

Ulrike Theusner

Etchings

Selection from the years 2006 - 2024



The selected prints provide an overview of my previous graphic work. They are etchings from various series that have been created in recent years.

The oldest print is *Carnival* from 2006 - inspired by the Carnival de Nice, which is celebrated every year with a parade on the Boulevard d'Anglais. This work was created during my time studying in Nice at the Ecole d'Art Villa Arson and refers to the internal political tensions in France at the time, which manifested themselves in riots in some major French cities.



The work *Wald* from 2008 was part of my diploma thesis *The Waste Land*, which dealt with the theme of *Broken Idylls*. On closer inspection, you can see ghostly faces in the tree trunks in an uncanny atmosphere.

The ghostly element also appears in the etching *Tanz um das Goldene Kalb* which depicts the worship of externally generated values, based on the archaic myth of the golden calf, as well as in the series *Ritus*, which depicts ancestral figures and masks that have accompanied us as human beings since the beginning of our existence. The series is about the loss of the ritual, the spiritual homelessness of modern man, which manifests itself in disorientation and lack of stability, ultimately leading to isolation.



This theme is also taken up again in the latest series *Weird Feelings* (2023-24). The series is based on small ink drawings and has played a role in my work before. They are ideas inspired by Goya's *Los Caprichos* - strange, funny, unusual, eerie figures and situations that come across like curious nightmarish visions, occasionally taking a nihilistic view of the world like the grinning fox in *The World is mean place*, but also humorous comments like the woman bathing in the champagne glass. If you look hard enough, you can decipher a delicate script above it that says: *They plunged headlong into woeful, puffy-faced decay.*



The drypoint etchings of the series *Gaspung Society* from 2016 are also based on ink drawings. This series describes a society in the throes of a snap, in an ever-increasing tension between external determination and its own needs, isolation and the search for closeness, lethargy and the desire for departure and orientation, a society that drifts back and forth between paralysis and irritation and is exposed to ever-increasing uncertainties such as the gradual disintegration of familiar comforts. The work *Europablues* could be understood as a swan song of the European idea, a unity that is now slowly threatening to disintegrate in both idealistic and economic terms. *Unruhig ist unser Herz* alludes to our inner irritation, which is expressing itself more and more, as if this series, created in 2016, was an indicator of things to come. In *Odessa Bar*, an anemic, mask-like person sits at the bar, unable to act, waiting - for what?



The Triumph, in reference to Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, in turn alludes to a carelessness as a solution to deal with the situation. It is inspired by Lorenzo de Medici's famous quote: *...chi vuol esser lieto, sia: di doman non c'è certezza.* - Let him who wills be happy, for tomorrow nothing is certain.



The drypoint etching *The Heroes* is based on another work of art; it refers to a work by Diane Airbus and depicts a group of masked people who defy the world in all its absurdity.



With reference to the *Gaspung Society* series, in 2018 I created a series of portraits entitled *Sweet Bird of Youth*, which primarily depict people from my close circle of friends. They look out into the world questioningly, perplexedly or challengingly as a new generation that is growing up and ready to set out to shape the world according to their ideas - if they are aware of their opportunity to do so and do not sleep through it, as in *Sleep of Reason*. In this work, fighting dogs are visible above the heads of the sleeping girls, rising from the unconscious as if in a dream. The drypoint refers to Goya's famous graphic *The Sleep of Reason produces monsters* and calls for mindfulness and critical judgment in times when reality and appearance can hardly be distinguished.



The technique of etching was a main focus during my studies at the Bauhaus University in Weimar (2002-08) and the Villa Arson in Nice (2005-08). They still play a major role in my work today. The etchings are usually based on a selection of motifs from previous series of ink or pastel drawings and thus form a substrate for these series. I particularly often use the technique of drypoint etching on aluminum plates, which is later mixed with the technique of monotype in the printing process. Likewise, etchings on copper plates are often subsequently further processed with aquatint or drypoint. The editions are usually no larger than six sheets for drypoint etchings, which in some cases are colored with ink and watercolor after printing to give their message more impact.