

Ingeborg Lüscher

Short Biography

In 1936 Ingeborg Lüscher was born Ingeborg Löffler in Freiberg, Saxony (Germany). After finishing acting school she became an ensemble member of the Renaissance Theatre in Berlin. In 1959 she was touring with the theater company when in Basel she met and later married the Swiss colour-psychologist Max Lüscher. Repeatedly she played the feminine lead in b/w films for German and Swiss television.

In 1967, after relocating to Tessin and while filming in Prague, Ingeborg Lüscher became acquainted with dissidents of the Prague Spring and started to question her role in her own life. What followed was the separation from Max Lüscher and the beginning of the self-determined life as an artist, working in the former studio of Hans Arp in Locarno. She got in contact with artists of the Nouveau Réalisme. After first experimental works with fire and cigarette stubs she discovered the encyclopedic forest of the hermit Armand Schulthess in Onsernonetal, in 1969. Her photographic documentary of this forest earned her the invitation of Harald Szeemann to take part in the documenta 5, in Kassel 1972. The encounter was the beginning of a longlife partnership with Szeemann until his death in 2005. Their daughter Una Alja was born in 1975.

Ingeborg Lüscher's artistic oeuvre radiates a unique radical-biographic honesty combined with the infinite joy of the richness of liveable life and its manifold levels of experience. In the seventies and eighties her photographic works and human paintings far from the artistic mainstream tended to become more ephemera and spiritual with themes like love and eros, death and birth, prophecy and dreams. Since 1976 and until today she invites artist colleagues, neighbours and friends "to do magic", documenting each of the meanwhile 520 performances by a series of black-and-white photographs. In 1984 she discovered sulphur as artistic material that to her in combination with ashes and black acrylic became a metaphor for the unity of the equal poles of light and darkness.

Gallery exhibitions in Switzerland, France, Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain as well as museum exhibitions in Paris, Solothurn, Malaga, The Hague, Wiesbaden, Philadelphia, Aarau, Chemnitz, Rovereto, Moscow and at other places made her work well-known throughout Europe and beyond. In 1992 she received a second invitation to the documenta in Kassel, where she presented a body of her sulphur works.

In China in 1999 Ingeborg Lüscher realized her first video film, which under the pseudonym Ying Bo was shown at the Venice Biennial that same year. In another video work entitled "Fusion" two Swiss soccer teams come to the pitch in grey Italian custom suits with white shirts and ties, a serenely as well as perfectly directed parable about rituals and rule violations in real business life.

Her photographs, video films and installations of the last twenty years, apart from the artistic-professional distance always refer to her own concernment in historic far-reaching and society-related themes like for instance the history of the legendary Amber Room or the political thinking contemporary who asks Israeli and Palestine women and men in a silent video for the chance of mutual forgiveness. As her youngest works are showing, neither the artistic view on her own ageing nor the journey all of us have to set out on sometime are placed under a taboo by her.

In 2011 Ingeborg Lüscher received the Prix Meret Oppenheim of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture, the top ranking artistic honour of Switzerland. In 2016 the Kunstmuseum Solothurn organized an extensive retrospective of her oeuvre.

Ingeborg Lüscher lives in Tegna and works in Maggia in the Swiss canton Ticino.