

Strasbourg, 06 August 2026

À TIRE-D'AILE. ANNA SOMMER IN REGARD OF THE COLLECTIONS.



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1. Note of intention

With À tire-d'aile. Anna Sommer in regard of the collections, the Musée Tomi Ungerer becomes the first French institution to host a solo exhibition by Anna Sommer. She won the 2024 Max and Moritz Prize for Best German-Speaking Comic Artist.

Down the decades, Swiss artist Anna Sommer (born in Staffelbach in 1968) has developed her own distinct style of visual storytelling. From collage portraits to short illustrated stories, from inked comic books to humorous etchings, her work is constantly puncturing the superficial appearance of things for a moment – telling a joke, evoking unease, opening up a new level of meaning. She dissects our human relationships, romantic tribulations, desires, roles and identities with the same precision with which she uses her paper cutter to create large, colourful collages.

For this 'carte blanche' exhibition, Sommer carefully studied the museum's collection and the works of Tomi Ungerer, which she has displayed in dialogue with her own works. Sommer also sought out drawings by other artists – Tomi Ungerer and Borislav Sajtinac from the collection of the Musée Tomi Ungerer, Marcelle Cahn and Käthe Kollwitz from the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Toshusai Sharaku and Kitagawa Utamaro from the collection of the Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins – that display a narrative, formal or poetic affinity with her own work. With this knowingly subjective artistic gaze, the exhibition affirms the many points of connection between works of different genres, styles and periods.

Her books have been published in France ever since her debut (L'Association, Les Cahiers dessinés, Actes Sud) and her work has featured in numerous festivals and exhibitions (including *La bande dessinée au Musée* and *Bande dessinée 1964–2024* at the Pompidou Centre in 2024). As part of the *Illustrer le Grand Paris* project, she produced a mural for the Gare Le Blanc-Mesnil (2025).

This exhibition also provides an opportunity to expand the Tomi Ungerer Museum's collections with works by Anna Sommer (donated by the artist and acquired by the museum).

Curator: Anna Sailer, curator of the Musée Tomi Ungerer – Centre international de l'illustration

With the support of the Consulat général de Suisse, Strasbourg



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2. Biography



Anna Sommer was born in Staffelbach, in German-speaking Switzerland, in 1968. Her father worked as a furrier and both parents had a passion for drawing, and the family home was filled with their creations. Tomi Ungerer's collage of a male torso wearing a fox's head as briefs reminds Sommer of her early childhood, when she used to pose like Mick Jagger with the fox mask from her father's workshop down the front of her pyjama bottoms.

In her early 20s, Sommer moved to Zurich to train as a graphic artist. She experimented with the drypoint technique, and during her subsequent work as a graphic artist began creating her first collages with black-and-white scrap paper on her lunch breaks.

Her first drypoint etching was published in 1991 in the magazine *Good Boy*, edited by Frédéric Pajak. She struck up friendships with Pajak, the Swiss artist duo Mix & Remix and the illustrator Noyau, who would become her life partner. Sommer's first comic strip was published in 1994 in *Strapazin*. Her very early comics also appeared in the Zurich weekly *WOZ*. The music magazine *Vibrations* regularly published her drawn and papercut portraits. Her first colour papercut works appeared in the culture magazine *Du* and her first inked comics in *Züritipp*, the supplement of the *Tagesanzeiger*. In 2003, she began an illustrated column for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung's Folio* supplement. Sommer enjoyed success as both an illustrator and a comic artist. In 2007, the comic festival Fumetto marked the publication of *Die Wahrheit und andere Erfindungen* (The Truth and Other Inventions) with her first solo exhibition.

Her first book, *Damen Dramen* (Women's Dramas, Arrache-Cœur), came out in 1996, the same year she went freelance. Later publications included *Honigmond* (Honeymoon, 1998), *Amourettes* (Flirtations, Buchet-Chastel, 2002), *Baies des bois* (Wildberries, United Dead Artists, 2002), *Die Wahrheit und andere Erfindungen* (The Truth and Other Inventions, Edition Moderne, 2007), *L'Œuf*, co-authored with Noyau (The Egg, Actes Sud, 2014), *Les Grandes Filles* (Big Girls, Les Cahiers dessinés, 2015), *The Unknown* (Conundrum, 2020), *Chambre d'amies* (Guestroom, Les Cahiers dessinés, 2023) and *Tinte* (Ink, Edition Moderne, 2023).

Anna Sommer is considered one of the most important illustrators and comic artists of her generation. She has received numerous awards, such as the 2024 Max and Moritz Prize for Best German-Speaking Comic Artist, and was included in the official selection at the 2018 Angoulême International Comics Festival. Her work was also featured in

many group and solo exhibitions, such as *La bande dessinée au Musée* and *Bande dessinée 1964–2024* at the Pompidou Centre in 2024. In 2025, she created a mural for the *Gare Le Blanc-Mesnil* as part of the *Illustrer le Grand Paris* project.

Anna Sommer, 2026. Photo : Anita Affentranger

3. Visitor route

Down the decades, Swiss artist Anna Sommer (born in Staffelbach in 1968) has developed her own distinct style of visual storytelling. From papercut portraits to short illustrated stories, from inked comic books to humorous drypoint etchings, her work always tells a joke, evokes unease or opens up a new level of meaning. She dissects our human relationships, romantic tribulations, desires, roles and identities with the same precision with which she uses her paper cutter to create large, colourful collages.

For the present 'carte blanche' exhibition, Sommer carefully studied the works of Tomi Ungerer and other artists in the collections of Strasbourg's museums, which she has displayed in dialogue with her own works. With this knowingly subjective artistic gaze, the exhibition affirms the many points of connection between works of different genres, styles and periods. The exhibition extends to the basement and first floor of the museum as well as the children's books area on the ground floor.

Salle 5

Schnitte

Die gelernte Grafikerin Anna Sommer beginnt Anfang der 1990er, mit Kaltnadel-Radierungen und Papierschnitten in Schwarz-Weiß zu experimentieren und erste Illustrationen zu veröffentlichen. Diese frühen Arbeiten sind bereits geprägt von einem lakonischen Sprachwitz, einem erotisch-poetischen Blick auf den Körper in seinen gesellschaftlichen Verhängnissen und Leidenschaften sowie einer minutiösen Arbeit an Porträts.

In ihren frühen, skulpturalen Papierschnitten (zu sehen in der Tischvitrine) schneidet die Künstlerin aus aufeinander geklebtem Papier ihre Figuren heraus. Die späteren Bildergeschichten (zu sehen in den Wandvitrinen) sind objekthaft: Die Künstlerin schneidet mit dem Cutter unterschiedliche Formen, die sie anschließend zusammenfügt. Hierbei verwendet sie oft die unterschiedlichen Texturen von japanischem oder nepalesischem Papier.

In den Neunzigerjahren beginnt Anna Sommer, ein eigenes Comicformat (in Radierung oder Tusche) zu definieren, das ganz auf Panels verzichtet. Diese Meisterschaft der sequenziellen Erzählung zeigt sich auch in den geschnittenen Bildergeschichten. Mit einer ungeheuren Ökonomie des Ausdrucks umreißt sie Themen wie beispielsweise den Lebenszyklus in einer Geschichte aus zwölf Bildern.

salle 6

Two anthologies of Anna Sommer's papercut works have been published, *Les Grandes Filles* (Big Girls, Les Cahiers dessinés, 2015) and *Chambre d'amies* (Guestroom, Les Cahiers dessinés, 2023). The portraits and scenes – some depicting real people, often Sommer's friends who posed for portraits; others depicting fictional individuals – do not form any coherent narrative. Rather, each image stands by itself,

captivating the viewer with a detail, some discombobulating aspect, that opens up another level of the story. The technique of papercutting requires utmost precision, yet Sommer does it without any preliminary sketch. This precision is also evident in the composition of the fields of colour and in Sommer's choice of attributes to characterise her subjects.

Sommer's papercuts and etchings have here been placed in dialogue with works by other artists, including Marcelle Cahn and Kätze Kollwitz. While Cahn often used the inside of envelopes for her abstract paper collages, Kollwitz's drypoints and lithographs give expression to her subjects' social origins and the hardships of their lives.

Die Geschäftsfrau (The businesswoman), a lighter work that shares the humour of her etchings, comes from Sommer's first book, *Damen Dramen* (Women's Dramas, Arrache-Cœur, 1996). It goes against the grain of conventional depictions of housework, similar to Tomi Ungerer's satirical drawing.

Hall 7

The Unknown

The inked graphic novel *The Unknown* (Conundrum Press, 2020) takes up the theme of motherhood, which Sommer has addressed in her work from a variety of different angles. For instance, in the children's book *L'Œuf* (The Egg, Actes Sud, 2014), we witness the main character looking after an unhatched egg, attending it, waiting for the child to be born – and ultimately having to let it go (on display on the ground floor). *The Unknown* is about two women who find themselves in tricky situations. One is involved in a tumultuous affair with her professor and becomes pregnant without meaning to. The other woman, a boutique owner finds the child, and begins to satisfy her desire to be a mother. Out of these situations, Anna Sommer weaves a story about different forms that parenthood can take, about accepting and letting go, about how we are thrown into a life we cannot control and must somehow make our own.

The book shares this humorous tone with Sommer's etchings, which have here been placed in conversation with Tomi Ungerer's sarcastic outlook on the world. *The Unknown's* themes of the ambivalence and complexity of interpersonal relationships are echoed in the prints by Kitagawa Utamaro and Tōshūsai Sharaku. Yama-Uba is the archetype of a witch who lives on the fringes of society, ungoverned by any norms. Here, she is depicted with Kintoki: in the tender version of the story, he is her son, in the more gruesome one, the object of her desire.

Hall 8

Tinte (Ink)

Influenced by Japanese prints, Sommer's latest book, *Tinte* (Ink, Edition Moderne, 2023), adopts a minimalist style with no words, which brings out the papercuts' graphic aspect and her characters' expressivity. The papercuts have been placed in dialogue with largely unknown works by Tomi Ungerer, who began creating diverse

assemblages of found objects (household objects, Barbies, driftwood) back in the 1960s. They represent an extension of his work with paper collages and drawings. In the wooden panels shown here, narrative has completely dissolved into a modernist composition of individual elements.

The story of *Tinte* (Ink) is based on the Japanese tradition of the daruma doll, a symbol of good fortune. You must paint the left eye of the doll to make a wish; meanwhile the right eye is left blank until the wish is fulfilled. When a monkey drinks the ink in the inkpot before the protagonist could trace her second eye, she sets off in search of black substance to complete the task. A squid, tar, lava – nothing works, until eventually she is washed up on shore, deprived from both her eyes. The monkey draws one on with a kiss, but the wish, however, remains unfulfilled. The daruma refers to the Buddhist teaching “fall seven times, rise eight”.

Hall 9

***Die Wahrheit und andere Erfindungen* (The Truth and Other Inventions)**

In the 1990s, alternative comics became an important medium for autobiographical storytelling, with Canadian artist Julie Doucet setting the template for generations of subsequent illustrators to follow. Anna Sommer's work is full of autobiographical references, a theme she explores in the form of short stories under the eloquent title *Die Wahrheit und andere Erfindungen* (The Truth and Other Inventions, Edition Moderne, 2007). The stories, which originally appeared as double-page spreads in the journal *L'Imbécile de Paris*, touch on the mysteries of the grown-up world, from bad sloppy teenage kisses, constipation and nightmares, posing as a model, meeting her later life partner to the printing press. With their laconic tone, use of wordplay and subversive bare-all character, the comics erase all shame.

The cover of the French edition shows a young girl covering a woman's eyes from behind. Sensing the gesture, the woman peers through the girl's fingers into the distance. This same inquiring perspective on an (impossible) encounter with oneself can be found in the self-portraits on display here, which show Anna Sommer at the ages of 5, 20 and 40.

4. Cultural and educational programming

VISITES

Découvrir l'exposition

Dimanches 11 octobre, 8 novembre, 6 et 20 décembre, 17 janvier à 15h

Durée : 1h

Führung auf Deutsch. Besuch der Ausstellung und der Sammlung

Samstag 31. Oktober, 14. November, 12. Dezember und 9. Januar
um 15.00 Uhr

Durée : 1h

À tous les étages, collection et exposition

Mercredis 21 et 28 octobre et 23 décembre à 14h30

Durée : 1h

Envie de visiter le musée, de découvrir la collection Tomi Ungerer et l'exposition

À tire-d'aile. Anna Sommer en dialogue avec les collections pendant les vacances ?

Cette visite est faite pour vous.

Regards croisés : Anna Sommer et Anna Sailer

Samedi 21 novembre à 14h30

Durée 1h

Visite commentée et rencontre avec l'artiste et illustratrice Anna Sommer, et la conservatrice du musée Anna Sailer.

ATELIERS TOUT PUBLIC

« Comment je me vois »

Atelier de papiers découpés avec Anna Sommer

Dimanche 22 novembre à 14h30

Durée : 1h30

Un dessin sans crayon ! Équipés d'un miroir et de lames, on découpe dans du papier coloré les différents éléments de l'image, puis on les assemble pour former une image composée de nombreuses pièces.

Cette technique laisse une grande liberté, car les différents éléments peuvent être réarrangés à l'infini, ce qui permet de se rapprocher progressivement du portrait.

Avec son effet saisissant, le découpage de papier se prête particulièrement bien à la création de portraits.

À partir de 10 ans. Nombre de places limité à 12 personnes.

Quotidien transformé

Dimanche 31 janvier à 14h30

Durée : 1h30

Laissez-vous guider par les gravures d'Anna Sommer où objets, personnes réelles ou imaginaires se racontent. Le temps d'un atelier, expérimentez la technique de la pointe sèche sur rénalon, l'encre et la presse pour imprimer votre image en direct.

À partir de 12 ans. Nombre de places limité à 12 personnes.

TABLE RONDE

Les Étoiles souterraines

Mercredi 14 octobre à 18h

Durée 1h

Anna Sommer et Noyau, illustrateur·ices et auteur·ices proposent une rencontre avec Frédéric Pajak, éditeur (*Les Cahiers dessinés...*), dessinateur, auteur et fondateur du *Festival du dessin* à Arles mais aussi ami de longue date. Parce que dans le milieu de l'édition, les rencontres entre les artistes et les éditeurs sont souvent des coups de cœur qui permettent des collaborations créatives.

CONFÉRENCE

La ligne érotique : désir, intimité, transgression

Samedi 23 janvier à 14h30

Durée : 1h

L'œuvre de l'illustratrice et autrice suisse Anna Sommer ouvre sur l'intimité et l'érotisme en présentant une vision contemporaine des relations amoureuses.

Avec Mathilde Leïchlé, historienne de l'art et critique d'art. Ses recherches portent sur les images et imaginaires des violences sexuelles faites aux femmes et, plus largement, sur les mythes ainsi que sur la capacité d'agir (agentivité) des femmes face aux constructions de genre.

SPECTACLE ET +

CINÉ FAMILLES L'amour et les métamorphoses

Dimanche 4 octobre à 11h

Durée : 1 heure

Un programme de films courts expérimentaux, de films d'animation et de vidéos d'artistes sur l'amour et les métamorphoses, et les états de réunion, d'attraction, de tendresse dans tous leurs potentiels de transformation présenté par l'artiste et curatrice Marie-Pierre Bonniol.

Dans ce programme, des lunettes roses se chaussent, le noir et le blanc tournent, se chassent, pour finalement se retrouver et danser ensemble, les lumières forment des messages dans les fenêtres des villes, des mains se retrouvent, des poissons fusionnent, les larmes se transforment en mer puis en création.

Tout public, à partir de 5 ans. Le programme n'est pas adapté pour les personnes épileptiques et photosensibles.

5. Partner

With the support of the Consulat général de Suisse, Strasbourg :
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5. Visitor information

Musée Tomi Ungerer

2, avenue de la Marseillaise, Strasbourg

Opening times: weekdays from 10 am to 1 pm and from 2 pm to 6 pm. Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 6 pm. Closed on Mondays

tel. +33 (0)3 68 98 50 00

Group Visits: information at

www.musees.strasbourg.eu/groupe-tarifs-reservations

Tickets: €9 (reduced: €5)

Admission free:

- visitors under age 18
- Carte Culture card holders
- Atout Voir card holders
- Museums Pass Musées card holders
- Educ'Pass card holders
- disabled visitors
- students in art history, archaeology and architecture
- employment seekers
- social assistance beneficiaries

Admission free, all visitors:

1st Sunday in the month.

Individual annual pass: €45 (reduced : €30)

1-day pass for all museums: €20 (reduced : €15)

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Press kit and visuals downloadable at: www.musees.strasbourg.eu

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<https://www.musees.strasbourg.eu/dossiers-et-communiqués-de-presse>