



5 December 2024, 6 p.m., Vrije Universiteit Brussel, U-Residence

**“That I should report on these things”
Reading and Discussion with German writer Esther Dischereit**

Award-winning German Jewish author Esther Dischereit will read from her new book *Ein Haufen Dollarscheine* (2024) and engage in a discussion about uncomfortable truths that linger in official sites of documentation, in family archives and, last but not least, in the memory of individuals that can be at odds with dominant narratives about the past.

Dischereit is one of the most important literary voices of Germany. Her work is informed by the experience of being a member of a family that was shaped by Holocaust survivors. She is a prolific, and indeed radical, writer across literary and documentary genres. In its many different forms, her work presents a visceral pathography of post-war continuities, crises and trauma. She has published fiction, poetry, journalism and essays, and is a regular writer for the radio, the stage and other artistic media. Between 2012 and 2017 she was Professor of Language Arts at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. She has been a Fellow at the Moses Mendelssohn Centre for European and Jewish Studies in Potsdam and the DAAD Chair for Contemporary Poetics at New York University, 2019.

In 2009 she received Austria’s prestigious Erich Fried Prize for her writing. Her book on the NSU murders, *Blumen für Otello. Über die Verbrechen von Jena* (2014) (*Flowers for Otello. On the Crimes That Came out of Jena*, English translation in 2022), was performed as a radio play and nominated for the ARD Medienpreis. Earlier this year, she was the recipient of the Alfred-Gruber-Preis in the context of the Meraner Lyrikpreis for her most recent works of poetry. In her poems, “political violence takes shape – in its various forms,” according to the jury. “They say, and at the same time do not say, what needs to be said.” The quest for, and mastery of, a language for the sometimes overt, sometimes subtle forms of violence permeating the social world and convivial spaces, is characteristic of all of Dischereit’s works. *Ein Haufen Dollarscheine*, [*A Bunch of Dollar Bills*] takes us into the fragile, tender, and yet charged world of a family whose members are spread across continents, inhabiting bubbles that appear to be irreconcilable – and yet share the legacy of a past that binds them. Nobel-Prize winning writer Elfriede Jelinek sees “in this rich book a Jewish variant of Rubens’s *Fall of the Damned*. This book is heavy and light at the same time, and that is an eminent art.”

The reading and discussion will be conducted mostly in English. Questions can be taken in English, Dutch, French and German.

This event is part of the Ties that Bind Us Series and realised in cooperation with the recently launched Chair Traces of the Resistance.

Ties that Bind Us

Transcultural Perspectives on Social Forms

A cross-disciplinary series organised at the Faculty of Languages and Humanities for VUB's Public Programme.

The impact of global and geopolitical crises on European societies is widely felt. Common reactions to these are a growing societal divide and a rise in anti-democratic positions. The public imaginary is rife with a rhetoric dominated by the erection of walls, the demarcation of territory and claims of ownership. Crushed between polarised camps are vulnerable members of our societies – and thus humanity itself. Individuals with their complex identities are categorised into groups whose belonging, right to existence even, is called into question. Understanding the realities of diversity and change as given, the series "Ties that Bind Us" seeks to create a platform for a wide range of perspectives, life experiences and cultures of knowledge about forms of kinship, solidarity and conviviality – or, in other words, a counter-imaginary space to an increasingly widespread, yet dangerously reductive binary thinking.

The series comes with a book stall – provided by Pepite Blues.

Contact

ties@vub.be

Organisers at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities:

Prof. dr. Benoît Henriët, History

Prof. dr. Eva Ulrike Pirker, English & Comparative Literature

Prof. dr. Katarzyna Ruchel-Stuckmans, Art History

Co-funded by the Faculty of Languages and Humanities research groups:

Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings (CLIC)

Social History of Capitalism (SHOC)

History of Art, Architecture & Visual Culture Research Group (VISU)

