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# BURLUNGIS

COVEN BERLIN with Yoav Admoni, Irene Fernández Arcas, Samantha Bohatsch, Hang Linton+Laura Lulika

Galerie im Turm  
23.01. – 08.03.2020  
Opening 22.01.2020 | 7pm

The Middle Ages are in our midst, more than ever before. The many TV series, historical novels, video games and fairs that thematically revive the Middle Ages, however, clearly reimagine it as a white, christian and heterosexual period. Conservative nationalists, too, draw on ahistorical and racist fantasies of the epoch in order to justify their notion of a 'pure Europe' and right-wing violence. Their image of the Middle Ages is as imprecise as the constructs found in popular culture. Historical aspects of cultural and spiritual hybridity, transgressive desires, and pre-capitalist landscapes are less apparent – as are queer (hi)stories.

In a process-oriented and participatory exhibition, COVEN BERLIN – together with artists Yoav Admoni, Irene Fernández Arcas, Samantha Bohatsch, Laura Lulika+Hang Linton, and with visitors – creates a new medieval fantasy from a queer-feminist perspective. Galerie im Turm is transformed into BURLUNGIS, a swamp-like and moory landscape which serves as the fertile ground and stage for performative investigations into various constructs of the Middle Ages. Here, popular phenomena such as Live Action Role Playing and fantasy video games are looked at more closely; at the same time their artificial qualities and penchant for play are drawn on in order to generate new fantasies and untold tales.

This world-to-be-filled is framed, to begin with, by an empty stage and a green screen in the midst of a boggy morass. Step by step, this landscape will be playfully navigated via workshops, readings and performances. New narratives, speculative figures, and artefacts will be conjured up, taking filmic form in a video essay that evolves throughout the duration of the exhibition.

The swampy ground of BURLUNGIS is the work of the multi-disciplinary artist **Yoav Admoni**, who works with sculpture and performance at the interface between physical and socio-political landscapes to investigate the production of nature in its various modes of appearance. The bog is an archetype of the european Middle Ages: peasants plow in the bog, surrounded by filth and the risk of infection. Witches live in the bog; the Celts bury their dead there, as well as their butter. It is the muck which taints the Middle Ages in the eyes of enlightenment thinkers, while also lending the epoch its dark and stinky mysticism. *Burl* means moor – and the name of Berlin likely stems from this Polabian expression, used by Baltic-Slav peasants for the swampy morass

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they inhabited in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Certainly, this is not the full picture – as is the case with so much ascribed to this period. The bog of BURLUNGIS is an invitation to exhume and create different narratives and artefacts of the Middle Ages.

The stage of BURLUNGIS is surrounded by **Irene Fernández Arcas'** large-format drawings on canvas of medieval representations of known and unknown women\*. Her flags and heraldry pay homage to non-binary Goddesses\* and the feminine power, witches and dragons that are present in every being. The textiles form a staged world in which witchcraft meets healers and creatures, in which fantasy meets reality – remembering past and new lives.

The resident dramaturg of this world is artist **Samantha Bohatsch**, who works with performance and sound to weave together narratives of female\* characters who are struggling with – and seeking to overcome – internal and external resistance. Together with COVEN BERLIN, for BURLUNGIS she creates hybrid personas compiled from experiences and observations derived from the internet, queer and feminist literature, Middle-Age histories, and pop culture.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, **Laura Lulika und Hang Linton** fabricate costumes in a series of performative sessions titled *Alchemical Creatures and Archaic Garms*. Laura Lulika, also known as yonabout, baby punk and gungeMutha, is a *crip*<sup>1</sup> artist who works with the themes of gender, sexuality, sickness and performativity. Hang Linton is a musician and performer who deconstructs normative understandings of bodies and identities through music, movement and self-made trickster-characters. In an open production process, they draw on aesthetics of the Middle Ages; the garments they create, however, bring bodies and roles to the stage that go beyond normative forms.

Over the six-week exhibition period, **COVEN BERLIN** will inhabit and activate BURLUNGIS, enlivening the stage, inviting guests, and developing spontaneous performances and activities. The queer-feminist collective aims to create spaces between virtual and located networks in which normative structures and understandings of sex, sexuality, and gender are deconstructed, and xenophobia, racism and ableism are resisted. Parallel to the exhibition, the online portal [covenberlin.com](http://covenberlin.com) will publish articles and texts relating to these themes, while the unfolding process in BURLUNGIS will be documented by film.

## WORKSHOPS

The workshop *Excavating the Erotic* investigates the erotic as a form of healing from a Black feminist perspective. **Dr. edna bonhomme** meditates on the modalities of the erotic as a catalyst for change and emancipation. She interweaves the case of Erzulies, a Haitian Voodoo Goddess of erotic love, with pagan healing practices of the medieval period, which were similarly denounced as witchcraft by christian europeans. Building on this, the essay *The Uses of the Erotic: The Power of the Erotic* by Audre Lorde and audiovisual material that highlights Haitian voodoo practices will be read and interrogated together. Altogether, these works will invite to reckon with African diasporic emancipatory archives of care, erotics and pleasure – elements that feature into the cosmology of queer and feminist spaces.

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1 Crip is an activist and self-designated term used by disabled and/or sick people.

In *Recipes from the Archives of Queer Aphrodisia*, **Dr. Luiza Prado** opens an investigation of historical aphrodisiacs in relation to medieval knowledge of healing plants. Together, a speculative archive of aphrodisiacs will be compiled in order to actualize the relationship between nourishment, care work and queer histories. What have queer love and radical forms of care contributed to the process of bringing queer communities into their own in a heteronormative, colonial and patriarchal world?

In her workshop *BY FIRE, BY WATER, BY COMBAT: Deviant Women & Medieval Punishment*, **Ileana Pascalau** focusses on the stigma of the supposed evil nature of femininity\*. The dragon, the fighter and the witch will occupy the stage and tell their stories of the Middle Ages. This is an invitation to deal with those mechanisms that led to the stigmatisation and massive punishment of women in the 15<sup>th</sup> century — but moreover to make acquaintance with the *femmes fatales* of medieval Europe.

## EVENTS

22.01. | 7pm | Opening

08.02. | 11am – 1pm  
*EXCAVATING THE EROTIC*  
Workshop with Dr. edna bonhomme

15.02. | 4pm – 6pm  
*Recipes from the Archives of Queer Aphrodisia*  
Workshop with Dr. Luiza Prado

22.02. | 5pm – 6.30pm  
*BY FIRE, BY WATER, BY COMBAT: Deviant Women & Medieval Punishment*  
Workshop with Ileana Pascalau

07.02. | 14.02. | 21.02. | 28.02. | 2pm – 6pm  
*Alchemical Creatures and Archaic Garms*  
Performative Costume-Making with Hang Linton+Laura Lulika

07.03. | 7pm  
*The Final Joust* with COVEN BERLIN

OPEN STUDIO DAYS | Children's activities may occur, Hildegard von Bingen Dinkel Cookies and Mead may be served, poetry may be read, so cast your eyes to Facebook and Instagram for tidings of spontaneous events.

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