

KUNSTMUSEUM THUN



REBEKKA STEIGER BĪNGFĒNG 5.4.–3.8.2025

ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

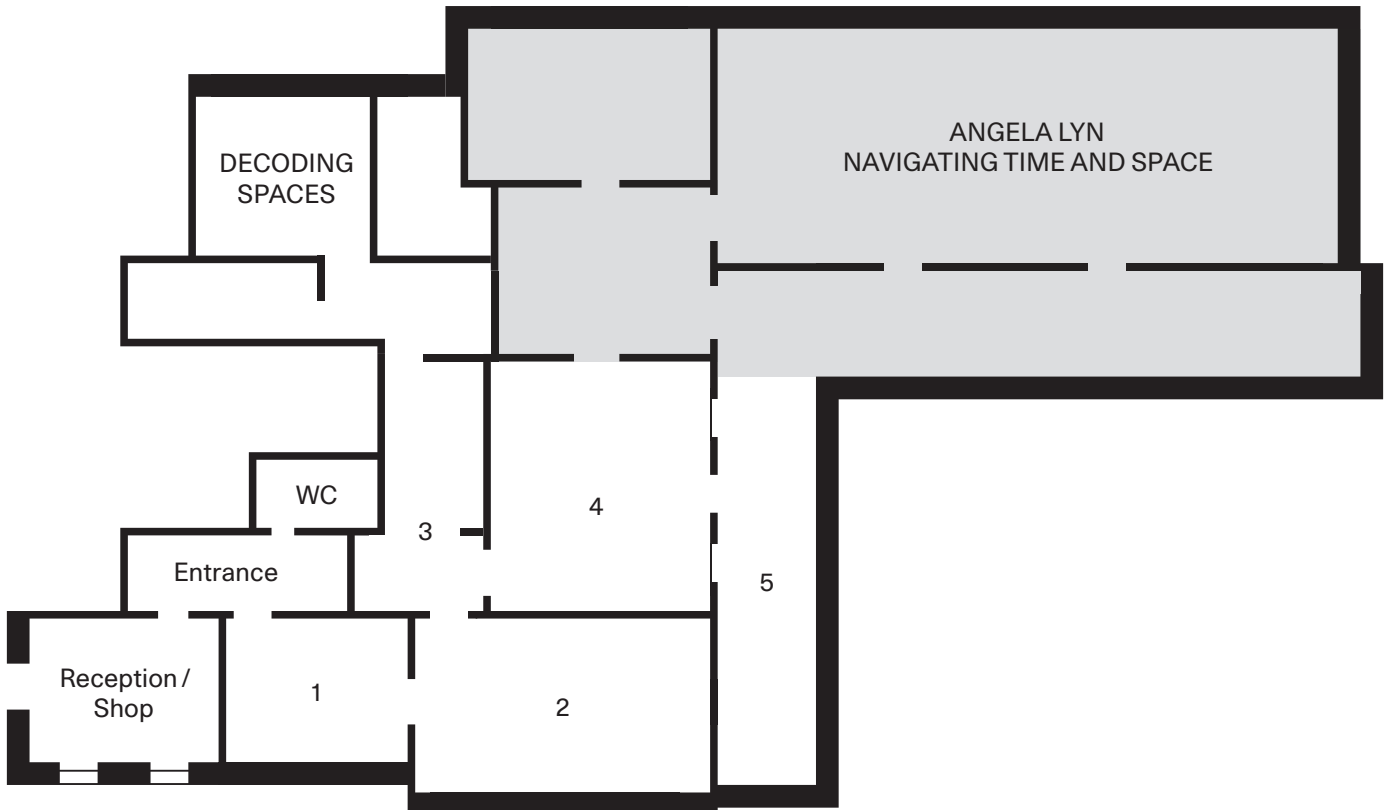
Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993, lives in Zurich, works in Lucerne and Beijing) is both a painter and a storyteller who spirits us away to strange and colourful dream worlds in her work. Sometimes flowery, at other times eerie, her paintings are marked by a dialectic of simultaneous movement and standstill.

Those who step into her universe encounter realities near and far, discovering landscapes, nature scenes, and mythological and fantastic figures from Western and Eastern traditions. Steiger's paintings contain narratives that tell of different worlds. These stories are in turn united by the signature exploratory painting style that distinguishes her artistic practice. Worked over in multiple layers using various experimental techniques, Steiger's large-format canvases can be read in myriad ways. For some of her works, for example the more abstract ones, the artist uses small pieces of paper as tools for soaking up and dabbing paint onto the canvas. Once this process has been carried out several times in different sections, the artist uses brush and ink to paint onto the canvas the concrete figures that sometimes give the work its title. In other pictures, especially the alpine landscapes, the random and surprising element of this printing technique is replaced by carefully prepared and precisely executed painting.

The exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Thun presents the many different facets of Rebekka Steiger's artistic practice. The title already offers various possibilities for reading and perception, as the Chinese word *bīngfēng*, written in Pinyin – the phonetic system that uses the letters of the Latin alphabet for the pronunciation of Chinese – cannot be defined precisely and remains ambiguous until the specific Chinese characters are known. Due to its multiple meanings, the word carries different connotations depending on the knowledge of each individual.

The exhibition follows a thematic path based on the literary works that the artist develops in connection with her paintings. These texts, which Steiger calls *title stories*, are like essays on the underlying themes or sources of inspiration for certain paintings. But they are also intended to serve as extensions of the titles. The content of these texts – and thus also of the works – ranges from commentary on language to the natural sciences, from East Asian folklore to the Swiss mountains, comprising fragments of the artist's personal experiences at home and abroad. Certain works or entire galleries in the exhibition are directly linked to the title stories, read aloud by the artist. The visitors can listen to the stories on an audio guide or smartphone. They provide orientation and also encourage reflection, complementing the visual artwork with an artistic linguistic component.

OVERVIEW



TITLE STORIES

- 11 dead wake
- 12 Fuchsfeuer [für Sophia] – Wannaspitz
- 13 赏石 Kitsune
- 14 bīngfēng – blue streak
- 15 Ichor – Petrichor
- 16 Olivewing
- 17 ma quý vô đồng tử
- 18 floral oblivion
- 19 Valenska
- 20 Helium 11

The QR code leads to voice recordings of the title stories, read by the artist



This symbol marks an associated title story



ENTRANCE

Bīngfēng begins with one of the artist's earliest works in the exhibition, *dead wake* (2019). The title of the work, which is accompanied by a title story that the artist wrote in 2023 during an artistic residency in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, has two meanings: The literal translation is 'wake' meaning vigil for the dead, but the word is also a nautical term for the flattened wake that remains on the surface of the sea long after the vessel that created it has disappeared. Certain features of the work evoke fleeting traces that point to the presence of anthropomorphic or abstract figures. The silhouette of a volcano appears on the horizon, recalling Asian landscapes.

 On the work *dead wake* (2019): 11

GALLERY 1

In Steiger's work, very specific figures recur again and again. The main motif in this gallery is the fox. Called *kitsune* in Japanese, this animal is regarded as a magical creature in both Chinese and Japanese mythology. In many legends, the up to nine-tailed *kitsune* is depicted as a powerful spirit and shape-shifter that can transform itself into a human, usually an alluring woman, in order to satisfy its desire for wisdom and greater spiritual force through cunning and beauty. The works in this gallery depict the animal in varied ways: fleetingly, in the midst of nature, or statically, flanked by a female figure.

 On this gallery: 12 and 13

GALLERY 2

This gallery is dedicated in particular to Steiger's landscape scenes. Forming almost an exception in her oeuvre, various alpine views are depicted for example in the works *bīngfēng* (2021) and *blue streak II* (2024). The artist first meticulously studies the actual views before setting them down precisely on the canvas. On long hikes, she selects certain places to capture with her camera and then faithfully reproduces the photos in her studio. By using colours that reflect both a particular light and a particular moment, Steiger applies a new *modus operandi* to painting landscapes that she has known since childhood, for example places she often frequented in Grisons.

🎧 On the works *bīngfēng* (2021) and *blue streak II* (2024): 14

🎧 On the works *Ichor* (2023) and *Petrichor [oder Landschaft mit Burgruine, für Böcklin]* (2022): 15

GALLERY 3

In this gallery, ephemeral female figures face each other. Steiger painted *modern charities* (2023) at the end of her studio residency in Ho Chi Minh City. In the image, three figures emerge from the background, representing female spirits walking towards the viewer. The figures remain shrouded in a mysterious fog, which is referred to in title story number 17 with the Vietnamese name *ma quỷ vô đồng tử* (meaning demon without pupils). The title of the work *olivewing* (2021), by contrast, refers to a real-life creature with almost fantastical features: a typical South American butterfly whose wings are coloured blue by a pure pigment. Instead of using the exact pigment typical of this insect in the painting, the artist juxtaposes light blue and olive green hues in an abstract manner to create with this mixture figures that can be read as both animal and human, just like the *kitsune* spirits.

🎧 On the work *olivewing* (2021): 16

🎧 On the work *modern charities* (2023): 17

GALLERY 4

Another leitmotif in Steiger's work is the rider. The medieval knight-errant is an archetypal image for the harmonisation that unfolds on the path to inner and spiritual truth. For the artist, the rider condenses various stories of famous equestrian figures from different cultural and historical contexts. Her riders thus quote literary, mythological and historical figures such as Genghis Khan, the tragicomic Don Quixote, the prince from *Sleeping Beauty*, and the *Ellerkonge*, or *Erlkönig*, that Goethe lifted from the Danish legend. Armour-clad riders galloping towards the viewer wielding raised swords and flags raise the question of whether they are coming to protect, rescue or fight.

🎧 On this gallery: 18

GALLERY 5

In the museum's 'Veranda', Steiger presents a series of new works on paper that have been specially developed for the exhibition. In these monotypes, one of them large-format, the artist brings together several themes from her painting, varying and reinterpreting them in the print medium. Monotypes are unique works of art in which ink is applied directly to a plate, which is then placed in the printing press to transfer the painted or drawn image onto the paper. This direct process lends the monotype great spontaneity and speed – although Steiger deliberately subverts these characteristics in her large-format interpretation of the painting of the same name, *bīngfēng [monotype]* (2025), for example, by meticulously transferring the motif to the sheet in eight printing steps.

🎧 On the work *Valenska [monotype]* (2025): 19

🎧 On the work *Helium 11 [monotype]* (2025): 20

The video shown in the Veranda is a short portrait of Rebekka Steiger produced for the exhibition *Octopus mountain* at Tank Shanghai (1.3. – 3.6.2024). Shot in January 2024 at the artist's studio in Kriens, Lucerne, it shows the painter at work. In conversation with director Vadim Jendreyko, Steiger talks about her approach to painting, aspects crucial to her practice and the making of specific works including the title stories.

To accompany the exhibition, Hatje Cantz has published the first comprehensive monograph on the artist (D/E; ISBN 978-3-7757-5941-0). The catalogue features five title stories by Rebekka Steiger as well as essays by Claudia Jolles, Patricia Bieder, Sophia Remer, Chiara Ottavi and Peter Stohler.

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LIST OF WORKS	8	17	GALLERY 5
ENTRANCE	<i>Ichor</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on canvas 160 × 200 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	<i>untitled</i> , 2022 Ink on paper 75 × 56 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	25 <i>未知数 [M][monotype]</i> , 2025 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 106 × 80 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
1 <i>dead wake</i> , 2019 Tempera and oil on paper 54 × 78.5 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	9 <i>blue streak II</i> , 2024 Ink on canvas 250 × 300 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	GALLERY 4	26 <i>blue streak [monotype]</i> , 2025 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 80 × 106 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
GALLERY 1	10 <i>bīngfēng</i> , 2021 Ink on canvas 240 × 190 cm Private collection, Maloja	18 <i>floral oblivion IV</i> , 2024 Acrylic ink on canvas 200 × 155 cm Private collection	27 <i>Helium 11 [monotype]</i> , 2025 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 80 × 106 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
2 <i>banter</i> , 2024 Acrylic ink on canvas 80 × 100 cm DU JIE	11 <i>untitled</i> , 2019 Tempera and gouache on paper 54.5 × 39.5 cm UBS art collection	19 <i>floral oblivion V</i> , 2024 Acrylic ink on canvas 150 × 110 cm Private collection	28 <i>ma quý vô đồng tử</i> <i>[monotype]</i> , 2023 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 106 × 80 cm Keller-Wedekind-Stiftung, Zurich
3 <i>foxy lady II</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on canvas 45 × 30 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	GALLERY 3	20 <i>eleventh hour</i> , 2024 Acrylic ink on canvas 195 × 155 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	29 <i>Valenska [monotype]</i> , 2023 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 106 × 80 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
4 <i>foxy lady I</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on canvas 45 × 30 cm H. P. Wehrli, Zurich	12 <i>untitled</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on paper 76 × 56 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	21 <i>untitled</i> , 2025 Tempera and acrylic ink on canvas 40 × 30 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	30 <i>Wannaspitz [monotype]</i> , 2025 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 80 × 106 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
5 <i>Kitsune</i> , 2022 Acrylic ink and oil on canvas 70 × 50 cm Keller-Wedekind-Stiftung, Zurich	13 <i>jardin Candidien</i> , 2024 Acrylic ink and tempera on canvas 200 × 145 cm Private collection	22 <i>untitled</i> , 2025 Tempera and acrylic ink on canvas 40 × 30 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	31 <i>bīngfēng [monotype]</i> , 2025 Monotype, lithographic ink on paper 305 × 200 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile
6 <i>Fuchsfeuer [für Sophia]</i> , 2023 Ink, oil pastel, pigments, acrylic ink and oil on canvas 150 × 195 cm Private collection of Claudia Davaz	14 <i>olivewing</i> , 2021 Tempera, ink and oil on canvas 170 × 240 cm Zürcher Kantonalbank art collection	23 <i>floral oblivion IX</i> , 2025 Tempera and acrylic ink on canvas 150 × 120 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	
GALLERY 2	15 <i>untitled</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on paper 76 × 56 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	24 <i>floral oblivion VIII</i> , 2025 Tempera and acrylic ink on canvas 200 × 140 cm Private collection	
7 <i>Petrichor [oder: Landschaft mit Burgruine, für Böcklin]</i> , 2022 Ink on canvas 220 × 180 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile	16 <i>modern charites</i> , 2023 Acrylic ink on canvas 160 × 200 cm Private collection, Switzerland		

EVENTS

Sat., 5 April – Sun., 20 April

ART TREASURE HUNT

A treasure map takes visitors from the Thun Panorama to the Kunstmuseum, for children accompanied by an adult

Wed., 9 April, 6:30 p.m.

BOOK LAUNCH

Madeleine Stahel (graphic designer) and Rebekka Steiger present the artist's first comprehensive monograph on the occasion of the exhibition

Wed., 16 April, 6 – 8 p.m.

OPEN STUDIO

Exhibition visit and creative workshop with Matthias Foff (art educator)

Sat., 26 April / Sat., 31 May, 2 – 4 p.m.

OPEN STUDIO FOR CHILDREN

Creative workshop for children aged 4 and older (may be unaccompanied) with Adrien Rihs (art educator)

Sun., 27 April, 10 a.m. – noon

OPEN DRAWING

Explore the exhibition through drawing. For participants aged 10 and older who enjoy sketching. Workshop with Julia Rosenberg and Urban Sketchers Thun

Sun., 4 May, 2 – 4 p.m.

GUIDED TOUR WITH TEA CEREMONY

Guided tour of the exhibitions with Helen Hirsch (director). From 3:30 p.m. tea ceremony with Grace Mani

Wed., 7 May / Wed., 28 May, 6:15 p.m.

GUIDED TOUR

Guided tour of the exhibitions with Helen Hirsch (director)

Wed., 14 May, 6:15 p.m.

THUN LIEST EIN BUCH

As part of the reading festival *Thun liest ein Buch* (Thun reads a book), texts from Flurin Jecker's new publication *Santa Tereza* will be read aloud to encourage listeners to make their own drawings. In cooperation with the Stadtbibliothek Thun

Sat., 17 May / Sat., 14 June, 2 – 5 p.m.

DRAWING AT THE MUSEUM

УРБАНИСТИЧНИЙ СКЕТЧ У МУЗЕЇ

Досліджуйте виставку з альбомом для малювання! Це заняття для всіх, хто любить малювати, віком від 8 років. Під керівництвом української художниці Ольги Сабадін ми відкриємо для себе музей з нової, творчої перспективи.

Мова: українська та російська

Wed., 21 May / Wed., 18 June, 6 – 8 p.m.

OPEN STUDIO

Exhibition visit and creative workshop with Réka Szücs (art educator)

Sat., 24 May, 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

ARTIST TALK

Guided tour of the exhibitions and discussion with Helen Hirsch (director) and the artists Rebekka Steiger and Angela Lyn

Wed., 11 June, 6:15 p.m.

GUIDED TOUR

Guided tour of the exhibitions with Chiara Ottavi (co-curator), Cornelius Krell (co-curator) and Janet Fiebelkorn (sign language interpreter)

Fri., 20 June, 7:30 p.m.

SCHLOSSKONZERTE

Concert by Mareille Merck, electric guitar. At 6:30 p.m. guided tour of the exhibitions with Gabriele Moshhammer (art educator)

Sat., 21 June, 2 – 4 p.m.

OPEN STUDIO FOR CHILDREN

Creative workshop for children aged 4 and older (may be unaccompanied) with Yvonne Nydegger (art educator)

Sat., 5 July, 3 p.m.

READING & GUIDED TOUR

Fairy tale reading with Sophia Remer (author) and tour of the exhibition with Rebekka Steiger

Sun., 3 August, 11:15 a.m.

GUIDED TOUR FOR ALL AGES

Guided tour for children and accompanying adults. A creative immersion in the exhibitions with suggestions for hands-on creativity. 4 years and older

For further information, registration and prices:
kunstmuseumthun.ch/Agenda



Parallel exhibition:

ANGELA LYN

NAVIGATING TIME AND SPACE

5.4. – 3.8.2025