

Château de Prangins.



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ET PLUS SI AFFINITÉS... AMOUR ET SEXUALITÉ AU 18^e SIÈCLE

05.04.20 - 11.10.20

MUSEUM

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MEDIA KIT

A Matter of Affinity – Love and Sexuality in the 18th Century

21.05. – 11.10.2020

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This media kit as well as images of the exhibition can be downloaded from our website www.chateaudeprangins.ch.

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A Matter of Affinity – Love and Sexuality in the 18th Century

21.05. – 11.10.2020

1 MEDIA RELEASE

A Matter of Affinity – Love and Sexuality in the 18th Century

From 21 May to 11 October 2020

A Matter of Affinity, the new exhibition at Château de Prangins – Swiss National Museum, explores issues of love and sexuality in the 18th century.

Today sexuality, either overt or implied, is omnipresent in the endless flow of images transported by the media and the entertainment business. “Sex sells!” the marketing specialists all tell us. And yet: hasn’t sexuality always been about dreams and fantasies? Above and beyond the act of procreation, it is now – fortunately – accepted in the West that the pursuit of pleasure should be founded on mutual consent and full awareness. But how did things look back in the 18th century? Where were the barriers of censorship, and where was the dividing line between acceptable and punishable? Were people able to choose their partner, or partners? *A Matter of Affinity* offers some occasionally surprising (but invariably documented) answers to these questions.

The exhibition highlights the aspiration to greater freedom and the pursuit of hedonistic pleasure, and sets them against affirmations of the importance of marital love, the child and the family. At the interface of the public and private spheres, it traces a progression from first meeting through to childbirth, examining the controls on sexuality put in place by the authorities but also the “gallant” and erotic imaginaries, contraceptive practices and the gendered body. These issues are brought to life by everyday objects, some of them valuable and rare, and previously unseen documents.

The exhibition also hears from some 18th-century “experts” on seduction, desire and sexuality. They include Casanova, who travels through Switzerland in 1760 engaging in numerous sexual encounters along the way, and the famous physician Samuel Auguste Tissot from Lausanne, author of the equally famous book *Onanism*, which condemns the practice of masturbation.

Exhibition curator: Nicole Staremborg

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Matter of Affinity – Love and Sexuality in the 18th Century

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2 ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

While the exhibition's French title *Et plus si affinités...* is a phrase from lonely hearts ads holding out the prospect of a deeper relationship if two people hit it off when they first meet, the origins of the concept of affinity can be traced back to the Enlightenment. In his *Elective Affinities* (*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, 1809), Goethe, a great admirer of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and precursor of German Romanticism, draws on the work of 18th-century chemists to describe emotional connections and the magnetic, physical attraction that can disrupt social conventions.

Reflecting the twists and turns of passion and the hidden depths of desire, this innovatively designed exhibition showcases objects from the refined to the everyday and even occasionally mischievous, and features multimedia displays as well as interviews with specialists.

Focusing on love and sexuality in the 18th century, a time when the Church's influence is waning and moral conceptions are being redefined, it centres around seven issues that each represent a facet of the story:

- The amorous encounter: the first meeting, in public
- Controlling the flesh
- Liberal, liberated, libertine?
- Talk of marriage
- Romantic words: love in all its states
- Masculine – feminine
- The precious child

Looking first at the elites, the exhibition investigates the interactions between personal choices and collective norms at a time when new expectations are being voiced and new practices are emerging: the love match, on one hand, and contraception, on the other. It explores the personal lives, loves and sexuality of individuals.

Desire, encounter, seduction

By the 18th century, the spirit of Romanticism is already making itself felt in numerous writings and everyday objects. Innocent for the most part, they prove somewhat more worldly once diverted from their initial function. These objects symbolise love itself, the loved one or their memory. At every level of society, the concern is with "gallantry" and the child – wanted or unwanted.

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Controlling the flesh

To really understand the wind of freedom blowing through 18th-century society, which sees the “invention” of pornography, we need to look briefly back to the 16th and 17th centuries. The legacy of the Reformation divides the western world into two religious camps. Protestantism legitimises sexual relations within marriage between a man and a woman, while criminalising all other forms of sexuality. The Bible is its rulebook, and the Reformers enlist the support of magistrates and the public authorities with the aim of policing people’s moral conduct.

Talk of marriage

The meeting point of social norms, family expectations and individual aspirations, marriage stands at the apex of a strictly hierarchical society. While people tend to marry a partner of their choosing, they continue to respect their parents’ wishes and never depart from their social rank. The aim of marriage is to ensure the continuation of the line; births are regulated, particularly using contraception. Yet the number of children born out of wedlock is increasing, both in Switzerland and across Europe.

Gallantry: an honest name for libertinism

The waning influence of the religious order goes hand in hand with increasing moral liberalism. This is the origin of libertinism, symbolised by the use of erotic or “gallant” objects. While the elites transgress social norms, an imaginary grows up to represent an ideal of relations between the sexes. Philosophers locate the flesh and pleasure at the heart of knowledge, which now takes account of the senses, touch and feeling.

Intangible desire

Samuel Auguste Tissot, a physician from Lausanne, gains fame throughout Europe for his advocacy of a bourgeois sexuality that favours moderate pleasure within the couple but without losing sight of its ultimate aim, namely procreation. His condemnation of masturbation is grounded in medical discourse rather than concepts of sin, since he regards it as a waste of energy.

The shared pleasures of Casanova

The tireless and controversial Casanova is the most famous “ladies’ man” of all time. During a journey through Switzerland in 1760 (numerous extracts from his account are read in the exhibition by actor Julien Tsongas), he describes a number of amorous encounters from Zurich to Geneva. No fan of condoms, Casanova is a sensualist who views men as pleasure machines, duty bound to satisfy their partners through a complete sexual act. Accordingly, he has three golden balls made in Geneva: a kind of diaphragm which, he claims, acts as a method of contraception.

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The contraceptive revolution

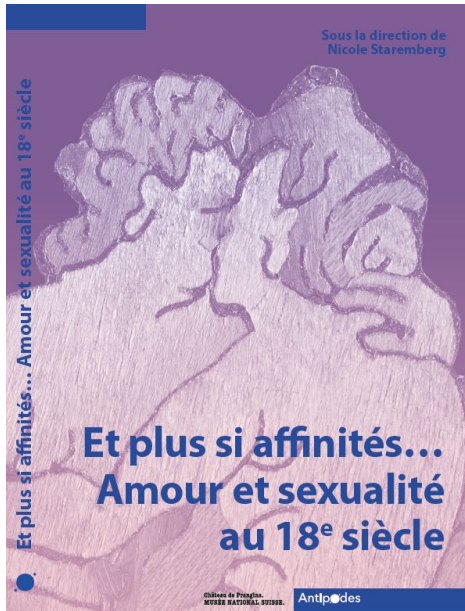
Contraception is far from being the exclusive preserve of libertines: birth control by means of *coitus interruptus* brings about a sexual revolution in the 18th century, initially in Protestant areas.

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3 PUBLICATION



A richly illustrated publication designed and edited by Nicole Staremborg for this exhibition.

Et plus si affinités... Amour et sexualité au 18^e siècle

180 pages

In French

Editions Antipodes, 2020

CHF 29.-

ISBN 978-2-88901-178-0

This book is sold at the museum shop, at bookshops or can be ordered info.prangins@museenational.ch or +41 (0)22 994 88 90

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4 EVENTS

Public guided tours

Sunday

14 June, 21 June, 06 September, 13 September, 4 October

15:00-16:00

28 June, 05 July, 12 July, 19 July, 26 July, 02 August, 09 August, 16 August, 23 August, 20 September

15:30-16:30

Included in the entrance fee

Other events

Thursday, 3 September | 18:30-19:30

Reading of extracts from the Memoirs of Casanova in Switzerland by Jacques Roman, writer and actor, preceded by an introductory visit to the exhibition with Nicole Staremborg, exhibition curator.

Included in the entrance fee

Wednesday, 30 September | 18:30-19:30

Reading of extracts from "La Belle et la Bête", a sensual tale dotted with eroticism, by Nathalie Pfeiffer, actor, preceded by an introductory visit to the exhibition with Nicole Staremborg, exhibition curator.

Included in the entrance fee

Thursday, 8 October | 18:30-19:30

Reading of extracts from the Memoirs of Casanova in Switzerland by Jacques Roman, writer and actor, preceded by an introductory visit to the exhibition with Nicole Staremborg, exhibition curator.

Included in the entrance fee

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Events

Activities around the exhibition are proposed on these special days.

NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Saturday 1 August | Free admission

CINÉMA OPEN AIR

Thursday, 27 August

Friday, 28 August

Saturday, 29 August

All included | CHF 10.-

In cooperation with Visions du Réel, the museum presents three films relating to its temporary exhibition. The entrance fee comprises the film screening, the entrance to the museum and the guided tour of the exhibition.

HERITAGE DAYS

Saturday, 12 September

Sunday, 13 September

Free admission

SWISS CASTLE DAY

Sunday, 04 October | Free admission

Guided tours and workshops on demand (as of 8 June)

Please make your reservations on

+41 (0)22 994 88 90 | info.prangins@museenational.ch

GUIDED TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

All ages | F, D, E

60 min | max. 25 pers.

CHF 120.- for each guide

Admission to the museum | CHF 8.- par personne

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5 - INFORMATION

OPENING HOURS

TU – SU 10:00-17:00

Open on Ascension Thursday, Pentecost Monday and 1 August.

ADMISSION

Adults | CHF 10.- | CHF 8.- (AVS, AI, AC, étudiants, militaires et groupes)

Children up to age 16 | Admission free

Schools | Admission free and one activity/day included for each student

Kitchen garden and its Visitor centre, Promenade des Lumières, Sentier historique de la Côte | Admission free

SERVICES

Room rentals, guided tours on demand, reservation of birthday events and workshops

+41 (0)22 994 88 96

Café du Château

TU – SU 09.30-17.30 | +41 (0)22 363 14 66 | www.lecafeduchateau.ch

ACCES

Train CFF | to Nyon train station

Bus TPN | 805 ou 811 from Nyon train station, two stops « Prangins, Musée national » ou « Les Abériaux »

Boat CGN | Until Nyon

On foot | Approx. 25 minutes from Nyon train station

Bike | Publibike

Car | Motorway A1 Genève-Lausanne, exit Nyon or Gland, parking next to the lake

For further information

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