



FRANEK

In Search of the Signs

**Selected Works on Paper
since 1960s in the permanent
exhibition**

11.8.21 – 10.1.22

In Search of the Signs

through traces, myths and yesteryear's glyphs
in caves, deserts and tombs
on rocks and in gorges
with the Indians and their shamans
in the reserves of the Sioux
with medicine men, ghosts and rituals
accompanied by cattle, deer and rabbits
in the canyons of the Black Hills and the Badlands
threatened and protected by the coyote, the eagle,
the serpent
from east to west, from south to north
to the shepherds, wise women and diviners
across the Elbe's frontier, where werewolves and field
spirits still appear
and storks bring messages from foreign lands
there I found the signs in myself

FRANEK, June 1985

Exhibited works

The Berlinische Galerie presents twelve selected works from its collection by FRANEK (Sabine Franek-Koch). FRANEK's early drawings celebrate an idyllic world of physical and erotic love. Her arcadian scenes are not free of danger and threat. Black ink is applied to the paper with vigour. The gaps and pale grey zones are inhabited by groups of slender female figures and lovemaking couples, accompanied by wild animals, angels and fauns. The themes may be reminiscent of works by Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso, but the style here is rooted in abstract expressionism.

The paper used for the "Misunderstood Incidents" in 2002 and 2003 is itself a relic. Sheets from misprints for an edition of woodcuts had been kept in FRANEK's studio to scribble and paint on. Then the artist felt inspired by the layered traces of colour, the symbols and jottings. FRANEK elaborated what chance had created and what is not evident at first sight.

The two editions dating from 1975 and 1999 illustrate FRANEK's interest in the spiritual quest for mental and physical perception.

The folder "Valley of the Kings" contains five colour etchings relating to texts from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. This collection of Ancient Egyptian verse first published in 1842 features spells for the dead in which they yearn to reach the underworld and implore help for the crossing in order to attain immortality: "Oh, could I, but hover upon the air

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like a bird,/ Always contemplating the sacred spirits/
Gathered about Ra!” FRANEK depicts a female figure
meeting various deities, such as Ra, the sun god, or
Anubis, the god of death and mummification, and the
stony Sphinx.

The box “Longlivelove” contains not only
nine etchings with simple sketches of a couple mak-
ing love in a variety of positions, but also a little case
with a stamp and pad. It conceals a humorous invita-
tion by FRANEK to stamp a green fig leaf on the scan-
dalous scenes if anyone should take offence.

Biography

FRANEK (Sabine Franek-Koch) was born in Potsdam
in 1939. From 1959 she studied painting and print-
making at the Berlin Art School (now Berlin University
of the Arts) with Fred Thieler and Mac Zimmermann.
Her first solo exhibition was in 1968 at the Pels-Leus-
den Gallery in West Berlin. Others followed in galler-
ies, art clubs and museums at home and abroad. She
taught at the Berlin Art School, the University of Art
and Design in Helsinki and Lahti, and University of
the Arts Bremen.

FRANEK’s work includes paintings, draw-
ings, prints, book illustration, sculpture, photography
and film. In the 1970s and 1980s, the artist became
deeply immersed in researching visual symbols used
by the indigenous cultures of North and South Amer-
ica. She worked in Mexico, Guatemala and Hondu-
ras and helped mathematician Maria Reiche to map
spirals (Nazca Lines) on the Nazca Plains in Peru.
Furthermore FRANEK recorded rituals for the Über-
see-Museum in Bremen among the Lakota (Sioux) at
the Rosebud Indian Reservation in the United States.

The artist lives and works in Berlin and in
Radegast, Lower Saxony.

Press Berlinische Galerie

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Admission 8 €, concessions 5 €
(Prices may vary during
special exhibitions)

Wed–Mon 10 am–6 pm
Tue closed

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berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/franek

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