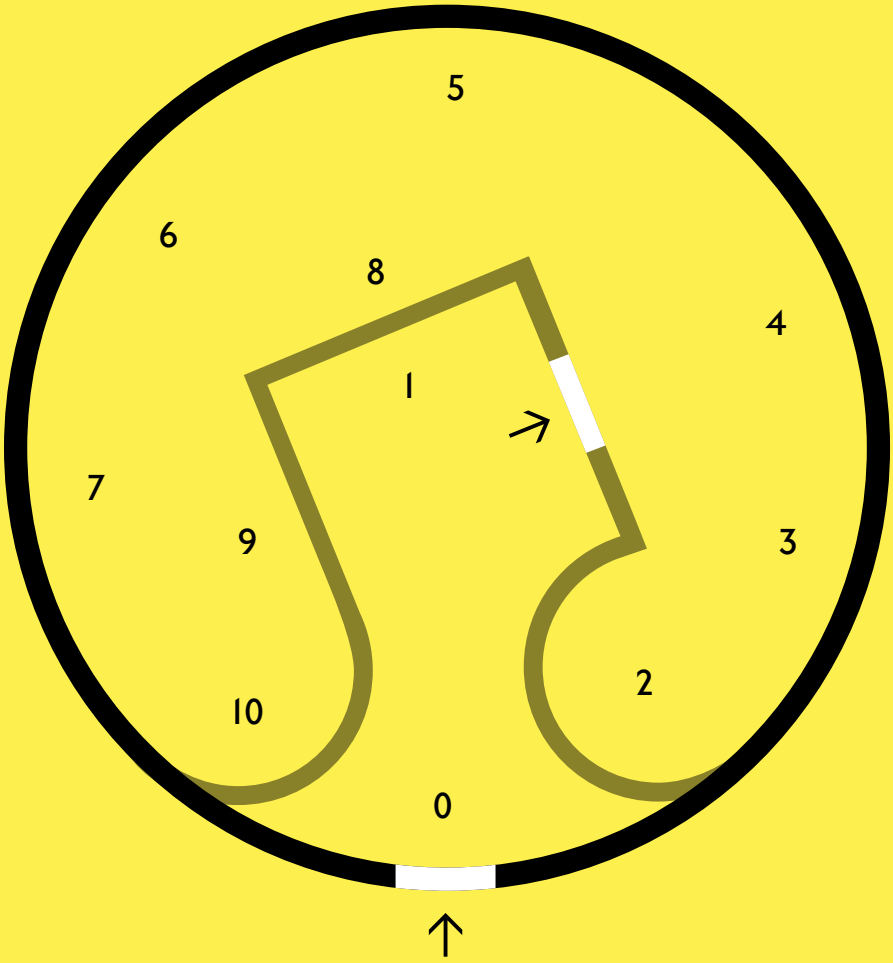
HAMBURGER
KUNSTHALLE

ART AROUND 1800

An Exhibition about Exhibitions

5 December 2025
to 29 March 2026

Exhibition Layout



ART AROUND 1800

Curated by
Petra Lange-Berndt & Dietmar Rübel

0. Introduction

Angelika Kauffmann *Self-Portrait as a Girl Drawing*, c. 1770

ART AROUND 1800 revisits the cycle of the same name curated by the Hamburger Kunsthalle between 1974 and 1981. This series of nine now iconic exhibitions explored the power of art during the 'Age of Revolutions' and shaped debates about the social relevance of paintings, works on paper and sculptures that continue to resonate today. Under the aegis of Werner Hofmann, then director of the museum, they re-wrote the narrative of European art history, focusing on themes and artists who broke with the conventions of their day: Ossian, Caspar David Friedrich, Johann Heinrich Füssli, William Blake, Johan Tobias Sergel, William Turner, Philipp Otto Runge, John Flaxman and Francisco Goya. ART AROUND 1800 is both a critical edition of that project and a remix. More than 50 paintings, books and works on paper from the Kunsthalle's collection dating from around 1800 are combined with over 70 loans and works by five contemporary artists.

A panorama of the age unfolds in ten episodes addressing Enlightenment, violence, dreams, political landscape, industrialisation and revolution or liberty – but seen from today's perspective. Here and there, a spotlight is turned on aspects missing from the cycle in the 1970s and yet relevant to the period around 1800: the fight for women's rights, the Jewish Enlightenment, slavery and the campaign to end it, and the Haitian Revolution. The Age of Reason spawned principles such as progress, love and the value of work, principles held dear by bourgeois societies across Europe. The artworks also draw attention to the contradictions inherent to these processes of modernity. But how were human relations during that time affected by industrialisation, capitalism and colonialism?

Exhibition *John Flaxman – Mythology and Industry.* Art around 1800, Hamburger Kunsthalle 1979

The Kuppelsaal on the upper floor of the extension building inaugurated in 1919 once again provides the exhibition space. In the 1970s it served as a central thought lab and a space for curatorial experiments. On this occasion, the exhibition architecture has been designed by **Marten Schech** as a sculptural intervention: ***Binnacle (Round Lodge with Three Corners)***. Schech is inspired by the circular floor plan and expands the architecture with extensions, insertions and modifications. These structures oscillate between solid architecture

and theatrical set; lime plaster and surface textures reference the exterior walls of Baroque and Classicist buildings. In the entrance area this plaster reappears in an interior space, as part of a display devoted to dreams around 1800. An uncanny materiality unfolds and appears like a repressed aesthetic remnant of the *ancien régime*. The juxtaposition of perfect and ruined surfaces comments on the function of the museum as an institution that seeks to preserve art for eternity. Inside and outside, sculpture and interior, beginning and end continually intersect and are interwoven throughout the exhibition.

With this sculptural spatial experience, ART AROUND 1800 adopts a practical aesthetic aimed at combining artistic and curatorial approaches. In the form of an essay, the exhibition invites visitors to create their own connections between the works on display. Beneath the dome, the Kunsthalle once again becomes a space for experimentation. Contemporary works by Mark Dion and Sigmar Polke on the French Revolution as well as by Kara Walker on slavery enrich, complement – or counter – the ensemble. **Suzanne Treister** has created a light projection for ART AROUND 1800. For four months, ***Vision: Intergalactic Social Systems* (2025)** will shine in the firmament above the Kunsthalle opposing universalisms and casting the exhibition's constellations in a techno-shamanic light.

Petra Lange-Berndt & Dietmar Rübel

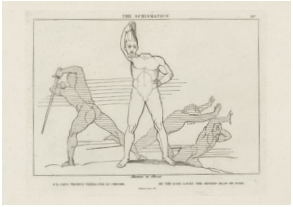
Marten Schech
Binnacle (Round Lodge with Three Corners), 2025

Opening

Louis-Simon Boizot
Portrait of a Free Female Slave, 1794

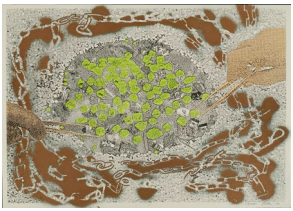
For four months the Kuppelsaal of the Hamburger Kunsthalle will be transformed into a 'single-room museum'. The exhibition is divided into ten thematic groups, with the entrance area welcoming visitors. This initial section can be seen as an open space, a place where visual encounters and good relations are created with pleasure, and where confrontations and intellectual discoveries take place. Six artworks on the two convex walls refer to exhibition's main themes. As the first image, **Angelika Kauffmann** greets visitors with a ***Self-Portrait as a Girl Drawing* (c. 1770)**; the narrative begins deliberately with a woman artist, thereby breaking with male-dominated art history. The celebrated painter depicts herself drawing as a young girl engaged in independent study, as access to official training institutions was denied, as it was for many women well into the 20th century. This treasured portrait, a legacy from the time of the museum's creation, is one of the 'founding images' with which the Kunsthalle opened in 1869. In the same way, the question of the equality of all human beings is addressed: the engraving after **Louis-Simon Boizot (1794)** shows the portraits of two formerly enslaved Black people who have been released into freedom, yet instead of individuals endowed with personal names and agency, we see two idealised types. Next to these works which, according to their visual rhetoric, want or need to dispense with social context, hangs an advertisement from ***The Philosophy of Manufacturers* (1835)**. It depicts a factory hall near Manchester filled with young women who belong to a different social class from Kauffmann, who came from the bourgeoisie: workers are supervising hundreds of steam-powered looms that are already operating automatically.
At this point, the exhibition introduces the complex relationship between the pursuit of freedom and self-destruction, because faith in Enlightenment and progress goes hand in hand with an age of violence. For this reason, the figure of a headless being appears in this section. When the French King Louis XVI, the embodiment of divine power, was guillotined in 1793, the social order was left without a head or leadership.
In these years of paradigm shift in forms of government, a headless – acephalic – figure appears in **John Flaxman's** outline sketch ***The Schismatics* (1807)**. The sheet is part of an artist's book containing Flaxman's outline illustrations for Dante

Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, engraved in copper by Tommaso Piroli in 1807. We see Bertran de Born, who in the 12th century worked against collective unity and sowed discord. As punishment, he was banished to the eighth circle of Hell and must carry his severed head like a lantern before him: 'I saw – and this dread sight still follows me – / A trunk without a head among that band / Of the unfortunate still marched along. / He held his severed head by its own hair, / And let it hang from out his hand as lantern, / And heaved a sigh as he approached us near'.



John Flaxman
The Schismatics, 1805

Thus the opening is shaped by diverse artistic and scholarly approaches as well as by the question of how we can engage with the period around 1800 today. A transition to the following section is formed by **Sigmar Polke**. For the bicentenary 1789 / 1989 he used a photocopier to create a remix – ***Revolution. 200 Years Later*** draws on imagery from the time of the French Revolution. Polke did not shy away from the brutal and bloody elements of this period. Depictions of atrocities around 1800 constitute the smallest particles from which these images are composed. It remains unclear whether a forensic investigation of historical crimes is taking place or whether existing images are being manipulated. The gory reign of terror permeates and shapes this artistic visual research – and begins to flicker before our eyes. Moreover, in the pivotal year of the so-called peaceful revolution of 1989, Polke emphasises that violence and terror must be seen as constitutive elements of 'liberty, equality, fraternity'. Altogether, the opening of ART AROUND 1800 highlights the fact that images are by no means neutral and enters into a dialogue with history.



Sigmar Polke *Revolution. 200 Years Later*, 1989

Petra Lange-Berndt & Dietmar Rübel

I. Dreams

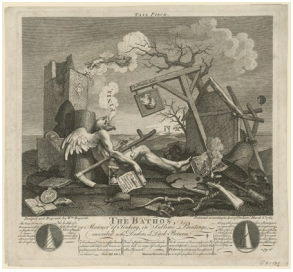
François Gérard
Ossian on the Shore of the Lora Summoning the Spirits to the Sound of the Harp, c. 1810

The first room of ART AROUND 1800 takes dreams to be an artistic method and presents **Francisco Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1799)**. We can also see works such as **Johann Heinrich *Füssli's The Nightmare* (1806)**, interpretations of which tend all too easily to slip into a kind of 'psycho-banalysis', as the Dadaist Tristan Tzara called it: passive, seemingly boneless women are draped half-naked on soft furniture, where they surrender sensually to 'their' dreams. Taking issue with such heterosexual male fantasies, the exhibition contrasts the dream-work of a woman artist: **Maria Flaxman's** etching ***Dream: A Fairy Shape* (1803)** is one of the rare examples from around 1800 in which a woman artist lets a female subject dream. Representations of dreams also served other purposes around 1800. Visually striking caricatures from Britain address fears of the revolutionary changes taking place on the continent. For example, ***Exhibition of a Democratic-Transparency*** by **James Gillray (1799)** shows a see-through image illuminated from behind. This spectacular medium became established in Europe around 1780. The print magically reveals the bloodthirsty intentions of the revolutionaries. As Elfriede Jelinek put it: 'Great satire is conservative'.

The series of exhibitions *Art Around* 1800 began in 1974 with *Ossian* – that is, with literary phantasms, for what the public of the 18th century understood to be the works of a poetic genius from ancient times had in fact been invented around 1760 by a Scottish contemporary, James Macpherson. The name 'Ossian' refers to a fictional author. With this forgery – the most momentous in the history of European literature – art overtakes reality like a dream, with the result that narratives by and about Ossian interweave past and present. Napoleon was an important commissioner of numerous paintings that celebrated the state-supported cult of Ossian in France, including **François Gérard's *Ossian on the Shore of the Lora Summoning the Spirits to the Sound of the Harp* (c. 1811)**. Bonaparte saw the fictional bard as a guarantor of his world domination – a 'Homer of the North', as Germaine de Staël wrote. The 'Ossian' phenomenon reveals the early attempts of modern society to compensate for the losses resulting from the transformative processes of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. In numerous paintings, figures dream

themselves back into a mythical past, while prints show legendary beings dissolving into the cosmos. For example, **Philipp Otto Runge** notes in a letter concerning his drawing ***Ossian* (1805)**: 'Ossian sits upon the highest cliff with his harp (...). Above him the North Star, (...) and his star rises for him only in hope'.

Such dreams and nightmares thus reveal emotional upheavals as well as anxieties about social and scientific changes. They show how important it was that the modern age introduce the category of the new, while demanding that the old and supposedly outdated be regarded as backward. In **William Hogarth's *Tailpiece, or The Bathos* (1764)**, time itself has come to an end. Chronos, the god of time, appears in a ruin as winged death and breathes his last. In this gloomy scene we are seeing the end of the world as we know it – an everyday terror even today. Or is this apocalyptic vision definitely not the end of history? Is this the emergence of a heterochrony, a mesh of interconnected temporalities that point asynchronously in different directions? **DR**



William Hogarth
Tail Piece, or The Bathos, 1764

Maria Flaxman
***Dream: A Fairy Shape*, 1803** in: William Hayley: *The Triumphs of Temper. A Poem* ..., London 1803

The poem that Maria Flaxman addresses in her drawing begins with the verses: 'As Quiet now her lightest mantle laid / O'er the still senses of the sleeping maid, / Her nightly visitant, her faithful guide, / Descends in all her empyrean pride'. The engraving was made by William Blake. In Canto V, Verse 43, William Hayley writes about a sleeping maid visited at night by her faithful fairy guide, as Quiet lays her mantle over her. The dreaming woman stands out as the brightest motif in the otherwise dark print. Above her floats a figure with four wings, holding a large piece of cloth, emerging ghostlike from the darkness of the room. She withdraws from our gaze behind the textile veil so that only her silhouette can be discerned. Two large curtains frame the scene, referring to the fourth, imaginary wall. We find ourselves observing an intimate moment of a stranger sleeping, who in the next moment might be covered by the cloth of the fairy figure. The atmosphere of this scene is a particular result of the printmaking technique. The copperplate engraving creates fine patterns of lines that model the

Maria Flaxman
Dream: A Fairy Shape, 1803

protagonist's face in detail and, through various hatchings, make the sleeper's surroundings appear dusky and deep. Even the darkness seems to have a textile-like quality. Are we watching the dreamer as her vision becomes reality? Or are we watching the dream itself? The dreaming woman is shown – without the poem itself making such a claim – both as a sleeper and as a producer of images, a rare perspective at the time, again highlighting Maria Flaxman as a female artist addressing the dream-work of another woman. But how can vision and reality be distinguished? In the 18th century, the idea emerged that dreams were an image of the inner self and referred to our past and present circumstances, that is, to our reality. In 1711 the British poet Joseph Addison wrote in *The Spectator* that dreams may indeed come from us, but they also govern us. Although this reciprocal, complex phenomenon of dreaming is difficult to grasp, the dream world was nevertheless regarded as a serious, lived reality. Philosophers, physicians and artists such as Maria Flaxman and Francisco Goya explored this connection. Imagination, thereafter closely associated with dreaming, appears in this copperplate embodied in a fairy figure – ghostly, veiled in darkness, barely tangible, yet unmistakably real. **LK**

Francisco Goya
The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, 1797–1799

Francisco Goya
***The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1797–1799**

The 43rd plate in the series *Los Caprichos* [The Caprices], in which court painter Francisco Goya comments on social and political grievances as well as developments in Spanish society, shows a man asleep, surrounded by nocturnal darkness. Resting his head on his arms folded upon a table, he is being circled by owls, bats and shadowy beings that around 1800 signified gloom and the embodiment of the demonic. The pedestal of the work table, on which papers are scattered, bears the title of the etching. As if prompting the sleeper, an owl to his left holds out a piece of chalk. On the right lurks a lynx, eyes wide open. The cat peering out from behind the man's back directs its gaze at the viewer. The etching highlights the dangers posed by the suppression or loss of reason as the central instrument of the Enlightenment – in Spain too. The word ***sueño***, which can mean both 'dream' and 'sleep', raises the question: do monsters awaken because reason is sleeping, or are they the expression of a dreaming individual? **JB**

Johann Heinrich Füssli
***Nightmare*, 1806** in: Erasmus Darwin:
The Botanic Garden II: The Loves of the Plants, London 1806

The British polymath Erasmus Darwin undertook research into plants and was inspired by the theories of natural scientist Carl Linnaeus to write his popular book of poems, both scientists using sexualised language to describe plants. In Darwin's work, blossoms or pistils develop a life of their own, are compared with human sexuality and appear like characters in a love story. From the 1799 edition onwards, the second volume of *The Botanic Garden*, The Loves of the Plants included a reproduction of Johann Heinrich Füssli's *Nightmare*. Trained as Protestant pastor in Switzerland, Füssli had engaged with this subject many times since 1781 in paintings that became famous through prints. Like a theatrical set, this copperplate engraving depicts a sleeping, 'love-stricken' woman with a demon pressing upon her chest and a ghostly horse. The work addresses the limits of Enlightenment rationality by raising questions about the relation between dream images and bodily reality, particularly during nightmares. The image also alludes to nocturnal incubi who, as agents of Satan, were believed to mate with women undetected. The female figure is sexualised, exposed to the voyeuristic gaze and – at a time when demands for women's emancipation were increasing – becomes an image onto which the anxieties of a male-dominated society fearing a loss of power are projected. **PLB**

Johann Heinrich Füssli
The Nightmare, 1806

2. Enlightenment / Haskalah

Daniel Chodowiecki
Goddess of Tolerance, c. 1791

In Europe after 1800, nothing was as it had been before. Through the upheavals of the Enlightenment, the order and worldview of the *ancien régime* came to an end: welcome to modernity, a world disenchanted by scientific rationality. At the same time, in the last third of the 18th century, the Haskalah [Reason] emerged in Berlin and Königsberg as the German-Jewish strand of the European Enlightenment. Although the Enlightenment had understood and presented itself as a homogeneous project of progress since 1750, the period had been full of ambivalences and contradictions. The Enlightenment thus contains complicated phenomena – ideals such as objectivity, but love as well. As a unique event, it was to be overwhelming, not dissimilar to modern art, apparently suspending norms and rules. **Daniel Chodowiecki's** series of prints, ***Natural and Affected Behaviour* (1779)**, which appeared in French and German the following year in the *Göttingen Pocket Calendar* (an important publication in the Enlightenment), demonstrates how declarations of love should operate in this period. Is love merely a bourgeois convention?

Artists also sought to answer questions about freedom, equality and religion, often in conjunction with scientific research. Light embodied truth and the transmission of knowledge. Yet artworks did not simply serve the Enlightenment by confirming existing insights; rather, they opened new fields of possibility, including failure and contradiction. In **Daniel Chodowiecki's** painting ***Goddess of Tolerance* (c. 1791)**, a white figure in antique dress, presumably the goddess of wisdom, spreads her bright red cloak protectively over representatives of different religions – Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, Muslims, Reformed Christians, Quakers and Mennonites. The Athena-style armour makes clear that this is not just about granting religious tolerance but also about defending it, thereby reinforcing a European claim to authority. As a key element, the artist painted the emanating light in a complex process using radiating beams. The Enlightenment created radical attitudes towards traditional belief systems. After the French Revolution, attempts were made to establish a 'Cult of the Supreme Being'. In 1794, Jacques-Louis David – painter, politician and organiser of revolutionary festivals –

even had a statue of Atheism burned during one of these civic-religious celebrations in Paris. Belief in nothing was still too much.

Tolerance, however, was far from straightforward, for antisemitism was part of the Enlightenment, as evidenced in Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764) and especially in the writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Jewish intellectuals such as Moses Mendelssohn and David Friedländer sought to end the isolation of the Jewish community. Their aim was to preserve the Jewish-Hebrew heritage and reconcile their religion with philosophy and science. This led to publications such as *Ha-Me'assef and Jedidja*. The aim was to set up a secular education system and link traditional Judaism to the modern world. Figures like Henriette Herz and Saul Ascher, along with painters and engravers such as **Loeser Leo Wolf** with his ***Views of Hamburg During the French Period* (1812)**, are representatives of this Jewish intellectual life. **DR**

Claude-Louis Desray: *Nature*, 1792

During the Enlightenment, disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biology and geology broke away from natural philosophy and developed into independent sciences. The natural world began to be regarded as a logical system. In this vertically elongated oval, the personification of Nature sits enthroned on earthy green ground against a brown background. She appears in the middle of the image as a woman wearing a crown made of the fruits of the Earth, with more agricultural produce and the landscape beneath her bare feet. In parallel with the rational approach, an emotional appreciation of nature also emerged. In a long gown and with her torso exposed, the subject nurses two children. The two *putti* – one Black, one white – hold each other's hands while they are being fed. By depicting Nature as a white mother nursing children of different ethnicities, the Enlightenment ideal of equality is expressed from the perspective of the European majority society. The image is promoting the main values of the Enlightenment – freedom, equality, human rights – while simultaneously challenging them. For although around 1800 people were calling for an understanding of nature and its usefulness, from today's viewpoint the rhetoric of this print also suggests dominance over nature and economic exploitation. Drawing on the notion of Natura, society formulated a concept of natural law that served as the political and philosophical foundation of the Enlightenment. To establish supposedly universal

Claude-Louis Desray
Nature, 1792

principles, colonial powers instrumentalised the idea of civilisation and portrayed subordinated territories as less civilised. This legal framework thus also refers to European imperialism and the trafficking of enslaved people. The French Revolution initiated a powerful discourse when the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) guaranteed all French men 'equality, liberty, security and property'. But in the colonies the new laws caused considerable conflict: it remained unclear whether equality and rights to liberty also applied to Black people and enslaved populations. After the official abolition of the slave trade, slave dealers turned their attention to children from Madagascar, India and East Africa instead. Desray depicts the *putti* as equal before nature and thus criticises the unfulfilled promises of the Enlightenment, which sought to abolish slavery while simultaneously being part of the system that legitimised forced labour and exploitation. **PH**

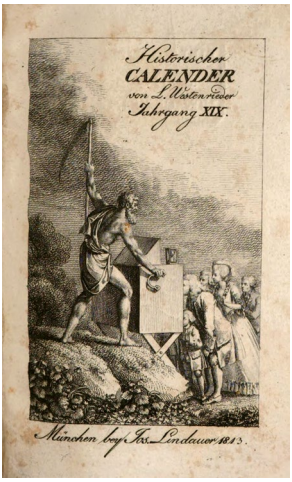
Daniel Chodowiecki
Natural and Affected Behaviour, 1779

Daniel Chodowiecki
Natural and Affected Behaviour, 1779

These small-format sheets of 1779 by Daniel Chodowiecki were produced for a pocket calendar that appeared in German and French and juxtapose affected poses with what seem to be natural forms of behaviour. Each image shows a man and a woman holding hands and walking towards the viewer. While the sheet entitled *Nature* depicts the figures almost naked and wearing only minimal, classical drapery, the figures in the contrasting image, entitled *Affectation*, are dressed in aristocratic style and represent the *ancien régime*. During the Enlightenment, Chodowiecki created numerous series of such images that portray scenes of social interaction. They show ideals of a code of conduct based on self-control, reason, modesty and the regulation of sentiments – that is, emotional discipline – reflecting social norms in the Enlightenment, with the artist himself seeking to set an example. By deliberately contrasting affected with natural behaviour, the images reveal bourgeois forms of social conduct. Debates within society around 1800 enjoyed evoking such contrasts in order to look critically at traditional conventions. In his contrasting images, Chodowiecki was thus idealizing forms of behaviour in the new age. **PH**

Anonym: *Laterna Magica*, 1813 in: *Historischer Kalender von L. Westenrieder*, München 1813

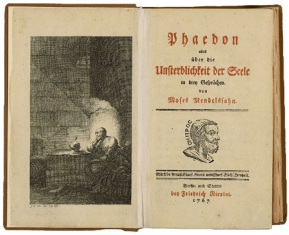
Around 1800, the narratives of the past had outlived their usefulness, and images no longer obeyed traditional rules. Lorenz Westenrieder always introduced his calendars with a humorous frontispiece depicting Chronos, or Saturn, shown with his attributes of sickle and hourglass. The mythological god had originally castrated his father Uranus to become ruler of the world and found the Golden Age. He later devoured his children – conceived with his sister Rhea – and only his youngest son, Zeus, survived. From today's perspective, this narrative could easily provide the plot for an over-the-top action or horror film. In 1813, however, this character conveyed a more family-friendly message, as in this image Chronos is operating a *laterna magica*, a technical device used since the 17th century to project images. In the Age of Revolutions, the technologies of perception were changing alongside the world order. For example, by the 19th century, the magic lantern had become an inexpensive mass medium, a precursor to film. Chronos is now a travelling performer, offering popular science and education, entertainment and diversion. The hourglass on the apparatus no longer refers to vanitas or melancholy, but to the time the eager audience has left in which to watch the performance. **PLB**



Anonym
Laterna Magica, 1813

Johann Wilhelm Meil
***Socrates in Prison, Observing a Butterfly on a Skull*, 1776** in Moses Mendelssohn, *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul*, Berlin, 1776

The philosophy of the Enlightenment was a crucial driving force behind the transformations around 1800, and the Haskalah played a central role in this process, marking a decisive shift in the perception and self-understanding of Jewish society on the cusp of the 19th century. One important aim was social improvement. Within the Jewish community debates on this issue were conducted mainly in Hebrew; texts written in German were intended to mediate between the community and the Christian majority society. In general, the aim was to adapt traditional Judaic faith – regarded as highly focused on law – to the secularised Christian society. Moses Mendelssohn is the key figure in this movement and was held in high esteem by contemporary philosophers. Karl Philipp Moritz, for instance, called him the 'Socrates of his age', and Lessing's figure of the



Johann Wilhelm Meil
Socrates in Prison, Observing a Butterfly on a Skull, 1776

wise merchant Nathan in the drama *Nathan the Wise* (1779) – a work concerned with questions of religious tolerance – was modelled on the scholar. It is therefore hardly surprising that Mendelssohn's book Phaedon, in which he adapted one of the most important texts by the ancient philosopher Plato, not only became his greatest success but also a standard work on the Socratic doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This metaphysical argument posits that the soul is separate from the mortal body and therefore eternal. Thus, the copperplate frontispiece engraving by Johann Wilhelm Meil depicts Socrates pondering in his prison cell alongside a skull and a butterfly: the skull represents the mortal body, the insect the immortality of the soul. Broken chains can be seen in the background, indicating the liberating impact of this doctrine. The ancient text conveys its ideas through three fictional dialogues in which Socrates' students discuss his theory. Mendelssohn adapts this classical model in the spirit of the Enlightenment and supplements it with an extensive preface introducing the 'Life and Character of Socrates'. This portrayal of the scholar as an ideal bourgeois philosopher – one who enables others to discover truth for themselves – was of great interest to contemporary readers, who regarded him as a model who could provide answers to the questions of their own age. **MK**

Daniel Chodowiecki
Moses Mendelssohn Is Examined at the Berlin Gate to Potsdam, 1791

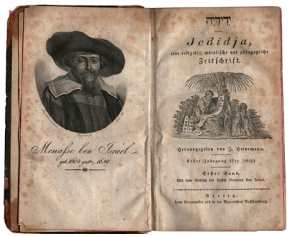
Daniel Chodowiecki:
Moses Mendelssohn Is Examined at the Berlin Gate to Potsdam, 1791

In the 18th century, only wealthy Jews were permitted to settle in Berlin, yet Moses Mendelssohn lived in poverty. Employment as a bookkeeper in a silk factory secured residency for him and his family and protected them from expulsion. The great success of his book *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul* (1776), which was widely translated, made the 'Jew of Berlin' famous throughout Europe. This engraving by Moses Samuel Loewe was published in the *Physiognomic Almanac for the Year 1792*. Chodowiecki had drawn the original template the year before, depicting an inspection by Prussian state authorities in 1771. As the leading advocate of tolerance and universal human rights, Mendelssohn had been invited to Potsdam to meet high-ranking officials from Saxony. But Frederick II refused to receive the German-Jewish philosopher in a deliberate act of discrimination. The image depicts a confrontation

between bodies: the senior official behaves elegantly, while the soldier stands rigidly, his long gun and tight uniform embodying the standard figure of a guardsman. Both gatekeepers look down upon the exceptional philosopher. Though short in stature and hunchbacked since childhood, the 'world-wise' thinker rises far above the Prussian state apparatus through the brilliance of his intellect. **DR**

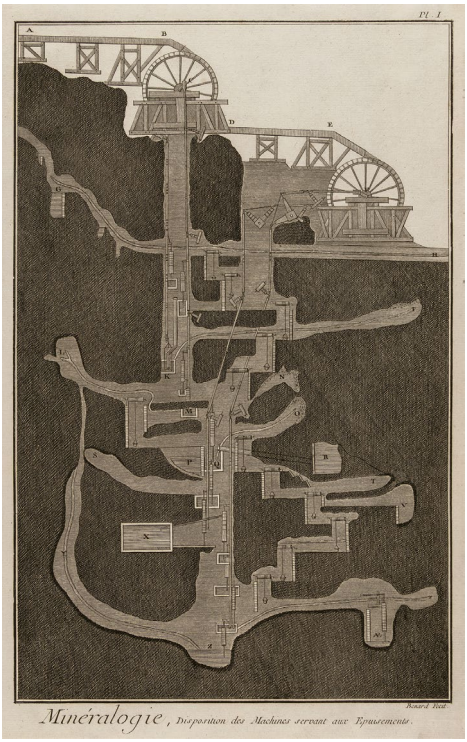
Moses Samuel Loewe:
***Menasseh ben Israel,* 1817** in: *Jedidja* 1, Berlin

With the Haskalah as part of the European Enlightenment, a new visual culture also emerged in conjunction with the writings of Jewish scholars. The frontispiece of the German-Jewish periodical *Jedidja* (1817) bears witness to this movement in Berlin after 1800. In the subtitle 'A religious, moral and educational journal', editor Jeremias Heinemann makes his agenda clear: secular education and Jewish histories are to be combined. Accordingly, he published Hebrew poems as well as curricula used in private schools for Jewish boys and girls. The title copperplate by Moses Samuel Loewe integrates traditional Judaism into this process. The portrait depicts the Dutch Sephardic scholar Menasseh ben Israel who was a rabbi, diplomat, writer, Kabbalist, printer and publisher. His major emancipatory work, *Vindiciae Judaeorum* of 1656, had been translated by Moses Mendelssohn in 1782. Loewe's source for the portrait was a 1636 etching by Rembrandt thought to portray Menasseh. The difficulties for Jewish artists around 1800 – from antisemitic restrictions on professional activity to orthodox prohibitions on images – are made particularly evident in the different ways of rendering the artist's name: Moses Samuel Loewe / Michael Siegfried Lowe / M. S. Löwe. **DR**



Moses Samuel Loewe
Menasseh ben Israel, 1817

3. Nature / Industry



Robert Bénard
Mining Tunnel, 1767

Around 1800, when individual European states were beginning the transformation to become industrialised nations, nature was a keyword of the Enlightenment. The new social order was considered 'natural'. In addition, the emerging natural sciences were systematically investigating the world. For example, geology increasingly moved away from biblical models and revised the age of the Earth from roughly 6,000 years to millions of years. Travel played an important role for the aspiring bourgeoisie, and the natural world was regarded as a place of reflection, self-knowledge and morality. As a result artistic innovations appeared in landscape painting. The hand-coloured copperplate engraving by ***Philibert-Benoît de La Rue, Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (1767)**, depicts curious bystanders, many of whom travelled to southern Italy at a time when modern tourism was beginning to develop. Such imagery was seen as an impressive natural spectacle or as a symbol of violent social renewal. Staffage figures draw viewers into the visual drama, although the event can be experienced from a safe distance. These images correspond to the concept of the sublime formulated by the philosopher, proto-conservative politician and critic of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke. This aesthetic is not concerned with beauty, but with a feeling of being overwhelmed. Such an emotion arises when confronted with something that is too vast, too powerful or even infinite to be fully grasped or controlled. Such a confrontation also enabled viewers to reflect upon God's creation.

At the same time, nature was considered a prerequisite for progress and technology, to be subordinated to humans using machines to do so. In ***The Fighting Temeraire Is Towed to Her Last Berth to Be Broken Up* (1838)**, William Turner, who travelled extensively, depicts both an intensely colourful sunset and the smoking funnel of a steamship. This atmosphere is not a divine realm, but rather human-made, as William Read's engraving Drawing the Retorts at the Great Gas Light Establishment Brick Lane (1821) of the energy supply in the city of London demonstrates. At the same time, in an era when ecological awareness was emerging, calls for a return to nature could also be heard. Industrial landscape paintings, featuring factories

and dispersed workers, also offer a panorama of extractive capitalism. Practical instructions for resource extraction can be found in the entry on ***Mining Tunnel in Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie* (1767)**. These dynamics extended beyond Europe to colonial territories. Referencing nature was often a way of restricting or denying the rights of groups fighting for their emancipation: women were regarded as symbols of flora and fauna and thus positioned in opposition to the achievements of culture, while legal systems defined enslaved people as natural objects. From today's perspective, it is clear that 'nature' does not exist as an independent entity; rather, artworks convey the ideas and concepts of the time in which they were created. Human civilizations are now seen as interwoven with the processes of nature – part of a fragile network. **PLB**

Joseph Wright of Derby
Eruption of Vesuvius, c. 1780

Until the French Revolution of 1789, it was customary for young aristocrats to undertake an educational journey to Italy. The Bourbon Kingdom of Naples, which included Vesuvius and, after 1750, the archaeological sites around Pompeii, was an essential stop on the Grand Tour. The painter Joseph Wright of Derby also travelled through the region and to the southern Italian port city between 1773 and 1775 – albeit without witnessing a volcanic eruption. Once back in England after the event, he painted 30 versions of Vesuvius spewing fire, drawing on numerous sketches made on-site. Around 1800, these natural spectacles were a popular subject in works known as 'nocturnes'. Eruptions were reported worldwide, for instance in Iceland and Japan, which resulted in crop failures, famines and extreme winters even in Europe. In this version of around 1780, Derby presents the eruption of Vesuvius as the central focus of the composition, his painterly emphasis being on the depiction of light. The volcano is viewed from a great distance, hurling magma, fire and smoke into the night sky. Tiny staffage figures on a boat in the foreground are intended to convey the feeling of participating in the sublime event. A reflection of this spectacular explosion of light is deliberately mirrored in the water. At that time, the volcanologist and British diplomat William Hamilton lived in Naples, and geology in particular played a leading role in the revolutionary expansion of knowledge. So-called 'Neptunists' believed that rocks originated from water,

Joseph Wright of Derby
Eruption of Vesuvius, c. 1780

whereas 'Plutonists' argued that heat from the Earth's interior had shaped the planet, making volcanoes an expression of geological forces. Hamilton, too, regarded fire-spewing mountains as windows into the Earth's core, describing them as 'permanent laboratories'. At the same time, he was interested in mythological traditions and ancient art. Wright of Derby's art responds to these geological studies and debates, as indicated by the final light source in his painting – the Moon, veiled by smoke and clouds. The Moon also alludes to the Lunar Society, founded in Birmingham in the 1760s as an influential group of Enlightenment scientists, engineers, philosophers and industrialists who exchanged ideas on science, technology and philosophy. Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood were members, and Joseph Wright of Derby maintained close contact with the society. The dramatic contrasts in his paintings – the hot red light of the fire against the cool white moonlight – allude to the loosening of traditions and ways of thinking. At the same time, the Lunar Society was closely linked to industrialisation and the factory system with its global trade networks. In this sense, Wright's landscape painting can also be understood as a capitalist version of Vulcan's forge. **OS**

George Cruikshank
An Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, 1815

In this etching, the British caricaturist George Cruikshank satirises Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and its political aftermath. In an apocalyptic scene, a volcano hurls rocks and lava into the air. In the background, fountains set the capital, Paris, ablaze, while above, the contemporary British government perches on storm clouds. Directly beneath a radiant dove of peace, they unleash lightning and gales upon the French army. This combination of disaster and humour creates a political commentary. Volcanoes such as Vesuvius serve as a metaphor for the outbreak of revolutions: a natural destructive force that cannot be stopped. While this analogy was employed by the French insurgents as evidence of their indomitable power, Cruikshank subverts this imagery of natural forces. His landscape embodies the brutality and decay of the French Empire. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the United Kingdom rose to the status of a great power. This caricature reflects the ambivalent attitude of the British public: admiration at the fall of Napoleon is mixed with fear of further upheavals. Cruikshank employs humour as a mass medium to reveal both politics and power relations. **SD**

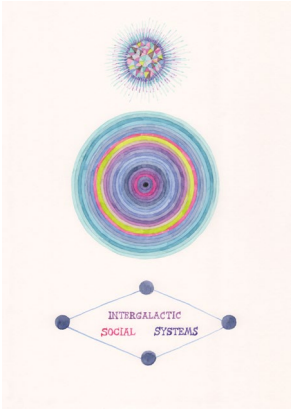
George Cruikshank
An Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, 1815

Philip James de Loutherbourg
***Iron Works. Coalbrook Dale,* 1805**

Over the course of the 18th century, Coalbrookdale became a famous site of the Industrial Revolution. The village's location in an idyllic landscape and its transformation into a centre of iron production exerted a strong attraction on English landscape painters. Coalbrookdale became a site of study for exploring the relationship between humans and nature. Loutherbourg, whose eponymous painting served as the model for this print, also seeks to capture this industrial region. The pictorial space is brightly illuminated by the fire of the blast furnace and the glow of its flames, whose light competes with that of the sun. Steam and smoke replace the mists of the hilly landscape, forming a new atmospheric element within the composition. The path is lined not with boulders but with scattered fragments of cast iron. This residue of production resembles ancient fragments and points towards the industrial ruins of a new era in the future. The picturesque beauty of nature and industry compete with one another, with the factory seeming to replace and repress natural features. Pollution covers the landscape, becoming an integral part of this early industrial scene. **LF**

Philip James de Loutherbourg
Iron Works. Coalbrook Dale, 1805

4. Revolution



Suzanne Treister *Intergalactic Social Systems*, 2020

Revolutions are an invention of modernity. Towards the end of the 18th century, the 'revolutionary spirit' – as Hannah Arendt put it in 1963 – appeared for the first time, along with 'the desire to free and to found a new place for freedom itself'. Until then, the word 'revolution' had been used in astronomy, for instance by Copernicus in his book *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543). With the French Revolution of 1789, this process shifted from nature to society. Humanity's fate was no longer determined by higher powers and their noble or clerical representatives; rather, individual citizens sought collectively to determine their own conditions. This shift of destiny from the heavens to the streets is reflected across various genres at that time: in **Johann Bernhard Basedow's *Elementary Work* (1774)**, mapping the night sky, or in **Johann Meil's** engraving **Dialogues on the Plurality of Worlds (1783)**, in which celestial bodies allow a bourgeois couple to experience the infinite power of love.

In the exhibition series of the 1970s, the Hamburger Kunsthalle examined the 'Age of Revolutions', a phrase coined by the British poet Lord Byron. The focus was on the turbulent period from the American War of Independence (1775) and the French Revolution (1789) to the Haitian Revolution (1791), the Irish Rebellion (1798), the slave uprising in Guyana (1823) and the July Revolution in France (1830). Today, alongside exhibits from the Enlightenment era, the exhibition presents works by contemporary artists that engage with Utopias, desires and revolutionary fetishes. **Suzanne Treister's Vision: *Intergalactic Social Systems* (2025)** projects the revolution of the cosmos onto the firmament of the Kuppelsaal's dome. The work reminds us that the conflicts and revolts around 1800 also gave rise to the term 'social movement'. Since then, artists have actively engaged, often on their own initiative, in social dynamics. At the same time, art helps us to grasp the contradictions of societies undergoing radical transformation, that is of the consequences of good faith in the Enlightenment and progress. These artworks not only represent revolutionary events but sometimes also demonstrate artists' participation in the formation of new kinds of social order.

Johann Meil, *Dialogues on the Plurality of Worlds*, 1783

Jacques-Louis David, for example, wanted to depict ***Oath at Jeu du Paume: Versailles, 20 June 1789*** in the form of a monumental painting **(1791)**. But this auspicious start to the French Revolution, the constitution of the nation united

in a single will remained only a sketch, and the large-format aquatint made by Jazet in 1825 was based on this design. At the centre of the crowd stands Jean-Sylvain Bailly, astronomer and president of the National Assembly. The egalitarian oath stands for the promise of equality, and this print shows that the modern world is founded on the secularisation and mobilisation of the masses. However, from June 1793 onwards, the Reign of Terror spread, promoted by David too. The number of figures who took part in the Oath at Jeu du Paume and who were later executed continued to rise. On 12 November, Bailly himself was guillotined. David abandoned work on the painting because, as Wolfgang Kemp puts it, 'more and more deputies dropped out of sight'. **DR**

Jacques-Louis David
Oath at Jeu du Paume: Versailles, 20 June 1789, 1825

James Gillray
The Blood of the Murdered Crying for Vengeance, 1793 / 1851

This etching by the British caricaturist James Gillray shows Louis XVI immediately after his execution on 21 January 1793. The guillotine on the scaffold occupies almost the entire height of the image. On the bascule lies the king's beheaded body, hands bound behind his back, while the severed head rests in a pool of blood at the foot of the execution machine. The central visual element is the victim's bodily fluid, crying out for revenge. A broad swirl of vital juices rises from the scaffold, like clouds of smoke and bright red in the coloured versions. Louis XVI's lamentations are written in his own blood: 'Whither, oh whither shall my blood ascend to obtain justice?' Gillray chooses not to depict the crowds of spectators, reducing the image to the king's body (depicted without attributes), the guillotine, the inscription and the central gush of sanguine fluid. The depiction of blood differs from other caricatures by the artist. The staging appears solemn, almost mythologising, and highly dramatic at the same time. Gillray presents the monarch as selfless, patriotic and unjustly condemned: France is 'the dearest object of his heart', whose misery was 'the keenest pain in his death'. He appeals to the British, who as 'representatives of eternal justice' and 'arbiters of the world' were to avenge the blood of the 'undeservedly slaughtered monarch' and free France from violence. But how serious is this characterisation of the Kingdom of Great Britain, and how much is ironic self-description? The execution of Louis XVI by guillotine marks a decisive moment in the French Revolution and can be seen as a historical turning point. The growing brutality of the revolu-

James Gillray
The Blood of the Murdered Crying for Vengeance, 1793 / 1851

tionary government had already become evident with the September Massacres the year before, causing widespread concern across Europe. Gillray's critical stance towards the Revolution is evident in this etching, as the monarch's blood symbolically addresses the numerous victims of the Revolution. The guillotine was intended to embody the revolutionary aspiration to equality, as beheadings had previously been reserved for the nobility. Its aim was to abolish cruel, degrading executions and to rationalise and humanise death. Yet ultimately the execution of Louis XVI marked the beginning of the Reign of Terror over the following months, and the guillotine became the bloody symbol of revolutionary violence. **YS**

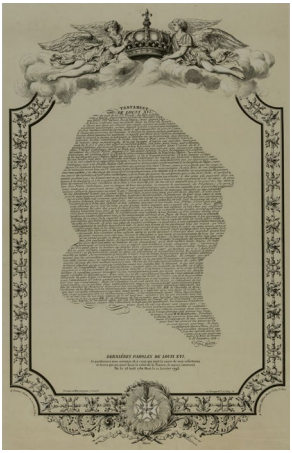
Anonymous
Festival of Reason in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, 1793

On 10 November 1793 – according to the new Republican calendar on 20 Brumaire, Year II of the French Republic – the first Festival of Reason was celebrated in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame at the instigation of the politician Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette. During the so-called Reign of Terror, revolutionaries met their opponents with violence. In this phase, the Catholic Church was to be replaced by the ideals of the Enlightenment, with the aim of establishing a rationalist form of piety. This etching shows the transformation of the church interior: the organisers have removed any references to Christianity, instead raising a mound of earth and erecting an antique-style temple dedicated to philosophy. In front stands a female personification of Reason, wearing a Phrygian cap and holding a spear. Music, singing and other activities involving the participation of the audience were part of the ceremony. The National Convention planned to convert all the churches in Paris and beyond into such Temples of Reason and to hold regular festivals. Churches were desecrated in a wave of iconoclasm, while the Cult of Reason met with resistance from the population. Following the execution of the social-revolutionary Hébertist faction in 1794, these events were suppressed. **PLB**

Anonym
Festival of Reason in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, 1793

Charles Fernique
Testament and Last Words of Louis XVI, c. 1870

Louis XVI was the last king of the *ancien régime*. The National Convention deposed him in September 1792, after which the once untouchable monarch was regarded as a citizen. He was charged and, on 20 January 1793, sentenced to death for 'conspiracy against public liberty'. The following day he was publicly executed by guillotine. Louis XVI composed his last will on 25 December 1792. His final words, however, were not published until the Restoration. Charles Fernique designed the body of the text as a calligram – a poem in the form of an image – resembling the profile of the King of France. Through the combination of anatomy, image and text, the violent aspects of history become legible – it is only the severed head that 'speaks'. The content primarily reminds us of a confession, or a plea for the forgiveness of sins. The focus is not on historical events, but on the salvation of the former ruler's soul. He makes no mention of his subjects, addressing only the con-citoyens, his fellow citizens. This echoes the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote in *The Social Contract* (1762): 'The citizen is a highly political being, who expresses not his individual interest, but the common interest'. **DR**



Charles Fernique
Testament and Last Words of Louis XVI, c. 1870

5. Freedom

Jean-Baptiste Regnault
Freedom or Death, c. 1794

'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' was the central motto of the French Revolution. The state was transformed from an absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, and later into a republic, and in 1789 the National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. The principle of *Liberté* referred, more specifically, to the personal freedom of individual male citizens; for women, Jews, Muslims, colonial populations, the poorer social classes and enslaved people these principles applied only partially, or not at all. A globe in **Louis-Simon Boizot's** etching ***Equality* (1794)** represents the universal aspirations of this policy. On 18 July 1790, a large public festival featuring illuminated obelisks was held on Paris's Champs-Élysées, as a continuation of the *Fête de la Fédération*. Four days earlier, on the Champ de Mars, this event had celebrated national unity, loyalty to the new constitution, and a break with the old hierarchical society, exactly one year after the storming of the Bastille. Further rituals followed: some 60,000 liberty trees were planted in villages and towns across France in May 1792 alone; in the case of the sacred mountain represented by **Jacques-Simon Chéreau**, they underwent a process of sacralisation. Yet political conflicts soon escalated. The King and many others were guillotined during the Reign of Terror between 1793 and 1794; **Charles Fernique** transformed the ***Testament and Last Words of Louis XVI*** into the outline of the King's now decapitated head.

The title of **Jean-Baptiste *Regnault's Freedom or Death* (c. 1794)**, commissioned by the state at the time and presented at the Paris Salon in 1795, recalls another battle cry of 1793 in an allegorical represention of France. The oil painting is one of the so-called 'founding images' with which the Hamburger Kunsthalle opened in 1869. The white, naked Genius of France, recalling the messenger god Mercury as well as an angel, floats above the globe; its wings bear the colours of the French Tricolour – red, white and blue. To its right sits the personification of Liberty on a throne, accompanied by the symbol for eternity – a snake eating its tail. Her attributes include the red Phrygian cap, the banner of Revolutionary France, and a set square; at her feet with an axe at its centre, lie the fasces – a bundle of rods

carried by lictors in ancient Rome – representing state authority and jurisdiction. To the left of the Genius, Death waits on a sulphur-yellow cloud, wielding a scythe – also with Tricolour wings – offering an oak wreath, emblem of the young republic and a symbol of patriotism.

Alongside this is **Philipp Otto Runge's** painting ***Triumph of Cupid* (1801)**, depicting love in its various stages of development within an idealised context. Childlike genii also appear in **John Flaxman's** 1807 interpretation of ***Dante's Divina Commedia* (1307–1321),** although in Flaxman's work violence slowly begins to emerge, as we are in Purgatory, where souls must wait before being purified. Regnault's painting, of which a larger version also exists, leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of the situation around 1800. On the one hand, only revolution – that is, violence and death – can bring liberty. On the other, the painting asks its audience to be prepared to make sacrifices. Martyrdom is the price to pay for the defence of the French Republic and its ideals. **PLB**

Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard
Ouf! (Revolution-Almanac), 1795

'Ouf!' exclaims this 1795 etching. It serves as the frontispiece to the *Revolutions-Almanach*, published in the same year, and is therefore the first image readers encountered before viewing the depictions or reports of revolutionary events. The almanac was published between 1793 and 1802. In the first of ten small volumes, the purpose of the publication is explained: 'This historical almanac deals, as the title suggests, exclusively with the violent changes and upheavals which the states and countries of Europe have endured in earlier and more recent times. They are fragments, arranged without chronological order, drawn from the history of those great world events, and described with fidelity, love of truth, and proper frankness. Should this endeavour receive acclaim, it will be continued'. The 1795 volume shows a man in tattered clothing, leaning on a walking stick. He stands in a square strewn with rubble, while behind him lies a city in ruins. On his back he carries a tall frame, from which a long pole with a rope is suspended, the end of which he holds in one hand. At the top of the pole is a Phrygian or Jacobin cap, rising into the clouds – thereby becoming an emblem. This kind of headgear was chosen by the fighters of the French Revolution as a symbol of their movement. Consequently, the accessory used by the Jacobins and

Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard
Phew! (Revolution Almanac), 1795

sans-culottes also served as an emblem of state for the Republic. Usually, Marianne, the personification of the French nation, holds the woollen cap on a pole or spear to proclaim and defend liberty. At the same time, the bonnet rouge on a pole became synonymous with the Reign of Terror. The subtitle *'Ouf!'* can be read as an exclamation of exhaustion after hard work, but it can also be translated as 'Mad!' or 'Idiot!' It may be interpreted as sarcastic humour, indicating that the image is an exaggerated caricature. The etching introduces the almanac's preface and sets the tone for the rest of the series, in which the editor expresses a critical view of the Revolution, of the many people executed by the guillotine, and of the chaos into which France was sinking without a 'proper' government or state. It becomes clear that the publication is in fact an anti-Revolution almanac. The man depicted in the etching, identifiable as a revolutionary by his cap, stands before a destroyed city. Ultimately, the artwork shows a dystopia resulting from the Reign of Terror. **DV**

Piat Joseph Sauvage
The Nightmare of the Aristocracy, 1793

Piat Joseph Sauvage
***The Nightmare of the Aristocracy,* 1793**

With its call for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', the French Revolution sought to turn the dreams of a bourgeois society into reality. At the same time, however, this desire became a frightening spectre for its opponents. Piat Joseph Sauvage addresses this nightmare of the aristocracy in the form of an allegory. The former court painter to Louis XVI produced numerous politically charged works around 1800, including this stipple engraving, which shows a female personification of the aristocracy being haunted by strange apparitions. Beneath the bed on which the woman lies are the insignia of the aristocracy, including coats of arms, a crown, a sceptre and a star of an order of nobility. She writhes on her bed in fear of the terrifying dream, which appears to her as a triangular shape representing Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, topped with a Jacobin cap; the colours red, white and blue in which the composition is rendered, also refer to the French Revolution. The composition and posture of the figures recall Johann Heinrich Füssli's famous painting *The Nightmare* (1790–1791). In Sauvage's version, however, the woman is posed in a more overtly sexualised way, and in place of the ghostly horse's head, the revolutionary symbol emerges as a terrifying manifestation of the dream. **MK**

Thomas Spence
***Tree of Liberty*, Middlesex, 1795**

From a young age, Thomas Spence published numerous pamphlets and poems, including *The Real Rights of Man* in 1775. He promoted gender equality and the alleviation of poverty, and as early as 1796 he proposed the idea of a basic income. As a result of his writings, he was repeatedly accused of 'seditious libel', arrested by the magistrates and imprisoned without charge. Spence also used another medium to spread his ideas: coins. Few things permeate industrial societies more radically and circulate more rapidly than money. He struck and stamped his messages onto existing coins, for example: 'No Landlords, You Fools, Spence's Plan, Forever'. The revolutionary goal was the end of the aristocracy; all land was to pass into the possession of 'democratic communities'. In addition, Spence designed and struck his own copper coins. Such halfpenny tokens, created after the French Revolution, depict the guillotine or a Tree of Liberty. In this Utopia – called Crusonia or Spensonia – four men dance exuberantly around a Tree of Liberty. Instead of a Phrygian cap, the pole bears the head of William Pitt. Spence ironically referred to the British Prime Minister as 'the protector of liberties'. **DR**

Thomas Spence
Tree of Liberty, Middlesex 1795

6. Equality!?

Johann Heinrich Füssli
The Revenged, c. 1806

In the French Enlightenment the concepts of liberty and equality excluded large parts of humanity, while colonialism, industrialisation and slavery made the rights of citizens in Europe possible. This power structure is reflected in the establishment of museums in the 19th century: art and cultural artefacts from non-European regions were collected by ethnographic museums. Similarly, the works held in the Kunsthalle archive reveal the white gaze on Black bodies. Slavery is denounced, precarious bodies are made visible, yet they retain a timeless presence or remain trapped within the visual regimes of the ruling class.

James Gillray reported on the ***Barbarities in the West Indias* (1791)**, and his brutal torture scene fuelled demands for the abolition of slavery in England. The campaign succeeded in 1807, but abolition only happened in 1838. In ***The Story of Paul and Virginie* (1795–1797)**, based on the novel by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, **Frédéric-Jean Schall** criticised France's colonial system of slavery, a form of oppression abolished by the National Convention in 1794 but reinstated by Napoleon in 1802. The love story, which also features the enslaved Domingue and Marie, is set in the idealised tropical nature of the Isle de France, present-day Mauritius. The two enslaved protagonists are characterised as loyal, morally upright and caring, as 'good savages' without agency of their own. **Johann Heinrich Füssli** makes a more forceful call for solidarity in his painting ***The Revenged* (c. 1806)**. The scene references an abolitionist poem by William Cowper of 1788. Its broader context includes the slave uprising in the French colony of Saint-Domingue in 1791, the murder of the Black revolutionary leader **Toussaint Louverture** in 1803, and the founding of the state of Haiti in 1804. **Nicolas Eustache Maurin's** 1833 portrait posthumously ennobled Louverture. At first glance, Füssli's scene departs from the logic of art in black-and-white: the nocturnal composition depicts a woman with brown skin embracing a man with deep black complexion as they gesture toward a lightning bolt and a slave ship sunk by natural forces. However a third survivor with unnaturally red lips is sitting on the right-hand side of the picture. Füssli was likely familiar with **John Gabriel Stedman's *Gradation of***

Duchemin
Fraternity, 1794

***Shades between Europe and Africa* (1813)**, a colonial system shaped by a racist hierarchy that categorised populations in the Dutch colony of Surinam according to skin tones. At the same time, Stedman's book illustration explains the infantry tactics of enslaved Africans fighting for their freedom. Similarly, the American colonies' first Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Mexican War of Independence (1810–1821), and the secession of the Spanish viceroyalties in Central and South America were all examples of other European colonies demanding independence.

Around 1800 representations from a confident Black perspective were rare – the portrait of **Phillis Wheatley**, attributed to ***Scipio Moorhead* (1773)**, is an exception. From a contemporary African-American perspective, **Kara Walker's** artist's book Freedom. ***A Fable* (1997)** engages with the cliché that representations of Black bodies are closely tied to the history of slavery. With this in mind, even for the period around 1800, an Afropean perspective – that is, the art and culture of Black Europeans as a whole – should be explored in the context of global exchange and cultural hybridity. **PLB**

Marcus Rainsford
***View of a Temple Erected by the Blacks to Commemorate* Their Emancipation, 1801** in Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, London, 1801

This image refers to the slave uprising of 1791 in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, an event that led to the Haitian Revolution and, in 1804, to the founding of the independent state of Haiti. The copperplate engraving appears in Marcus Rainsford's book *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, the first comprehensive account of these events. The English-language volume was translated into numerous languages. At the centre of the image stands a circular temple with a domed roof, supported by seven columns. Inside are tablets marked with Roman numerals, showing Year II of the new calendar. Rainsford, a British officer, combines eyewitness reports and historical sources with his own political views. He admired the struggle for freedom of the formerly enslaved people but interpreted the conflict from a European perspective. While he sharply criticises France's colonial policies, British responsibility is downplayed. In the context of the abolitionist

Marcus Rainsford
View of a Temple Erected by the Blacks to Commemorate Their Emancipation, 1801

movement, enslaved people were often depicted as pleading, grateful or submissive. The engraving, however, presents a different perspective. At its centre is the Black population, which has achieved its equality on its own and commemorates this accomplishment through the construction of a temple. Rainsford – whose own drawing served as the model – and the engraver Inigo Barlow portray the hard-won freedom and its revolutionaries with dignity and solemnity. At the same time, the classical form of the temple situates the Haitian struggle for freedom within a European tradition that emphasises reason and order. Disciplined soldiers stand on either side, the numbered tablets inside allude to law, and the symmetrical composition defines freedom as a monument rather than an uprising. Moreover, the work does not escape a colonial perspective: the revolution is recognised but tamed aesthetically. In this image the violent struggle for equality remains invisible. The French Revolution of 1789 celebrates bourgeois liberty and reason, while the new government in Haiti shortly thereafter proclaims the absolute, existential freedom of the oppressed. Although both claim to enact a 'revolution', their histories do not unfold synchronously. European historiography still tends to overlook distant calls for freedom or to perceive them merely as a faint echo of its own history. **SD**

Scipio Moorhead (attributed)
Phillis Wheatley, 1773 in Wheatley, Poems on Various Subjects, 1773

Phillis Wheatley is recognised as the first enslaved Black person in North America to have her writings published – *Poems on Various Subjects*. This portrait was engraved for the frontispiece of this anthology, which appeared in London in August 1773, commissioned by the publisher. The original likeness is believed to have been made by Scipio Moorhead, a Black enslaved artist in Boston, then part of Britain's colonies in New England. Wheatley is shown seated at a table, lost in thought as she writes a few lines with a quill on a sheet of paper. This image emphasises her talent as a writer and attests to her capacity for independent intellectual work – a deliberate message, given that contemporary society, shaped by racist and sexist prejudices, doubted her authorship. Abducted from West Africa at around seven years of age, she barely survived the passage across the Atlantic. In Boston, she was purchased as an enslaved woman by John Wheatley for his wife Susannah; the publication euphemistically refers to her as a 'servant'.

Scipio Moorhead (attributed)
Phillis Wheatley, 1773

Her writing talent was recognised early on, and through Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, a London publisher agreed to print her poems. A few months after their initial publication, Phillis, likely at Susannah Wheatley's request, was granted her freedom. However, she remained financially dependent on the Wheatley family. The poems were translated into German by Saul Ascher in 1809, thereby establishing a German-Jewish tradition of anti-slavery criticism in the 19th century. **LS**

Josiah Wedgwood: *Anti-Slavery Medallion,* 1787

This anti-slavery medallion was produced by the workshop of entrepreneur Josiah Wedgwood from 1787 onwards in Staffordshire, England. Beneath the inscription 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?', a Black man kneels with hands clasped. The chains on his limbs identify him as an enslaved person. The amulet was originally distributed free of charge by Wedgwood as an emblem of the British Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. It remained a popular symbol for supporters of this cause into the early 19th century. Only in the 1830s was a version created showing a woman in the same pose. The medallion is ambivalent: while the text demands equal human rights for those exploited by the transatlantic slave trade, the figure is portrayed as submissive and helpless. His pleading and vulnerable posture was intended to appeal to the benevolence of primarily white viewers, thereby encouraging parliamentary action in favour of abolition, which was only passed in 1807. The enslaved figure is granted no agency or capacity for resistance. Consequently, despite its emancipatory intent, the medallion reproduces racist visual conventions in Europe. **LSF**

Josiah Wedgwood
Anti-Slavery Medallion, 1787

Note: Historical documents in the exhibition contain racist and discriminatory terms for Black and indigenous people. These exonyms persist even today. The labels are designed to raise public awareness of the issue by reproducing these terms with a visual barrier. Moreover, some images depict Black people, indigenous peoples and other persons of colour in a stereotyped, racist manner. They illustrate social ideologies with currency around 1800. These depictions were discriminatory from the outset and remain so today. Displaying them enables us to explore our responses critically and to discuss the context of their origin in our own day.

Jean-Michel Moreau
This Is the Price You Pay for Eating Sugar in Europe, 1787

Jean-Michel Moreau
This Is the Price You Pay for Eating Suger in Europe, 1787 in Voltaire, *Candide ou l'Optimisme*, Paris 1759 / 1787

In Voltaire's book of 1787, wars, greed and human cruelty accompany the young Candide on his journey around the world. As a leading figure of the Enlightenment, Voltaire criticises the belief system of his colleague Gottfried W. Leibniz, initially represented through his protagonist. Confronted with malice and avarice, Candide gradually loses his optimism over the course of his odyssey. This print by Jean-Michel Moreau accompanies Chapter 19 of the novella. On the way to the Dutch colony of Surinam in South America, Candide, accompanied by his servant Cacambo, encounters an enslaved man mutilated by his master. The scantily clad man lies in the shadow of a palm tree, looking up towards the pair on the left-hand side of the image. His right arm is bandaged, and his left leg, severed during an attempted escape, has been replaced by a wooden prosthesis. The composition remains hierarchical: the standing travellers remain superior to the seated man, reflecting the political realities of the period. To meet European demand, the cultivation of and trade in sugar – increasingly important to the economies of 18th-century European imperial powers – transformed plantation economies in the West Indies. This led to a sharp rise in the importation of enslaved Africans and ruthlessly intensified their exploitation. The effects of this system are evident in Moreau's depiction of severe injuries and the in print's caption. Commenting on his own mutilation, the enslaved man addresses Candide and Cacambo – and the book's readers – with his final words: 'This is the price you pay for eating sugar in Europe'. The horrifying labour conditions in sugar production and the inhumane aspects of slavery as a profit-driven system are made visible. Triggered by the Haitian Revolution of 1791, which led to the abolition of slavery in the French colony, visual culture in France began to change. Black figures were increasingly depicted not as infantilised or submissive, but as violent and threatening to white Europe. Consequently, Moreau's print was omitted from later editions of *Candide ou l'Optimisme*. **JB**

Kara Walker: Freedom. A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times, Santa Monica 1997

This pop-up book, reminiscent of popular children's literature, depicts a nude female figure lying on her back with one leg bent, holding a flower, while an oversized palm – phallic and reminiscent of Orientalist clichés – rises from her lower body and towers above her. Kara Walker's artist's book tells the story of an enslaved woman who, despite emancipation, continues to face oppression and discrimination in the context of the American Civil War. For this narrative, Walker chose the silhouette, a traditional craft predominantly practiced by middle-class women around 1800. But in *Freedom. A Fable*, she casts an unflinching black-and-white gaze on the history of slavery, racism and colonialism in North America. The artist interrogates how Blackness has been unconsciously prescribed and how prevailing narratives of identity in art and literature have been – and continue to be – produced. Walker plays provocatively with stereotypes, challenging her audience. The antiquated shoe, the figure's only article of clothing, emphasises her nakedness and vulnerability. Just as Walker reproduces racist as well as sexist images, the language accompanying her artist's book is equally brutal. Body and text merge to make visible what has been spoken out loud in the past and what remains unspoken today, as exemplified by the word "Negress" in the title. Also the phrasing *Freedom. A Fable* serves as a lesson: Is freedom merely a fairy tale? Was slavery ever truly abolished? Who controls the discourse about colonialism today? What dark past does the audience see in Kara Walker's shadow plays? The silhouettes demonstrate how the artist wrestles with her own culturally contested African-American history, attempting to invert traditional representational conventions through strategies of appropriation and empowerment. History is never simply black and white; it is grey, complex and ambivalent. The process of emancipation is ongoing, and 'Black' identity – like the words ascribed to it – is constantly in flux. In her work, Walker seeks to liberate herself from both her own and imposed shadows, and she calls on us all to participate in this process. **OS**

Kara Walker
Freedom. A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times, 1997

7. Feminism

Claude-Louis Desray
Olympe de Gouges Presents Her 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman' to Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, 1790

During the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, women's rights movements began to emerge; at the time, 'man' was considered the prototype of humanity. Around 1800, artworks frequently cast women as goddesses, allegories, mythological figures or sexualised objects, roles that diverted attention from contemporary politics. **Johann Heinrich Füssli**, for example, presents the biblical story of ***The Creation of Eve*** in his theatrical painting **(1793)**. The first female ancestor emerges from the rib of a sleeping passive. She is portrayed as rebellious, having made a pact with the devil: Eve prompted Adam to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge. While patriarchy frames this as the Fall, for feminists Eve brought knowledge into the world. By around 1800, women were engaging in concrete political action. On 5 October 1789, a procession of female labourers, some armed, marched to Versailles demanding political reforms. Intellectuals such as Mary Wollstonecraft in Britain called for equality, while the French philosopher Olympe de Gouges wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* in 1791. Their aims included political participation, education, divorce rights, and equal treatment within marriage and family.

Circles and political clubs formed, and women took part in uprisings and protests – and in some cases even armed conflict. This emancipation was often accompanied by violence. Numerous portraits from 1793 depict Charlotte Corday, who on 13 July assassinated the journalist and politician Jean-Paul Marat, whom she blamed for growing brutality. Jacobins viewed Corday as a traitor, while the Girondins hailed her as a martyr of the moderate Revolution. She was guillotined a few days later. Self-defined representations that went beyond male fantasies also exist: Maria Flaxman, for instance, explored dreams and the female imagination. Academic art education, however, was denied to women, Jews, adherents of non-Christian religions, and people of lower social status. Nevertheless Angelika Kauffmann and Mary Moser were among the founders of London's Royal Academy of Arts in 1769, although they too were barred from full access. As a result, in **Johann Zoffany's** group portrait of Academicians, they appear only as pictures within the picture. For a brief period around 1800, European academies and salons

opened their doors to women, but this was short-lived. **Claude-Louis Desray** depicts ***Olympe de Gouges Presents Her 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman' to Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI* (1790)**; the engraving appeared at the beginning of the Revolution as the frontispiece of her pamphlet Remarques patriotiques. In 1793, the year de Gouges was executed, the government forbade women from founding political clubs and participating in elections, leaving many of their demands unfulfilled. Counter-propaganda was widespread. **Thomas Rowlandson**, for example, caricatured women's rights activists in his ***Procession to the Hustings after a Successful Canvass* (1784)**, highlighting in particular the privileges of aristocrats such as the Duchess of Devonshire, who appears among the crowd. Jacques Esnauts & Michel Rapilly, in their political caricature, Harpy. Living Monster That Was Caught on the Shores of Lake Fagua in Chile (1784), portray femininity as both exotic and monstrous. These polarised gender roles shaped 19th-century bourgeois society: for example, ***The Diligent Housewife* (1791), as shown in Daniel Chodowiecki's** print, is increasingly confined to the domestic sphere, while working-class women performed both productive and reproductive labour. **PLB**

William Blake
Insects, Birds & Animals, Are All Enjoying Existence …, 1791
in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life*, London, 1788 / 1791

In her children's book *Original Stories from Real Life*, the writer Mary Wollstonecraft calls for the recognition of children's rights – for girls especially. Following the first edition of 1788, a 1791 version was published with illustrations by William Blake. The overarching narrative revolves around the education of the sisters Mary and Caroline by their governess, Mrs Mason. Over the course of 25 chapters, moral lessons are conveyed through personal anecdotes directed at the two girls. Blake's six engravings visualise these lessons, which primarily concern charity towards both humans and animals. In the book's frontispiece, Mary and Caroline are depicted beneath the outstretched arms of their governess. They look up at her with respect as they step out of a doorway. This engraving sets out the educational approach of the publication: the education of girls means leaving the domestic sphere in order to engage with the outside world and develop independent thinking. The subtitle of the image also reflects Wollstonecraft's view that every living being exists in a divinely ordained harmony. Children should, through

William Blake
Insects, Birds & Animals, Are All Enjoying Existence …, 1791

education, cultivate respect for every part of God's creation. The second engraving reinforces this aim. A man stands despairing at the bedside of his two deceased children, who had attempted to find him while he was in prison. The corresponding chapter recounts how, despite being hard-working, he was imprisoned by his landlord due to unpaid debts. Through this story, Wollstonecraft criticises the exploitation of the Third Estate. This kind of social realism made young readers aware of Enlightenment ideals and acknowledged them as capable participants in society. Similarly the remaining four illustrations highlight the structural oppression of workers and peasants at the end of the 18th century. By embedding social critique in her stories, Wollstonecraft provides children with their own access to education. At a time when children from poor families had to work from an early age and childhood was not protected by society, the author was remedying this point of view. In this way, readers – particularly girls – in a male-dominated world were afforded both moral and political education that was considered inappropriate for daughters at that time. Mary Wollstonecraft and William Blake are thus addressing girls as part of society, anticipating the political demands of the first feminist movement. **LSF**

Anonym
List of People Depicted in Johan Zoffany, The Academicians of the Royal Academy, 1772, 1773

Johann Heinrich Füssli
***Bust Portrait of a Woman with a Stiletto*, 1814**

At first glance it is not immediately apparent, but the title of Johann Heinrich Füssli's work is revealing. The young woman with her styled curls and exposed breast is not holding a closed fan or any other frivolous accessory: she is holding a kind of dagger, a stiletto, a slender weapon used for stabbing. The imminent threat stands in tension with the allure of the woman's erotically charged beauty. Straddling the line between sexualisation and demonisation, the figure becomes a *femme fatale*, thereby typifying a modern myth. As part of a series of courtesan portraits, the picture was likely intended for private viewing. Women with elaborately styled hair are a recurring motif in Füssli's work. Greek inscriptions, like the one in brown ink at the bottom of the sheet, frequently appear in the artist's drawings. The text comes from Homer's *Iliad*: 'And she bore Sarpedon, the godlike warrior. But after him too, he became hateful to the Celestials (…)'. Füssli had already explored the fate of the demigod in 1804 in his painting *Sleep and Death Carry the Body of Sarpedon to Lycia*. By linking the woman with the heroic warrior, he emphasises her ability both to defend herself and to harm others. . **JW**

Johann Heinrich Füssli
Bust Portrait of a Woman with a Stiletto, 1814

Villeneuve
***French Women Who Have Liberated Themselves*, c. 1790**

The inscription 'Françaises devenues libres' heralds the women's rights movements of the French Revolution in 1789. Within the oval, tinted frame of the etching stands a woman, one hand on her hip and the other holding a spear, looking directly at us, the audience. The abstract background, rendered in bright red, makes the central figure stand out. The weapon, inscribed at its tip with 'Liberty or Death', identifies the woman as a representative of the militant women's movement, while the shattered chains at her feet indicate her self-liberation. Not least, the red, blue and white of her clothing – the colours of the French flag born in the Revolution – refer to the political context. Her hat, adorned with feathers and a Tricolour cockade, evokes depictions of the famous freedom fighter Théroigne de Méricourt, who called herself and her fellow activists 'Amazons', drawing on the ancient legends of female warriors. A fragment of the group's manifesto is quoted in the caption: 'We must wield weapons other than needle and spindle. (…) Should not all women (…) advance on an equal footing with men?' **LK**

Villeneuve
French Women Who Have Liberated Themselves, c. 1790

8. Political Landscape

George Cruikshank
The Peddigree of Corporal Violet, 1815

Around 1800, landscape painting gained new significance. Through this genre, artists addressed political events, concepts of power and economic interests. Works by Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich were created in the context of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815). After Prussia's defeat at Jena and Auerstedt in 1806, France occupied numerous cities. At the time, Germany consisted of 39 independent states, kingdoms, duchies and principalities, loosely connected by the idea of a cultural nation, which was envisioned as a path to national unity. In **1808, Runge** painted ***Amaryllis formosissima***, a flower from Mexico, then a Spanish colony. His work embodies a universal, cyclical vision of the world that regards nature as sacred. The lily – *Jakobslilie* in German – is reminiscent of the cross of an order of knights that had reclaimed the Iberian Peninsula from medieval Muslims in the 8th century. In Runge's time The Spanish War of Independence (1808–1814) was ongoing: does the flower signify solidarity, a call for resistance, or is it meant to inspire national consciousness in Germany? **Friedrich** used his art more explicitly to create a patriotic identity in works such as ***Graves of Fallen Freedom Fighters* (1812)**, thus politicising images of nature and landscape. His paintings convey a sense of homeland, a longing for nationhood and spiritual renewal. In the 20th century, Friedrich's work was appropriated by ethnic nationalist, *völkisch* and Nazi art history, circumstances addressed by the Kunsthalle's series of exhibitions in the 1970s, *Kunst um 1800*.

The Wars of Liberation ended the French occupation of German territories in 1813. In 1814, Paris was captured, Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba. He returned in March 1815, beginning the brutal 'Hundred Days'. In the political cartoon ***A View of the Grand Triumphal Pillar***, published on **12 May 1815**, the British artist **George Cruikshank** presents a monument dedicated to this topography of violence and terror. The landscape is populated by toads and snakes; the foundation stones bear the incised words 'Murder, Plunder, Ambition, Deceit, Vanity'. Dripping in blood, a skeleton leans on a guillotine, Napoleon lashes a blindfolded Justice or Britannia, and

decrees – for peace or the abolition of the slave trade – spill from a cornucopia in the colours of the Tricolour, but are ignored. In ***The Peddigree of Corporal Violet***, published on **9 June 1815**, Napoleon's face wearing Tricolour insignia grows like a poisonous mushroom out of a dung heap, from which a sunflower sprouts, its stamens forming an imperial crown. However this pollen does not create new life but turns into a sickly *Elba fungus*. Violets, depicted in the upper part of the image, were used by Bonapartists as a secret sign of loyalty, the shoots supposedly representing Napoleon, his wife Marie-Louise of Austria and their son. But the days of this invasive mutation are numbered – the allied coalition is approaching. Prussia's General Blücher, the Duke of Wellington and Tsar Alexander I advance with spade and pickaxe, while Louis XVIII, walking with a crutch, cheers the group on. Napoleon's final defeat came at Waterloo on 18 June 1815. **PLB**

George Cruikshank
A View of the Grand Triumphal Pillar, 1815

Caspar David Friedrich
Graves of Fallen Freedom Fighters (Tombs of Ancient Heroes), 1812

This painting evokes the spirit of awakening in the years leading up to the German Wars of Liberation (1813–1815), a period during which the German-speaking small states sought to forge a shared identity and unite against Napoleonic France. In this context, Caspar David Friedrich was painting a political landscape. In the grass in front of the rock face lie new and old tombs. The shattered grave in the foreground is decorated with images of a sword, a mace and two halberds. A snake in the colours of the French Tricolour winds across it. The monument bears the inscription 'Arminius', the legendary chieftain of the Cherusci tribe. The intact sarcophagus to the left reads: 'Peace be unto your grave – saviour in distress'. An obelisk in the background is adorned with crossed swords and a winged figure. Its bright coloured stone makes it seem the most recent of the monuments, and a golden beam of light highlights it as the central element of the composition. On its base we can read the inscription: 'Noble youth; saviour of the fatherland'. The intact sarcophagus on the right also bears a dedication: 'To the noble fallen for freedom and justice, F.A.K.' The rocks in the background obscure the view but part in the middle to reveal a cave entrance, where two soldiers stand guard. With its themes of war and national liberation, Friedrich's painting captures the zeitgeist of the early 19th-century German territories. Since

Caspar David Friedrich
Graves of Fallen Freedom Fighters (Tombs of Ancient Heroes), 1812

the beginning of the French occupation in 1799, there had been a desire for liberation and the formation of a German nation state. Through his visual rhetoric, Friedrich references this movement. The painting glorifies fallen soldiers, presenting their deaths for country and freedom as honourable. In addition, the artist is comparing the soldiers with Arminius, the Germanic chieftain who defeated the Roman legions at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. Friedrich also places an obelisk dedicated to the German homeland on the gravesite, with a ray of sunlight falling on the monument like a divine illumination. By narrating a shared past, the painter seeks to create a sense of 'Germanness', a shared reason to fight: The two soldiers at the mouth of the cave wear contemporary uniforms and golden helmets. Overall, this imagery evokes a mythical present of a future German nation, grounded in historical precedent. Without a visible horizon or sun – unusual for a landscape painting of the period – this Germanic wilderness appears resilient, defiant in the face of contemporary circumstances. . **LF**

Friedrich Perthes & Philipp Otto Runge
Patriotic Museum, Hamburg, 1810

In 1810, Runge created two woodcuts for the cover of the journal *Vaterländisches Museum* [Patriotic Museum]. The publication aimed to preserve 'German art and culture' and, during Napoleon's occupation of German territories including the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, was intended to be an instrument of national renewal. The front cover features two weapons, their handles transforming into shovels. A rod is balanced on the weapons' blades, from which a Janus head hangs. A frieze of passionflowers entwining all the elements of the composition grows out of a heart being beaten by a *putto* holding a bundle of twigs. The back cover shows a burning, radiant heart being struck by another *putto* holding a rod. Lily-of-the-valley is growing out of the heart, their roots intertwining with those of the lilies on either side. From above, a radiant dove of peace descends, holding an olive branch in its beak. The Janus head signifies a turning point in German history, while the passionflowers symbolise the resurrection of Germany: as in the Passion of Christ, suffering is followed by resurrection and peace. In this combination of allegory and ornament, history is represented as a divine, cosmic cycle of nature – a continual process of becoming and passing away. **DV**

Friedrich Perthes & Philipp Otto Runge
Patriotic Museum, Hamburg, 1810

Auguste Desperet: *Third Eruption of the Volcano of 1789*, 1833

In the 19th century the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Laki in 1783–1784 was considered one of the causes of the French Revolution. Since 1789, volcanoes had been an integral part of the Revolution's natural history, regarded as reservoirs in which injustices committed by governments built up. In these images, magma embodies the simmering anger of society. Earthquakes in Europe were also used metaphorically to signify revolts on the verge of eruption in the colonies. Auguste Desperet's lithograph appeared in *La Caricature* in June 1833. From the crater, the letters forming the word *Liberté* spout upwards, heralding a third revolution. The first revolution of '1789' leads to the ruined feudal castle in the foreground, its protective walls inscribed with 'Divine Right' and 'Birthright' – privileges abolished by France's National Constituent Assembly. The second uprising of 1830 is represented by the 'July' stones flying through the air. At the same time, aristocrats attempt to flee the firestorm with their possessions, but the forces of nature know no bounds. On the slopes of the Volcano of Liberty small citadels flying national flags can be seen: first France, which risks being consumed by the lava, followed by Belgium, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Piedmont and Monaco. Desperet does not specify the date of the onset of the third revolutionary events, but he predicts that they are sure to happen sooner or later. **DR**

Auguste Desperet
Third Eruption of the Volcano of 1789, 1833

9. Violence

Francisco Goya
Cartload to the Cemetery, 1812–1814

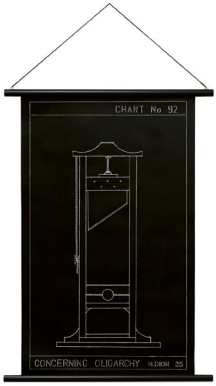
On 1 August 1793, the Section des Piques, a committee of the French Revolution in Paris on which even the Marquis de Sade served as a commissioner, ordered that the following be written on the walls of houses: 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death'. The social order established after 1789 was closely intertwined with political and social forms of violence. The *Kunst um 1800* exhibition series of the 1970s returned to this issue many times, including the state's legitimisation of violence. Thirty years after World War II, the terror of National Socialism and the genocide committed by Germany, the intoxicating emotions of collective violence were still a physical reality for many people. Artworks by William Blake, John Flaxman and especially Francisco Goya depict circles of Hell and scenes of terror filled with suffering, punishment, conflict and murder. Art and love are not the only human inventions; cruelty and war are too. The exhibition series sought a response to the brutality of the modern world through the lens of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's 1944 work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The book's ideas, which had become widely debated since it was re-issued in 1969, provided the framework for the displays in the earlier exhibitions. Werner Hofmann's explicit aim in his installation of artworks was to reveal a 'dialectical process'. For example, the curatorial team highlighted the complex relationship between the pursuit of freedom and self-destruction that can be seen in processes of modernisation.

ART AROUND 1800 consciously adopts this configuration and argument in one respect: depictions of violence presented on a double page of the catalogue *John Flaxman. Mythology and Industry* (1980) are transferred into the space of the current exhibition. Under the heading 'The Death of the Gods', **Flaxman's** outline sketches are juxtaposed with **Francisco Goya's** aquatint etchings. For instance, ***Hector's Body Dragged at the Chariot of Achilles* (1795)** from Homer's Iliad is displayed alongside Goya's ***Cartload to the Cemetery* (1812–1814)**. Plate 64, one of the final prints in the series *The Disasters of War*, shows the aftermath of the 1811–1812 famine in Madrid, which claimed the lives of an estimated 15 per cent of the population. Central to this engagement with Critical Theory was its guideline: 'What is at stake is not conservation of the past, but the fulfilment of past hopes'. This fundamental belief closely aligns with the historical and curatorial approach of *Kunst um 1800* in the 1970s. In his catalogue essays Werner Hofmann notes that the discussion of industrialisation in

the German-speaking world must take into account the extermination machine created by National Socialism. As the director of the Kunsthalle explained in the catalogue with reference to works by Flaxman and Goya, 'This is how humans were treated in the concentration camps'. This statement stands immediately next to the plate *Carretadas al cementerio*. The exhibition series reinforced the question of the connection between the beginnings of modernity and the Shoah, Hitler and the mass murders committed by Germany, emphasising that art in this context had failed, as it could not prevent death and violence. **DR**

Mark Dion: *Concerning Oligarchy*, 2025

This work comprises a scientific diagram on thick paper, held firm by two dowels and hung on the wall with a cord – such teaching aids are usually found in classrooms. The image of a guillotine resembles a technical drawing and, combined with the caption, evokes multiple layers in time and space. Dion is commenting on the apparently scientific image and its claim to objectivity in order to express a political critique. Could it even be a provocative demand? At first glance, the execution machine recalls the French Revolution. In the 18th century, the guillotine became a symbol of equality and justice as it made no distinction between people: people were executed independently of social status, and even the heads of the most powerful aristocrats had to fall. But Mark Dion transposes this symbol into the year 2025. The prominent placement of the artist's signature and the date leaves no doubt as to the political and social context of the work. The term 'oligarchy' describes a form of government in which power resides with a small group of people who prioritise their own advantage over the welfare of the population. Today, the term is often used in connection with Russia and Vladimir Putin. But since the 2024 US election and the victory of right-wing populist Donald Trump, accusations have also emerged in the United States that the 'Land of the Free' is becoming an oligarchy. Billionaire Elon Musk supported Trump's campaign with over $270 million and has since benefited from policies that allow the ten richest US billionaires to accumulate even more wealth, while the rest of the population struggles with rising living costs. Such social inequality was one of the causes of the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, which ultimately led to the King, Louis XVI, being executed by guillotine. It remains unclear whether Dion wishes the same violent fate



Mark Dion
Concerning Oligarchy, 2025

upon today's rich and powerful. What is certain, however, is that the work asks us to look closely at whom those in power feel accountable to and whose interests they serve. Does it call for a return to public executions on the scaffold, or a return to a sense of fraternity? **JW**

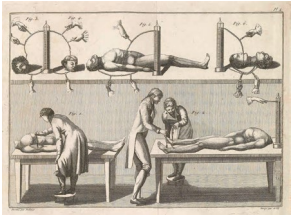
James Gillray
Buonaparte, 48 Hours After Landing!, 1803

James Gillray
***Buonaparte, 48 Hours after Landing!*, 1803**

John Bull, the personification of Great Britain, presents the impaled head of the French ruler Napoleon Bonaparte to a cheering crowd, above which the Union Flag rises as a symbol of patriotism and the unity of the kingdom. In March 1803, the Treaty of Amiens ended the Second Coalition War. Hostilities between France and Great Britain resumed in May, and just weeks later James Gillray created this work. The British caricaturist had already become famous around 1780 for his politically and socially critical etchings and engravings, a project that he pursued into the early 19th century through his pointed observations on the state of Europe and the world. During the Napoleonic Wars on the European continent, there was widespread fear among the British of a French invasion. This fictitious beheading addresses this fear of a Napoleonic victory. The confident yet mocking message at the top of the print promises viewers that their wagers would be multiplied a hundredfold if Napoleon were still alive 48 hours after his arrival on the coast of Britain. And John Bull also mocks Napoleon with rhetorical questions that the severed head can no longer answer. **LS**

Giovanni Aldini: *Theoretical and Experimental Essay on Galvanism…*, Paris 1804

In this book, physicist Giovanni Aldini presents his theories on Galvanism through descriptions of numerous experiments, some conducted in public. This engraving appears in the fourth plate, addressing aspects of these experiments. Galvanism investigates, among other things, the physiological effects of electrical currents, with a particular focus on muscle contractions. Aldini became known for his experiments on the corpses of executed individuals. He sometimes assembled bodies from disparate parts as, for example, in Fig. 1, where the biceps muscle of a decapitated man is connected to the spinal cord of a preserved frog. The arrangement of seemingly objective images, such as the apparently disembodied, floating hands, underscores the strangeness of the scene. Electricity was closely associated with Enlightenment thought, and such experiments raised profound questions about life: does a decapitated body remain conscious? Can the dead be reanimated by electric currents? Is it possible to create a new creature from lifeless tissue and electrical impulses? Aldini's experiments, combined with ethical questions concerning the use of violence in the name of science, provoked both shock and fascination. They are considered a source of inspiration for the novel *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, daughter of the feminist and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft. **YS**



Giovanni Aldini
Theoretical and Experimental Essay on Galvanism …, 1804

10. Remix

Suzanne Treister
MI3 (Machine Intelligence 3), 2018.

Since the late 1980s, **Suzanne Treister's** complex works – painting, video, prints and installations – have been exploring the relationship between new technologies, society, alternative belief systems and future scenarios. At the centre, as in ***Machine Intelligence 3* (2018)**, are digital media: computers, the internet and its history, and artificial intelligence, as well as global arms trading, invasive governments and countercultures. As a whole, in works such as ***Technoschamanic Systems: New Cosmological Models for Survival* (2020–present)**, Treister is creating speculative worlds. She is also drawing on quantum physics; between 2018 and 2022 the artist collaborated with the CERN research institute. In addition, as in ***Kabbalistic Futurism* (2021–2023)**, her own version of the Kabbalah, the mystical tradition of Judaism plays a central role – in particular the Tree of Life with its ten sephiroth. On the ceiling of the Kuppelsaal, the hypnotic projection of ***Vision* (2025)** can be seen. The spherical shape of the space evokes Utopian architecture of the Age of Enlightenment, which represented the universe from a Eurocentric perspective and with totalitarian tendencies. By contrast, Treister imagines the possibility of ***Intergalactic Social Systems* (2020)**. In this series of works, technology is not a tool of military, economic or governmental control processes and has no desire to colonize planets. Rather, Treister asks what kind of social Utopias might be possible if the same means were used to create a positive future for survival on Earth, in solidarity with all theoretically possible elements, beings or civilisations in the cosmos. The aim is an ethically informed fusion of art, spirituality, science and technology. **PLB**

Marten Schech creates his sculptures and installations from the material of space itself, expanding existing buildings through extensions, insertions and modifications, or constructing houses within interior spaces. These structures oscillate between solid architecture and theatrical set. One such installation was created for the Kuppelsaal of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, in inspired by its geometric floor plan. This art of edges, walls, thresholds and boundaries also functions as a display within the exhibition. The two apses of the in-built house merge seamlessly with the panoramatic curved wall of the museum, creating a spatial hybrid – an interior world of the exterior of the interior. At the same time, various architectural forms, materials, and craft techniques from art and architectural history are incorporated. In the context of ART AROUND 1800, Schech references the lime plaster of Baroque buildings, the grottos and follies of English landscape gardens, and Revolutionary-era French architecture. One of the peculiar holes evokes Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's Saltworks in Chaux with its decorative urns from which brine can pour out, as well as the lunette, the circular opening in the guillotine to hold the victim's neck. In 1828 Heinrich Heine noted: 'It is, of course, undeniable, this machine, invented by a French physician, a great world orthopedist, Monsieur Guillotin, with which one can very easily separate foolish heads from evil hearts'. Thus, within the cool austerity of the dome, a sense of unease toward modern architecture emerges. Schech's small-scale model houses reference temple designs around 1800, Utopian ideal buildings dedicated to freedom or reason. Several of these include hypogea – underground temples or burial sites. Like the architectural intervention in the Kuppelsaal itself, the sculptures reveal the boundlessness of a conceptual space. In this way, as the title **Binnacle** suggests, art begins to dance like a compass needle within its wooden housing. **DR**

Marten Schech
Binnacle (Round Lodge with Three Corners), 2025

Marten Schech
Hut Cave in the Hut Grotto, 2025

Imprint

EXHIBITION

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Production Christine Ebeling
Research Assistance Isabelle Lindermann, Lucas Stübbe
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Layout Hesse Blandzinski Design
Building Technology Ralf Suerbaum, Andreas Horn, Florian Krause
Fittings Kolck Ausstellungsgestaltung & Marten Schech
Paintwork Meister der Farben – Timo Antosch GmbH
Light Heinrich Meyer, Christine Ebeling
Projection Meister Lampe und die Lichtgestalten
Museum Attendants Hassan Daneschwar, Gerhard Kruse, Mirco Steinke-Götz & Team

BOOKLET
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Auguste Desperet, Third Eruption of the Volcano of 1789, 1833, private collection, Hamburg