

New Presentation of the Collection at K21

Key works by Ai Weiwei are now on permanent display at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

In 2019, the Kunstsammlung presented the hitherto most comprehensive exhibition of Ai Weiwei in Europe at both locations, K20 and K21. Now, recently acquired works and a donation by the artist are on display in K21.

Following the re-opening of K21 in 2018, the collection is now being almost completely reinstalled. More than half of the rooms are already completed and feature works by, among others, Ei Arakawa, Wolfgang Tillmans, Lutz Bacher, Margarete Jakschik, Jef Geys, Marcel Broodthaers, Ed Atkins, and Cao Fei. Among the highlights of the new presentation of the collection is the installation *Stool* (2014), the wallpaper piece *Odyssey* (2016), and the photo series *Study of Perspective* (1995–2011) by the activist and artist Ai Weiwei. The ensemble is complemented by Ai Weiwei's work *Stacked Porcelain Vases as a Pillar* (2017), which the Friends of the Kunstsammlung are making available to the museum on permanent loan. The Kunstsammlung is particularly joyful over the artist's donation of the large-scale installation *Laundromat* (2016).

K21

“*Laundromat* is a key work within Ai Weiwei's oeuvre of the past years. For me, it is one of the most disturbing and at the same time most touching installations by the artist. We regard this extremely generous donation as a great display of trust and are delighted to be the only museum in Germany to be able to show such an important installation by Ai Weiwei,” says Susanne Gaensheimner, Director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Ai Weiwei's artistic approach cannot be separated from his political commitment. With the attitude “everything is art, everything is politics,” he challenges us to always understand art and politics as being interrelated. Ai Weiwei's commitment to human rights worldwide therefore always finds an echo in his artistic works. Since 2016, Ai Weiwei has increasingly reflected and commented on the issue of global migration.

The artist's donation of *Laundromat* (2016) consists of clothing and shoes left behind by refugees in the Idomeni camp on the Greek-Macedonian border when it was evacuated in 2016. Ai Weiwei visited the hopelessly overcrowded refugee camp several times and rescued items left behind from being destroyed by the authorities. He had them cleaned and repaired in his studio in Berlin. Each individual item tells a story of oppression, flight, persecution, and suffering. Neatly sorted as though in a laundry, they seem to be waiting to be picked up and pose questions about the fate of the people who once wore them. At the

same time, they remind us of the continuing inadequacies in dealing with refugees, not only at the external borders of Europe.

The wallpaper piece *Odyssey* (2016), a recent acquisition by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, depicts flight and migration in six repeating bands. Here, Ai Weiwei draws on pictorial formulas from antiquity. Realistic depictions of flight in the twenty-first century overlap with historical and mythological representations, which are repeated in a seemingly never-ending frieze. Ai Weiwei thus reminds us that flight is a topic of all human-kind which has affected people all across the globe and in all eras.

In contrast, the forty-piece photo series *Study of Perspective* (1995–2011) functions like a self-commentary. Each image depicts a center of state and cultural power. Ai Weiwei gives each of them the finger. In interaction with the other works, the series can be understood as an indictment against decision-makers in politics and society to face up to their responsibility for refugees.

The New Collection Rooms at K21

In the new presentation at K21, acquisitions from the past three years are presented. The acquisition policy pursued by the director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Susanne Gaensheimer, of securing works for the collection from the museum's temporary exhibitions of international contemporary artists and opening up perspectives on non-Western works is clearly visible. Works by Ed Atkins, Lutz Bacher, Raqs Media Collective, Cao Fei, and Ai Arakawa, which have only recently been added to the collection of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, are thus now on display at K21. These are complemented by acquisitions of works by Jef Geys, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Jan Albers, and Margarete Jakschik. These works will be shown individually or in constellations together with works that have already been in the state art collection for some time.

The new presentation incorporates the building's long colonnades, so that the tour through the former *Ständehaus* appears expanded and newly accentuated. On the second floor, Lutz Bacher's reflecting wall piece *Cyclops* (2018) occupies the walls. The American artist, who died in 2019 only a few months after her spectacular exhibition on the first floor of K21, worked with found everyday material.

The tour of the new presentation of the collection on the second floor begins with a double room with works by two Belgian artists: Jef Geys (1934–2018) and Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976). While the works by Jef Geys are acquisitions from 2018 and 2020, Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité* (1972) has been in the museum's possession since 1999. Created for *documenta 5*, the *Section Publicité* (Section Publicity), with which Broodthaers concluded the series of manifestations of his *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles*, realized between 1968 and 1972, is not only an art historical highlight but also an important point of reference for generations of younger artists.

Videos and wall-text objects were acquired from the exhibition *Ye Olde Food* by the British artist Ed Atkins, which was presented on the first floor in 2019 and are now also on display on the second floor of K21. Ed Atkins (b. 1982) is considered one of the most advanced media artists of our time. With his computer-generated imagery (CGI), he experiments with innovative digital technologies. At the same time, he draws on an enormous amount of cultural and historical knowledge.

The film *Haze and Fog* (2013), as well as an eponymous photographic series, was acquired from Cao Fei's comprehensive survey exhibition at K21 in 2018. Cao Fei (b. 1978) is currently one of China's most prominent artists, despite her critical stance towards Chinese politics and society.

Young Photo Art from Düsseldorf with Margarete Jakschik at K21

The purchase of a series of photographic works by Margarete Jakschik (b. 1974) enriches the holdings of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. A graduate of the Düsseldorf Academy of Art who studied in the class of Thomas Ruff and now lives in California, she approaches her objects as if by chance, capturing plants, trees, and the atmosphere of her garden as she passes by. The color effects and play of light and shadow in her photographs are real, captured without any digital post-processing.

Jakschik's works are exhibited in the proximity of Richard T. Walker's video *The Hierachy of Relevance* (2009), which was purchased as early as 2011 and visually and acoustically evokes the beauty of undergrowth, bushes, and rock formations in the Californian desert. In the context of the thematically arranged double room on the third floor of K21, which deals with landscape, nature, and ecology Jan Albers' sculpture *smOulderbOul-der* (2019) is further new acquisition by the young artist from Düsseldorf.

A Look Ahead at Further New Presentations of the Collection

For the second half of 2020, the installation of further rooms with works by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Carsten Nicolai is planned. The large-scale installation by Reinhard Mucha [*Das Deutschlandgerät* (The Germany Device), 1990] will remain on site, as will the room with the bronze and ceramic sculptures by Thomas Schütte.

A presentation in memory of the conceptual artist John Baldessari, who died this year, will be installed on the first floor in the Dorothee and Konrad Fischer Archive in the summer months.

Due to current hygiene and social-distancing regulations, Tomás Saraceno's net installation *in orbit* (2013) is closed until further notice. Efforts are underway to reopen it as soon as possible.

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