



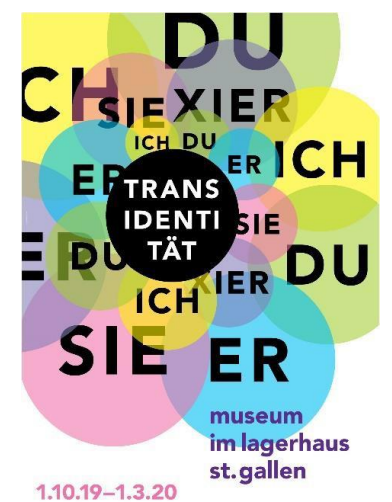
museum im lagerhaus.
stiftung für schweizerische **naive kunst**
und **art brut**.

Crazy, Queer, and Lovable: Overtaci

I YOU HE SHE THEY: Trans Identity

1st Oktober 2019 – 1st March 2020

The gender and transgender debate is highly topical, also in art and the art business. The second exhibition in the international trilogy *The "Other" in Art* deals with gender issues, sexual identity, and trans identity. The focus is on the extraordinary oeuvre of Overtaci (1894–1985), which took shape over 56 years in psychiatric clinics in Denmark. Overtaci is one of the most outstanding artists from Denmark as well as in international Outsider Art. He is the "Danish Wölfli," and equally famous. Now his work is being shown for the first time in Switzerland.



Crazy, Queer, and Lovable: Overtaci

Overtaci's existence began as a bird of paradise, some 3000 years before Overtaci's human existence. Whether he/she was male or female at the time, Overtaci cannot say. Overtaci was born into human life on 26 September 1894 in Ebeltoft, Denmark, as Louis Marcussen. Early on he was interested in yoga, Buddhism, and literature, and sought to master his body and mind. After completing an apprenticeship as a painter, he emigrated to Argentina. Overtaci returned to Denmark in a mentally unstable condition, and in 1929 his family saw no choice but to send him to the Risskov psychiatric clinic in Aarhus. In 1932 Overtaci was transferred to the Dalstrup psychiatric clinic in Djursland. This is where his work as an artist began. After his return to Risskov in 1942, Overtaci lived in the clinic until his death in 1985. "Overtaci"—*Overtossi* in the Jutland dialect—is the alter ego he chose for himself and means "chief patient," a role equivalent to that of a clinical psychiatrist.

Ovartaci's return to Risskov marked the beginning of his painful fight against being a man. In search of pure, spiritual love, Ovartaci saw women as noble beings. Only the amputation of his penis, which he carried out himself, and the subsequent operations to transition to a woman brought him peace. At the time, Ovartaci was 63 years old. But toward the end of his life, Ovartaci returned to his birth name: Ovartaci was once again Louis Marcussen.

Ovartaci not only moved between a female and/or male identity. He dealt with the theme of transformation throughout his life. Pictures, sculptures, painted objects, and even flying machines reflect fantasies about various cycles of reincarnation—whether as a bird, a butterfly, or a llama. Numerous female figures, small to life-size dolls made of paper, cardboard, or papier-mâché, were his companions at the clinic. They accompanied Ovartaci and populated rooms and walls. Ovartaci was the “prima donna” of the clinic. In this protected environment, Ovartaci lived in trans identities and transformed his surroundings into a unique artistic universe.

In cooperation with the Museum Ovartaci in Aarhus.

I YOU HE SHE THEY: Trans Identity

Instead of the currently invoked post-feminism in art and the art business, today the gender debate must be conducted in a non-binary form. Alongside Ovartaci, the exhibition *I YOU HE SHE THEY: Trans Identity* presents contemporary artistic positions of female, male, and trans identity. They explore issues of gender and the resulting social expectations and gender stereotypes.

Muda Mathis (*1959) and Sus Zwick (*1950) playfully create confusion in rapid shifts between being a woman, portraying a woman, and playing a man in the photo series *Grüner Donnerstag* (2008). Sometimes female and male attributes are switched. In the video *Vereinte Geometrie* (2019), despite all visible gender characteristics, the pure body appears neutralized, even genderless. Sascha Alexa Martin Müller (*1964) portrays gender definition and gender identity in mechanical pictograms. Perceptions of male and/or female or their interaction change only in contact with the viewer. What is the original state of gender without the categorizing view of someone else? In the film *Genderwonderland* (2016), Michelle “Jazzie” Biolley (*1976) interviews people from different countries about how they understand gender beyond the usual conventions and categories. We learn about lived gender utopia as well as efforts not to fit into the binary social system, and hear about oppressive silence in Oman. The works of Francesca Bertolosi (*1977), who has been working as an artist at the Kreativwerkstatt Bürgerspital Basel since 2018, attest to the daily struggle for self-assertion. Symbolic motifs stand for strength (tiger), protection (dragon), and help (butterfly elf) or danger (black “dung bugs”) and death (skull), which she encounters in the queer scene, since the risk of suicide among trans people is high.

Opening hours

Tue to Fri 2-6 p.m.

Sat / Sun / public holidays 12 to 5 p.m.

closed: 24/25/31st Dec and 1st January

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