

Arrangements of Life

The exhibition comprises eight arrangements dealing with human transiency, with becoming, being, and passing. People have always tried to explain the world around them by means of myths and legends, and, in this context, death has usually been a key issue. The series of visual arrangements provides visitors the opportunity to encounter and reflect on culturally foreign objects, the people behind the objects, and their own being.

Becoming

Since time immemorial humans have searched for explanations as to the origin of life, the emergence of the cosmos, or the development of human consciousness, by means of myths and stories. The myths often differ in content just as the explanations do that we put forward to explain the secret of life. For the exhibition we have chosen a Hindu creation myth as an example.

Model

The installation makes reference to patterns of belief and practice which humans invent, learn, or inherit from their forebears, including worldviews, social orders, religious identities, as well as scientific paradigms. However, what we believe to understand at first sight often turns out to be wrong upon closer inspection, in other words, we are often compelled to discard allegedly safe knowledge and replace it with new insights. Meanings also tend to shift in the course of time, not least due to changing cultural perspectives.

Storm

The pebble-stone installation floats in mid-air. By setting the pebbles in motion the harmonious balance is disrupted and the stones rise up to form mighty waves. In terms of metaphor the storm stands for conflicting emotions: fortune and suffering, safety and confusion, fear, sorrow, anger, or joy. It is up to us to retain a balance between positive and negative emotions and energies. The two Balinese masks Barong and Rangda lend expression to the ongoing struggle between good and evil.

Spindles

In this installation a pebble-stone helix crosses the architectural space on a winding path, ending in a dialogue with a set of suspended spindles. Spindles were, and still are, used to produce long threads from pieces of fibre by twisting and twining. In European cultures, goddesses like the Norns in Northern mythology or the Moira in Ancient Greece, called Parcae in Roman mythology, stand guard over the fate of humans. They spin the threads of life and sever them again when a person's time is up.

Fabric

Next to providing protection, clothes often serve as semiotic carriers. The patterns on cloth communicate messages, at times they even tell entire stories. Clothes not

only vary according to a person's gender and age, they also tell us something about his or her economic standing and social status. They can express values as well as indicate a person's affiliation to a social, ethnic, religious, or political group, demarcating him or her from other, like groups. Clothes are an ideal means to express status, power, and affluence, often changing through time according to the whims of fashion.

Stone objects

Stones each possess a colour, a form, and a texture of their own, they are silent and unconcerned. Since time immemorial human beings have manufactured things from stone, making use of its durability for diverse items of equipment, weapons, adornment, ritual objects, and toys. The texture, form, and colour of stone have always fascinated people, often giving rise to philosophical contemplation. The French philosopher Roger Callois, for instance, describes one of the aspects of stone as follows: 'The rigidity of stone seems to set the premise for movement, for the dynamic of lived being, inferring that durability presupposes transiency.'

Swarm

Every individual is part of a group, a society, and a member of the human race. Each pebble stands for an individual, cultural trace. Together the pebbles form an amorphous, ever-moving swarm which represents more than its constituent parts. Visitors are invited to bring to the museum a pebble stone that symbolically stands for what they have achieved in life and add it to the growing swarm. The two skeleton figures are an example of the humorous and colourful way people in Mexico deal with death, and a memento that death is always present in life.

Helix and bell

Behind the low-lying fold in the roof, the floating line of pebble stones reaches its conclusion, ending at a Chinese temple bell which visitors are invited to strike. Just as the pebbles wind themselves through hall's architecture, so does the sound of the bell spread across space, transforming it into an echoing soundbox: the entire world consists of sound, rhythm, and vibes. The bell's dying echo is reminiscent of fading memories, of farewells, and of change.