

K20
Press kit
October 7, 2021
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Stiftung Kunstsammlung
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Press kit: Marcel Odenbach

Marcel Odenbach. So oder so
Oct 9, 2021 – Feb 6, 2022
K20

Press conference and preview
Thursday, October 7, 2021, 11am, K21

Speakers

- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Doris Krystof, curator of the exhibition
- Marcel Odenbach

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<https://www.kunstsammlung.de/en/press/>

#K21Odenbach
#MarcelOdenbach
#K21

A Comprehensive Overview of a Multi-Layered, Media-Critical Oeuvre: Marcel Odenbach at K21

With the exhibition “Marcel Odenbach. So oder so” (Oct. 9, 2021 – Jan. 9, 2022), the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen presents a comprehensive overview of a multi-faceted oeuvre that looks back on forty-five years of contemporaneity. Marcel Odenbach’s cinematic collages, installations, and performances have contributed to making video art a key medium of international contemporary art. Parallel to this, Odenbach created an extensive body of works on paper over the course of more than four decades, ranging from drawings and concept plans to large collages. With a selection of roughly sixty video works and works on paper, the exhibition at K21 sheds light on how Odenbach always views art and culture from a socio-political perspective and at the same time relies on the sensual-aesthetic strength of images.

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Marcel Odenbach (b. 1953), who lives in Cologne, Berlin, and periodically in Biriwa, Ghana, has been working with video since 1976. His artistic approach is driven by a strong awareness of the historical-social and transcultural topics of the time. Using the means of collage and montage and always in connection with his own biography, Odenbach works on politically and culturally relevant issues in the media of video and paper. Odenbach reflects on the image politics of RAF terrorism, deals with the repression of the Nazi era and the resurgence of anti-Semitism, and questions clichés of the foreign and exotic. In his works, he illuminates the impact and after-effects of European colonialism in Africa, examining, for example, the genocide in Rwanda and the persistence of colonial structures in today’s Togo.

With his characteristic balance of subjective perspective, objectifiable interest in historical-documentary material, and a fascination for the subtle effect of images, Odenbach is one of the most internationally acclaimed artists of his generation.

“So oder so”

The works brought together in the exhibition bear witness to Odenbach’s attentive view of the signs and codes of the world. He reflects on the image politics of RAF terrorism in the videotape “Sich selbst bei Laune halten” (Staying in a Good Mood, 1977), deals with the repression of the Nazi era in “As if memories could deceive me” (1986), and questions clichés of the foreign and exotic in the video sculpture “Das Schweigen deutscher Räume erschreckt mich” (The silence of German rooms frightens me, 1982). In the course of the 1990s, which Odenbach largely spent in New York City, his artistic approach broadened and increasingly aligned itself with political explorations of globalism and postcolonialism. The readjustment of the view onto the diversity of society and culture culminated—both thematically and technically—in the large installation “Ach, wie gut, dass niemand weiß” (Hal glad am I that no one knew, 1999). After the turn of the millennium, a further develop-

ment and differentiation of the technical means and narrative methods followed. The spectrum ranges from the epic depiction of the genocide in Rwanda (“In Stillen Teichen lauern Krokodile” [In Still Waters Crocodiles Lurk], 2002) to the narrative of a trip to India (“Disturbed Places—Five Variations on India,” 2007), which is peppered with alienation effects and topoi of globalization. In a haunting portrayal, the double projection “Tropenkoller” (Tropical Frenzy, 2017) contrasts archival material from the time of colonialism with images of the persistence of colonial structures in today’s Togo. The theme of identity and the affinity with cinema are expressed in the video installation “Männergeschichten 1” (Male Stories 1) created for the Istanbul Biennial in 2003. Video works such as “Das große Fenster, Einblick eines Ausblicks” (The big window—insight, looking out, 2001) and “Beweis zu nichts” (Proof of Nothing, 2016) demonstrate the continuing relevance of the examination of Nazi history and anti-Semitism. The themes find their way into the large-format paper collages in various ways (“Familienfeier” [Family Affair, 2012], “Als mein Haus noch kein Dach hatte” [When my house did not have a roof, 2018], and many others). Odenbach’s preoccupation with music, rhythm, and sound, which play a key role in his filmic works in a variety of ways, runs like a thread through the exhibition. While the early video works contain numerous musical quotations (from classical music to film soundtracks and pop music), the video installations from 2001 onwards are almost exclusively equipped with specially composed sound, most of which was developed for Odenbach by the musician Richard Ojijo.

In the exhibition at K21, Odenbach’s largest multi-channel installation to date, “Ach, wie gut dass niemand weiß,” which he developed in 1999 for the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne, will be on view for only the fourth time. The four-channel video installation with its title based on the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tale character Rumpelstiltskin is one of the milestones in the development of the presentation of moving images in the 1990s. Comparable to the immersive, monumental video installations of Steve McQueen, Douglas Gordon, Isaac Julien, Sam Taylor Wood, and Eija Liisa Ahtila, Odenbach relies on an innovative participatory form of cinematic reception to achieve an immediate, physical impact of the themes of racism, state repression, and protest. The installation, which is visually and acoustically dominated by a strong rhythm, and its reference to the 1960s, were connected for Odenbach with an artistic and personal stocktaking: “I wanted to know where I stand, what my name is, and what my name was back then, and where I stood then,” he explained in a 1999 interview about the installation.

The method of collage, the selecting, copying, cutting, mounting together, using and reusing visual material, working with quotations and fragments has been characteristic of Odenbach’s work from its beginnings to the present day. With regard to film, Odenbach applies the technique of cutting and montage to the factors of time and movement. The aesthetics of the images, assembled from a wide variety of sources, are in the tradition of political art in the twentieth century. At the center of the Düsseldorf exhibition is the double projection “Wer Leidet der Schneidet” (“He Who Suffers, Cuts), conceived as a tribute to John Heartfield and commissioned in 2019 for the major Heartfield retrospective at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. While in Berlin it was projected onto two free-standing walls and served as an exhibition display, the video installation, accompanied by a fine sound texture, will be shown at K21 as an autonomous work in a closed, soundproofed black box. It forms the conclusion—or the beginning—of a presentation of works that invites different readings.

“So oder so” (One way or another), the subtitle Marcel Odenbach has given his exhibition at K21, quotes the last stanza of a famous poem by Thomas Brasch from 1971 and aptly captures the retrospective character of the exhibition of a decidedly open work:

“[...]”

He who writes remains
 Here or away or where
 He who writes drifts
 One way or another”

Curator: Doris Krystof

Biography

Marcel Odenbach was born in Cologne on July 7, 1953 and studied Architecture, Art History, and Semiotics at the RWTH Aachen from 1974 to 1979. Together with Ulrike Rosenbach and Klaus vom Bruch, he founded the production group ATV (Alternative Television) in Cologne in the mid-1970s, which broadcast an alternative television program to surrounding households in a guerrilla-like manner using the technological possibilities of the time. In the course of the 1980s, Odenbach received increasing attention as a video artist, also internationally (1984 participation in the exhibitions *Het lumineuse beeld* at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and *Von hier aus – Zwei Monate neue deutsche Kunst* in Düsseldorf; 1986 invitation for a contribution to the Contemporary Art Television Fund, Boston; 1987 participation in *documenta 8*, exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, etc.). In addition to his artistic work with the medium of video, from around 1990 onwards he also created large-scale paper collages using his own uniquely developed technique. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, Odenbach realized large cinematographic installations in addition to the technically increasingly elaborate collages for numerous international solo exhibitions and is often involved in group exhibitions. Since 2014, the exhibition tour *Marcel Odenbach-Stille Bewegungen | Tranquil Motions*, organized by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), has been disseminating Odenbach’s works worldwide (with venues in, among others, Venezuela: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas; Brazil: Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul Ado Malagoli, Porto Alegre; and India, National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai). Solo exhibitions were recently organized by the Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (*Beweis zu nichts*, 2017) and the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg (*Es brennt*, 2020). Since 1992, in addition to numerous workshops on video art around the world, Marcel Odenbach has been continuously active as a professor of video art (Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, and the State Academy of Art in Düsseldorf) and has exerted a great influence on younger generations. In November 2021, Marcel Odenbach will be awarded the Wolfgang Hahn Prize. From November 17, 2021 until February 20, 2022 Odenbach’s “Schnittvorlagen” will be exhibited at Museum Ludwig for the first time.

Publication

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The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog (German/English) published by Hirmer Verlag, Munich, with graphic design by Petra Hollenbach, Cologne. Edited by Susanne Gaensheimer and Doris Krystof, with contributions by Nils Emmerichs, Barbara Engelbach, Cécile Huber, Doris Krystof, Hans Nieswandt, Kolja Reichert, and Marcel Wälde. Numerous illustrations, 250 pages, price: approx. 39 €.

On the occasion of the exhibition, a **double vinyl album** with compositions by Richard Ojijo will also be released, documenting his twenty-year collaboration with Marcel Odenbach. It will be available from October 9, 2021 at the Bookshop Walther König in K21.

Marcel Odenbach. So oder so

K21, October 9, 2021 – February 6, 2022

Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

#MarcelOdenbach

#K21

Partners and Sponsors

The exhibition is supported by
Kunststiftung NRW

K21 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

Opening day

Saturday, October 9, 2021 from 11am – 8pm

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Free entry

Art Guides

11am – 4pm, 6pm – 8pm

Workshops for children

11.30am, 3.30pm

Registration required

Curator's tour

4pm

Dr. Doris Krystof, curator of the exhibition

Registration required

Art Talk for young adults

5pm

Cécile Huber, Curatorial assistance

Registration required

Record release: Richard Ojijo

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6pm

Supporting program to the exhibition

Art Guides

Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays: 2pm – 4pm
Every first Wednesday of the month: 4pm-8pm

Curator's Tour

Sundays: Oct 10, Dec 12, Jan 9, 12pm – 1pm
Tuesdays: Oct 26, Nov 9, 4.30pm – 5.30pm
Registration required

Events

For more events and the workshop programme please check the calendar on our website: www.kunstsammlung.de/en/calendar/

Information: Your visit to the museum (1.10.2021):

To visit the exhibitions and collection rooms, no registration, no booking of a time slot and no proof of vaccination, recovery or a current-day negative test is required. Compliance with the applicable distance regulations and the wearing of a mask (OP mask, FFP2/3, KN95) are mandatory for the duration of the stay in the museum.

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Prior registration at service@kunstsammlung.de is required for participation in workshops, guided tours and events. Presentation of a proof of vaccination, recovery or a current-day negative test result is mandatory at the Museum Box Office prior to attending the workshop, tour or event. Youth 16 and older must show their student ID or a certificate from their school. Children up to school age are not required to wear mouth and nose protection.

Exhibition preview

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

Fly in League with the Night.

Oct 16, 2021 — Feb 13, 2022

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Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (b. London 1977) makes figurative paintings drawn from a variety of source materials including life studies, photography and scrapbooks of found images. The figures are fictitious, inhabiting enigmatic settings that are often abstract or non-descript. There is a timelessness to the works; people recline, walk, watch, dance, speak, laugh and confer amongst themselves, much as people do and always have done.

The exhibition is sponsored by Schwarzkopf.

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Press conference: October 15, 2021, 12 am, K20
Opening day: Saturday, October 16, 2021, 11am – 8pm, K20

Open Space
Nothing but the Future
Nov 13, 2021 – Feb 13, 2022
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For the second OPEN SPACE, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen will again transform an exhibition hall into an indoor public space. Under the title “Nothing but the Future,” the focus is now on the Anthropocene, a scientific term for the present age of the earth, in which humankind has become a force of nature.

In view of the climate crisis and its life threatening consequences, the excessive waste of resources, and growing social and economic inequality, the question must be asked: How can we think and shape a just and worthwhile future together? In a cooperative process with local and international partners, a transdisciplinary program is being developed that will make OPEN SPACE a place for negotiations on questions concerning the present and future of our planet.

Developed in collaboration with the architectural office of raumlaborberlin, OPEN SPACE is a place where people can meet without having to pay admission and where they can work, discuss, learn, play, read, or participate in a wide variety of events.

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The Open Space is supported by Commerzbank-Stiftung.

Media partner: Kunstforum International

Press conference: November 11, 2021, 11am, K20
Opening weekend: November 13 and 14, 2021, 11am – 6pm, K20