



Press Release

Two great art practices coalesce at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art when Janaina Tschäpe and Ursula Reuter Christiansen's joint exhibition *Das Unheimliche* opens on Friday, 25 June, 2021. The exhibition is comprehensive; it contains more than 150 artworks and embraces small ceramic formats, immersive video installations, and enormous paintings. The exhibition will reveal new perspectives on the practices of both artists as their artworks have not previously been exhibited together. Reuter Christiansen and Tschäpe see an elective affinity between them based on interests, artistic agendas, and tonality. It is this elective affinity, the exhibition will pursue. The exhibition is on view at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art until 5 September, 2021. Additionally, the exhibition is the largest display of Janaina Tschäpe's artworks in the Northern countries.

In Janaina Tschäpe and Ursula Reuter Christiansen's artworks, bodies, motives and categories are transformed, looking different from their recognizable, original appearances. Both artists relate to classical art historic formats such as the landscape and the portrait, but at the same time they push the boundaries in terms of how these formats can appear.

An awareness of history and heritage runs as an undercurrent in each artist's practice and is also the starting point for choice of theme and title for the exhibition *Das Unheimliche*. The exhibition has given a reason to connect the two artists' art practices and to examine the individual artist and gather both older and new artworks under the same roof. Thus, the exhibition presents grand statements from the individual artist, and artworks created with the joint exhibition in mind.

Das Unheimliche is a known cultural theoretical concept that originates from Sigmund Freud's book of the same name from 1919, in which he presents his theory of the uncanny as the reappearance of the familiar in a new form. It is this ambivalence, the interconnection of the ordinary and the strange, a simultaneous attraction and fear, that has sparked Tschäpe and Reuter Christiansen's interest in inserting *Das Unheimliche* as a prism for the exhibition at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art. They have chosen this prism, partly because of a certain tonality that is constant in both practices, but also because of their common German cultural heritage.

Although Tschäpe and Reuter Christiansen have known each other since they met in Hamburg in the 1990's, they have never exhibited together before, nor is the relationship between their artworks obvious when taking their painting practices into account. Reuter Christiansen creates space for an inner emotional life through concentrated explosions, often expressed through figurative or semi-figurative narratives. In Tschäpe's paintings, on the other hand, there is no figuration in the actual expression. Figures and landscapes are, on the contrary, dissolved in abstractions characterized by strokes of colors and surfaces in a dynamic interplay. But their friendship goes back a long way, and the artists themselves have long been aware of a mutual approach to material and underlying inspiration.

For this reason, the elective affinity must therefore be found on a more abstract level where interests and themes are closely linked with the artists' shared background and personal history, it can be traced in their approaches to the performative that runs like an undercurrent in their works. Transformation is a recurring theme in their practice, and is reflected in their approach to media, materials, and scale, as well as in the use of the personal sphere to for general artistic statements. The exhibition *Das Unheimliche*, highlights a number of common elements that reveal the elective affinity between the two artists and open up new perspectives on both practices.

It is an extensive exhibition containing new works, created with the exhibition in mind, as well as artworks from the last two decades. The exhibition shows a wide range in media and materials, as Tschäpe and Reuter Christiansen work in video, watercolor, sculpture, installation, as well as painting.

Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art and the exhibition series, *Elective Affinities*

Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art occupy a significant place in Danish art history and on the contemporary art scene. The building was originally built in 1898 by the groundbreaking artist, photographer, ceramist, and architect J.F. Willumsen. The building is owned by Denmark's oldest artists' association, Den Frie Udstilling (The Free Exhibition), which was established in 1891.

The exhibition *Das Unheimliche* is the first in the exhibition series *Elective Affinities* where two or more artists, who have not previously been regarded as kindred, are put together. In a classic art historian curation, the artists are often categorized through their similarity. It can be a visual similarity, a thematic one, a national one, etc. But historically, this has not always been the case. Back in the 1890's, the exhibition program at Den Frie was arranged by the artists themselves, and guest artists, such as Van Gogh and Gauguin, were invited because the artists saw what could be called an elective affinity between them. With the exhibition series *Elective Affinities*, we open up for this relationship again. And thus, also for exhibitions that provide space to new perspectives on how artistic practices relate to each other.

(Elective affinities: originally a scientific term used to describe the tendency of chemical species to combine with certain substances or species in preference to others; Johann Wolfgang von Goethes use of the term in the novel *Elective Affinities* (also called *Kindred by Choice*), 1809 / da. 1810-11, more generally also based on the metaphor of human passions)

Ursula Reuter Christiansen

Ursula Reuter Christiansen was born in Trier, Germany, in 1943. Ursula Reuter Christiansen graduated from Akademie der Künste in Düsseldorf in 1969 where she studied under professor Joseph Beuys. She married the Danish composer, Henning Christiansen (1932-2008), and in 1969 they settled down together in Askeby on the Danish island, Møn, where Ursula Reuter Christiansen still lives and works today. Reuter Christiansen worked as a Professor at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg from 1992-97, and as Professor of Painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1997-2006. Her work is represented in the collections of SMK National Gallery of Denmark, AROS Aarhus Art Museum, KUNSTEN Museum of Modern Art Aalborg. Selected solo exhibitions include Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; MOCA, Los Angeles; Brandts, Odense m.fl. Furthermore, she represented Denmark at the Venice Biennale with Henning Christiansen in 2001.

Janaina Tschäpe

Janaina Tschäpe was born in 1973 in Munich, Germany and grew up in São Paulo, Brazil. Today, Tschäpe lives and works in New York. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg and a Master in Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts, New York. Tschäpe's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Sarasota Art Museum, Sarasota, Florida; Musée L'Orangerie, Paris, France; the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, Arizona; Kasama Nichido Museum of Art, Kasama, Japan; the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland, and the Contemporary Museum of Art, St Louis. She has been featured in numerous group exhibitions at institutions including The Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork, Ireland; NCA Taipei, Taiwan; Whitechapel Gallery, London; TBA21-Augarten, Vienna, Austria; CCBB, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Centre D'Art Contemporain de Normandie, France; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Nanazawa, Japan; and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, amongst other. Her work can be found in notable public collections including Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, among others. She has completed public commissions in New York City; Miami Beach, Florida; São Paulo, Brazil; and Holbæk, Denmark.

Information about the exhibition

The exhibition *Das Unheimliche* opens Friday, 25 June from 12 PM to 6 PM. On the occasion of the opening, there will be free admission all day.

Exhibition period:

25 June - 5 September, 2021.

The exhibition is curated by Julia Rodrigues in collaboration with Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art.

For further information, please contact Exhibition Coordinator, Laura Gerdes-Miranda at lgm@denfrie.dk or +45 28 34 82 29

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