

28 August 2018

**Press release**

Exhibition within the Year of the Women\*

**HIJRA FANTASTIK**  
by Claudia Reiche  
**28.9.-19.11.2018**



Claudia Reiche, "What you love and hate?", photo series  
Photo project with Vaishu, Bhavana and friends, from Bangalore, 2014

An art and research project by Claudia Reiche

HIJRA FANTASTIK is an inquiry into a Femininity not defined biologically and grapples artistically with the contradictory Hijra identity as a woman and as a third gender: an idea, which can also be attempted as the structure for a lesbian identity. The exhibition HIJRA FANTASTIK explores this idea as a contribution to the *Year of the Women\** at the Schwules Museum.

In India "Hijra" is used as a description of a long-established transfemininity. Especially since India's highest court acknowledged a third gender one to two million Hijra hope for a progressive social change. For an often exoticized, archaic-seeming culture, whose rigidity partially stems from the criminalization and disenfranchisement of Hijra under British colonial rule, this would mark significant upheaval.

The starting point of HIJRA FANTASTIK is the photographic collaboration between Claudia Reiche and a small Hijra community in Bangalore. During a residency at the Goethe Institut Bangalore in 2014 the artist sought out the contact for a shared photo project. The result of this encounter is approximately 400 images, taken by the Hijras and given for publication.

Insisting on an attitude beyond romanticization or folkloristic appropriation was made easier by the introductory question posed by the Hijras to the artist: „Why are you here?“ In taking up this question HIJRA FANTASTIC aims – in spite of and due to the violence of societal and ideological conditions – at a Space of the Utopian, at the borderline of lesbian and trans female conceptualizations.

Not forgetting that the contemporary emancipation movement of Hijras as a third gender is still fighting against Victorian ideas of gender and sexuality, it is necessary to think ahead for fantastical spaces, loopholes and alliances in spite of the inertia of ideological change. Therefore. Here...

HIJRA FANTASTIK tackles this structure as space adventure using room installations, collages, literary elements as well as photographic and video pieces, presenting it by means of an historical episode, which takes up the still pending but demanded participation of Hijras in Indian space travel.

The Hijra organization **Delhi Pradesh Hijra Kalyan Sabha** demanded in 1984 that Hijras, as representatives of India, should be sent into orbit in a sovjet-indian space mission. An open letter of this organization approached the heads of states with this demand. So far without success... Or, with the piercing success of the Not-Accomplished, and the power of absurdity, the exhibition thinks further in a retroactive and feminist way. Which sex the sun the moon and you?

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue ([thealit verlag](#), 6 cardboard booklets, Frauen.Kultur.Labor. series quite queer, vol. 7).

Book presentation: 1.10.2018, 19:00 at the Café of the Schwules Museum.

**Opening:** 27.9.2018, 19:00, free entry.

Opening Hours: Sunday, Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 14:00-18:00

Thursday 14:00-20:00, Saturday 14:00-19:00

Tuesday closed

*The curator, media theorist, artist and gender activist Claudia Reiche holds Film diploma (HfbK, University of Arts of Hamburg) Magister artium, German literature (University of Hamburg), and Dr. phil. in art and media theory (Academy of Media Arts Cologne). She has researched and published widely on medicine's visual culture, from photography to recent "digital clones" with a background in psychoanalysis. She gained her PhD in 2009 with a thesis on "Digitale Körper, geschlechtlicher Raum, Das medizinisch Imaginäre des 'Visible Human Project'".*

*As one of the conceptual and artistic directors of "thealit Frauen.Kultur.Labor." (Bremen) she has decade-long experience in project work between theory, art and activism and practices feminism with a queer impact up until now – with early activities as a cyberfeminist (old boys network) and within Net Art ([www.mars-patent.org](http://www.mars-patent.org)).*

*She has been teaching art, media philosophy, queer and gender theory etc. at universities and art academies in Germany and abroad (Hamburg, Braunschweig, Paderborn, Bratislava, Oldenburg, Basel, Berlin, Bremen et al.). Currently she is lecturing at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg in the administration of the chair for history and theory of contemporary media.*

The exhibition developed in cooperation with Goethe Institut Max Müller Bhavan.





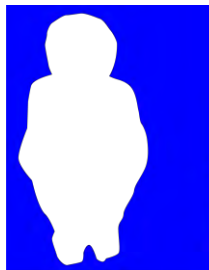
Press images as downloads in the press area of our website [here](#).

**Press and Public Relations Year of the Women\***

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year  
of the  
women\*



Senatsverwaltung  
für Kultur und Europa

*HIJRA FANTASTIK* is a part of the yearlong *Year of the Women\** program – a concerted queer feminist intervention. The *Year of the Women\** is supported by the Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa.

Further information on the *Year of the Women\** [here](#) and [here](#).