twentieth-century dance and theatre history that were considered lost, such as the repertoire of the Ballets Russes and Ballets Suédois, including a revival of the original version of *Le Sacre du printemps* staged in 1987 with the Joffrey Ballet, with Vaslav Nijinsky’s choreography and with set and costumes after Nicholas Roerich. In addition to the *Sacre* reconstruction, they have also revived Nijinsky’s choreographies for *Till Eulenspiegel* (1916) and *Jeux* (1913) on the basis of painstaking research lasting more than ten years.

For more than two decades, **Karen Kilimnik** (*1955) has been working on an oeuvre defined by the use of iconography drawn from popular culture formats (television series, the yellow press) and from the

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history of art and ballet. Her interest in Romanticism and the Baroque focuses in particular on an engagement with the discourse on kitsch in contemporary art. In her works, figures like Paris Hilton are styled as Marie Antoinette, or Leonardo DiCaprio as a fairytale prince. In 2011, Kilimnik created the set for a production of *Psyche* by the Ballet de l'Opéra national de Paris at the Palais Garnier. In the exhibition Kilimnik shows a photograph of a ballerina in classical ballet dance pose with a "springlike" flower bouquet in her arms. The interpretation stays with the viewer: Is the classical ballet in contemporary dance world again a "rebellious" act?

For more than ten years, **Xavier Le Roy** (*1963) has been among the most important contemporary choreographers for experimental dance. In museum shows of his work, Le Roy, who originally studied molecular biology, has often addressed the issue of representing dance: How can a time-based medium be translated into the duration of an exhibition? How are memory and trace affected by repeated performance? How can a choreographic language be transferred to different bodies? Le Roy's *Le Sacre du printemps* (2007) can also be read in this context. In his solo performance, he takes on the role of the conductor guiding an orchestra through Stravinsky's complex composition. He focuses not only on the conductor's choreographical gestures, which especially in the case of *Le Sacre* are sometimes highly acrobatic, but also on his interaction with the orchestra, a part mimed here by the audience. In this way, he adds a humorous element to this otherwise serious piece.

In his work, **Marko Lulić** (*1972) examines and questions the interplay between politics, power, and aesthetics, and thus the influence of political ideologies on art and culture. In this context, he has frequently examined the modernist architecture of the former Eastern bloc, in which the promise of a better society was often formulated and used for propaganda purposes. His video work *The Sacrifice* (2013) can be read as a choreographic reflection on themes such as violence, victim ("sacrificium"), group identity, and (male) bodies: Both the title and the motif of his film choreography refer thematically to the modernist *Le Sacre du printemps*, but without borrowing its iconography; Lulić also does without Stravinsky's composition. In a mixture of grainy black-and-white footage and several sequences of stills, he examines the theme of violence and ritual.

Dancer, choreographer, and dance teacher **Royston Maldoom** (*1943) earned worldwide acclaim with his complex dance projects involving marginalized communities such as teenagers (often from socially deprived backgrounds), prisoners, and disabled people. In his dance project *Le Sacre du printemps* (2003), created in partnership with the Berlin Philharmonic and brought to the public's attention by the documentary film *Rhythm Is It!* (Thomas Grube and Enrique Sánchez Lansch, 2004), he developed a piece with 250 children and teenagers from various Berlin schools, including "problem schools." With this experimental set-up, Maldoom not only staged the *Sacre* choreography with the largest cast to date, but he also extended the content with its theme of sacrifice to include a sociopolitical dimension.

In her sculptural works, **Sara Masüger** (*1978) addresses the instability and fragility of bodies. The casts, typically made using synthetic plaster, oscillate between abstraction and figuration. For the group of works in this show, Masüger took different choreographic elements from the reconstruction of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (in particular the role of the chosen virgin) as points of departure, translating them into her own strongly existentialist formal idiom. In Masüger's work, the body is in a state of deformation and decay, often displaying breaks in unusual places. Such fractures located away from the point of impact are known in medical jargon as "displaced fractures." In view of Masüger's work, this "displacement" can also be read metaphorically, in the psychological sense discussed by Freud.

Having left the Ballets Russes for good in 1916, **Vaslav Nijinsky** (1889–1950) withdrew with his family to St. Moritz in Switzerland. Between 1917 and 1919, he lived at Villa Guardamunt, where he worked on new choreographies and kept a journal. He also made a significant body of drawings, works distinguished by a geometrical vocabulary, with arcs, ellipses, and circles as the predominant elements. For a long time, these drawings were interpreted as Art Brut, as their making coincided with the period of Nijinsky's mental illness. With hindsight, however, it seems reasonable not to interpret these drawings merely as psychopathological symptoms, since they also contain strong analogies to Nijinsky's choreographic work. Especially the circular structures that play a central part in *Le Sacre du printemps* are used again and again by Nijinsky in his drawings.

Silke Otto-Knapp (*1970) often employs photographic documentations of avant-garde and postmodern dance productions as a point of departure for her painting. Rather than taking an approach based on appropriation, she is interested in a further translation of the surface and of the aspect of the figure in motion, which is renegotiated in these almost monochrome, opaque pictorial spaces. The metallic colors (primarily watercolors and gouache) cause the figures on the canvas to shimmer, suggesting movement. Otto-Knapp's painterly gesture is marked by an elaborate procedure of addition and subtraction. In this exhibition, she is showing two large-format paintings that refer to the original stage sets by Nicholas Roerich, combining them with a series of pictures based on elements of movement from Michael Clark's *Mmm...* (2006). In this way, Otto-Knapp not only links two iconic *Sacre* choreographies, but also establishes a closed system addressing the theme of stage space and figure.

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Christodoulos Panayiotou (*1978) came to prominence with works that are poetic and, frequently, political at the same time. He has a great interest in the role and structural function within society of the culture of remembrance. His works are inspired by signs drawn from ceremonial or ritual performances, which he transfers into the art context. Panayiotou's contribution to the present exhibition consists of several pairs of men's shoes that were sewn out of leather from used handbags. In the exhibition space, the unworn objects are presented on top of shoe boxes. This altar-like installation has a theatrical dimension, with the personalized items becoming instruments for a staging of self-portrayal, the cult of personality, and myth-making – aspects that also feature in the history of Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes. In this shuttling between past and present, Panayiotou reveals an interplay, a moment of transition that is of central importance.

In the early 1970s, while working as camerawoman for filmmakers and artists such as Michael Snow or Chantal Akerman and making her own film works, **Babette Mangolte** (*1941) began to document performances by New York's avant-garde in films and photographs, taking in dance, art performances, and theater plays. She also filmed the premiere of **Yvonne Rainer's** (*1934) *RoS Indexical* (2007) at Documenta 12. Rainer's choreography, written for four women of different ages, refers to Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, inquiring critically and humorously into its nostalgic character and its status as a now-canonical work. As the title implies, the original choreography is broken down into "indexical pictures", making it possible to discuss the piece in fresh terms. In her work, Rainer addresses both the question of the different genres of pictures and the fact that every picture, however revolutionary and scandalous it may once have been, can become iconic.

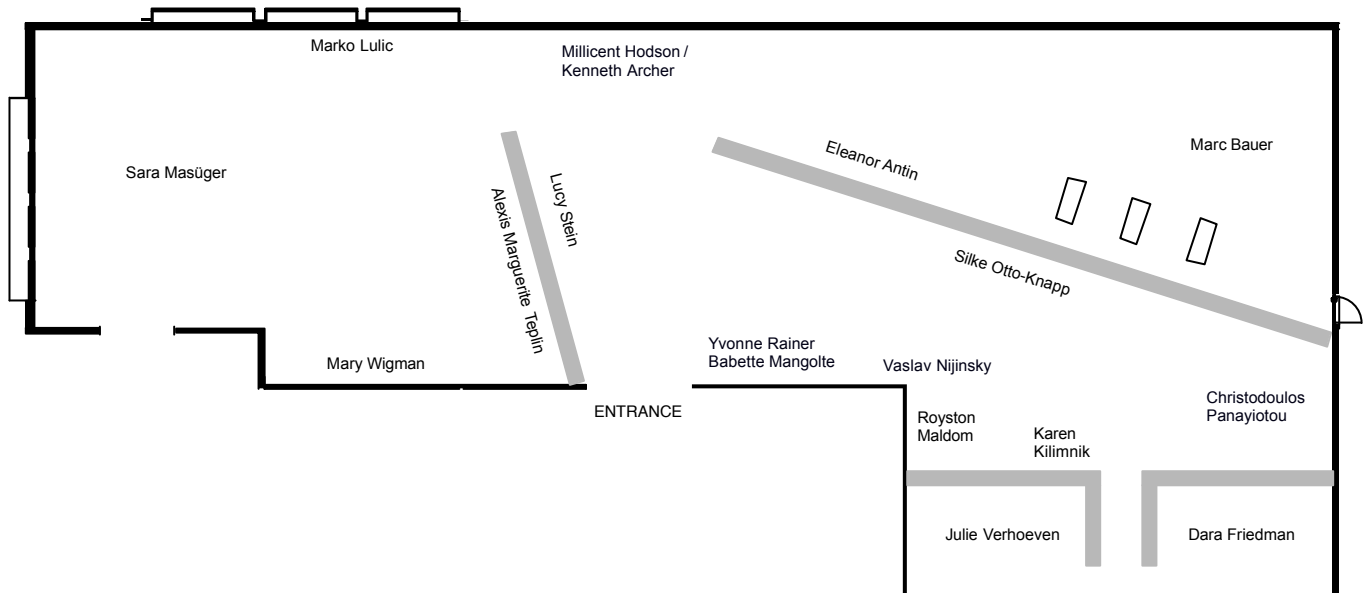
Lucy Stein's (*1979) painting stands out for its distinctive gesture that refers to and incorporates a wide range of currents, styles, and motifs from art history. For this exhibition, Stein has developed a new cycle of pictures that take their cue from Nijinsky's writings, his journal, and his drawings. A central role in the artist's paintings is played by these biomorphic circular structures, that likewise occupy a central place in Nijinsky's choreographic and graphic works. In the exhibition, the series is shown on a silver background (a color now strongly associated with modernism) in a nested, Matryoshka-like hanging.

In her non-figurative paintings, **Alexis Marguerite Teplin** (*1976) often features references to art history, including the Rococo as shaped by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806). In addition to her practice as a painter, she produces texts characterized by dramatic structures, which she commonly presents in the form of performances. As well as engaging with contemporary discourse on painting, these texts address issues of feminism and femininity, for which her paintings often serve as settings. In this exhibition, she shows two painted paper costumes and a monumental canvas whose dimensions are borrowed from a stage set by Russian avant-garde artist Natalia Goncharova (1861–1962) and which is also used as such for Teplin's performance *P and C* (2014).

Julie Verhoeven's (*1969) artistic praxis moves easily between art, fashion, and design. She studied fashion design at the Kent Institute of Art & Design and then worked for various designers including Marc Jacobs. Alongside her activity in the fashion world, she makes art for exhibitions, using a broad range of media including installations, drawings, and video. In these works, she has established an iconographic system distinguished by its eclectic experimentation and by references to art history. In this exhibition, Verhoeven is showing a new video work that takes its cue from Nicholas Roerich's iconic costume designs, which aimed to convey a medieval, "primitive" feeling. Verhoeven takes individual elements from these designs and integrates them into her own system of signs coined from pop culture, creating a comment – by equal measure analytical and critical – on a present where a fascination with the Middle Ages and its associated metaphysics continues to exist.

In 1913, the same year as the premiere of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, German dancer and choreographer **Mary Wigman** (1886–1973) presented her *Hexentanz* (Witches' Dance) for the first time. Although the careers of these two dancers and choreographers could not have been more different, they did pursue similar interests at the same time, including their use of motifs, their tendency toward the archaic, and individual elements of movement like stamping or expressive gestures. Wigman's dance style (strongly influenced by Rudolf von Laban, whom she met in 1913) later became known as New German dance or Expressionist dance. In 1957, Wigman created her *Le Sacre* for the Städtische Oper Berlin, a performance reconstructed in 2013 by Tanzfonds Erbe and the municipal theaters of Osnabrück and Bielefeld. Wigman's approach to the material is characterized by a mixture of choreographic and theatrical elements, borrowing a vocabulary from religious-liturgical culture and blending it with archaic gestures.

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Eleanor Antin

Recollections of My Life with Diaghilev, 1919-1929
1976-1978

Silver gelatin photographs, tinted, watercolor and ink on paper, text panels

30 parts: 24 parts each 35.6 x 27.9 cm,
6 parts each 35.6 x 28.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Marc Bauer

Portrait as a Madman

2014

Pencil and inkjet print on paper

38 parts: 23 parts each 45 x 32 cm, 4 parts each 32 x 45 cm, 11 parts each 32 x 22.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts, Zürich

Sanatorium Bellevue, Kreuzlingen

2014

Lithographic crayon on wall

Ca. 390 x 550 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts, Zürich

Übungen im Wahnsinn. 8 Digitaldrucke verloren in Zeichnungen und Aquarellen zum Ballets Russes
2014

Inkjet print and watercolor on paper, passepartout, portfolio

10 parts: each 45 x 32 cm, 2 parts each 46 x 33 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts, Zürich

Dara Friedman

RITE

2014

Single-channel video projection (HD, color, video, sound)

4:10 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York

Co-produced by Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst

Kenneth Archer/Millicent Hodson

Strawinsky et les Ballets Russes/Le Sacre du printemps

Directed by Denis Caiozzi

2008

Single channel video on monitor (color, sound)
36:47 min.

© Bel Air Media – ARTE France – Mariinsky Theatre - NHK – 2008

Karen Kilimnik

The Fairy Princess Flora in Winterland

2014

Inkjet print, framed

27.3 x 17.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich and 303 Gallery, New York

Marko Lulić

The Sacrifice

2013

Single channel video on monitor (b/w, sound)
11 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Gabriele Senn Galerie

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Royston Maldoom

Rhythm Is It! The Dance Performance (Le Sacre du printemps)
Directed by Thomas Grube and Enrique Sánchez Lansch
2004
Single channel video on monitor (color, sound)
39:30 min.
Courtesy of Boomtown Media, Berlin

Sara Masüger

Ohne Titel
2014
Acrytal
145 x 140 x 55 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Ohne Titel (Liegende)
2014
Acrytal
45 x 180 x 65 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Ohne Titel (Sitzende)
2014
Acrytal
105 x 74 x 72 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Vaslav Nijinsky

Mask
1918/19
Colored pencil on paper
37.7 x 28.3 cm
Courtesy of the Bethlem Art and History Collections Trust

Silke Otto-Knapp

Figure (Bending)
2007
Watercolor on canvas
80 x 80 cm
Private Collection, London

Figure (Half-Bending)
2008
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
59.7 x 44.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and greengrassi, London

Figure (Horizontal)
2009
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
80 x 110 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Köln

Group (Spring)
2006
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
130.2 x 100.3 cm
Collection of Nancy Portnoy, New York

Landscape (Rite)
2013
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
160 x 180 cm
Courtesy of the artist and greengrassi, London

Two Figures (Sitting)
2011
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
100 x 130 cm
Courtesy of the artist and greengrassi, London

Rite of Spring
2013
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
120 x 140 cm
Courtesy of the artist and greengrassi, London

Turning Shadow (Silver)
2009
Watercolor and gouache on canvas
80 x 100.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York

Christodoulos Panayiotou

Ohne Titel
2013/14
Leather, leatherette, fabric, rubber, shoe laces, cardboard boxes
Dimension variable
Courtesy of the artist and Rodeo, Istanbul

Yvonne Rainer/Babette Mangolte

Yvonne Rainer RoS INDEXICAL
2008
Single channel video on monitor (color, sound)
42 min.
Courtesy of the artist and BROADWAY 1602, New York

Lucy Stein

A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 1)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
156 x 136 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 2)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
130 x 115 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 3)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
104 x 90.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

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A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 4)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
78 x 68 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 5)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
52 x 45 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

A Voyage Around My Rice Cake (Matrioshka Painting 6)
2014
Oil, oil stick and spray paint on canvas
26 x 23 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich

Alexis Marguerite Teplin

Marche Sur Place
2014
Oil on linen and metis linen
Ca. 291 x 485 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Mary Mary, Glasgow

Costume P (Lino)
2014
Oil on metis linen and cotton
163 x 76 x 34 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Mary Mary, Glasgow

Costume C (SiSi)
2014
Oil on metis linen and cotton
116 x 92 x 18 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Mary Mary, Glasgow

Julie Verhoeven

Sweating Greens
2014
Single channel video projection (color, sound),
coat hangers, adhesive tape, thread
3:23 min., dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
Co-produced by Migros Museum für
Gegenwartskunst

Mary Wigman

Le Sacre du printemps
Reconstruction: Henrietta Horn (artistic director), Susan Barnett, Katherine Sehnert
Advisory service and support: Brigitta Herrmann, Emma Lewis Thomas, Susanne Linke
1957/2013
Single channel video on monitor (color, sound)
37:27 min.
The reconstruction was made possible by TANZFONDS ERBE (DANCE HERITAGE FUND) / Funding for Artistic Projects Promoting the Cultural Heritage of Dance – an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation.
TANZFONDS ERBE facilitates reconstructions and restagings of 20th-century dance classics.

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