

# THE VIEW FROM THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

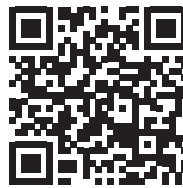
In the sixth path, Berlin women rediscover the works of art in the Bode Museum

When we as visitors walk through a museum, we frequently do not perceive the stories behind the women portrayed in the works of art; often their beauty or very existence is at the fore. And yet in many cases, it is particularly their deeds, their knowledge, and their lives that influence the world and society and consequently also the city in which we live today. Therefore, the perspectives of inspiring Berlin women on works of art in the collection of the Bode Museum and the special exhibition »Photovoice« are the focus of the sixth path. Using these objects and the personalities they portray as a point of departure, nine women of Berlin talk about their lives, their work and their experiences, in a series of videos. In doing so, they address the role of women and genders in society, their own experiences and inspirations as well as decisions, thus allowing new and female perceptions of the works of art at the Bode Museum and present-day Berlin.

The Bode Museum and its collections are closely linked to the city of Berlin and its inhabitants. Since the museum's opening in 1904, they all share a common history, with wars and the division of Berlin as well as its reunification, and today are part of an open, colourful, and liveable city. In order to portray a small slice of this diversity, creativeness, and dynamism, only women living in Berlin were interviewed and filmed for this path.

To this day, the diverse deeds, successes, and artistic achievements of women are grossly underrepresented in society and in museums. The Bode Museum is no exception. This path and its associated videos are meant to make a small contribution towards an enduring change in this state of affairs. Thus not only are the stories of the women behind the selected works of art rediscovered and interpreted, but also nine Berlin women are introduced: women who inspire through their actions, ideas, and willpower and in vastly different ways shape society and the city in which we live or work or which we gladly visit.

This QR-code will take you directly to the video interviews: [www.smb.museum/frauen-route-6](http://www.smb.museum/frauen-route-6)



**Anastasia Biefang**  
© Carolin Marie Kreuzfeldt

## **Anastasia Biefang, Trans Activist and Officer**

Anastasia Biefang was born in Krefeld in 1974 and has been an officer in the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) since 1994. She studied education, served in various leadership and staff assignments, completed the General Staff Course of the Bundeswehr and served as an aide in the Federal Ministry of Defence. She became the first openly transgender battalion commander in the German armed forces in 2017. She lives in Berlin and is currently division head in the Cyberspace and Information Space Command in Bonn. During her time of service she was deployed to Afghanistan twice.

The activist is engaged in a volunteer capacity as the Deputy Chair of QueerBw and champions LGBTIQ\* rights. Since 2020 she has been writing the column »The Trans Perspective« for the LGBTIQ\* magazine MANNSCHAFT.

The charisma and determination of »Diana as Huntress« (by Bernardino Cametti, ca. 1720/50, for further information please see pp. 43–45) made an immediate impression on Anastasia Biefang as Diana stands out as an assertive and determined female amongst a sea of mostly male figures in this room. In this way, the work of art squarely raises questions about our relation to, and understanding of, gender.

## **Dr. med. Dr. h. c. Jenny De la Torre Castro, Physician, Founder of the Jenny De la Torre Foundation with the project »Health Centre for the Homeless«**

Jenny De la Torre, mother of a son, was born in 1954 in Nazca, Peru, where she studied medicine until in 1976 she received a fellowship to study in the GDR. There she continued her medical training, completed a



**Jenny De la Torre Castro**

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residency, and obtained her doctorate. Her great desire to return to Peru was denied due to bureaucratic reasons.

In 1994 she began providing medical care to homeless people at Berlin Ostbahnhof. Getting to know these patients, their problems, and their fates impressed Jenny and motivated her to help them and to try anything she could to allow them to lead a dignified life.

In 2002 she was able, with the prize money from the »Goldene Henne« award for charity, to establish a foundation that serves exactly this purpose. Thanks to the foundation as well as to many donors and volunteers, Jenny De la Torre was able to open the Health Centre for the Homeless in Berlin in 2006. The goal of her work is to give to people who are seeking help a new perspective and an opportunity to get back off the streets.

The selected sculpture of Queen Joan of Navarre as a donor (Paris, created ca. 1305, for further information please see p. 16), is described by Jenny De la Torre as follows: »A personable queen, who lovingly and proudly holds a building in her hands. The life of the Queen of Navarre made an impression on me, especially the fact that she was ahead of her time. She was brave and energetic and already as a young girl had visions of changing and improving her world. She oriented herself to the Franciscan ideals: poverty, humility, and charity. She donated her plentiful income for the needs of the old and sick, supported the Franciscans, and above all enabled the Collège de Navarre to be established and endowed, which in former times was one of the most prestigious colleges in Paris. She gave her largest bequest for the support of study and education.«

## **Rabbi Gesa Shira Ederberg, Rabbi for the Jewish Community of Berlin**

Gesa S. Ederberg was born in Tübingen in 1968. She studied physics and Jewish studies in Tübingen, Bochum, Berlin, New York, und Jerusalem. After rabbinical studies at the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem she received her ordination (smicha) in 2002. She works as a congregational rabbi of the Jewish Community of Berlin and is responsible for the Oranienburger Straße synagogue. In addition, she is the spiritual advisor at the Zacharias Frankel College, the Masorti rabbinical seminary in Potsdam. In 2002 she founded the »Masorti e. V. – Verein zur Förderung der jüdischen Bildung und des jüdischen Lebens« (Masorti Registered Society for the Promotion of Jewish Education and Jewish Life) in Berlin. She is a member of the board of directors of the society, which is, among other things, a supporter of two bilingual day care centres and a bilingual elementary





**Gesa Shira Ederberg**

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school in Berlin. As a co-initiator, Gesa S. Ederberg is involved in the planned Three Religions Day Care Centre building in Berlin (construction start: 2022). In Winter 2020 she was recognised with the Louise Schroeder Medal for her commitment to democracy, peaceful cooperation, and the equality of women and men in all spheres, especially in religion and interreligious dialogue. She is married and has three children.

Gesa S. Ederberg selected the mourning Penelope (by Johann Valentin Sonnenschein, ca. 1780, for further information please see pp. 57–58) because she can really identify with the diversity of Penelope's duties, from household to government – and she would also like to play a part in bringing important women out from the shadows of their husbands.

**Prof. Dr. Christina Haak, Deputy Director General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin**

Christina Haak studied art history in Braunschweig and Münster and received her doctorate in 1999 with a dissertation about Baroque portrait in northern Germany. After a three-year research project at the Museum für Kommunikation in Frankfurt am Main, she was Head of Project Management at Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (formerly the Staatliche Museen Kassel) from 2003 to 2008. She then moved to Berlin and became Head of Project Planning at the Directorate General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. In 2011, Christina Haak assumed the position of Deputy Director General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, where as Chief Digital



**Christina Haak**

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Officer from 2017 to 2019 she was also responsible for digital transformation within the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. She has been Vice President of the Deutscher Museumsbund e.V. since 2018.

Christina Haak has chosen the »Enthroned Isis with the Child Horus« (Egypt, 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, for further information please see pp. 50–52). The sculpture shows signs of considerable changes over the years. The reason is the successive reinterpretation of a very popular later motif – Mary nursing the baby Jesus. As a result, the attributes of Isis, such as cow horns and a solar disc, were removed, along with other parts. The depiction of the nursing Blessed Virgin Mary (*Maria lactans*) goes back to Hellenistic-Roman images of Isis holding the child Horus on her lap and suckling him, which is why the sculpture is sometimes ironically called »Isis with Baby Jesus«.

The selected sculpture unites Mary and Isis, illustrates transcultural linkages, and thus depicts a generalist – a function that Christina Haak could certainly use to describe her daily activities at the Staatliche Museen.



**Heidi Kasten**

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### Heidi Kasten, Head of Security at the Bode Museum

Heidi Kasten was born in 1966 in East Berlin and has a son. For many years, she worked as a train driver in the Berlin subway system (U-Bahn). She then started her own business renting charter boats, later working as the office manager at a large insurance company and then in the office of an auto repair shop. In 2018, Heidi Kasten began working as a security employee at the Bode Museum, and since 2019 she has been its Head of Security, responsible for a staff of 40.

Heidi Kasten has selected a sculpture of Mathilda of Canossa (by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1633/34, for further information please see pp. 14–15). There are different reasons for her choice: besides the many associations with the saying »going to Canossa«, she is fascinated by the story of Mathilda. Born in the 11<sup>th</sup> century into one of Italy's most powerful aristocratic families, Mathilda, as the ruler of a realm that encompassed large parts of central Italy, did not fit the norm in the male-dominated Middle Ages. She was an army commander, politician, and diplomat between the pope and the emperor, left her husband, supported the arts,



**Angelika Müller**

© Nele Eberle

and was one of the key figures in Italian history. For Heidi Kasten, Mathilda von Canossa represents courage, loyalty, and equal rights: values that she considers very important in her daily dealings when working at the Bode Museum.

### Angelika Müller, Nurse at Frauentreff Olga on Kurfürstenstraße

The Frauentreff Olga is a drop-in and counselling centre for drug-using women, trans women, and sex workers that is located on Kurfürstenstraße. Basic care like laundry, showers, a place to sleep, and a warm meal is as much a part of its offerings as medical assistance and drug, legal, and social counselling in a number of clients' native languages. Angelika Müller has worked here as a nurse for 22 years. She first began her education as a physician's assistant at the age of 15, and immediately after obtaining this qualification trained as a registered nurse at the German Red Cross, where she worked for several years as an intensive care nurse. After having lived for more than ten years in Greece, she has worked since then as a nurse at Frauentreff Olga.

The selected photograph »Kurfürstenstraße« shows her long-time place of employment. It was taken by Lena, a person whom Angelika Müller cared for, first at the Frauentreff for many years and then ultimately at her death: »For me, Lena represents Frauentreff Olga and therefore it was very important to me that she be seen in the Bode Museum.« The photograph is part of the exhibition »Photovoice«, which will be shown from October 29, 2021, to October 30, 2022, in the Bode





**Sara Nuru**

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Museum. Women from five countries talk about their everyday lives as sex workers on the streets of Berlin in compelling and thought-provoking stories, highlighted by striking pictures that convey very personal impressions of life in the Kurfürstenstraße red-light district. A project that was initiated and supported by the social workers from the Frauentreff Olga.

### **Sara Nuru, Model, Entrepreneur, Speaker and Author**

Sara Nuru was in 2009 the first person of colour to win the TV competition »Germany's Next Topmodel«. Shortly after her first visit to New York Fashion Week, she travelled to the homeland of her parents, Ethiopia, where she was confronted with the poverty of the inhabitants. This experience awakened her desire for social engagement. Since then, not only does she support Ethiopian women with microcredit through her own association, *nuruWomen*, she also runs the socially responsible business *nuruCoffee* with her sister, Sali Nuru. In this enterprise, the sisters advocate for, above all, women who are still mostly disadvantaged in the supply chain to be able to lead autonomous and independent lives. In recognition of her work, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2018 designated the native of Erding as an ambassador for fair trade.

Sara Nuru chose the bust of Juliette Récamier (by Joseph Chinard, ca. 1802/03, for further information please see p. 20–23), since its history illustrates that behind every pretty facade is hidden much more than might initially be assumed. Juliette Récamier was considered one of the most beautiful women of her time and posed as a model for numerous artists. She utilised her appearance and the attention it attracted to establish several salons in Paris, since at that time it was only in the private sphere that women were able to be politically and socially active. Napoleon recognised her potential as well as the threat she might pose. He summoned Récamier to his court so that she would not act against him but rather with him. However, she declined and was sent into exile. Through her own work and engagement, Sara Nuru also motivates and supports girls and women to follow their own autonomous paths.

### **Prof. Dr. Mira Sievers, Junior Professor of Islamic Theology**

Mira Sievers is a Muslim theologian at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She studied in Frankfurt am Main and London and earned her doctoral degree in Frankfurt in the area of creation theology in the Qur'an. In the process, she spent a great deal of time studying languages in Cairo, Istanbul, and Beirut. In Berlin, Mira Sievers currently focuses on Islamic religious instruction and Islamic ethics.

The representation of Mary and Jesus (Pazzi Madonna attributed to Donatello, ca. 1420, for further information please see pp. 30–31) spoke to her directly, and Mira Sievers relates: »The story of Mary plays an important role in the Qur'an and is therefore relevant for Islamic theology. Because of the way that Mary has tied her headscarf, she immediately looks like a Muslim woman to me – even though this was certainly not Donatello's intention, as a result it forms a special bond to the current reality of the lives of Muslim women and men, because the image looks so familiar.«

### **Sasha Waltz, Choreographer, Dancer, and Director**

Sasha Waltz studied dance and choreography in Amsterdam and New York. Together with Jochen Sandig, she founded the company *Sasha Waltz & Guests* in 1993. She is a co-founder of the *Sophiensæle* (1996) as well as the *Radialsystem* (2006) in Berlin. From 2000 to 2004 she was a member of the administration of the *Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz*. During the 2019–20 season, Sasha Waltz, together with Johannes Öhman, assumed the directorship of the Berlin State Ballet. The development of innovative and boundary-transcending forms



**Mira Sievers**

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of performance and creation is an important focus of her artistic work, in which she draws a line from internationally renowned dance pieces like the »Travelogue« trilogy (1993–95) or »Körper« (»Bodies«) (2000) through choreographed operas (among others »Dido & Aeneas«, 2005) right up to pioneering dialogue projects (e. g. »Dialogue 09 – Neues Museum«). In her current choreographic work, Waltz is concentrating on the consolidation of collaborative processes, such as the synchronous development of choreography and music (among others »Kreatur«, 2017). In parallel, Sasha Waltz is engaged in the transfer of dance knowledge and in dance as a medium for social and socio-political understanding. Since 2013 she has been a member of the Berlin Academy of the Arts.

Sasha Waltz has also chosen the Pazzi Madonna (by Donatello, ca. 1420, for further information please see pp. 30–31), but for different reasons than Mira Sievers. She sees in this work, unlike in the usual portrayals of the Virgin Mary, a reflective young woman who contemplates her child with a critical eye. Mary holds the little boy, whom she conceived as a single mother, in her arm and grasps him by his bum, as if to say: »You are safe with me, I will deal with our destiny and I know how hard it is to raise a child.« This unusual depiction fascinates Sasha Waltz because it does not look idealised; not refined and innocent, but realistic, energetic, and serious: »Mary has just given birth to her child – not in a hospital, but in a stall. Dirty, without doctors, without midwife, without help. Left alone with her pain. Then fleeing to a foreign land. How would she have felt? As a result, she looks Jesus right in the eyes and predicts to her child the difficulties that will arise because he was born in poverty – a major problem that still needs to be solved even in a rich country like Germany.«



**Sasha Waltz**

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