



Christine Wunnicke, *Die Dame mit der bemalten Hand*

Thread bound, 168 pages, 22 €

Berenberg Verlag

Christine Wunnicke has already been on the German Book Prize's longlist twice, and with her new novel she has moved up another step, onto the shortlist. In addition, it should be mentioned that "Die Dame mit der bemalten Hand" has been number one on the SWR bestseller list this month and just won the highly endowed Wilhelm Raabe Literature Prize. Thus, the novel has found, at least by Wunnicke's standards, many enthusiastic readers.

This is not surprising. On the back of the book, the famous German critic Sigrid Löffler is quoted, claiming that Wunnicke is a "great, underestimated novelist." But that's not true. The fact that Wunnicke is an accomplished storyteller and, on top of that, has a masterly command of the German language has long been known and is undisputed. However, she has never written for a large audience, which is probably due to her penchant for curious historical gems.

The new novel is no exception: in 1764, the Persian Musa al-Lahuri, who made his living by selling precious astronomical measuring instruments, becomes stranded on a small island off Bombay. There he discovers not only a temple carved into rock, but also a European who, as it turns out, is also marooned on the island: Carsten Niebuhr, a young mathematician from Germany.

Communication is difficult, especially since Niebuhr is suffering from a fever and is delirious at times.

I shall not reveal any more of this story. But this much can be said: Christine Wunnicke tells her story with her usual confidence, subtle humor, and unerring feeling for absurd situations. This doesn't make you jump out of your armchair excitedly, but makes you sink into it with pleasure.

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