

## Press Kit: Andrea Büttner. No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion at K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

*Andrea Büttner. No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion*  
October 28, 2023 – February 18, 2024  
K21

Press conference and preview  
Thursday, October 26, 2023, 11 am, K21

With:

- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Isabelle Malz, Curator, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Andrea Büttner, Artist
- Ursula Wißborn, Executive Board, Stiftung Sparda-Bank West

K21

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#K21

## Press Kit: Andrea Büttner. No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion at K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

Under the programmatic title *No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion*, the internationally renowned artist Andrea Büttner (b. 1972 in Stuttgart) has developed a site-specific exhibition for K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. On view are new works created especially for this presentation as well as works from the recent past.

For more than twenty years, the artist, who was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2017, has been dealing with complex themes: shame, poverty, work, and the practices of religious communities, as well as the historical continuities of right-wing ideologies in the ecology movement and the fetishization of craftsmanship, which she explores in a field of tension between aesthetic and ethical questions. Andrea Büttner uses a wide range of media, including large-format woodcuts, paintings, drawings, video installations, silkscreen prints, textiles, and glass objects.

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With their resistant aesthetics, the works of Andrea Büttner combine small, seemingly insignificant things with existential themes and dig into our consciousness. She takes a close look at value creation processes and systems of enrichment in the worlds of consumption and art, as well as at the art history of poverty and the questionable search for healing through art. Her approach is conceptual. In apparent contradiction to this, however, she works with art techniques in which particular importance is attached to manual labor and devotion to materials.

Andrea Büttner would like her presentation in the three rooms of the Bel Etage to be understood as both a review and a new orientation. In the first exhibition room, she critically examines an alleged healing through art. With a series of works, she argues against the concern conveyed in many exhibitions of recent years to overcome trauma through art, architecture, or religion. Instead, she focuses on uncovering, showing, and continually questioning hidden and repressed wounds and voids, as well as their immediate relevance to the present. Her call for an informed awareness of history takes form, for example, in the photographic series depicting the gridded foundations of overgrown planting beds: *Beetfundamente der Plantage und des "Kräutergartens," die von der SS im Konzentrationslager Dachau für biologisch-dynamische Agrarforschung genutzt wurden* (Former plant beds from the plantation and "herbal garden," used by the SS for biodynamic agricultural research, at the Dachau Concentration Camp, 2019/23). Here, anti-modernist currents and National Socialist continuities in the ecology movement come to the fore. Andrea Büttner's new video work *Coventry Cathedral* (2023) is being shown for the first time. Coventry's Gothic cathedral was destroyed by German air raids in 1940 and now exists only as a ruined shell. The new St. Michael's Cathedral, built in 1962, serves as an offering of consola-

tion and a worldwide symbol of peace. In the video Büttner considers "the trauma of modernity through beautiful design." The second video work, *Liberty and Morris: Simple Life and so on* (2018), also presented publicly for the first time, concerns William Morris, a key figure of anti-modernism in art history. Here, too, Andrea Büttner's work goes beyond the question of how design and politics are connected as she addresses the supposedly human warmth of anti-modern aesthetics.

Poverty is the central theme of the second exhibition space. Here, among other things, the large-format woodcuts from the nine-part, monochrome black series *Beggar* (2016) are juxtaposed with materials from the Warburg Institute in London and working papers by the art historian Linda Nochlin on the representation of poverty in art. Andrea Büttner pairs her depictions of shrouded bodies with outstretched hands begging for alms—condensed in a few strokes into haunting, pathos-filled expressions formulas— with art historical depictions of beggars reproduced in auction house catalogues. The latter are from the Warburg Institute's Photographic Collection. The backs of the catalogue pages bear references to the sales, revealing a striking contrast between the images of poverty and their value on the art market. Since 2003, and especially in her dissertation on *Perspectives on Shame and Art*, which she submitted to the Royal College of Art in London in 2008, Andrea Büttner has been concerned with the thematic complex of shame and—related to this—with visibility and invisibility, with poverty and humiliation, as well as with Christian notions of humility of "smallness." It is against this background that her fascination with mosses as so-called lower plants can be understood. The complex organism, which is difficult to keep alive in the air-conditioned exhibition rooms protected from UV light, is handed over to the museum's care in the form of a moss-covered stone. It is both an amorphous beauty and a precarious organism.

At the center of the third exhibition space is the newly developed installation *Schamstrafen* (Shame Punishments, 2022/23), with historical images of the public humiliation of people in different centuries and contexts. Presented in such a way that the motifs are barely visible, we are confronted with the question of how to legitimately deal with images of humiliation, including those we are familiar with today from social media networks. Her double slide projection *Kunstgeschichte des Bückens* (Art History of Bending) (2021/23) gathers art historical representations of socially undervalued physical activities, mostly attributed to women (field work or domestic work). Again, drawing on the richness of art history, Büttner links these themes to a political agenda. The connection between poverty labor and exploitation, as evidenced in her woodcuts from the series *Ertende* (Harvesters) (2021), created during the pandemic, extends beyond the historical context to the present: During the Corona pandemic, for example, seasonal workers from abroad were exposed to an increased risk of disease in group quarters so that the German population, who had retreated to their private homes, could enjoy asparagus. In Büttner's work, the task of harvesting asparagus is linked to the question of the value of manual labor in general—in society as well as in art.

Curator: Isabelle Malz

The exhibitions on the Bel Etage are sponsored by the Foundation for Art, Culture, and Social Projects of Sparda-Bank West.

**Andrea Büttner** (b. 1972 in Stuttgart) lives and works in Berlin and is Professor of Art in the Contemporary Context at the Kunsthochschule Kassel. She received her PhD from the Royal College of Art in London and previously studied at the Humboldt University in Berlin and the Berlin University of the Arts.

Her solo exhibitions include *Der Kern der Verhältnisse / The Heart of Relations*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2023); *Andrea Büttner*, Kunstverein München, Munich (2019); *Shepherds and Kings*, Bergen Kunsthall (2018); *Andrea Büttner*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); *Beggars and iPhones*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2015); *Andrea Büttner*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2015); *Andrea Büttner*, Tate Britain, London (2014); *Andrea Büttner*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2014); and *Andrea Büttner*, MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (2013). She participated in *dOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel (2012) and the 33<sup>rd</sup> Bienal de São Paulo (2018). Büttner was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2017 and received the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2009.

She is represented in numerous collections of international art institutions, including the Tate, London; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the National Museum Cardiff, Wales; the MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Lenbachhaus, Munich; the Kunstmuseum Bonn; the Staatgalerie Stuttgart; the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; the Kunsthaus Zürich; the Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Banff; and the Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia.

## K21

**Andrea Büttner. No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion**

K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

October 28, 2023 – February 18, 2024

**Press Conference:** Thursday, October 26, 2023, 11:00 am at K21

Sneak Peek for students and trainees: Friday, October 27, 2023, 4:00–5:30 pm at K21, with Andrea Büttner, free admission

Opening of the exhibition, followed by an artist talk: Friday, October 27, 2023, 7:00 pm at K21, free admission

**Catalog**

The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive publication edited by Josef Helfenstein and Maja Wismer for the Kunstmuseum Basel and by Susanne Gaensheimer and Isabelle Malz for the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. The publication (Hatje Cantz, German/English; 368 pages; 200 illustrations; Museum Edition: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen 48 euros) includes texts by Andrea Büttner, Anne Carson, Aden Kumler, Mason Leaver-Yap, and André Rottmann and an introduction by Isabelle Malz and Maja Wismer.

**Accompanying Program (selection):****Artist Talk**

Wednesday, January 17, 2024, 6:30 pm, Salon 21, free admission; no registration required.  
Andrea Büttner in conversation with André Rottmann, art historian, author, and Professor of Theories of Arts and Media at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)

**“The Making of...”**

Sunday, November 26, 2023, 4:00–5:00 pm, with Isabelle Malz, curator of the exhibition; registration required

**K21**

Tuesday, January 23, 2024, 4:30–5:30 pm, with Elena Fernandez-Vegue, conservator for paintings and contemporary art; registration required

Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 4:30–5:30 pm, with Isabelle Malz, curator of the exhibition; registration required

For more information on the accompanying program, please visit: [www.kunstsammlung.de](http://www.kunstsammlung.de)

**Exhibition Preview**

**Hilma af Klint and Wassily Kandinsky. Dreams of the Future**  
**March 16 – August 11, 2024**

**Press Conference: March 14, 2024, 11 am at K20**

Two great artists are considered the guiding stars of Western abstraction: on the one hand, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the Russian painter, co-founder of the “Blauer Reiter” in Munich, and teacher at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau; on the other, Hilma

af Klint (1862-1944), the Swedish artist whose visionary work has only recently been rediscovered and who has since inspired a large audience. With the exhibition at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, the works of af Klint and Kandinsky will be united for the first time in a comprehensive exhibition. It offers the unique opportunity to view and compare the paintings, watercolors, drawings, and notes of both artists. Af Klint and Kandinsky, who lived almost simultaneously, have in common that, with abstraction, they strove to invent much more than a new style of painting. Both dreamed of a future, to which art would point the way.

The exhibition is curated by Julia Voss, author of „Hilma af Klint: A Biography“, and Daniel Birnbaum, co-editor of „Hilma af Klint: Catalogue Raisonné“.

**Mike Kelley. Ghost and Spirit  
March 23 – September 8, 2024**

**Press Conference: March 21, 2024, 11:00 am at K21**

The work of Mike Kelley (1954–2012) is experimental, opulent, and irritating—and is considered one of the most influential since the late 1970s. The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen presents a comprehensive retrospective at K21, in collaboration with Tate Modern, London, the Bourse de Commerce/Pinault Collection, Paris, and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

From spiritualist notions to heavy metal to Superman comics, Kelley draws on the images and myths of pop and subculture to pose perennial questions about man's place in the world and society. The themes of his work range from the influence of politics and education to class and gender affiliation: In the 1990s, his "handicraft" and stuffed animal works posed puzzles, and it became apparent that something sinister, threatening, and twisted lurked behind the seemingly harmless toys. One of his last major bodies of work, *Day Is Done* (2005), references school plays and carnivalesque events. Kelley understood them as sites of ritualized violations of social conventions. Art itself can also be counted among these places. In their midst, Kelley staged the artist as a highly fragile figure.

Supported by the ART MENTOR FOUNDATION LUCERNE and Hauser & Wirth.

Media Partner of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen:  
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia