



Cultural phenomena

Halloween (7)

15:00 Minuten

- 1.15 "It's something out of America,
1.21 "It's to attract the spirit of winter
1.27 "I think it's fascinating to dress up
1.31 What do you know about Halloween ?
1.35 Halloween is really cool. I'm from Brazil and it's almost like carnival."
1.39 "Party, fun, creepy atmosphere and scaring people."
1.44 "It's a heathen festival, I think, and the souls of the dead come back
1.49 You're here as Death. Aren't you afraid of death?
1.54 "I'm already dead, nothing can happen to me."
1.55 Thousands of people came to the old Feldschlösschen area near Zürich-Dietlikon, where advertisements claimed that the biggest Halloween party in the world was taking place. The weirder the costume, the better. But not everybody was happy about it.
2.14 The evangelical group „Christians for Truth“ demonstrated in front of the gates against the party.
2.24 For these Christians Halloween is not just a harmless spooky party, but a dangerous heathen spectacle, a conspiracy of dark powers, of death, devils, witches, evil spirits and demons.
2.44 But the party guests didn't let them spoil the fun.
2.56 ((Stefan Gisler, Christen für die Wahrheit)):
"What's going on here is against Christianity.
It's true that it's a kind of religion, but its origin is very misanthropic. It has even involved people being sacrificed, so that's why we have to make a stand. Because there is something which is constructive and not destructive.
We already have enough violence today. So we think it's wrong that you organise a concert or make music or do anything at all for something like this."
3.32 The folklorist Gabriela Muri was also among the guests. She has a different opinion of Halloween than the protesting Christians.
3.47 ((Gabriela Muri, folklorist at the University of Zurich)):
"I do understand the criticism, because people think customs are something lasting that never change. But that is misleading. Customs, including Christmas, Sächsilüte in Zürich, or the carnival in Basel, always have two aspects, both new and old elements. So there are people who defend the old Halloween traditions that we have here in Europe. People who refuse to accept the so-called heathen festival of Halloween.
Then there are newspaper reports complaining about the Räbeliechtliumzug , saying it's a pity they now use pumpkins too.
We see the same thing with Christmas or Easter – there have always been voices that want it to be the way it was. And other people have introduced something new, and that is important: Customs only sur-

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vive because of these new elements.”

4.37 Halloween originally comes from Ireland, probably from Celtic times. The heathen Samhain festival seems to be a forerunner. It brought in the beginning of winter and the new calendar year on the first of November. At this time the doors to the kingdom of the dead were opened and the world beyond met with everyday life. When the great famine broke out in Ireland in 1845, hundreds of thousands emigrated to America and took Halloween with them to the new world. The pumpkin lanterns also go back to an Irish legend: to Jack the Drunkard, who wanders between heaven and hell in a hollowed out illuminated turnip. The turnip became a pumpkin in America.

5.34 The largest Halloween parade in the world takes place annually in New York. Every year over 30,000 people take part in the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade.

These days having fun is the main thing, but in the old days people dressed up as ghosts, witches, devils and other horrific figures, to scare off evil spirits.

5.53 Back to Switzerland: the two farmer's sons Beat and Martin Jucker, from Seegräben in the Zürcher Oberland, and their partner Walter Nägeli have been key figures in the local boom.

6.12 In 1996 they launched a true pumpkin offensive.

06.19 ((Martin Jucker, Jucker Farmart AG)):

“We were trying out various things, when we stumbled on the pumpkin and realised that there was huge potential there.”

6.27 They not only increased their pumpkin production, but organised exhibitions at the same time.

6.39 Their Halloween pumpkin production increased from 50 tons in 1997 to 5000 tons in 2000 and the number of visitors to their exhibition rose from 8,000 to 400,000 in the same period.

7.00 ((Martin Jucker, Jucker Farmart AG)):

“We have an enormous variety of pumpkins – we don't just sell pumpkins, we sell the pumpkin experience in the form of an exhibition.”

7.09 And the pumpkin experience was a best seller.

Halloween has become a monster marketing success:

7.18 Back then, in 2000, the Halloween business reached a new high. Even established companies like Coop, Interio, Swatch, Mövenpick and Migros joined in.

7.33 ((Oliver Greis, Produkt Manager Migros)):

“Three or four years ago the total market was pretty much zero. Now it's developed: this year we may reach thirty or forty million.”

7.41 But is Halloween just business? Just the discovery of a new gap in the market? Or does the Halloween trend conceal a longing for old rituals and customs?

7.51 Is Halloween more than just the enjoyment of horror?

7.58 ((Gabriela Muri, folklorist Universität Zürich)):

“The horror aspect comes in part from the media, and it's the same as with death. You can say that it's a topic that is only present under the surface in society, but it's still an important one. Everybody has fears in them, and you can symbolically process fear by wearing spooky masks for example, and that way it loses a bit of its terror because there's also a playful aspect. And apart from the masks, there is also the Gothic scene, a subculture which also plays with

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weird, morbid effects; this has certainly also given some stimulus for Halloween.”

8.45 A Halloween Party in the Zürcher Aera Club, where people from the Gothic scene meet. The sombre, black, dark side of life is celebrated here.

9.11 Death is an important topic in this scene, not only at Halloween, but the whole year round.

9.20 ((Jugendlicher)):

“Halloween means nothing at all to me. I’m just at a party. The skull represents our awareness of mortality. We are all flesh and one day we’ll rot.”

9.33 Akron, the Guru of the occult scene in St. Gallen, celebrates Halloween with his order “Templum Baphomae”.

9.47 ((Akron, Magier und Schriftsteller)):

“What we’re seeing today is that a huge show, is coming back via America, and it also has a psychological background.

In our society we suppress death to a great extent, and this Halloween masquerade, is an attempt to bring death to the level of grimaces and masks, where you can laugh at it.

In a way it’s also a cheerful festival – there’s something ecstatic about it.”

10.21 Akrons ritual is inspired by the ancient Celtic Samhain festival. The battle between the god of the sun and the demons of darkness is represented here symbolically.

10.35 The sun god is dead and at Halloween he starts his journey into the underworld, where he has to live in the dark winter months.

10.54 ((Erster Jugendlicher)):

“Halloween is the transition from summer to winter, and this is an occasion to celebrate that;

also to say goodbye to summer, perhaps to look back on the summer, to relive it one more time.”

11.15 ((Zweiter Jugendlicher)):

“Remembering our ancestors; in the Catholic religion the first of November is also the day when you think about your forefathers.

I like a bit of Celtic culture, and that’s why I always enjoy celebrating this festival.“

11.31 There’s a strengthening drink for everyone, before they step over the threshold to the underworld like the sun god.

12.04 The dance of the dark gods, who are at work in winter.

12.12 And with this dance Akrons Halloween comes to an end. Halloween is a short form of “All hallows eve” or “All Hallows Evening”, which means the evening before All Saints’ Day.

12.30 On the day after Halloween the Catholic community of Zug celebrates All Saint’s Day with a procession to the cemetery, to commemorate the dead. The Catholic Church introduced All Saints on the first and All Souls on the second of November. This took place in the early Middle Ages. The Church aimed to turn popular traditions from heathen times into Christian ones.

12.56 The Roman Catholic priest Othmar Kähli has nothing against Halloween, even if its origin is heathen.

13.08 ((Othmar Kähli, Pfarrer St. Michael, Zug)): “What does heathen mean?

Catholic and Christian rituals also came from heathen traditions. I have no problem with that: all the rituals that we celebrate have a

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long history and are always changing.”

13.26 Old and new, native and foreign customs are increasingly mixed up:

13.33 In this quarter of Zürich the Räbeliechtliumzug and the Halloween festival now take place on the same day, the thirty-first of October. After all, Räbeliechtli and Halloween are both customs related to light and the harvest. Light is supposed to overcome evil and threats in the dark time of year.

14.00 The old, native custom of the Räbeliechtliumzug changes in the course of the evening into a Halloween party.

14.12 From the turnip lantern to the pumpkin,

14.17 from a children’s festival to witches and ghosts.

14.21 Whether the customs are old or new, the children don’t mind – it’s exciting in any case.

14.31 And when the witches finally wake up and put sweet things on the table, then the party really gets going.

14.54 ((Gabriela Muri)):

“I can well imagine that there’s a close connection between Halloween and the Räbeliechtli. It particularly appeals to children who are not so neighbourhood oriented, who perhaps know people in America, so they are happier to come to this procession which they used to think was for stuffy people from the neighbourhood. So I think it tends to attract more people. And the other thing is that we are increasingly including international customs in our annual routine. One example is the Chinese New Year. I think that is a part of our world, that customs are also being globalised.”