

Salvation cannot be bought

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If one is seeking views on spirituality, then often terms like esotericism, mystical experiences, New Age, self-healing, alternative medicine, etc. are mentioned. “Special offers” seem to promise salvation. In reflection of such opinions, the artist Zenita Komad replies: “Spirituality is not Shopping”—salvation cannot be bought, superficial spirituality is not possible.

Zenita Komad has approached the topic of spirituality in all its details and provides to the audience insights into her fascinating drawings, collages and texts — a suggestion for a comprehensive introspection, encouraging to think about one’s own existence and fulfilment in life.

A separate chapter presents the framework of Judaism and spirituality. Judaism is rich in opinions and puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of asking questions: What does Jewish spirituality mean, does it exist at all? If so, what does this have to do with me? In any case, the term Jewish spirituality applies to Hasidism, the almost ecstatic joy of learning, of religion, tradition, storytelling and songs, or the Kabbalah.

Zenita Komad puts spirituality into context with the wish to transform. For the Museum Judenplatz the artist has created an extensive series of drawings, an oracle and combinations of numbers in reference to one of the most important places in the history of the Viennese Jews. On this square the medieval roots of the Viennese Jewish community are evident. The Judenplatz, then called “Schulhof”, served for one and a half centuries as the centre of the Jewish community, a place of activity and learning, where some of the most outstanding religious authorities have taught, it was then a centre of Jewish knowledge. One of the largest synagogues dominated the square and its surroundings. Here lived a thriving community, known far beyond the borders of the country, but it came to a tragic end with the expulsion and murder of all its members in 1421. It took generations until Jews settled again in Vienna. Today the square is home to the Lessing monument in memory of the important thinker of the Enlightenment, the Holocaust memorial by Rachel Whiteread, but above all, to a very active Jewish community with a synagogue and a children’s and youth club. In the late 1990s the foundations of the medieval synagogue have been discovered, which bear witness to the history of this site.

A spiritual place with a tremendous intensity is now reinterpreted through the work of Zenita Komad. Rebekka Hagg and Markus Mittringer have worked together with Zenita Komad on the writing of the oracles, Rebekka Hagg has written a poem for this purpose and transformed it into a film. Chief Rabbi Paul Chaim Eisenberg has added to this discussion a unique finishing touch.

The positive internal and external insights of this exhibition are immanent. To name only one of the many important principles: Love your enemies, they give you the opportunity to learn.