

Making the World

Humans shape the world they inhabit. How they do this is the topic of two exhibitions at the Museum der Kulturen Basel and the Kunstmuseum Basel, respectively.

What makes the world what it is? This is a question that has forever occupied humans and served as an incentive to create artefacts and artworks in response. Now the Museum der Kulturen Basel (MKB) and the Kunstmuseum Basel have got together to explore this multifaceted theme in two interrelated exhibitions, with the Kunstmuseum Basel focusing on “spiritual worlds” and the MKB on “lived worlds”.

In the five exhibition galleries at MKB, works from the museum’s own collections, the Kunstmuseum Basel, and the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation are juxtaposed and set in relation to one another. Among other things, they reveal their creators and makers are intertwined with the worlds they inhabit. The focus is on the following themes: relationships, orientation, traces, and imaginations.

Relationships

“Cosmos” is the topic of the first gallery, which also provides the connection to the show at the Kunstmuseum Basel. Three exhibits from three continents and different time periods shed light on how humans view the universe and explain the creation of the world.

In the second gallery, old European masters, African masks, Asian shadow plays along with an orator’s stool from Oceania tell about the multitude and variability of relationships. The exhibits reflect relations of humans amongst each other, with the animal world, as well as with ancestors who, in turn, exert influence on human life. Ideas, beliefs, aspirations as well as the sense of belonging often find expression in manmade, material things – which, in turn, are often exchanged as the short film performance “Farafin a ni Toubabou” by Adrien Sina and Mamary Diallo illustrates.

Orientation

Mobility, both mental and physical, has always been an issue for humans. It’s all about finding one’s bearings in the world. For orientation – the subject of the third gallery – people often rely on charts and illustrations, for example, in the shape of a Micronesian stick chart, the painting Rich Harbour (a travel image) by Paul Klee, or a Tibetan thangka. In addition, travellers often seek the support of higher powers as illustrated by the figure of Saint Christopher, as an example.

Wherever people travel, live and work, they leave traces in the landscape. An installation of ploughs from across the world signifies this in the fourth gallery. A series of artworks not only depict cultural landscapes but also scenes of industrialization and environmental degradation. Could the untitled sculpture by Fischli/Weiss represent the remains of a forest fire?

A war rug from Afghanistan, the painting Hartmannsweilerkopf by Lotti Kraus, and an arpillera, a patchwork picture from Chile, testify to traces of a quite different nature: humans seem bent on destroying the world through war and suppression, through their craving for power.

Imaginations

Finally, to end the exhibition, large paintings and textiles from across the world show how humans immerse themselves in imaginary, surreal or cubist worlds, forests, and cities and render them artistically. How will viewers appreciate these interpretations by Tony Oursler, Lyonel Feininger, Percy Trezise, Barnett Newman, Made Wianta, and Max Ernst?

The exhibition “Making the World. Lived Worlds” at the MKB is on from 26 March 2021 to 23 January 2022.

The exhibition “Making the World. Spiritual Worlds” at the Kunstmuseum Basel opens on 27 November 2021 and runs until 24 April 2022.

You can download photographs of the exhibition at MKB from our website:

<https://www.mkb.ch/de/services/medien.html>