

Vera Hofmann

Transposing the YEAR *OF THE WOMEN**

Editorial

The YEAR OF THE WOMEN* was a yearlong (queer) feminist intervention at the Schwules Museum in 2018, initiated and directed by Birgit Bosold and me, Vera Hofmann. The project addressed sexism and misogyny in art and culture, in the LGBTQIA+ scene, and in the Schwules Museum specifically. It aimed to make the participation and self-representation of all parts of the LGBTQIA+ community in the Schwules Museum a matter of course in the future. A major step was to transform the mechanisms of exclusion that worked within the museum up to that point.

The YEAR OF THE WOMEN* was the most successful and the most controversial year to date in the museum's more than 30 years of operation. Never before have in-house negotiations and debates about the museum reached such intensity. Both the success and the debate are reason to carefully archive and contextualize the project.

At the start of 2020, I began to sift through the material and develop concepts to deal with its complexity and how to transpose it from its specific temporal and physical space to other forms. Mediating such an extensive and conflicted project is complex. The aim was to both honor the polyphony of activist, artistic and theoretical positions and to make visible the underlying strategic, administrative and affective labor. Such an ambition is always destined to remain an incomplete interpretation. My desires for radicality and precision were in conflict with the pandemic working conditions and my position as a co-publisher within institutional structures. In the end, I decided to compile a detailed archive as well as to offer a format for discourse that can be expanded and updated.

Counter-narratives, resistant archives and alternative forms of remembering marginalized knowledge oppose hegemony and normativity. Despite the risks that come with increased visibility, LGBTQIA+ communities need records of their activities – this is a core concern of the Schwules Museum and its archive. At the same time, the politics inscribed in collecting activities have to be questioned

and complicated again and again. To this end, the YEAR OF THE WOMEN*, for the duration of its 14 month-run, brought the structural level into focus. To consequently reflect upon and transform gaps and exclusionary mechanisms, including one's own, and to embed these processes, is work that goes beyond mere willingness. This work requires commitment that must be constantly renewed. It takes determination and sensitivity to build trusting intersectional alliances and engage in collective practices of unlearning and caring. For this, resources need to be continuously replenished and existing ones redistributed.

In the aftermath of the YEAR OF THE WOMEN*, I talked with many people about its different aspects. Often people who could and wanted to contribute and work with us got in touch. I am grateful for that. We can finally present the complete online archive for the YEAR OF THE WOMEN* and a magazine with currently 39 articles and space for more:

In addition to the [archive](#), the [magazine](#) forms the second part of the [yearofthewomen.net](#) platform. There are three sections: first, selected and newly prepared material from the program in the form of film and video works, audiovisual recordings of talks and lectures, and written presentations; second, new artistic and discursive productions that are thematically adding to the year; and third, reflections on the specific events and the program in the form of interviews and essays. In addition to the online version on the website with individually retrievable contributions, an updated collection of all contributions can be downloaded as a complete document by clicking on the green button. The non-commercial distribution of the contributions is expressly desired, information on use can be found [here](#). The texts are either in German or in English, some (so far few) are available in both languages. A note on our use of gender-sensitive language is included at the end.

To introduce the YEAR OF THE WOMEN*, previously published texts by **Birgit Bosold**

(SMU board member since 2006) and myself, **Vera Hofmann** (artist and SMU board member from 2016 to 2020) have been made available. As initiators and curators of the overall programming, we reflect on our project in the volume *Radicalizing Care – Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating* (Sternberg Press, 2021). We go into more detail about our different curatorial approaches and assessments of the initial situation in the Schwules Museum in the Arthur Boskamp Foundation's *kuratieren* series bilingual conversation. Back in 2018, we published text and visuals in the *OnCurating.org Queer Curating Issue*. For a quick overview, take a look at the *Questions answered on the YEAR OF THE WOMEN** section. Another introductory text is the speech given by **Emilia Roig**, political scientist, author and founder of the *Center for Intersectional Justice*, at the *YEAR OF THE WOMEN** finissage in February 2019. Among other issues addressed, she answers the question of whether, in times of gender fluidity, a program that refers to the subject position "woman" is still necessary. She reflects on this with an intersectional view of the various invisibilities within the LGBTQIA+ community and in broader art and culture.

The opening speeches, which were held for different projects – for the *12 Moons Film Lounge*, for the *Dyke Bar: SPIRITS* and for *LESBIAN VISIONS* – reflect the specific intentions of the respective curators and transport the atmosphere on site as snapshots. Additional voices from curators provide insight into the programs. The curator, filmmaker and founder of the *Aks International Minorities Film Festival* **Saadat Munir** introduces the festival and the curation of the 10th program of the *12 Moons* with accompanying exhibition. Artist and author **A.L. Steiner**, who curated the final *12 Moons* program of the year, takes us on a bracing ride through the current conditions in which we live, make art and seek to connect. The artist **Juliette Lizotte** designed the piece with her special handwriting. In a detailed interview, **Birga Meyer**, co-curator of *PROUDLY PERVERTED* and recently elected board member, describes the community-centered

approach of this exhibition and how she experiences the opening process of the SMU. Intersex activist Luan Pertl follows the change processes of the SMU from the perspective of a longtime companion. Luan works as a guide at SMU, was involved in the beginning of the curation of *PROUDLY PERVERTED in the YEAR OF THE WOMEN** and co-curated the exhibition *Mercury Rising – Inter* Hermstory[ies] Now and Then*, which ran from October 2021 to April 2022. In a collective online writing process with the international curators and artists invited for the magazine, **Chris E Vargas**, **Dot Zhihan Jia**, **Helena Reckitt**, **Jamila Prowse** and **Taey Iohe**, curator **Sylvia Sadzinsky** and I exchange views on curatorial and interventionist practices and answer questions about what caring and community-building practices we as artists and curators desire.

A series of video documentaries from the *12 Moons* supporting program revives the collective character of the year: filmmaker **Lasse Långström** discusses queer feminist collective practices of filmmaking around his film *Folkbildningsterror* (3rd Moon) with the anthropologist and journalist **Atlanta Ina Beyer**. Filmmaker and journalist **Marit Östberg** shares the most important insights from her many years of film practice and, together with the filmmakers, performers and sex workers **Lina Bembe**, **Candy Flip** and **Paulita Pappel**, explores the question of how to create safer spaces in feminist porn (9th Moon). I spoke with historian, author and activist **Katharina Oguntoye**, director and author **Barbara Teufel** and journalist and activist **Marinka Körzendörfer** about the political concerns and collective practices of the second feminist wave in East and West Germany in the 1980s and 90s, which the films shown during the 8th Moon retold. **Farzada Faarkhooi**, curator of *TransFormations – Trans* Film Festival Berlin* and 2018 board member of SMU, moderated a discussion with activist and co-founder of *Aks Festival* **Neeli Rana**, her colleague **Saadat Munir** and anthropologist and activist **Mehlab Jameel** about their activist artistic strategies. You can also hear an excerpt from the reading by writer **Stephanie**

Bart from her book manuscript about Gudrun Ensslin. – Please forgive us if the video quality is not optimal, we rarely had professional tech.

Other small video excerpts from the program are scattered throughout the archive. In tribute to two community members who have passed away in the meantime, filmmaker **Barbara Hammer** and illustrator and filmmaker **Heidi Kull**, I have included two snippets from 2018 in the magazine. I would also like to remember the recently deceased activists Bettina Dziggel and Ika Hügel-Marshall, who were also represented in the film program, and the artist Sarah Schumann, who passed in 2019, whose works were shown in the exhibition *LESBIAN VISIONS*.

An important concern of the *YEAR OF THE WOMEN** was to question queer politics of remembrance critically and to stimulate intergenerational dialogue between younger, queer-feminist activists and representatives of feminist positions from the 1970s to 1990s. Social scientist and historian **Gisela Notz** problematizes the often misunderstood relevance of the socialist workers' movement in the ultimately successful struggles for women's suffrage in her lecture, now available as an essay, held as part of the symposium on the history of the women's movement. The lecture by historian **Lorenz Weinberg** on the feminist sex wars in the German lesbian movement, held at the same symposium, is dedicated to the struggles over sex positivity many decades later and provides insights useful for understanding the current TERF wars. The text is accompanied by the photo series *A Cadillac Please! And a Chauffeur!* by the photographer and representative of sex-positive feminism in Germany, **Krista Beinstein**, taken in 1995. The next generation of artists and activists like **Lena Rosa Händle** are dealing with questions that arise around the modes of queer-feminist memory, especially at a time when queer- and transphobic right-wing ideologies are spreading, even within LGBTQIA+ communities. The curator and art theorist **Barbara Mahlke** discusses Händle's work *Furs / Pelze* (2015)

from the exhibition *LESBIAN VISIONS* and her cooperation with artist **Roswitha Baumeister**.

Spaces of collective self-organization, for activist, experimental and sex-positive practices are enormously important for queer communities. One such place for lesbian women* in Berlin in the 1980s and 90s was *Pelze Multimedia*. Many exhibitions and events in the *YEAR OF THE WOMEN** in the Schwules Museum, also a self-organized and activist space, revolved around meeting places and spaces that are either enable or are being made impossible: e.g. the *Aks International Minorities Film Festival* in various cities in Pakistan, which offers space and thus safety and communion for the Khawaja Sira community (the indigenous transgender culture in that area). In addition to private rooms, the BDSM scene presented in the *PROUDLY PERVERTED* exhibition also depends on places where larger groups can meet. In some large cities in the GDR in the 1980s, lesbian women* organized themselves not only in private rooms, but also came together under the protection of the Protestant church. Gentrification and changes in political power relations are crowding out queer spaces in many places, including the lesbian bars – in the *YEAR OF THE WOMEN**, we were able to open a Dyke Bar in the Schwules Museum. In Ankara, Turkey, the exhibition *koloni/colony* had to be canceled in response to government requests, so we offered the curators Derya Bayraktaroğlu and Ayline Aslı Demir of the *Kaos GL* association two exhibition spaces that had become vacant at short notice to kick off the year. On top, the pandemic has demonstrated dramatically how essential physical meeting places are, especially for marginalized people. If these places disappear, it becomes more difficult for communities to realize themselves and marginalized cultures are pushed further to the edge. Solidarity and active cooperation were hugely motivating during the *YEAR OF THE WOMEN** – just as we stood up for others, we ourselves depended on support. Again and again we are asked in our different contexts to help, strengthen and protect each other. I would like to

present two places in this magazine: Some of the curators of the *Trans*Formations Film Festival Berlin* and freelancers from the SMU together with others, founded **Casa Kuà** in Berlin, a trans*, inter*, queer community and health center specifically for people affected by racism. *Casa Kuà* and its projects are important safer spaces of healing and activist self-organization for QTBIPOC. The second location is the free for every artist residency *pIAR (perfocraZe International Artist Residency)* in Ghana, run by artist Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi, known as crazinisT artisT. In 2021, some Ghanaian parliamentarians introduced a tougher anti-LGBTQIA+ bill that, if passed, would not only threaten *pIAR* as a place, but would make any queer life in Ghana much more difficult. Curator and co-founder of the London project *CUNTemporary* **Giulia Casalini** compiled for us an interview about Va-Bene's artistic and activist practice. Our struggles are all interconnected and need each other's support, so if you have access to resources, please support these two projects. – Speaking of interconnectivity: As I put this finished text on the website, massive floods are hitting large parts of Pakistan. You can find information and a solidarity campaign at this [link](#). –

The series *our own feminismS* offered theoretical approaches for the year. **Ulrike E. Auga**, Professor of Gender Studies and Theology, developed a ten-part lecture series *Queerfeminist Life and Futurity* for the YEAR OF THE WOMEN*, which provides an overview of the current status of the academic debate. We present here all ten lectures in the form of video documentation. In a new contribution, philosopher Luce DeLire proposes the thesis that the current queer, western debates move on a spectrum between the two poles 'gender abolitionism' and 'trans materialism'.

88 films and video works were shown in the 12 programs of the 12 Moons Film Lounge. Three of them can be seen in the magazine: *Matriarchy* by **Patricia Zamorano** and **Rosa Navarrete** from the 1st Moon and *Das Loch* by **Julia v. Randow** and *Our Vagina, Ourselves* by **Dajing** from the 5th Moon. Film trailers and program booklets

with additional texts for each moon can be found in the [archive](#). Program booklets and exhibition guides on the overall concept, on all eight exhibitions and the 133 other events are also available there.

New productions by artists are also included: **Verena Melgarejo Weinandt** presents photographs with an accompanying poem in which her alter ego, Pocahunter, defends herself against colonial-racist attributions. The newly founded "singing band" **Komminutéρας** by **Franck-Lee Alli-Tis**, **Christina Karagianni** and **Oýto Árognos** tries to destabilize hegemonic national languages through music, rhythm, poetry and movement. The project *double single* is the first release of their upcoming music album and celebrates its premiere with us. **Sanni Est** just released her album *PHOTOPHOBIA*. She provides us previously unpublished material that shows her approach to a post-human world destroyed by neglect focused on salvation and renewal. **Nika Fontaine** intends to publish an NTF series this year in which she works on her spiritual and natural experiences. We can showcase an initial image-text combination. **gorjeoux moon** is currently developing a "meta-methodology of trans poetry." In her fresh contribution, she presents her working method in text and video.

The YEAR OF THE WOMEN* was an extensive program with many different positions and offered a variety of occasions for conflict and debate. Four contributions contextualize some aspects of the conflicts in and around the YEAR OF THE WOMEN* from different perspectives and provide impetus for further study. I speak to the performer **Sadie Lune** about the legendary opening ritual that she co-created and whether we really intended to "smoke the gays out of the museum", as repeatedly claimed in the press and on social media. The media theorist and artist_curator of the exhibition *HIJRA FANTASTIK* **Claudia Reiche** reworks some material from the "little folder of hate", the digital files with our best-of shitstorm material, in a humorous, artistic and truly artificial way. I speak to the psychologist and

author **Gisela Fux Wolf** about how the dynamics of the harsh conflicts within the LGBTQIA+ communities can be interpreted psychologically and what options for action exist in such situations. **shofie bhahalwan**, artist and facilitator and counselor, presents approaches from Transformative Justice in a surprising *drag* essay. The contribution, delicately illustrated by **Johanna Gehring**, shows alternative ways of being with each other based on current and historical narratives of conflict and violence.

The magazine no. 1 closes with this proposal for aligning our actions with (queer) feminist, abolitionist and common good-oriented principles for more justice in our more-than-human worlds.

Some scheduled posts are works in progress, they will be added as soon as they are finished. If you would like to contribute something in the future, a text, a translation of an existing article, a transcription or even artistic or illustrative work, please contact the editor.

I would like to thank **everyone involved** in the YEAR OF THE WOMEN* 2018, who form

the heart of the project. Without you there would be no YEAR OF THE WOMEN*, no archive, no discourse. The documentation project also had benevolent companions throughout its various forms and phases. I would like to thank all the contributors, writers and artists of the [yearofthewomen.net](https://www.yearofthewomen.net) project for their generosity and trust in me and us. I would like to thank everyone who worked on the texts, videos, the small-scale upload, the graphics, etc. Thanks to the Kunstfonds Foundation for the flexibility and to the private donors for their financial donations. Many thanks to Toni Brell for designing and programming the website and the magazine and to Sebastian Kraus from SMU IT. I would like to thank my former colleague at SMU and co-curator Birgit Bosold for her support and her trust in me to implement this project. Thanks also to all employees at the Schwules Museum for your commitment to the LGBTQIA+ communities.

I wish you an inspiring visit through the archive and the magazine.

Vera Hofmann

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STIFTUNG KUNSTFONDS

Our use of gender-sensitive language

This website is a collection of written and spoken contributions by different authors, created from various perspectives and produced in different contexts. Each contribution approaches structural violence and power relations in its own way. Each one tries to sensitively and critically deal with discriminatory norms and logics through language. To find a uniform style of writing and speaking from and for these different positions and voices seems neither possible, nor correct to us. Instead, we have opted for a pluralistic and dynamic approach. We use the asterisk, and in some cases the underscore, to signal that “woman,” among other words, is a socially and culturally manufactured category. For groups from the LGBTQIA+ communities, we have opted, to the best of our ability, to use the designation that reflected, and reflects, the respective historically relevant debates within each group, knowing full

well that there are also arguments against this practice. We have gendered each person according to their own definition of self. Because terms and spellings have evolved since 2018, we have adjusted some texts from the program section. Most have been left in their original 2018 form. In 2018, we focused on women*, lesbians, inter*, non-binary, trans, and agender people (WLINTA*/FLINTA*) and gendered them according to the then-current state of the debate. Today we would also write “man” with an asterisk. For historical texts, we have decided to avoid asterisks or underscores in some places in order to make clear that contemporary feminist struggles emanated from the model of two genders. Overall, we made choices about language and style on a context-specific and case-by-case basis, and have also sought to respect the approaches of individual authors and curators.