

Emma Talbot

In the End, the Beginning

17.9.23 – 26.5.24

Curator:
Kathrin Becker

British artist Emma Talbot poses existential questions in her paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations. In these “catastrophic times” marked by ecological and political instability, as noted by Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers, Talbot emphasises the imperative of forging a hopeful new beginning to shape a future that is truly worth living for. “Through my work I advocate change,” the artist said. She is equally fascinated by the fleeting nature of human existence and the lost cultures of the past, as well as women’s wisdom that has been denied and obscured for centuries.

For the Kesselhaus at the KINDL, Emma Talbot has developed the site-specific installation *In the End, the Beginning* (2023), composed of expansive paintings on ten-metre-long silk hangings, three-dimensional pieces made of soft materials, and objects suspended from the ceiling. Through these artworks, she reawakens the archaic voices of furies, sirens, harpies, oracles, witches, ghosts, and spirits. These mythical figures disrupt our conventional world in unsettling ways, offering a glimpse into other realities.

The colourful paintings hang from curved supports, making a simple labyrinth for people to explore and discover different scenes. The narrative begins in our current time, with the depiction of a violent storm (*The Storm*). Faceless mythical creatures with flowing hair swirl through a vortex created by giant snakes, battling tidal waves and issuing warnings. “Is there a way out of the storm we have created?” The artist repeatedly embeds urgent questions and fragments from inner monologues as text within her visual worlds. The painting *Materials of Survival* offers a glimpse into a harmonious world where nature exists in balance, following hidden rules unknown to humans. A giant spider, various insects and flowers are the protagonists of this scene; people only play a secondary role here. First, the natural cycle of toxicity and healing must play out until a hopeful future emerges where the storm is overcome, and a new beginning becomes possible (*In the End, the Beginning*).

The three-dimensional work *Old Tree, Spells and Incantations* shows an old tree with long-haired faceless heads and curved branches protruding from it. Seemingly magical objects dangle from the tree’s trunk. A symbol of wisdom, the tree harbours the knowledge of centuries-old mythical creatures who lament the current state of our world and seek to caution us about the impending consequences. Meanwhile, the work *Generative Plants* explores the natural principle of growth, displaying generations of interconnected beings who possess both human-like and plant-like attributes.

Hovering above it all are the cosmic forces of the sun and the moon (*Close Friends: The Sun* and *Close Friends: The Moon*), acting as enduring constants that watch over us and influence our perception of time and transformation.

As part of Berlin Art Week 2023

BERLIN
ART WEEK — 13 — 17 SEP 2023
WEEK

Discursive Programme

27.9., 18:00

Curator's tour *POLY. A Fluid Show* and *Emma Talbot. In the End, the Beginning* with Solvej Helweg Ovesen und Kathrin Becker

In German

Free admission

Registration here: kindl-berlin.de/talbot

Additional events featuring the artist and exploring the exhibition's themes are planned for spring 2024.

Emma Talbot (* 1969 in Stourbridge, lives in London and Italy)

Selected solo exhibitions: Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2023); Beiqiu Museum, Nanjing (2023); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022); DCA Dundee (2021); KM21 / GEM Art Museum, The Hague (2019).

Selected group exhibitions: STUK, Leuven (2023); K21, Dusseldorf (2023); Venice Biennale (2022); Hayward Gallery, London (2020); Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2018).



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