

## **Awakening and Liberation: International Art from 1960 to 2000. K20 presents major works from the collection on an additional 800 m<sup>2</sup>**

as of November 2024  
K20

**New perspectives on art history: Since the summer of 2024, K20, the state museum of North Rhine-Westphalia, has been showing its collection in a comprehensive new presentation. More than 180 masterpieces of early modernism and postwar art are on display. Seminal works by iconic artists such as Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Andy Warhol are joined by groundbreaking modern figures such as Etel Adnan, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Gabriele Münter, Alice Neel, and Marianne Werefkin, as well as works by artists from non-European regions such as Arpita Akhanda, Fouad Kamel, Mayo, Park Seo-Bo, Lygia Pape, and Hassan El-Telmisani. As of November 19, K20 will unveil a newly expanded presentation of its collection. Spanning an additional 800 m<sup>2</sup>, the museum will showcase over 30 monumental works from the 1960 to 2000 period, offering visitors new perspectives on art history.**

K21

Among the outstanding works are important examples of American Minimal art and Pop art and Italian Arte Povera, as well as large-scale sculptures, light installations, video works, and assemblages by major international artists such as Dan Flavin, Rebecca Horn, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, and Jeff Wall. Special highlights include groundbreaking works by Katharina Fritsch, Gerhard Richter, and Rosemarie Trockel, which were created in the Rhineland between 1970 and 2000 and have made these artists among the most famous in the world. With this expansion, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is showing seminal works by international artists from its collection dating from 1960 to 2000.

For Susanne Gaensheimer, director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, the expansion of the collection marks another milestone for the museum: "The works on view as of November tell the story of postwar abstraction for a broader audience by revealing its profound ties to everyday life, societal shifts, and personal reflection, and by offering moments for all of us to see modernism through new, contemporary lenses."

### **The Museum in Transition**

Since Susanne Gaensheimer took up her post in 2017, the Kunstsammlung has been undergoing a programmatic process of opening up under the guiding principle of "Rethinking the Collection." One of the central tasks is to honor the legacy of the unique

collection while at the same time reimagining the museum in the context of current challenges and continuously developing the collection in the spirit of polyphony, globality, and digitality. In this process of transition, the Kunstsammlung has significantly expanded its holdings over the past seven years through acquisitions of modern painters and non-Western artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Between 2017 and 2024, Susanne Gaensheimer acquired more than 100 works and groups of works by women artists for the collection, including art-historically significant works by Etel Adnan, Sonia Delaunay, Noa Eshkol, Helen Frankenthaler, Simone Fattal, Isa Genzken, Carmen Herrera, Alice Neel, Henrike Naumann, Lygia Pape, Charlotte Posenenske, Anne Truitt, and Marianne Werefkin. During the same period, more than sixty-five works by non-Western artists were added to the public collection, including important works by Arpita Akhanda, Rasheed Araeen, Kader Attia and Anna Boghiguian, Martha Boto, Park Seo-Bo, Cao Fei, Isaac Julien, Fouad Kamel, Senzeni Marasela, Mayo, Zanele Muholi, Raqs Media Collective, Dayanita Singh, Hassan El-Telmisani, Wang Tuo, Ai Weiwei, and Akram Zaatari.

With works such as these, the collection is now exemplary for the history of modern abstraction and one of the world's most prominent and polyphonic collections of modern art, expanding the art historical canon to include positions by women and non-Western artists.

## K21

### **Awakening and Liberation: International Art from 1960 to 2000**

The Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, capitalism and globalization, democracy movements and the decolonization of Africa marked the second half of the twentieth century. No other era has been defined by acceleration, change, and liberation as much as these times. These profound social upheavals also led to a break with modern conventions in the visual arts and to revolutionary innovations in the media. Art after 1960 broke boundaries, embracing bold new materials, techniques, and methods. That makes the art of that time challenging, experimental, and unique. At the same time, it is closely linked to the social developments of the time, such as the growth of liberal capitalism, the second wave of feminism, and the increasing commercialization of art. These interactions between artistic experimentation and critical responses to politics and society make the art of the second half of the twentieth century relevant today.

The walk through the collection follows a loose chronological structure. It interweaves thematic rooms with intergenerational dialogues. The new collection rooms highlight central themes in international art from 1960 to 2000 and their connections to the present. Visitors can immerse themselves in thematic galleries exploring connections between realism and abstraction, innovation and craftsmanship, everyday life and pop culture, feminism and identity, friendship and individuality, sculpture and performance—offering fresh insights into the art of the late twentieth century. These complex relationships are programmatically reflected in important works in the collection, including Katharina Fritsch's *Man and Mouse* (1991–92), Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Venere degli Stracci* (1967), Gerhard Richter's *Ten large color charts* (1966 / 1971–72), Rosemarie Trockel's *Copy me* (2013), and Jeff Wall's

*Morning Cleaning, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, Barcelona (1999)*. For the first time in many years, these works will be presented to the public at K20 under new thematic aspects.

Curator and Head of Collection: Vivien Trommer

**Download text and images:**

[www.kunstsammlung.de/de/press/](http://www.kunstsammlung.de/de/press/)

Exhibition views:

Email: [presse@kunstsammlung.de](mailto:presse@kunstsammlung.de)

Password: kunstsammlung

*#K20RausInsMuseum*

*#RausInsMuseum*

*#K20*

**Media partner of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen:*****Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung***

**The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is sponsored by  
the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia**

**Collection Online**

With the launch of the “Collection Online” website, interested users now have access to a new digital presentation of the collection: The masterpieces of the Kunstsammlung are available online for viewing at home or on mobile devices, regardless of the museum’s opening hours and the user’s location. From July 2024, users will be able to discover 200 works selected by the museum’s director, Prof. Dr. Susanne Gaensheimer—and the digital gallery will be continuously expanded.

Connected to the museum’s in-house database, the “Collection Online” facilitates scholarly research and exploration of the high-caliber collection: The advanced search invites users to explore the collection with an alphabetical list of artists and numerous filters (e.g., date of execution, material/technique, keywords). Each work is presented with metadata, such as provenance or exhibition history. High-resolution images allow users to experience art in a way that is not possible in front of the original for conservation reasons.

The state museum of North Rhein-Westphalia presents itself on a new digital stage with information on the history of the Kunstsammlung since its founding in 1961 and the strategy of the current expansion of the collection in the spirit of diversity and globality (“Rethinking the Collection”), as well as with an album of the latest acquisitions. The website was realized by the agencies Stan Hema, Berlin, and Systemantics, Willich, under the project management of Dr. Maike Teubner and Dr. Vivien Trommer.

**K21****Open Studio**

The Open Studio is integrated into the new collection presentation. Visitors of all ages can reflect on, experience, and help shape the works of art in the collection in a creative and engaging way. The themes and content of the Open Studio will change periodically. To kick off the new collection presentation, the Open Studio invites visitors to explore different images of the body, their variations, and their creative possibilities. What shapes can one’s own body take on? Different fabric covers allow for the creation of diverse and abstract forms. Photographs of the actions are presented on a large screen in the Open Studio, allowing visitors to leave behind their own abstract body images and become part of the exhibition.

**K+ Digital Guide**

For the first time, a digital offering on site, the K+ Digital Guide, invites visitors to delve deeper into the content of the new collection presentation. Audio talks, videos, and ideas for exchange, reflection, and participation accompany visitors through the exhibition. Background information on the collection, individual works of art, and especially new acquisitions is presented in a simple, realistic, and multimedia way. Visitors can put together their own tour of the collection, learn more about internationally renowned artists in audio talks, or stroll through the collection to the soundtrack “The Sound of the Collection” produced especially for K20 by the international star DJ Wolframs (DFA Records/Public Possession/Live from Earth). Visitors can access the digital guide via QR codes using their own mobile devices.

### Guided Tours

\_Open House. KPMG Art Evening  
Every first Wednesday of the month  
Free admission, registration on site  
Guided Tours at 6 pm, 7 pm and 8 pm

## Annex

### Wall texts for the new collection expansion at K20

#### 21 Art-as-Art & the Look of Non-Art

Beginning in 1960, Ad Reinhardt created his *Last Paintings*, which were intended to signify the end of painting itself. He produced around 50 radical, square, black canvases featuring subtle shading. The barely perceptible color fields formed cross-like patterns, with no elements referencing reality. Reinhardt coined his purist works *art-as-art*.

#### K21

Gridded images, serial repetitions, and mathematical progressions became defining features of Minimal art, which emerged from New York in 1963 and went on to revolutionize Western art. Agnes Martin and Frank Stella broke free from the constraints of the rigid grid. They restructured their paintings to challenge the traditional rectangular frame and encourage viewers to develop a more sensitive perception. At the same time, Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre created industrially produced sculptures defining the cool look of non-art.

The Minimal artists had a shared passion for the grid. It was a tool for order and structure, but also an expression of artistic rebellion and rethinking. In classical painting, the grid was simply a means to accurately depict proportions and depth, but for the Minimal artists, it became a symbol of autonomy and artistic freedom.

#### 22 Traces of Everyday Life—Echoes of Existence

While strolling through New York in the 1950s and 1960s, Robert Rauschenberg often found himself fascinated by forgotten objects lying on the street. These discoveries inspired his *Combine Paintings*, a collage technique that involved blending discarded everyday items with painterly elements.

Like many artists of that time, Rauschenberg aimed to create artworks that were deeply connected to everyday life. Other artists, such as Alberto Burri, Jannis Kounellis, and Jasper Johns, also explored this approach, combining real and found objects like coffee sacks, clothing, scrap metal, and newspapers into three-dimensional assemblages.

These artists felt that abstract art had grown detached from the realities of life. In response, a loose counter-movement began to take shape. Pop Art first emerged in New York, followed by the rise of Arte Povera (“poor” art) in Italy from 1960 onwards.

A key feature of both movements was their use of everyday materials. Thus, anything could be transformed into art, and in doing so, art became both a mirror of daily life and an expression of human existence.

### 23 Balancing Acts in Painting, Sculpture & Video

Beginning in 1950, artists like Anthony Caro, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Mangold, and Richard Serra started pushing the boundaries of modern painting and sculpture. They liberated painting from its rectangular confines and expanded the idea of sculpture by incorporating painterly elements.

At the heart of this gallery is a large, deep-black drawing by Richard Serra. It serves as a testament to his legendary work *Tilted Arc* (1981–1989), capturing its interplay of mass, weight, and form in public space. Serra created the monumental sculpture from heavy, rusted COR-TEN steel as a public commission for New York’s Federal Plaza. After years of controversy over its perceived “ugliness,” the city decided to remove the sculpture in 1989. Serra took the case to court, arguing that it violated the right of artistic freedom. After losing, he wished that the stored work could only be reinstalled at its original site. Serra’s drawing today evokes the delicate balance of the lost sculpture.

Similarly, the exploration of balance played a crucial role in the choreographies of Rebecca Horn. In 1974, in Berlin, she used sculptural prostheses to sensitively explore the relationships between space, nature, light, the body, and sound.

### 24 A Tribute in Light

In 1963, Dan Flavin, a self-taught artist, transformed the ordinary fluorescent tube into a medium of art. In his New York studio, he combined multiple tubes, using exclusively the 10 standard industrial colors, and referred to his light and color installations as “situations.”

In 1987, Flavin created this significant work to honor his close friend and fellow Minimal artist, Donald Judd. The two artists first met in 1962 in a Brooklyn apartment, where they, along with a group of younger artists, discussed the possibilities of an independently run gallery. A year later, their work was shown in *New Work: Part I* at the Green Gallery in New York. This groundbreaking exhibition paved the way for Minimal art and marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

It was often mistakenly claimed that Flavin’s works were made from neon tubes, which frustrated him, as neon tubes are individually crafted while fluorescent tubes are mass-produced items, and therefore *ready-made*.

In his light sculptures, Flavin brought together the uniformity of industrial production with the sensuality of light. Today, his work serves as a powerful reminder that even the most mundane materials can be transformed into vehicles for magical artistic expression.

## **25 After the End of Painting**

The end of painting has been predicted many times. Yet, contrary to these claims, painting has never disappeared. On the contrary, even at the close of the 20th-century, it continuously reinvented itself.

The works created between 1970 and 2000 by Gerhard Richter, Katharina Fritsch, and Rosemarie Trockel highlight these innovations in art. The three artists studied painting and later taught at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. Through their large-scale sculptures and paintings, they referenced emerging computer technologies while reflecting on the traditions of modern painting. Additionally, they expanded their artistic practices in response to the rise of capitalism, tackling critical issues such as the rapid pace of life, the alienation of humans from nature, shifting gender roles, and the global spread of liberal markets.

This gallery room powerfully demonstrates how painting, at the close of the 20th-century, grappled with its own conditions and new possibilities. By consciously referencing the past, critically reflecting on the present, and imagining utopian futures, painting continually redefined itself.