

Lentos Kunstmuseum

Simon Wachsmuth Evil Spirits – Measures for Revitalization 28.02. to 18.05.25

Simon Wachsmuth creates a dense network of historical references in the Lentos exhibition, revealing the mechanisms of armed conflicts and reflecting on their ongoing relevance to the present. To achieve this, the artist distorts theatrical forms and incorporates chassis, marionettes, and hand gestures – not least, an evil spirit also has a hand in the game.

The exhibition at Lentos is dedicated to the deconstruction of historical narratives and the mechanisms by which war and violence have been perpetuated over centuries. "Simon Wachsmuth's works expose the extent to which historical and contemporary power systems manifest in images, symbols, and narratives. His artistic practice intervenes precisely where history and the present intersect," says Lentos director Hemma Schmutz.

Brecht's Model Book as a Starting Point

A key role is played by a sixteen-part series in which Wachsmuth reworks a model book of Bertolt Brecht's war drama *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Brecht's drama itself is based on Trutz Simplex by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, a 1670 picaresque novel that addresses moral decline in times of war. Through graphic interventions, Wachsmuth transforms the actors into puppets – a play on autonomy and external control that reveals the manipulative nature of historical narratives. The title of the series refers to the *Genius Malignus*, a powerful deceiver in René Descartes' philosophy who challenges our certainties.

The Seven Deadly Sins as Sculptural Allegories

In the same room, bronze casts of limbs hang from the ceiling dangling over a triangular stage. The armbands on the sculptures identify them as allegories of the seven deadly sins – pride, greed, lust, wrath, gluttony, envy, and sloth. These are collectively known under the acronym *Saligia*, derived from the Latin initials of each word. In doing so, both religious references and fundamental human failings are brought into the discourse.

A Forest of Memorial Steles

In the second exhibition space stands a forest of steles with inscriptions rubbed from gravestones in the Münster Church in Herford, Westphalia. The fragments – words like "Most Reverend," "God," "Honor," "Valiant" – appear as quiet voices from the past, poetic memorials to the fragility of human existence. Wachsmuth supplemented these fragments at Lentos with additional rubbings from the secularized Capuchin Church in Linz. One historical figure still remembered there is Raimondo Montecuccoli (1609–1680), a general of the Thirty Years' War and founder of Austria's first standing army. His words that wars primarily require "money, money, and more money" remain unsettlingly relevant today. "The exhibition is a reflective

space where the interplay of time, memory, and perception can be experienced. With his artistic language, Simon Wachsmuth unveils historical patterns that challenge our understanding of history and the present," explains exhibition curator Brigitte Reutner-Doneus

The Unstoppable Carts of History

The exhibition is complemented by two wooden carts reminiscent of props from a performance of *Mother Courage*. Loaded with various objects, they seem to roll inexorably through history. Their names – *O' Crudele Spectaculum* ("Oh Cruel Spectacle") and *Eternal Recurrence* – allude to the recurring patterns of violence and war throughout the centuries. The installation may also evoke the metaphor of "image vehicles," a term used by the visionary art historian Aby Warburg to describe the journey of images and forms through space and time.

Historical and Contemporary Relevance

In this exhibition, Simon Wachsmuth weaves a dense network of historical references that expose the mechanisms of warlike conflicts and reflect on their persistent relevance today.

The exhibition at Lentos runs until May 18, 2025. It is accompanied by a diverse supporting program that underscores the topic's contemporary relevance, including a reading by writer Margret Kreidl from the poems of Sibylla Schwarz (1621–38), a curator-led tour, an artist talk, and a family workshop to engage children in age-appropriate discussions about war and peace.

Biography

*Simon Wachsmuth was born in 1964 and lives and works in Berlin.
Studied painting and media art at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna.*

Simon Wachsmuth is an interdisciplinary artist whose work deals with the materialization of memory. He explores how history emerges through monuments, documents, and images and how it evolves over time. His artistic approach lies at the intersection of archaeology, politics, natural history, and economics, questioning the mechanisms of collecting, archiving, and exhibiting.

Wachsmuth's multifaceted work deliberately transcends the boundaries between media and genres. His installations combine film, sculpture, photography, painting, sound, text, and performance into immersive experiences that make the past visible and offer new perspectives on historical narratives. He is particularly interested in the traces that memories leave in material form and how these shape our understanding of history.

Through his artistic practice, Wachsmuth creates spaces for reflection where the interplay of time, memory, and perception becomes tangible. His works invite the audience to engage with the fragility of historical records and the construction of reality.

Wachsmuth participated in documenta 12 in Kassel (2007), the Istanbul Biennale (2009), the Busan Biennale (2012), and the Macao Biennale (2021). His installation *Parabasis* was part of the Atlas exhibition curated by Georges Didi-Huberman at the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid and the ZKM in Karlsruhe.

Selected Exhibitions:

Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'Art Contemporain (2024), Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz (2023), Kunsthau Dresden (2020), Gropiusbau Berlin (2019), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Turin and Egyptian Museum Turin (2018), Museum Ulm, Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm (2018), Marta Museum, Herford (2017), CAAC, Seville (2017), Suzhou Silk Museum (2016), Neues Museum Nürnberg (2016), Kunsthau Graz (2016), Belvedere 21, Vienna (2015), Musée de Valence (2014), Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen (2013), Museu Picasso Barcelona (2012), Museu Serralves, Porto (2010), Kunstmuseum Vaduz (2009), NÖ Landesmuseum, St. Pölten (2007), Kunstverein Salzburg (2006), MAERZ, Linz (2005).

Program

Events

Opening

Thu 27.02. 19:00

Welcome: Hemma Schmutz (Director, Lentos), Introduction: Brigitte Reutner-Doneus (Curator),
Free admission

Guided Tours

Public Tours

Thu 06.03. 6-7pm

With Karin Schneider (Head of Art Education)

Cost: € 4 plus admission, registration requested*

Matinée "I Fly Heavenward on Untamed Horses"

Sun 16.03. 11:00am–12:30pm

Reading by author Margret Kreidl from the poems of Sibylla Schwarz (1621–38), "the Pomeranian Sappho."
The poet addressed not only love and nature but also contemporary events, war, and displacement.

With music by Daniel Oman (Baroque guitar)

Cost: € 4 plus admission, registration requested*

Curator's Tour

Sun 16.03. 2-3pm

With curator Brigitte Reutner-Doneus

Cost: € 4 plus admission, registration requested*

Baby Tour

Tue 08.04. 10:30–11:30am

What would "Mother Courage" do? Tracing her spirit through past and present. A relaxed tour through the exhibition, specially designed for visitors with babies.

Cost: Museum admission only

Tour with Sign Language Interpreter

Sat 12.04. 4-5pm

Free admission for the deaf

Artist Talk

Thu 17.04. 6-7pm

Artist Simon Wachsmuth in conversation with Christian Dewald (Historian, Educator, and Senior Researcher at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Digital History, Vienna)

Cost: € 4 plus admission, registration requested*

Children & Families

Family Workshop

Sun 27.04. 14:00–16:00

Together with artist Osama Zatar, we will transform our (toy) weapons into things that do not destroy life but make it more beautiful. We will develop utopias of peace and explore our diverse life experiences and cultural backgrounds.

The workshop is open to people of all ages, with or without experiences of war.

Free admission, registration requested*

Schools

Research Workshop: Ghosts of History

From 8th grade onwards

Is the past really past? What happens when "ghosts" from history haunt us, and we can still feel them today? We will reflect on contemporary questions of war and peace, as well as the connection between history and the present.

Duration: 1, 1.5, or 2 hours

Cost: € 4.5 or 6 per student, registration required*

Registration/Information:

+43 732 7070 3614 or online at lentos.at (for schools also at kunstvermittlung@lentos.at)

Factsheet

Exhibition title	Simon Wachsmuth Evil Spirits – Measures for Revitalization
Exhibition duration	28.2. to 18.5.25
Venue	Untergeschoß
Curator	Brigitte Reutner-Doneus
Publication	<p>On the occasion of the exhibition Simon Wachsmuth. Seven Deadly Sins, a catalog was published by Galerie Zilberman Berlin in 2022.</p> <p>With texts by Andris Brinkmanis, Bettina Klein, Lotte Laub, and Simon Wachsmuth. 78 pages, € 19</p> <p>This and other publications are available at the Lentos Shop or online at shop.museenderstadtlinz.at.</p>
Cooperation	The exhibition was created in collaboration with Galerie Zilberman, Istanbul/Berlin.
Opening hours	Tue–Sun 10am–6pm, Thu 10am–8pm Closed on Mondays. Special opening hours can be found at www.lentos.at .
Admission	€ 11, reduced € 9 / € 5
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Web & Social Media	www.lentos.at facebook.com/lentoslinz instagram.com/lentoslinz

Images

Press images and exhibition views are available for download on our website for the duration of the exhibition at <https://www.lentos.at/museum/presse/pressekit-simon-wachsmuth-boese-geister>. Royalty-free use is permitted only within the scope of current reporting on the exhibition, with proper image credits.