Heksejagt / *Witch Hunt*
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(DK)

Mellem år 1450 og 1750 blev op mod 100.000 mennesker i Europa beskyldt for at stå i ledtog med djævelen. I Norden blev flere tusinder dømt af staten som hekse; en dom, der førte til brutal straf, tortur og henrettelse. Firs procent af de anklagede var kvinder.

De danske, norske og svenske hekseprocesser var nogle af de mest omfattende og voldelige i europæisk historie – ikke mindst pga. den målrettede forfølgelse af samerfolket under Christian IV, konge af Danmark-Norge. Selvom både politiske og religiøse institutioner dæmoniserede brugen af magi, startede og sluttede anklager om hekseri ofte i de små lokalsamfund. Anklager begyndte typisk som sladder, der spredte sig blandt naboer, og var ofte ansporet af misundelse og ulykke såsom naturkatastrofer, barnedød og sygdom. Den dybt forankrede frygt for hekse opstod i en af de mest ustabile perioder i Europa – en periode, der var præget af pandemi (Den sorte død), krig (Tredieveårskrigen), hungersnød på grund af klimaændringer (den lille istid) samt både den katolske og reformerede kirkes beretninger om verdens undergang. Heksejagten udpegede syndebukke: Holdningen var, at man ved at udstøde og henrette såkaldte 'afvigere' – mennesker, der ofte i forvejen var sårbare og udsatte – kunne opretholde den moralske samfundsorden.

Udstillingen *Heksejagt* undersøger, hvordan de nordiske hekseprocesser stadig vækker genklang i vor tids diskussioner om identitetspolitik, klimaforandringer og social magt. Ved bl.a. at berøre dansk kolonihistorie og kvindehad gennem tiden, peger udstillingen på hvordan vores samtid er hjemsøgt af fortidens forfølgelser, men også en samtid, hvor nye kritiske stemmer modsætter sig diskrimination. *Heksejagt* kobler kunstværker, historiske arkiver og helt nye kommissioner for både at mindes ofrene for den nordiske heksejagt, og for at forstå de faktorer, der førte til denne ekstreme klapjagt – hovedsageligt på baggrund af køn og etnicitet. Denne historiske bevidsthed er relevant i vores tid, der også er præget af en global pandemi, klimakrise og nye politiske, sociale og moralske fantasmer, hvilket ofte fører til nye former for hetz mod marginaliserede. De deltagende kunstnere udforsker social dæmonisering og frygten for det fremmede, og undersøger hvordan dette ofte bliver glemt eller skrevet ud af historien. *Heksejagt* bidrager til den aktuelle debat om kulturelle og nationale monumenter ved at genbesøge underbelyste historiske fortællinger og ved at tilbyde nye måder at mindes.

(ENG)

During the 300 years from 1450 to 1750, up to 100,000 Europeans were accused of conspiring with the Devil. Roughly 50,000 people were killed for this crime. In the Nordic region, thousands were sentenced as witches by the state, leading to brutal punishment, torture, and execution. Eighty per cent of the accused were women.

The Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish witchcraft trials were some of the most extensive and violent in history – particularly with regards to the targeting of Indigenous Sámi people under the reign of Christian IV, then king of Denmark–Norway. Although political and religious institutions worked hard to demonize uses of magic, accusations of witchcraft often started (and ended) within local communities. These convictions would spread as rumour and gossip through townships and sparsely populated rural areas, and were spurred by hardship and misfortune, particularly relating to environmental disaster, personal livelihood, fertility, and health. The deep cultural fear of witches emerged from the most uncertain of periods in the European continent – ridden by pandemic (the Black Death), war (the Thirty Years' War), famine due to climate change (the Little Ice Age), and end-of-world narratives relayed by both the Catholic and reformed Church. Witchcraft accusations served as a kind of scapegoating, where the legal expulsion and execution of supposedly deviant individuals – often vulnerable or disenfranchised – was thought to maintain social order.

Witch Hunt investigates how specific threads of the Nordic witchcraft trials, particularly relating to identity, climate, and systems of power, reverberate today. From the impact of Danish colonialism to the multifaceted violences of misogyny, the exhibition envisages a present haunted by persecutions of the past, but also one that is occupied by critical voices of opposition. Bringing together artworks, new commissions, and historical archives, *Witch Hunt* commemorates the victims of the Nordic witch hunt while redeeming them as political subjects, reflecting on the factors that contributed to this history of gendered and Indigenous persecution – particularly in a time marked by a pandemic and new political, social, and moral phantasms. The participating artists explore discriminatory fear and social violence and question how such narratives have been written out of history. Amidst the present global unrest, as the politics of commemoration are in question, *Witch Hunt* revisits seemingly distant narratives and suggests new imaginaries for remembering and representation.