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Ursula Reuter Christiansen  
*Rose Thorn*  
November 4–December 22, 2023

„Every era has a Sleeping Beauty. I have eliminated the prince in mine. Through the rose thorns, my Sleeping Beauty finds her own path out.“—Ursula Reuter Christiansen

The legend of Sleeping Beauty has fascinated generations for centuries and has seen many different challenges for its main character. In Nordic mythology, the Valkyrie Brynhild disobeyed the chief god Odin and was punished with his Sleeping Thorn. In this *Saga of the Volsungs*, it was the famous dragon slayer Sigurd who had to fight his way through a wall of fire to get to her.

Much later, in the Brothers Grimm's fairytale, *Dornröschen*, the queen and king were punished by a curse that made their daughter fall into a 100-year-long sleep, after she had pricked herself on a spindle. When the thicket and hedge of roses withdrew, a young prince kissed Sleeping Beauty awake, and life at court also awoke anew.

*Rose Thorn*, the solo exhibition by Danish-German artist Ursula Reuter Christiansen, builds on that legend and fairytale of Sleeping Beauty, and presents the artist's empowerment of its main character through a series of new and recent artworks.

The selection of works—new and old, paintings, drawings, and ceramics—departs from the idea that the gallery's historical limestone building references a small castle overgrown by thorns. Flickering candles in the tower guide the way through the concrete jungle of the city, and from outside, the gallery's windows are blocked by red rose branches with thick thorns that the artist picked and painted outside of her studio on Møn. Ceramics have settled on the window sills. *Red Riding Hood*, *Totentrompete* (Engl. Death Trumpet), and *Die kleine Tänzerin* (Engl. The Little Dancer) indicate the direction in which this exhibition is going.

„I was fascinated—and inspired to create new artworks—by the architecture of the gallery, which reminded me of the castles described in the fairytales of Sleeping Beauty.“—Ursula Reuter Christiansen

In the main exhibition space sits *Sleeping Beauty*, 2018, a large-scale, two-part painting. Here, a red light gleams from the tower window. The mystical scenery in many colors is complete without figures. Trees and branches climb up and block the view of the castle behind. Nature mimics the forms of the archways closed by lattice, which can then be imagined further along the windows of the exhibition space.

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The first figures appear in the drawing next to it, *Im Gestrüpp* (Engl. In the Thicket) 1983, and mark the transition to the artist's latest work, the painting *Rose Thorn - Die Träne* (Engl. Rose Thorn - The Tear), 2023. A certain sadness has settled over the face of this woman, and a tear rolls down her cheek. Is it her, the Sleeping Beauty, in the constraints of thorn bushes? Also from 2023 is, *Rose Thorn - Der Tag Erwacht* (engl. Rose Thorn - The Day Awakens). An orange-blazing sun puts everything around it in the shade. The thorns seem less threatening. In keeping with Reuter Christiansen's credo, „Courage,“ hope appears on the horizon here. *Rose Thorn*, 2001, is the oldest of the canvases, and, in addition to a deformed face, a barbed branch adorns the canvas. The work was the starting point for the new works and lends its title to the exhibition.

A series of three older drawings closes the circle of works on the walls in the main exhibition space. *Der Dom* (Engl. The Cathedral) like *Sie will mich zurückhalten* (Engl. She wants to hold me back), show the city of Trier, Reuter Christiansen's hometown before she moved to Denmark in her mid-20s. Two watercolors show her mother trying to capture the artist as a small figure in the center. In the context of this exhibition, personal stories are mixed with narratives from well-known fairy tales that merge into a cemetery scene, *Friedhof - All die Auferstandenen* (Engl. Cemetery - All the Risen), in which various figures rise up from the attainment. Chaos reigns, no happy ending, much in the tradition of the fairy tales that so often have inspired Reuter Christiansen to speak about the hurdles of life and feminist issues.



#### About Ursula Reuter Christiansen

Born 1943 in Trier, Germany / Lives and works on Møn, Denmark

Ursula Reuter Christiansen's work oscillates between symbolism and mythology, desire and hatred, beauty and abysses. Throughout her practice, she incorporates various media, from painting, filmmaking and performance to ceramics and sculpture. Having studied literature in Marburg, DE, she later graduated from the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts in 1969, where she studied under Professor Joseph Beuys and became active in the emerging women's movement, which was to have a strong influence on her oeuvre. Following a great urge to leave her native Germany, together with her husband, the composer Henning Christiansen (1932-2008) she settled in a farmhouse on the Danish island Møn.

Ursula Reuter Christiansen in her exhibition *Rose Thorn* at von Bartha, Copenhagen, 2023. Photo: Davy Denke / von Bartha

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