

EXHIBITION TEXT

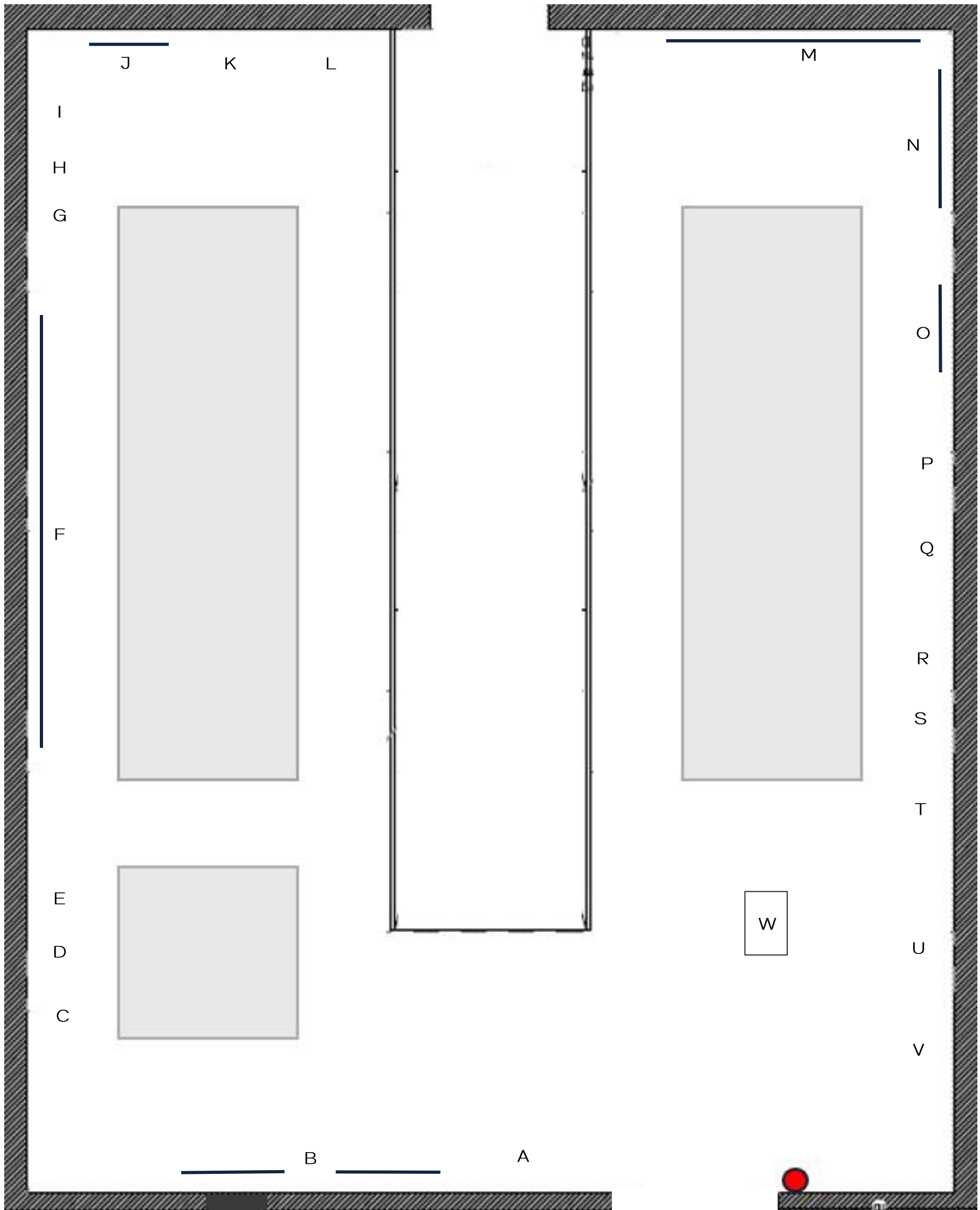
GOOD NIGHT.

Fairy tales, myths, ghosts and phantoms

19 July – 8 November 2026

EXHIBITION SPACE

GRAPHICS ROOM, 1st floor



- A. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel*, 2009
- B. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel* (n.7-8), 2019
- C. Emil Nolde, *Junger Fürst und Tänzerinnen*, 1918
- D. Klaus Florian, *Apocalypse II (Phantastisches I)*
- E. Emil Nolde, *Nachtgestalten*, 1922
- F. Daniele Cudini, *Apparizioni*, 2025
- G. FRANEK, *Elbische Schellwische*, 1990
- H. Anne Peters, *Metamorphose I/II*, 2001
- I. Andrea Lehmann, *placing fate II*, 2008
- J. Daniele Cudini, *Gnomus 3/4*, 2015
- K. Daniele Cudini, *Two half lives don't make one*, 2015
- L. URSULA, *Der Baal-Priester*, 1984
- M. David Hockney, *Six Fairy Tales From the Brothers Grimm (Edition D)*, 1969 /1970
- N. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel*, 2014
- O. Jim Dine, *Imprint from Dorian Gray's Stomach / Dorian Gray at Opium Den*, 1968
- P. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel*, 2007
- Q. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel*, 2012
- R. Lubo Laco, *Selbstdarstellung III*, 1992
- S. FRANEK, *Zwillingssterne*, 1999
- T. Dore O. Nekes, *Schattenporträt Werner Nekes*, 1990
Schattenporträt Helge Schneider, 1987/1992
- U. Uwe Henneken, *Semper Mi*, 2008
- V. Matthias Lahme, *ohne Titel*, 2008
- W. Daniele Cudini, *Il Conte Bernetti da Montone*, 2024

The exhibition brings together works that explore fairy tales, myths, ghosts and phantoms. These figures have been around for a very long time. People have been telling stories about them for many centuries. Even today, we still encounter them in books, films, pictures and stories.

The night can feel different. It can offer peace and protection. However, some people also feel unsafe or afraid at night. Many stories are about creatures that appear in the darkness.

The artworks in this section of the exhibition depict both familiar and unfamiliar creatures. They tell of desires, fears, memories and hopes.

The exhibition asks: Why do these figures still fascinate us today? And what can they tell us about our lives today?

The wish "Good night", which Matthias Lahme conveys to the viewer through his typography, appears at first glance to be a harmless, caring platitude.

It conveys a sense of calm, protection and the hope for a peaceful night's sleep. Yet a subtle ambiguity lies buried within it. Traditionally, the night is not only a time of rest, but also of uncertainty.

It has always been regarded as a realm of the unknown – as the hour of spirits, ghosts and eerie apparitions. Precisely because darkness obscures visibility and blurs contours, it creates space for imaginary forces. In fairy tales, myths and folk beliefs, supernatural beings tend to appear at night.

The wish 'Good night' can therefore also sound like a protective charm, as if one were wishing the other person not only sleep, but also protection from the uncanny.

Great mythological tales, fairy tales and their creatures have always inhabited the interstices of the human imagination. They take shape where rational knowledge ends and the realm of the imagination begins.

In the twilight zones between visibility and invisibility, in the fluid space between memory and repression, between fear and desire, these 'shadow beings' rise into consciousness.

Threatening and alluring, frightening and seductive, they challenge our familiar systems of order and shake the very foundations of our world.

Fairy tales, myths, ghosts and phantoms are therefore not merely harmless narrative remnants of pre-modern cultures. Rather, they are disruptive elements within the system of the rational, resistant formations against the force of unambiguity.

Where the narrative of the Enlightenment promises order, they open fissures in our thinking. Where meaning appears to be fixed, they insist on ambiguity, ambivalence and illegibility.

As narrative figures, they are never merely fictional, but always serve as repositories of cultural knowledge. They embody collective experiences, moral codes, social norms and unconscious desires.

Fairy tales tell of transformations and trials, and of the permeability between worlds. They reveal that identity is not a stable state, but a process.

Between 1969 and 1970, **David Hockney** created the etching series '**Illustrations for Six Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm**', which he subsequently published as a portfolio. For this publication, he chose the stories of 'Fundevoegel', 'Rapunzel', 'The Boy Who Went Out to Learn to Be Afraid', 'The Little Sea Hare', 'Old Rinkrank', 'Rumpelstiltskin', 'The Golden Bird' and 'The Old Sultan'.

In his etchings, Hockney does not depict an idealised fairy-tale world. Using clear, cool lines, he focuses on the subtly unsettling aspects of the stories, which he sets in strange architectural spaces. Here, the feeling of helplessness and vulnerability that overwhelms the viewer upon seeing them finds a space in which to resonate.

In myths, by contrast, cosmological questions, power dynamics and archetypal conflicts coalesce; over the millennia, these have repeatedly re-inscribed themselves into social structures, thereby establishing origin and order. But contemporary figures such as celebrities.

As archetypes such as 'the rebel', 'the seducer' or 'the saviour', pop stars, for example, fulfil a similar function in modern media society to that of mythological figures in ancient cultures.

They embody collective longings and archetypal role models, and often follow narrative structures analogous to the ancient hero's journey, which encompasses the media-driven path

from obscurity through breakthrough and scandal to a comeback.

In her artistic exploration of light, movement, the body and cinematic perception, **Dore O.** stages her models as shadowy figures.

They appear as tension-filled silhouettes, as a fleeting apparition in which the human body is dematerialised through light and projection.

The shadow body has no substance; rather, it is an event between light, body and space, between being and appearance... real and immaterial at the same time.

Jim Dine's lithograph series 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'

engages with Oscar Wilde's novel of the same name. This is not an illustration of the text, but rather an independent visual interpretation of archetypal experiences. It does not depict a handsome young man, but rather deformed heads, mask-like faces, fragmented bodies – in short, human beings in a state of inner turmoil. The 'I', the body and the self-image become the subject of an existential self-examination.

Dorian Gray is not a classical mythical figure; rather, he embodies a modern myth in a figurative sense, as the idea of the perfect selfie without consequences seems eerily topical. Much like Goethe's Faust motif, he trades his soul for eternal youth. This myth of immortality leads not to salvation, but to decay.

The portrait 'The Priest of Baal' by URSULA (Schultze-Bluhm) alludes to ancient Oriental mythology. Baal is a deity associated with storms, rain, fertility and harvest, and can also be understood as a symbol of life force. He embodies the cycle of death and rebirth in nature and thus an eternally recurring rhythm of life.

In her works, which often feature hybrid figures, fairy-tale scenes and fantastical elements, URSULA has frequently engaged with archaic or mythologically charged figures. The Baal Priest appears as a fantastical being with ornamental details.

Phantasms are inner, pictorial representations; they exist at the intersection between inner imagery and external appearance. Phantasms fragment the subject. They demonstrate that perception is not a neutral process, but rather a theatre of projection, desire and control.

They are neither entirely real nor wholly imaginary, and defy clear categorisation. In their ambiguity, they reflect the fragility of perception and the instability of what we understand as reality. Shadows function here as metaphors for the unconscious: they are inextricably linked to the body, yet remain perpetually elusive, dependent on light, perspective and movement.

Matthias Lahme's paper cut-outs take on a life of their own as such phantasms; hovering between drawing and sculpture, they make impermanence itself the subject. Depending on the viewing angle, light filters through the cut-out sections, altering the perception of the work. The viewer's perspective fluctuates unpredictably between what lies 'in front' and what lies 'behind'.

The dark, delicate web of lines suddenly mutates into a menacing shadowy creature, a grimace with subtle nuances. Visually oscillating between structure and illusion, the viewers become disoriented and perpetually doubtful.

Ghosts mark the return of the repressed. They symbolise something that no longer has a place, yet cannot disappear.

They appear as disruptions to linear time, as echoes of past events or as projections of inner states. Ghosts are not figures from the afterlife. They are proof that history does not fade away.

These ghostly beings run like a common thread through **Daniele Cudini's** work. Far from being eerie apparitions in the traditional sense, they appear either as fragile, more or less translucent bodies, as blurred lines of shadowy silhouettes, or as very present, goblin-like creatures.

They should be interpreted less as figures than as traces. In terms of content, Cudini does not view his ghosts as beings from the afterlife, but as condensations or hauntings of memory. In this sense, they are radically of this world – albeit a world in a state of turmoil.

Each ghost represents something repressed – a biographical experience, a collective history, an unspoken conflict. They are distorted images of humanity, traces of human derailment: anger, greed, abuse of power, shame, violence. Cudini is interested in the moment when humanity derails.

His ghosts emerge where human action loses its balance. They do not depict the supernatural, but rather the distorted aspects of humanity – the deformed remnants of responsibility.

Cudini reveals what remains when a person oversteps their own boundaries. His drawings are the unflattering selfies of our soul, and for that very reason, they are painfully human.

The idiosyncratic figures from **fairy tales, myths, ghosts and phantoms** are not treated in the exhibition as nostalgic relics of pre-modern narrative forms, but as highly topical models of thought.

In a present characterised by crises and uncertainty, by media overload and fragmented identities, fairy tales and myths are returning in new forms. The artistic works take up their motifs, deconstruct them, update them or subject them to contemporary systems of power and knowledge.

Consequently, the exhibition conceives of the fantastical not as an escape from reality, but as a critical tool. Fairy tales and ghosts, myths and phantasms open up spaces of doubt and ambivalence. In their state of limbo, these beings challenge viewers to renegotiate the boundaries between reality and fiction, the visible and the invisible, the familiar and the foreign.

IMPRINT

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