

**Museum der
Kulturen Basel**

Making the World

Lived Worlds



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Introduction

A Collaboration between Kunstmuseum Basel and Museum der Kulturen Basel

During the refurbishment and extension of the Kunstmuseum Basel, a sizeable collection of its old masters featured as guests at the Museum der Kulturen Basel in 2015/2016. The exhibition *Holbein. Cranach. Grünewald – Masterpieces from the Kunstmuseum Basel* was shown in the two-storey gallery called Anchor Room. This room, and especially its unusual height, prompted a rather unusual hanging, allowing a new perspective on both the individual works and the ensemble as a whole to unfold. This perspective extension was also brought about by the show's setting and the unfamiliar house with its quite different exhibitions. This change to the context was frequently addressed on the guided tours offered jointly by staff members of both houses. According to the art historians and anthropologists involved, this kind of border-crossing presentation was both inspiring and enriching, and, in the end, gave rise to the idea of expanding the collaboration from the level of event to the exhibition level.

The aim of the collaboration in the present project was to develop the theme of the exhibition together from scratch. Hence, the members of the joint project team embarked on a fascinating journey, for one thing into the others' specialist field, for the other into the storage rooms of the respective museums. Numerous ideas grew from this exploration, which, however, were quickly discarded again, for a variety of reasons. Mind you, there was one constant that permeated all project outlines: the convergence of the two fields in terms of content as well as visuals. With this collaboration, we are thus taking up the challenge of giving new impetus to the long series of efforts to relate collection and museum sectors that are today perceived as different.

The emergence and growth of separate scientific disciplines in the 19th century inevitably brought with it the separation of museum collections into independent holdings: out of universal museums, which served as homes for everything worth collecting, became specialist museums, including museums of history, art, antiquity, ethnography, natural history, and so forth. This segmentation required criteria by which single objects and collections could be assigned to distinct museums. In the process, artefacts from non-European cultures were allotted to ethnographic museums and thus separated from artworks of the Western world, both institutionally and conceptually. Under the label of "art or context", discussions whether works from non-European cultures were to be assigned rigorously to ethnographic museums or whether they did not rank as artworks after all and therefore belonged into museums of art went on for decades. When, occasionally, the two categories were merged and shown together, for example, in a special exhibition, this usually triggered at times heated discussions with regard to the mode of presentation and whether or not the exhibits were being exploited, implicitly or explicitly, for other purposes such as elevating or exalting Western culture over non-European cultures in the typical colonial spirit of "the West and the rest".

Probably the most famous example to date is the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* curated by William Rubin at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984. The exhibition and the accompanying publication triggered a storm of protest among anthropologists, who seriously questioned whether the show was not simply an attempt to re-appropriate or reincorporate ethnographic objects and artworks for the sake of promoting and celebrating the "Western modernity" project. Further reproaches addressed the reduction of ethnographic objects to their formal features and merely "parading" them

as sources of inspiration for Western artists. A further point referred to the implicit "promises" raised by the title: Critics argued that the term "affinity" should not have been taken in its pure allegorical sense. A genuine understanding of the term affinity would have also appealed to historical, economic and political aspects; this would have approximated a more "authentic" and equal treatment of the works on display. None of the numerous subsequent projects on the subject voiced such a far-reaching claim and none achieved anywhere near the same level of attention.

The problems brought to light by the criticized approach with its implicit Western bias have by no means been resolved; however, they do not deter us from undertaking further experiments in this – hopefully promising – direction. The fruits of our collaboration, that is, the two exhibitions by the title of *Making the World* – the one in the Museum der Kulturen Basel, the other in the Kunstmuseum Basel – need to be viewed as part of this ongoing debate. For us it was important from the start, to avoid a confrontational approach in any form, including the idea of pure juxtaposition, nor do we place emphasis on comparison, not least because comparing the works would call for clear and accountable criteria. Instead, our idea is to unfold possible ways of viewing and understanding the works that result from the relationships that ensue when objects are physically assembled in a shared space and therefore automatically start communicating with each other.

While, in the past, art history and anthropology relied on distinct methodological approaches and procedures, for some time already the two disciplines have been inquiring how humans are intertwined with the world around them: what kind of world do creative individuals imagine and what worldview do they set out from? What intention are they pursuing and what does the respective artefact teach us about the worldview it is based on? What effect on the world does the creation of a work engender, considering that every creative act, even the most minute, inevitably changes the world as the sum of all existing facts and subjective attitudes?

With these questions in mind, the respective curators of both houses undertook numerous excursions to the respective storage rooms, selected works and questioned them, and revisited their appraisals on an ongoing basis. In long and intensive discussions, they carefully and gradually closed in on the topic, step by step and in a constant exchange of opinions. The process demanded the bridging of fundamentally different working methods between anthropology and art history; each had to learn to understand the other's way of seeing things and take into account the resulting premises in terms of implementation. The focus was always on how the selected works related to one another and what kind of dialogue the relationship engendered, but also on how they could be grouped into thematic galleries along with the nature of the dialogue between the galleries.

Now, as an outcome of this meticulous process, both museums are each presenting an exhibition on *Making the World*. Beginning in March 2021, the Museum der Kulturen Basel is showing *Lived Worlds* sectioned into four separate but interrelated galleries: "Relationships", "Orientation", "Traces", and "Imaginations". From November 2021, the Kunstmuseum Basel will focus on *Spiritual Worlds* divided into "Higher beings", "Beginnings", "Transitions", and "Absence". The works were selected according to content-related aspects, thus infusing each individual exhibit with tangible meaning – in addition to its aesthetic and artistic quality. Beyond this, the works develop impact on the strength of their presence, their aesthetic power, and their expressiveness, underpinned by the special nature of the exhibition setting which allows them to unfold their innate powers.

What this actually means, can only be experienced in the exhibition itself: impressions evolve with each step through the galleries, relationships are forged by viewing the works in their given space, dialogues unfold by selecting and highlighting single aspects of the works in their specific assemblage – namely, by each and every visitor. Although the arrangement of exhibits, the exhibition design, the lighting, and other resources tend to influence the mode of interpretation, they should by no means dominate the ensembles.

Acknowledgments

The exhibition looks back on a long lead time. Collaborative projects are undoubtedly worthwhile and extremely enriching – not least because the partners often question the perspective of the other's discipline. But they also demand a different kind of work coordination between the institutions involved, each with its own logic and "way of doing things" which is often determined by the genres of the objects concerned. Against this background, it is all the more remarkable that the two exhibitions could finally be realized – especially since much of the work had to be done under the difficult conditions of the Covid pandemic.

All the more, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those involved in the project. First and foremost, this applies to the project heads in both museums as well as the responsible curators and their associates. Following the selection of works, the loan requests were submitted, discussed in both museums, and, finally, approved. Upon this, the staff in the restoration and design departments were able to get down to work. In the meantime, texts had to be written, edited, proofread, and translated; a marketing concept was developed and subsequently implemented; for the mounting of the exhibition, we were able to rely on the active assistance of the art handling teams. Finally, *Lived Worlds* was launched at the end of March 2021 – albeit once again without an official public opening. Now, all we can do is to hope that the exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel experiences a similarly smooth and focused run-up and installation.

We would like to thank the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, its chairwoman, and the Schaulager staff involved in the project for allowing us to show two of their works in the exhibition. The MKB request submitted at very short notice was processed speedily and in a remarkable "good neighbourly" manner. Our thanks also go to all those who have backed and supported the project as a whole.

Last but not least, we hope that the positive, creative unrest that we experienced during the realization of the project carries over to each and every visitor and that their dialogue with the works generates the same inspiring power that we experienced during the preparations for the exhibition.

Josef Helfenstein, Anna Schmid

Making the World. Lived Worlds

Since time immemorial and across the globe, humans have asked themselves the question: how did the world come to be, what makes it what it is? What is our part in the story? Across all eras and communities, humans have come up with different but often also very similar answers. Individuals as well as groups translated their impressions and experiences into stories, objects, and works of art. Across human history, they have intervened in the course of the world, and attempted to master and exploit it. Thus, it is safe to say that humans have co-shaped the world, leaving many traces behind in doing so. Likewise, the world has moulded the way we are.

The Kunstmuseum Basel and the Museum der Kulturen Basel (MKB) have got together to explore a major and diverse topic in two exhibitions: the shaping of the world by humans. At MKB, the focus is on the intertwinements of human beings and their lifeworlds.

In five galleries, works from the collections of the Museum der Kulturen Basel, the Kunstmuseum Basel, and the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation are set in relation to one another. They shed light on the complex interactions between humans and the environment they inhabit. The focus of attention is on relationships, orientations, traces, and imaginations. We start with the gallery "Cosmos", which also provides a link to the upcoming exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel.

The galleries hinge on how the works are grouped; in other words, relationships and the dialogue between the works are at the forefront.

Cosmos

How do we view the universe? How do we explain the creation of the world?

Three works of art try to provide answers to these questions. Their makers created them at separate times, and relied on different ideas and diverse stylistic means, thus also allowing their own notions and worldviews to flow in.

Cosmic Allegory by Abraham Hondius reflects early Western concepts of the universe: space, time, material, and energy are set in relation to each other in their capacity as constitutive elements. The cherub heads featured on the globe represent the directions of the four winds. Embodiments of dawn and dusk as well as personifications of the new and old world constitute the universe according to the artist's understanding.



Fig. 1
Abraham Hondius, "Cosmic Allegory"; Netherlands,
around 1660/65; oil on canvas; 103.4 × 149 cm;
Kunstmuseum Basel, on permanent loan from Stiftung
zur Förderung niederländischer Kunst in Basel 1982;
Inv. G 1982.31

The Ticuna people of Brazil stretch such painted bark cloths over a wooden wheel. The sun is shown at the centre. Today, the four outer areas are understood to represent the cardinal points and celestial bodies.

The bark cloths act in their role as **cosmic wheels** together with the spiritual being O'ma (Mother of the Wind) on the occasion of a girl's initiation. They protect the girl and her relatives at the moment of greatest vulnerability and while taking a decisive step in life, namely, her social rebirth as a fully-fledged Ticuna woman. Upon initiation, she is assigned a definite place in the Ticuna universe.



Fig. 2
Bark cloth; Ticuna; Brazil, before 1965; bark fibre, colour;
200 × 170 cm; MKB, coll. Borys Malkin, purchased in
1965; IVc 11778

The Balinese painting **The Churning of the Milk Ocean** addresses the salvation and continued existence of the world: in his manifestation as a turtle, Vishnu raised the world mountain from the milk ocean, thus saving it from doom. By that time, the deities and demons had forfeited their immortality. Vishnu suggested coiling the serpent Vasuki around the mountain and jointly pulling at it from both ends, the deities from one end, the demons from the other. In this way, they churned the milk ocean and finally obtained the nectar of immortality, *amrita*.



Fig. 3
The Churning of the Milk Ocean; Kamasan, southern Bali,
Indonesia; 2nd half 20th c.; canvas, pigments;
140 × 130.5 cm; MKB, coll. Peter Horner, purchased in
2006; Ilc 22309

Relationships – Worlds in Exchange

In what kind of relationship networks are we involved? How do we communicate with each other and with otherworldly realms?

Relationships are crucial for shaping the world. They are established and maintained by means of complex systems of interconnection and communication. For one thing, humans exchange ideas, things, beliefs, and aspirations amongst each other; for the other, they maintain relationships with otherworldly realms. Deities, ancestors, and other spiritual beings impact on the world of humans and their wellbeing. Such instances of exchange and belonging often find expression in material objects; they simultaneously represent and embody a particular relationship.

The short film performance **Farafin a ni Toubabou** (The Black Man and the White Man) by Adrien Sina and Mamary Diallo unravels the principle of exchange. The artists visualize aspects of the mechanism of exchange, most of the time in a questioning mode, occasionally spiced with irony, but throughout with reference to the connective nature of exchange, including global entanglement, asymmetric relationships, incomprehension, innovation, exploitation, to name but a few. Some of the items exchanged, but particularly also the arrangement of newspaper clips in the shape of a cross with the title "Le Monde", allude to the exchange of religious ideas and, not least, also to the history of Christian proselytization.



Fig. 4
Adrien Sina & Mamary Diallo, "Farafin a ni Toubabou";
2005–2007; Mali/France; DVD; MKB, purchased from
Adrien Sina in 2010; III 27664.01

This Bwa mask from Burkina Faso was worn by men and women in ceremonies to commemorate the eminent ancestor **Luruya**. According to legend, Luruya was small in size but a master at hunting. He spent days alone in the forest and possessed the gift of speaking with animals.



Fig. 5
Mask *luruya*; Bwa; Leo, Burkina Faso; early 20th c.; wood,
colour; 48 × 21 cm; MKB, coll. Paul Wirz, purchased in
1933; III 7754

Among the Yiman, success at hunting was not a matter of personal prowess alone. Instead, the hunter was also required to establish contact with certain otherworldly beings. The striking **hook figures *yipwon*** played a vital part in this context. They served as spirit repositories and were activated for hunting. Before the hunter was able to kill an animal, its spirit first had to be taken out by a *yipwon* spirit.



Fig. 6
Hunting spirit helper *yipwon*; Yiman; Chimbut, Korewori,
Papua New Guinea; before 1959; wood, colour, snail
shells, cassowary feathers; 266 × 20.5 × 7 cm; MKB, coll.
Alfred Bühler, purchased in connection with the
expedition of 1959; Vb 18266

To be successful, hunters must learn to understand how animals behave. Decoys can be helpful in gaining the trust of the prospective prey, only to outsmart them. The makers of these **decoy ducks** knew how to exploit the gregariousness of these marine birds. By placing the decoys on the water, they enticed the ducks and other migratory birds to approach, thus allowing the hunters to shoot them in large numbers.



Fig. 7
9 decoy ducks from Europe, all held by MKB (VI 9547+48,
VI 37607-10, HM 1974.290a+b).

The twelve apostles were assigned by Jesus Christ to spread the gospel across the world after his death and thus develop and strengthen the Christian community. The Apostle **Saint James the Great**, here shown in a work by a member of the El Greco school, was one of the first disciples to follow Christ's calling. After Christ had died on the Cross, James is said to have proselytized across the Iberian Peninsula. Up to this day, pilgrims travel to Santiago de Compostela on the Way of St James.



Fig. 8
El Greco (School); "Saint James the Great"; Toledo,
Spain; around 1600/04; oil on canvas; 102.4 × 83.2 cm;
Kunstmuseum Basel; acquired in 1935; Inv. 1644

The painting shows a gathering in a forest clearing. Most of those present, some of them have come from afar, are intently listening to the **Sermon of Saint John the Baptist**. Others look distracted. Brueghel himself is among those present, directly facing the viewer.

While experts do not quite agree as to what the picture actually shows, Flemish painting at the time of Brueghel clearly reflects the then nascent zeitgeist: ever more the human being as an individual gravitates to the centre of attention.



Fig. 9

Jan Brueghel the Elder (copy after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), "The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist"; Antwerp, Belgium; around 1598; oil on oak panel; 114.6 × 165.2 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased with means of the Rudolf Bleiler bequest in 1858/59; Inv. 139

Among the Iatmul, a clan's primeval ancestor is believed to ensoul the **orator's stool teket**. The ancestor's presence is imperative for meetings and discussions in the men's house. During a debate, the speaker stands behind or next to the stool. The ancestral presence lends the debates as well the relations being discussed the required gravity and momentousness.



Fig. 10
Orator's stool teket; Iatmul; Mandanam, Sepik,
Papua New Guinea; before 1930; wood, colour;
158 × 50 × 52 cm; MKB, coll. Felix Speiser-Merian,
purchased in 1930; Vb 9403

In Christianity, angels serve as messengers of God. The painting fragment **Three Hovering Angels** probably made up part of the right panel of a wall altar whose middle panel showing the crucifixion of Christ is today in the Hessische Landesmuseum in Darmstadt. Who the three angels in their flowing blue robes and displaying different gestures actually are and what they are announcing remains unknown. Possibly they originally featured above a further holy figure related to the central crucifixion scene such as, for example, Saint Veronica.



Fig. 11
Master of the Monis altar (in the milieu of the Master of the Housebook), "Three Hovering Angels";
Germany; around 1490; mixed technique on fir wood;
29.1 × 37.9 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by Emilie
Linder in 1862; Inv. 431

Among the Iban of Borneo, the **hornbill *burong kenyalang*** belongs to the "upper world". The bird is regarded as a divine messenger, as a ruler of destiny, as the protector of warriors, in addition to being the primeval ancestor of all Iban. According to belief, the hornbill mediates between the deity Singalang Burong and the world of humans, who venerate him in ceremonies. For this purpose, they mount carved hornbills on long poles who then relay messages to the "upper world".



Fig. 12
Hornbill *burong kenyalang*; Iban; Borneo, Malaysia;
around 1950; wood, colour; 98 × 220 × 37 cm; MKB, coll.
August Flick, purchased in 1994; Ilc 21388

In the face of sickness or danger, Catholic believers frequently pray to saints for protection, often with the help of **consecrated protective notes and benedictions** which they carry on them or deposit in their houses and stables. They bear evidence to how people cope with difficult situations and try to influence the course of events in their favour.



Fig. 13
42 protective notes, devotional pictures, and pilgrimage
images; all held by MKB

In many areas, masks are ascribed with special powers. The Suku of the Democratic Republic of the Congo create terrifying masks which perform in various contexts, for example, at boys' circumcision ceremonies, in healing sessions, or in connection with weather magic. The **old man** had the paramount task of protecting the community against all forms of danger. In return, he demanded offerings.



Fig. 14
Mask *kakuungu*; Suku, Tsambotseke, Democratic Republic of the Congo, before 1939; wood, colour, plant fibre, fur, metal; 125 × 90 × 40 cm; MKB, coll. Hans Himmelheber, purchased in 1939; III 1358

The people living in the western part of the island of Borneo carve so-called *pantak* figures after the death of an important member of the community. The *pantak* serve as repositories for the souls of the deceased. Their spiritual presence provides protection and ensures wellbeing for the living community.



Fig. 15
Ancestor figure *pantak*; Bidayuh, western Borneo,
Indonesia; early 20th c.; wood, beads; 82 × 69 × 9 cm;
MKB, coll. Peter Horner, purchased in 1997; Ilc 21398

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the Kota people of present-day Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo placed **guardian figures *mbulu ngulu*** above baskets containing the bones of prominent ancestors. These reliquaries were offered prayers and sacrifices in the hope that the ancestors would exert a favourable influence on the people's destiny.



Fig. 16
Guardian figure *mbulu ngulu*; Kota, Gabon; 20th c.; wood,
copper/brass foil; 51.2 × 31.5 cm; MKB, coll. Ernst and
Annemarie Vischer-Wadler, bequest 1995; III 26692

According to the belief of the Baule people, a human being, prior to his birth, lives with his entire family in the netherworld to where he or she returns after death. During life on earth, the connections to the beyond are never severed. **Carved figures** represent the bodies of otherworldly family members on earth. They are venerated in private and, in return, aid their relatives in all situations in life.



Fig. 17a
Male figure; Baule, Ivory Coast; 20th c.; wood, traces of colour; 57.5 × 12 × 13 cm; MKB, coll. Ernst und Annemarie Vischer-Wadler, bequest in 1995; III 26601



Fig. 17b
Female figure; Baule, Ivory Coast; 20th c.; wood, plant fibre, traces of colour, glass beads; 51.6 × 7 × 7 cm; MKB, coll. Hans Röthlingshöfer, bequest in 1995; III 26601

After a hard day's work, alpine herdsmen chant a blessing across the evening mountainscape in which they invoke God and a range of saints to protect them and their animals. In order for their blessing to carry over a long distance and cover the whole alp, the herdsmen use so-called **Vollen**. Vollen are milk funnels and, in this context, serve the same function as a megaphone, that is, to amplify the voice. During the lockdown in connection with the Covid pandemic in spring 2020, the vicar of the Zurich Grossmünster sent out a blessing and prayer across the city, using a milk funnel of this kind.



Fig. 18
5 Vollen (milk funnels) and one Alpine blessing from
Switzerland, all held by MKB (VI 15966, VI 15966, VI 4142,
VI 7662, VI 9432, VI 19863, VI 43170)

The **tree of life *gunungan*** marks the beginning and end as well as any intermission in Javanese and Balinese shadow play performances. The tree stands for the universe and human life as such. It represents the world mountain, the place of life on earth, as well as crossings to other worlds.

Shadow plays serve the purpose of both entertainment and instruction. At the same time, each performance is a ritual that connects human beings with the supernatural world and indicates where the supernatural is present on earth.



Fig. 19
19 shadow play figures *gunungan* from Indonesia; all held
by MKB

Orientation – Moving through Worlds

How do we represent the world? What means do we have to help us find our bearings, both geographically and mentally?

Mobility is pivotal to all human beings. We travel across space in mental as well as physical terms; we try to find our way through both the real and the imagined world.

Illustrations, maps, and charts are abstract constructs that help us find our bearings. Their makers actively translate their surroundings into a different medium. The process is informed by perceptions and notions and based on man's attempt to create an order that relates to him directly. This raises questions as to the available resources, as to what perspectives and other projections are pertinent, and with regard to the issue of decoding.

Paul Klee's **Rich Harbour (Picture of a Journey)** leaves much room for interpretation. But the title offers a clue: the spatial effect conveyed by the arrangement of lines and surfaces comes like an invitation to search for tangible items (ship, harbour, water, etc.). At the same time, the painting can be understood as a point of departure in intellectual terms – after all, Klee's journeys to countries like Egypt and Tunisia had a distinct impact on his abstract artistic oeuvre.



Fig. 20
Paul Klee, "Rich Harbour (Picture of a Journey)";
Switzerland; 1938; oil and paste on newspaper on burlap;
75.4 × 165 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by
Klee-Gesellschaft in 1948; Inv. 2212

In **Mardayin design at Milmilngkan**, the Australian artist John Mawurndjul makes reference to the secret and sacred Mardayin ceremony by including in the picture patterns of body paintings and hidden clues to sacred sites. Non-initiated viewers may look at the painting but are unable to grasp its true contents. For those with the necessary knowledge, the painting not only connects the past with the present and the future, it also instils meaning into the environment they live in.

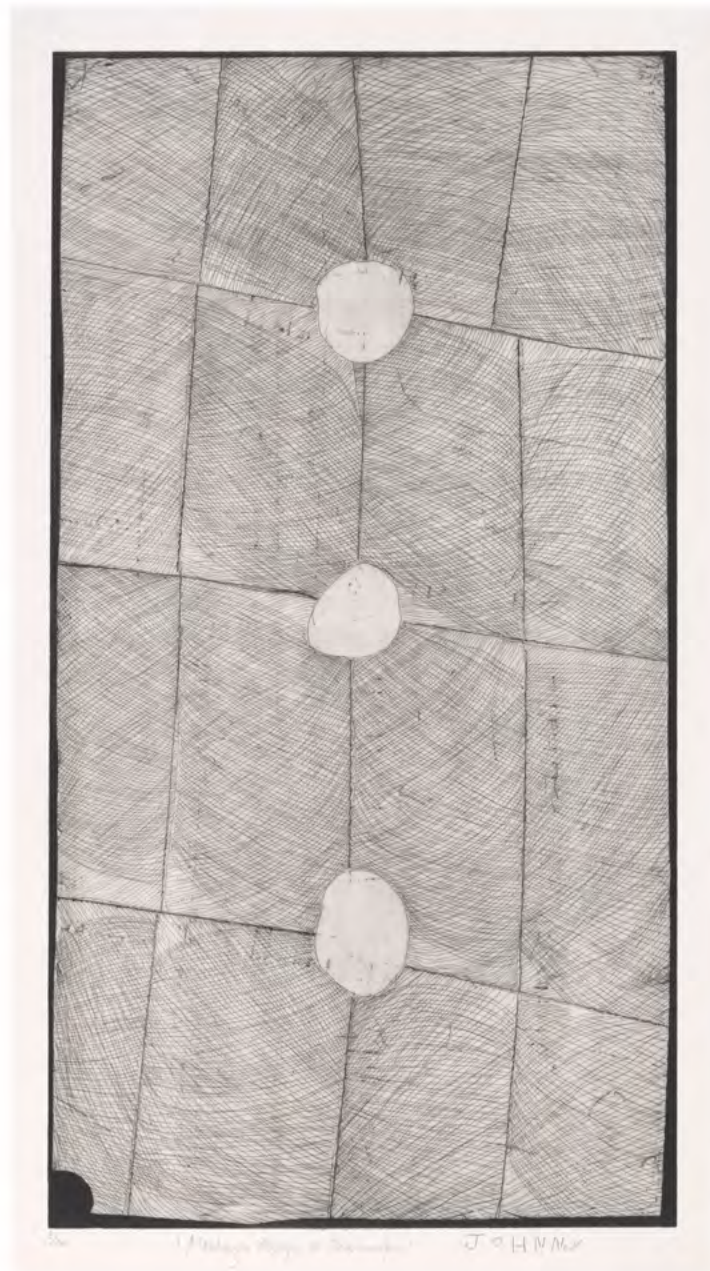


Fig. 21

John Mawurndjul "Mardayin design at Milmilngkan";
Milmilngkan, Northern Territory, Australia; 2004; graphic
print on paper; 76 × 56.5 cm; MKB coll. Christian
Kaufmann, purchased from Maningrida Arts & Culture in
2004; Va 1430

In his capacity as the patron saint of travellers, the giant **Christopher** stands for the overcoming of obstacles in rugged terrain. According to legend, a hermit once told Christopher to serve God from then on by using his immense body strength to carry travellers across a river. One day he took a young child on his shoulders only to notice that the boy became ever heavier the deeper the water became. When he finally reached the other side, the child revealed to him that he had not only just borne the weight of the entire world on his shoulders but also the One who had created the universe: it was the Christ child.



Fig. 22
Konrad Witz, "Saint Christopher"; Germany; around
1435/45; mixed technique on oak wood; 101.5 × 81 cm;
Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by August La Roche-
Burckhardt in 1868; Inv. 646

The view of **Lhasa and the Losar Festival** is a combination of panorama picture and map. The focus of this scroll painting is on the most important temples in the Tibetan capital and its surroundings. Particularly during the Tibetan New Year festival *losar*, myriads of pilgrims travel to Lhasa to make offerings at as many sacred sites as possible in order to gain spiritual merit. Maps like these help people to find their way around.



Fig. 23
Thangka "View of Lhasa and Losar Festival"; Tibet;
around 1900; pigments, cotton, silk, brocade, metal,
wood; 168 × 205 cm; MKB, coll. Gerd-Wolfgang Essen,
purchased in 1998; Ild 13863

The **map of Tamazulapan** conveys geographical, legal, and political information as recorded in 1733. Drawings and inscriptions in Mixtec, Chocholtec, and Spanish help users to find their way around. The map indicates rights to mills, water resources, and communal boundaries as well as paths that lead to important buildings and neighbouring settlements.



Fig. 24
Mapa de Tamazulapan (Lienzo Vischer III); Tamazulapan del Progreso, Oaxaca, Mexico; 1733; cotton, colour; 210 × 156 cm; MKB, coll. Lukas Vischer, gifted by his family from his bequest in 1844; IVb 756

Micronesian navigators relied on **stick charts *mattang*** to find their bearings at sea. Before setting sail, they studied them to work out the position of islands in the ocean and what conditions were to be expected at sea. However, they did not carry the charts with them. With the aid of the stick charts and in combination with their knowledge of the stars, the seafarers were able to pinpoint even the smallest atolls in the endless Pacific Ocean.

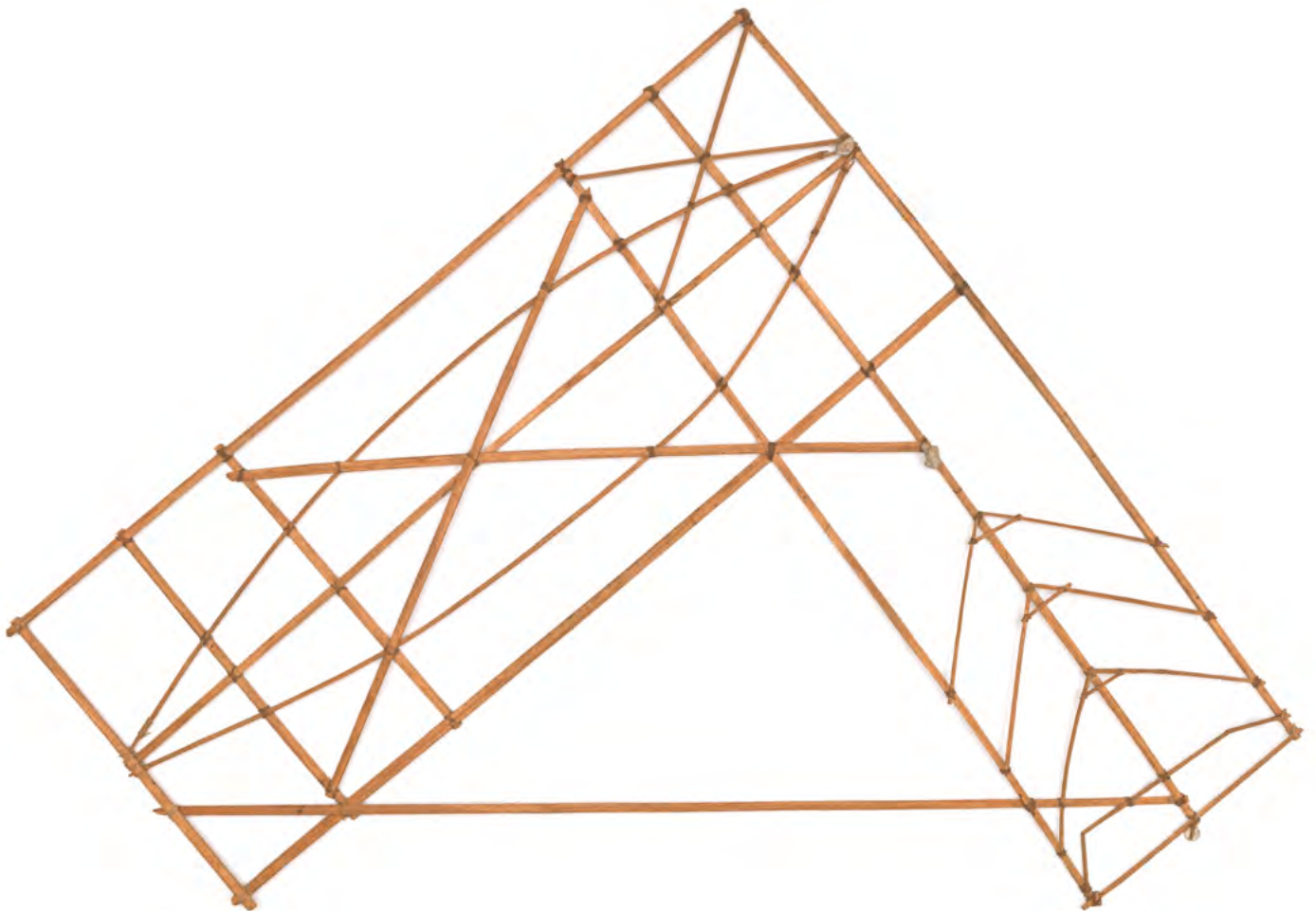


Fig. 25
Stick chart *mattang*; Marshall Islands, Micronesia; before 1903; wood, shell, pumice; 114 × 119 cm; MKB, acquired in exchange from the Museum Natur und Mensch Freiburg im Breisgau in 1903; Vc 201

With the aid of the **jug chomo**, members of the Shipibo-Conibo are able to find their bearings not only in the tangible but also in the spiritual world. The undecorated part of the vessel stands for the underworld, while the decorated, middle part represents the world of humans. The upper section with its filigree patterns symbolizes the transition to the upper world. Form and motifs are to be understood as a representation of the Shipibo-Conibo microcosm, a manifesto of their identity in a globalized universe.



Fig. 26

Manioc vessel; Shipibo-Conibo; Bethel, Peru; before 1969; clay, colour; 27 × 38 cm; MKB, coll. Gerhard Baer, purchased in connection with the expedition of 1968/69; IVc 13589

In **Landscape near Visp**, Niklaus Stoecklin does not hide the traces of industrialization: apart from the high mountain peaks that surround the village, one also spots trainlines and factories. Although Stoecklin is stylistically oriented towards Cubism, his attention to detail calls to mind the artist's cartographic approach to painting.



Fig. 27
Niklaus Stoecklin, "Landscape near Visp"; Switzerland;
1920; oil on canvas; 51.5 × 59 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel,
acquired with means of the Birmann-Fonds in 1933;
Inv. 1609

Traces – Changing the World

What traces do we leave behind in the world? What kind of traces do events leave behind in landscapes, life, and memories? What impact does change have? And, how do we process formative experiences?

Agriculture is certainly one of the cornerstones of human existence. However, since the age of industrialization with all its innovations, the significance of agriculture has been on the wane in many areas. Still, the large majority of our food is produced by agriculture. This has left visible traces in the world: large parts of our planet have been transformed by human hand.

In agriculture, the **plough** is used to prepare the land for planting crops. Today, roughly a third of the land area is agriculturally exploited. While, nowadays, large-scale, mechanized monocultures dominate the scene in many parts of the world, most of the agricultural production once used to be in the hands of small-scale family holdings, at least up to the industrial revolution. The development of the plough marked the beginning of intensive agricultural production: or, put differently, the plough stands for the shaping of the world by human hand.



Fig. 28
13 ploughs from across the globe, all held by MKB

In **Grain Harvest**, Robert Zünd suppresses all signs of industrialization, depicting pure idyll instead. Yet, uncertainties possibly endanger the picturesque scene. Do the dark clouds herald rain and therefore a threat to the harvest?



Fig. 29
Robert Zünd, "Grain Harvest"; Switzerland; after 1859; oil
on canvas; 61 × 81 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, bequest of
Benedikt and Päuli Christ-Steinegger in 2007;
Inv. G 2007.20

Apart from scenes of everyday village life, **Warli paintings** describe the various steps in rice cultivation, from planting to harvesting to storage. Jivya Soma Mashe is one of the best-known artists among the Warli, a people living north of the capital Mumbai in the Indian state of Maharashtra. The paintings, which were originally designed as murals, rely on a range of recurring motifs: the circle is associated with the sun and the moon, triangles represent trees and mountains. The paintings are an integral part of numerous rituals; a wedding, for instance, cannot be held without a picture of the fertility goddess Palghat.



Fig. 30
Warli-Painting by Jivya Soma Mashe; Dhahanu,
Maharashtra, India; 20th c.; 78 × 58 cm; paper, rice paste
pigment; MKB, purchased from the Gallery Chemould in
1993; Ila 10935

In south-eastern Sierra Leone, Kissi and Mende farmers working in their fields once discovered large assemblages of human and animal figures made of soapstone. Little is known about their original function and meaning. Both groups went on to integrate the **figures** in their own respective material culture. While the Kissi venerated them as ancestor figures, the Mende employed them as tutelary figures to guard and nurture their rice crops.



Fig. 31
Figure *nomoli* or *pomda*; Mende or Kissi; Sierra Leone;
before 1901; soapstone; 18 × 14,5 × 7,5 cm; MKB, coll.
Crisinel, purchased in 1901; III 1365

Rice is one the world's most important staple foods. In many areas it is cultivated on terraced fields. In the Bali tradition of agriculture, the rice plant is conceived as an animate, female being and treated with special reverence: it is regarded as the embodiment of the **goddess Dewi Sri**, the source of all life and the guarantor of fertility and wellbeing. As for humans, celebrations are held for rice plants to mark the transition from one stage in life to the next.



Fig. 32

Rice goddess Dewi Sri; Bali, Indonesia; end of 19th / early 20th c.; wood, colour; 54.5 × 16.5 × 16 cm; MKB, coll. Ernst Schlager, gifted by Georg André Schlager in 2001; Ilc 21678

In **Landscape in the Ticino**, Werner Neuhaus translates the view from his studio in the village of Castel San Pietro into an intense and colourful interplay of lines and surfaces. He composes fields, houses, trees, and paths in a strongly abstracted manner, but without obscuring them completely. The traces of human activity remain clearly discernible.



Fig. 33
Werner Neuhaus, "Landscape in the Ticino"; Switzerland;
1925; tempera on canvas; 110.5 × 140.5 cm;
Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by Mrs Elka Spoerri in 1974;
Inv. G 1974.15

Despite all our scientific and technical achievements, we are still subject to nature: Volcanic eruptions, storms, earth and seaquakes, avalanches, or forest fires have disastrous, long-lasting or even irreversible consequences for human populations and their environments.

The **Earthquake in Basel in 1356** reduced large parts of the town to rubble. In the painting's background we recognize the severely damaged Basel Minster. At centre, the bishop is blessing the dead. Traces of the event are still to be found in the cityscape today. For one thing, there are hardly any buildings from the time before the earthquake, for the other, when the cathedral was rebuilt it was equipped with only two instead of the original five spires.



Fig. 34

Ernst Stückelberg, "The Earthquake in Basel in 1356";
Switzerland; 1886; oil on canvas, 185.5 × 344.5 cm;
Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired with means of the
Birmann-Fonds in 1886; Inv. 599

Towering above these Balinese rice fields is the mighty volcano **Gunung Agung**. The eruption of 1963/64 cost many lives, destroyed roughly 500 square kilometres of fertile land, and wiped out numerous villages. The last eruptions date from 2017 and 2018 but, luckily, they did not cause too much damage.

Ketut Togog's ink painting is based on a work by the Basel artist Theo Meier, who lived in Bali for many years. Meier encouraged young Balinese artists to experiment with new materials and techniques. The picture also stands for the exchange between traditional Balinese art and new international art trends.



Fig. 35

Ida Bagus Ketut Togog, "Goenoeng Agoeng", painted after an oil painting by Theo Meier; Bali, Indonesia; 1941; paper, ink; 51 × 47 cm; MKB, coll. Ernst Schlager, gifted by Georg André Schlager in 2001; Ilc 21795

We human beings are the greatest threat to ourselves and the world we inhabit. We seem to be bent on destroying our natural environment, while wars bring chaos and destruction to countless communities. The thirst for power and political influence, the taking of lands, and the use of military force to gain ascendancy all leave their mark on people and landscapes. Since time immemorial, artists have lent expression to these experiences in their work.

The ink drawing **A Battle in the Village of Darwati** by Ida Bagus Ketut Diding addresses an episode in the Indian Mahabharata epic. The scene depicts the fratricidal war of the Yadava clan and the sinking of the city of Dvaraka/Darwati in the sea. In this war, Krishna also loses his life upon which the "good" warring party retreats from the world. What happens when familiar structures implode?



Fig. 36

Ida Bagus Ketut Diding, "A Battle in the Village of Darwati"; Batuan, Bali, Indonesia; 1937; paper, ink; 47.5 × 36 cm; MKB, coll. Ernst Schlager, gifted by his family from his bequest in 1971; Ilc 16667

Hartmannsweilerkopf is a mountain top in the south-eastern foothills of the Vosges. In World War I it was the scene of heavy fighting between French and German troops. Well preserved trenches and grass-covered shell craters bear evidence of the battle to this day. The entire region of the Upper Rhine Plain is marked by such relics of war, and nearly every village boasts a monument in remembrance of WW I. In Lotti Kraus' portrait of the war-ravaged land, shell craters and an oversized plant stem covered in sharp thorns, reminiscent of a rifle, call to memory the desolation of an entire region, many traces of which are still discernible today, more than a hundred years on.



Fig. 37
Lotti Kraus, "The Hartmannsweilerkopf"; Switzerland;
after 1940; oil on canvas; 65 × 45 cm; Kunstmuseum
Basel, acquired with means of the Birmann-Fonds 1985;
G 1985.17

With the beginning of military dictatorship in Chile in 1973, women began to sew so-called *arpilleras*. In this age of suppression, working jointly on such patchworks was a way for people to come to terms with the loss of beloved relatives. Through church organizations, *arpilleras* were sold across the world, for one thing to collect money for the bereaved families, for the other, to draw attention to the ongoing injustice. *Arpilleras* are used in South America to this day for the purpose of coming to terms with all kinds of disasters.



Fig. 38

Arpillera; Conchali, Chile; around 1985; jute, cotton, synthetic cloths and yarn; 34 × 45 × 1.5 cm; MKB, coll. Heinrich and Marlyse Thommen-Strasser, gifted in 2019; IVc 27090

In Afghanistan and in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran, the war that has been raging in the area for forty years are addressed in pictorial rugs. The dominant motif on this **war rug** is, next to tanks, helicopters, and hand grenades, a Kalashnikov automatic rifle. Many Mujahideen show pride in having captured these weapons from their Soviet enemies.

The pictorial rug is like a silent witness to the arsenal of weapons deployed in this conflict. What do arms suppliers but also viewers associate with this panopticon of war? Suffering or heroic deeds?



Fig. 39

War rug; Afghanistan; end of 20th c.; wool;
93 × 71.1 × 0.8 cm; MKB, purchased on eBay from
radioflyer77 in 2016; Ila 11527

Time and again, the artist duo Fischli/Weiss succeeded in drawing the viewers' attention to ordinary everyday things and, at the same time, highlighting their uniqueness. The work **Untitled** consists of a mass of black, moulded rubber. Sadly, the work is germane to today's situation as its colour and structure immediately call to mind the destruction of nature through wildfires, forest blazes, and global warming.



Fig. 40
Peter Fischli/David Weiss, "Untitled"; Switzerland; 2005;
moulded rubber; 100 × 100 × 165 cm; collection of the
Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, on permanent loan to
Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel; H 2005.02

The threat to nature by humans is a topic that Peti Brunner repeatedly addresses in his art. Environmental pollution is man-made and transforms the essence and habitability of the world radically. It has the capacity to destroy the livelihood of countless people and turn landscapes into useless wastelands. In his work **Untitled**, Brunner confronts us with an intense and haunting close-up view of the wounded world we share.



Fig. 41
Peti Brunner, "Untitled"; Switzerland; 1987; gouache,
watercolour, dispersion and plant paints on paper on
cotton; 160 × 255 cm; collection of the Emanuel
Hoffmann Foundation, on permanent loan to Öffentliche
Kunstsammlung Basel; H 1989.04

Tingatinga paintings originated in Tanzania in the 1960s and were named after the man who conceived them, Edward Saidi Tingatinga. Athumani Nipela's work conjures up a binary world divided into two separate spheres, nature and culture. In the upper part of the picture, wild animals are attacking people, which could be seen as a reversal of the actually reigning power relations. In the lower part, a car accident disrupts the balance in a village community.



Fig. 42
Tingatinga painting by Athumani Nipela; Tanzania; 1996;
canvas, colour; 89 x 89 cm; MKB, gifted by Helvetas in
1996; III 26892

Imaginations – Worlds of Thought and Fantasy

What kinds of worlds and places do we come up with in our imagination? By what means do we create images of spaces of contemplation and vision? How are these ideas and fantasies translated into works of art? And how do we as viewers react to these stimulations?

Some artists create mystical realms and fantasy worlds; others are drawn to abstraction, and design complex and surreal pictorial worlds.

Tony Oursler is particularly concerned with the impact of the media world. However, this work can also be interpreted as a commentary on communication as such. An aperture in the irregular red surface of **Redjelloblue** represents a moving, inarticulately speaking mouth. While the title could be seen as a homage to Barnett Newman, the question remains: what is the mouth telling us? The inarticulate sounds let our imagination run wild!



Fig. 43
Tony Oursler, "Redjelloblue"; USA; 2007; aluminium,
acrylic paint, video; 116 × 138 × 12 cm; MKB, purchased
from Lehmann Maupin in 2007; VI 70261

During his time at the Bauhaus in Dessau, Lyonel Feininger created a cubist-geometrical street view called **Illuminated Windows II**. For many people living in urban spaces he depicted a real world: a dreary street of tenement houses, a daily experience for many. However, in this case he transforms the dismal looking tenement blocks into a harmonious, almost romantic scene.



Fig. 44
Lyonel Feininger, "Illuminated Windows II"; Germany;
1932; oil on canvas; 43.2 × 72.2 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel,
bequest of Dr h.c. Richard Doetsch-Benziger, Basel
1960; Inv. G 1960.19

At the beginning of his artist career, Wassily Kandinsky focused heavily on figurative landscapes before turning away to the more abstract. In **Heavy Red** he composed an interplay of abstract colours and surfaces. In his view, colours and forms not only trigger optical but also acoustic stimuli. To him, the colour red was a powerful force with diverse effects, depending on the mixing ratios.



Fig. 45
Wassily Kandinsky, "Heavy Red"; Germany; 1924; oil on
cardboard; 58.7 × 48.7 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, bequest
Dr h.c. Richard Doetsch-Benziger, Basel 1960;
Inv G 1960.20

The pilot, painter, and explorer Percy Trezise was intensively engaged with Australian Indigenous art. With **Life in the Rainforest** he created a world marked by plenty and growth. The people who inhabit this world only become apparent upon second sight. The triptych reflects a non-Aboriginal Australian's vision of Aboriginal life.



Fig. 46
Percy Trezise, "Life in the Rainforest"; Australia; before
2005; oil on wood fibreboard; triptych, each panel
150 × 121 cm; MKB, coll. Anthony und Jovita Bliss,
gifted in 2016; Va 1467

The women dyers who created this cloth have transformed their place of residence – Ibadan in Nigeria – into an abstract image with the aid of resist-dyeing. The columns of Mapo Hall, the city's town hall, feature as a recurrent motif. The title of this cloth with its different patterns is **Ibadandun**, which means "Ibadan is a happy place".



Fig. 47
adire eloko cloth; Yoruba; Ibadan, Nigeria; before 1973;
cotton, indigo, batik technique; 179 x 196 cm; MKB, coll.
Renée Boser/Bernhard Gardi, purchased in connection
with the 1973-75 expedition; III 20096

In **Day Before One**, Barnett Newman, renders an image of the world before creation. The sweeping use of the colour blue generates an abstract image which, together with the work's title, alludes to a condition beyond the pictorially representable.



Fig. 48
Barnett Newman, "Day Before One"; 1951; USA; oil on
cotton; 334.7 × 127.3 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by
Schweizerische National-Versicherungs-Gesellschaft on
the occasion of its 75th anniversary (1958) 1959; Inv.
G 1959.16

Made Wianta initially trained in classical Balinese painting. Later he found inspiration in the art of classical modernism, above all in Surrealism. This influence marked his style of art profoundly. In **Time Travel**, Wianta creates an imaginary place in a different time sphere which, at the same time, reminds us of familiar urban sights, namely a bird's eye view of street canyons and towering building facades.

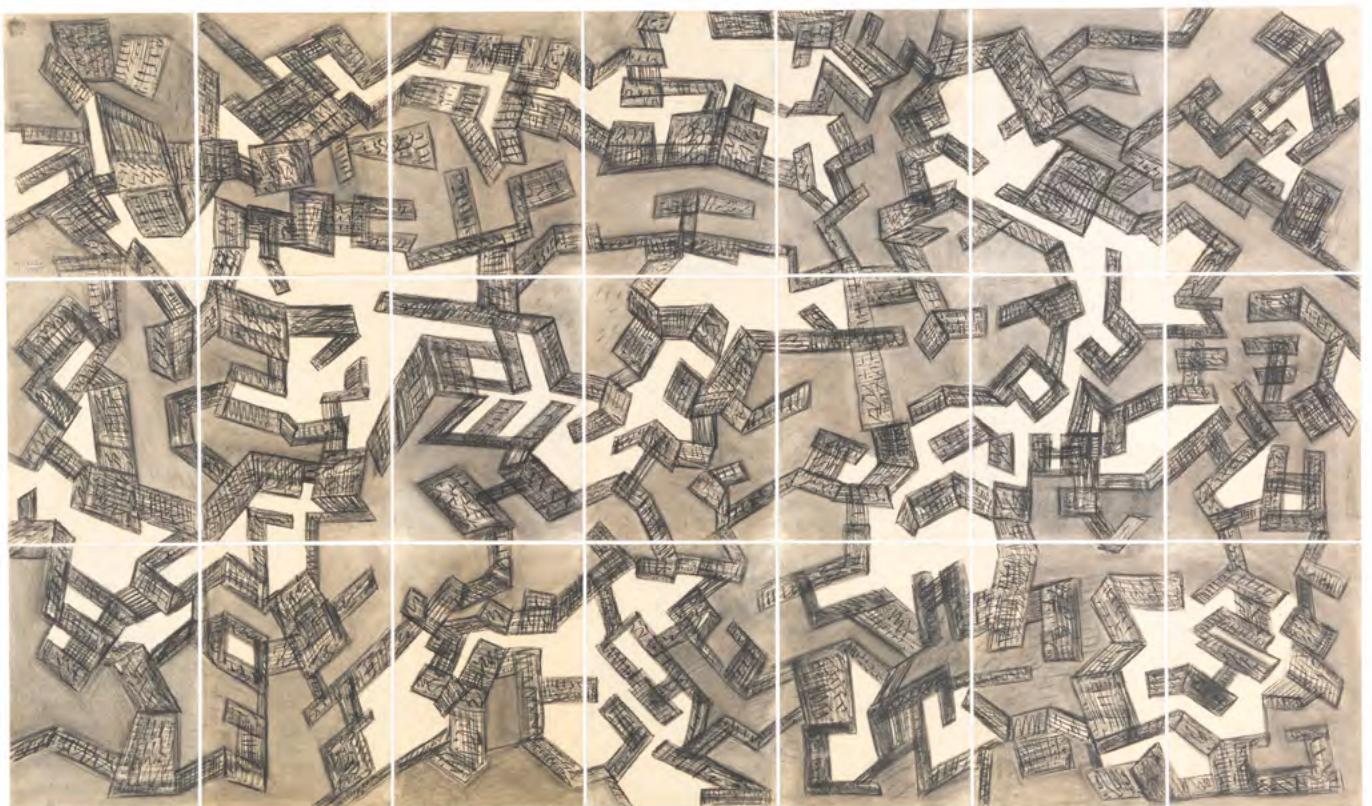


Fig. 49
Made Wianta, "Time Travel"; Bali, Indonesia; 1997;
charcoal on paper; 124 × 209 cm; MKB, gifted by the
artist in 1997; Ilc 25382

The motifs on **lliklla shoulder wraps** provide insight into the cosmological ideas of the Q'ueero Quechua people: The four fields stand for the four provinces of the former Inka empire Tahuantinsuyo. The bands featuring zig-zag patterns probably represent mountain peaks, which form a distinct feature of the surrounding landscape.



Fig. 50
Shoulder wrap; Pitumarca, Cuzco, Peru; before 1980;
wool; 104 × 96 cm; MKB, coll. Valentin Jaquet, gifted in
2012/2013; PE 403

The large majority of so-called *bogolanfini* cloths, which were traditionally dyed with fermented mud, come from villages of the Bamana people. The various signs are ascribed different meanings which, however, only those with the requisite knowledge understand.

Mud dyeing experienced an upturn as well as an innovative push in the late 1970s. Young artists created new visions of *bogolanfini*. The urban creations captured the essence of the time and seized the tourist market as well as the art and fashion worlds in a flash. In Mali itself, they lent expression to the pride felt about national culture and identity well into the 1990s.



Fig. 51
Textile *bogolanfini*; Bamako, Mali; 2000; cotton;
188 × 116.5 cm; MKB, coll. Bernhard Gardi, purchased in
2000; III 27186

The oeuvre of Max Ernst is informed by innovation and renewal throughout. Time and again he developed new techniques of applying colour. In his surreal work **Father Rhine**, Max Ernst painted the legendary river god with help of the so-called decalcomania technique. For Ernst, the technique itself was an allegory for the river which both connects and separates.



Fig. 52
Max Ernst, "Father Rhine"; France; 1953; oil on canvas;
114 × 165.2 cm; Kunstmuseum Basel, gifted by Frau Dr
Carola Giedion-Welcker in the sense and remembrance
of Prof. Dr med. Wilhelm Löffler in 1974; Inv. G 1974.1

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Seeing the world with different eyes