

Rethinking the Museum

An online symposium on the future of modern and contemporary art museums, hosted by Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

September 7/8, 2021

7pm CEST | 6pm BST | 1pm EST | 10am PST
in English

www.kunstsammlung.de/rethinking

In celebration of its 60th anniversary, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen presents an online symposium devoted to the future of museums of modern and contemporary art. Over the course of two evenings, a program of lectures will honor the legacy of the museum's founding director Werner Schmalenbach (1920–2020), contextualize its history and origin, and highlight the ways in which we aim to rethink the presentation of the collection today. "Schmalenbach compiled an outstanding collection of 20th century art and our task today is to analyze and broaden 'his' perspective on modernism," says Susanne Gaensheimer, who has headed the museum since 2017.

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Like the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, every museum is built on a unique foundation, cares for a specific collection of art, and acts within its own social field. However, museums all face similar challenges today: How can they remain relevant to our cultural life? How should they operate in the future? How can they embrace plurality and a more global perspective? Joined by internationally renowned curators, critics, and thinkers the online symposium takes individual museum histories as vantage points to initiate a discussion about the power and legacy of the Western canon, the need for public and civic spaces, and the role of museums in times of digitization and globalization.

The guests include Doryun Chong (M+, Hong Kong), Martje Esser (Art historian, Düsseldorf), Susanne Gaensheimer (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf), María Mercedes González (Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín), Jennifer Higgie (Writer, London), Ruth E. Iskin (Art historian, Jerusalem), Omar Kholeif (Sharjah Art Foundation), Koyo Kouoh (Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town), Frances Morris (Tate Modern, London), Raqs Media Collective (Artist collective, New Delhi), Nora Sternfeld (Art educator and curator, Hamburg/Vienna), Ann Temkin (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) and Rein Wolfs (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam).

The symposium will be held in English and German with subtitles.

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The online symposium will be broadcast via YouTube and the [website of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen](#). Registration is not required and viewing is free of charge. Following the live broadcast, the digital talks will be available on our website.

Media Partner of the symposium
frieze

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

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of North Rhine-Westphalia

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Program

9 / 7 / 2021 **Rethinking the Collection**

A Legacy for the Future

7 pm

Words of Welcome

Susanne Gaensheimer, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

7:05 pm

Lecture

Martje Esser, Art historian, Düsseldorf

“Building a Collection: Werner Schmalenbach and the Founding History of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen”

In her lecture, Martje Esser takes a look at the 1960s and 1970s. Tracing the cultural policy context of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, she deals with the history of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen and explores the genesis of the collection to examine the role of the founding director Werner Schmalenbach as a pioneer of modern art in the young Federal Republic.

The lecture will be held in German with English subtitles.

7:30 pm

Lecture

Nora Sternfeld, Art educator and curator, Vienna/Hamburg

“Collections as Commons”

From today’s perspective, Nora Sternfeld asks, “To whom do collections really belong?” She proposes that we understand public museums and the artworks they collect, preserve, research, and exhibit as shared commons: cultural objects and artifacts of history that belong to everyone.

The lecture will be held in German with English subtitles.

8 pm

Lecture and Q&A

Ruth E. Iskin, Art historian, Jerusalem

“Are canons and counter-canons still relevant?”

In her lecture, Ruth E. Iskin looks at the issue of canons and museums from the first protests and critiques of the exclusion of “others” to the creation of counter-canons and the current boom of “global” exhibitions. “Re-envisioning” the canon, she suggests the idea of “pluriversal canons” to transcend the traditionally gendered and geographically limited art history narratives.

The lecture will be held in English. Please hand in your questions via the YouTube live chat.

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8:45 pm Outlook
Susanne Gaensheimer, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf
“Rethinking the Collection”

Introducing recent museum acquisitions, artistic interventions, discursive collection presentations, and a multi-faceted program of exhibitions, Susanne Gaensheimer presents the first steps marking the process by which the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen aims to expand and rethink its Western collection of modern and post-war art.

The outlook will be held in German with English subtitles.

9 / 8 / 2021 **Modern Art Museums in Transformation**
How Museums Embrace a Broader Perspective Today

7 pm Words of Welcome
Vivien Trommer, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

7:02 pm Statements
Doryun Chong, M+, Hong Kong
Frances Morris, Tate Modern, London
Ann Temkin, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
María Mercedes González, Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín
Rein Wolfs, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

How can museums become more pluralistic and inclusive spaces? In brief video statements, five internationally acclaimed museum directors and curators present their newest approaches to presenting their collections and share their visions for a new museum culture for the 21st century.

The statements will be held in English and Spanish.

8 pm Roundtable and Q&A
“How Can Modern and Contemporary Art Museums Meet the Challenges of Our Time?”

Jennifer Higgle, Moderator
Omar Kholeif, Sharjah Art Foundation
Koyo Kouoh, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town
Susanne Gaensheimer, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf
Raqs Media Collective, Artist collective, New Delhi

In a conversation, artists and curators discuss how museums can meet the current challenges of globalization and digitization. Reflecting on the role that museums play in various contexts and regions, they share their thoughts on what significance museums will have in the future.

The conversation will be held in English. Please hand in your questions via the YouTube live chat.

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Participants

Doryun Chong

Deputy Director and Curatorial and Chief Curator of M+, Hongkong



Doryun Chong is Deputy Director and Curatorial and Chief Curator of M+, a new museum of visual culture that will open its Herzog & de Meuron–designed building in 2020 in Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District. Appointed as the inaugural Chief Curator in 2013, Chong oversees all curatorial activities and programs, including acquisitions, exhibitions, learning and public programs, and digital initiatives encompassing the museum's three main disciplinary areas of design and architecture, moving image, and visual art. Some of the exhibitions he has curated or co-curated at M+ include *Mobile M+: Live Art* (2015), *Tsang Kin-Wah: The Infinite Nothing*, *Hong Kong in Venice* (2015), *Samson Young: Songs for Disaster Relief World Tour* (2018), and *Noguchi for Danh Vo: Counterpoint* (2018). Prior to joining M+, Chong worked in various curatorial capacities at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2003–2009) and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009–2013).

Martje Esser

Art historian, Düsseldorf

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Martje Esser studied visual communication at the HFBK (University of Fine Arts) Hamburg. From 2001 to 2008, she was Artistic Director of the Falckenberg Collection, Hamburg. In 2020, she completed her doctorate in art history on the genesis and development of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. Based on her dissertation, her book *Werner Schmalenbach und die Stiftung Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. Eine Staatsgalerie im Aufbau* was published by Deutscher Kunstverlag in the spring of 2021. Martje Esser is currently working as an advisor for an art insurance company.

Susanne Gaensheimer

Director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf



Susanne Gaensheimer is art historian, curator, and museum director. She has been Director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf since 2017. For K20 and K21, she has realized exhibitions dedicated to, among others, Carmen Herrera, María Hassabi, the Raqs Media Collective, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, and Hito Steyerl. She previously held positions as Director of the Westfälischer Kunstverein,

Münster (1999–2001) and as Curator and Head of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Lenbachhaus, Munich (2002–2008). From 2009 to 2017, she was Director of the MMK. Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main. She curated the German Pavilion of the 54th and 55th Venice Biennale, presenting Christoph Schlingensief (Golden Lion) in 2011 and Ai Weiwei, Romuald Karmakar, Santu Mofokeng, and Dayanita Singh in 2013. She teaches at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, where she has been an honorary professor since 2016.

Photo: Andreas Endermann

María Mercedes González

General director of the Medellín Museum of Modern Art (MAMM)

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María Mercedes González was appointed general director of the Medellín Museum of Modern Art (MAMM) in 2012. Established in 1978, the Museum is a non-profit, private institution, exhibiting works of contemporary and modern artists of the twentieth century, mostly of Colombian origin. The institution takes on issues that are culturally, socially, politically, and aesthetically relevant, drawing from the landscape of the contemporary arts

while maintaining high-quality production and a tight connection to the local context. Since assuming her post, Ms. González has led a building expansion project and implemented an extensive programing reorientation. Prior to MAMM, Ms. González was an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and served as cultural attaché at the Colombian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She received her BA in Political Science from Javeriana University, Bogotá, and an MA in Media Studies from The New School, New York.

Jennifer Higgle

Writer, London



Jennifer Higgle is an Australian writer who lives in London. Previously the editor of *frieze* magazine, she is the presenter of *Bow Down*, a podcast about women in art history, the author and illustrator of the children's book *There's Not One*,; the editor of *The Artist's Joke*, and author of the novel *Bedlam*. Her new book on women's self-portraits, *The Mirror & The Palette*, is published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson. She is currently working on a new

book about women, art, and the spirit world and also writes screenplays.

Ruth E. Iskin

Art historian, Jerusalem



Ruth E. Iskin has edited the volume *Re-envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World*, which has been widely used by museums in the quest for re-installing permanent collections to reflect a greater diversity and gender representation. Most recently, she has co-edited the volume *Collecting Prints, Posters and Ephemera: Perspectives in a Global World*. She is the author several books and numerous essays in journals

and anthologies, as well as in museum exhibition catalogs.

Omar Kholeif

Sharjah Art Foundation



Dr. Omar Kholeif (They/Them) was born in Egypt to Sudanese and Egyptian parents. They are a writer, curator, cultural historian, and Director of Collections and Senior Curator at Sharjah Art Foundation. Trained as a political scientist, Kholeif's career began as a journalist and documentary filmmaker before entering into the picture palace of museums. The focus of their practice considers the ontological possibilities made visible

through emerging digital technologies as they intersect with debates around queer, postcolonial, and critical race theories. They have curated more than one hundred exhibitions of art, design, and architecture on six continents and are the author, co-author, or editor of thirty-three books, which have been translated into twelve languages. Recent volumes include *Goodbye, World! Looking at Art in the Digital Age* (Sternberg, 2018); *The Artists Who Will Change the World* (Thames and Hudson, 2018), and *Art in the Age of Anxiety* (SAF/Mörel/MIT Press, 2021). They are currently completing a monograph entitled *Internet Art: The First Thirty Years* (Phaidon, 2022) and an anthology of essays titled *Code-Switchers: The Art of Being Invisible* (2022/23).

Photo: B. Mitchell

Koyo Kouoh

Executive director and chief curator at Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town



Appointed the executive director and chief curator at Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town in March 2019, the Cameroonian-born **Koyo Kouoh** has already made a significant impression, launching an ambitious program of symposia, and summits and special commissions as well as overseeing a first survey by Nigerian-born Otobong Nkanga in South Africa, and working on the first retrospective of Tracey Rose. Previously, Kouoh was the artistic director of RAW Material Company, an exhibition space, artists' residency, and center for critical education in Dakar that was founded by her in 2008. As an independent curator, Kouoh has organized exhibitions internationally, including *Body Talk: Feminism, Sexuality and the Body in the Work of Six African Women Artists*, a touring group show, including Tracey Rose, which debuted at Wiels, Brussels in 2015; the 37th edition of *EVA International* in Limerick in 2016; and *Dig Where You Stand*, an exploration of colonial histories as represented through objects from the collections of the Carnegie museums in Pittsburgh in 2018. Kouoh also served on the curatorial teams for documenta 12 and 13 (2007/12) and has written and published critical works, including the upcoming *Breathing Out of School: The RAW Académie* and *Condition Report on Art History in Africa*, co-edited with Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi et al.

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Frances Morris

Director of Tate Modern, London



Frances Morris has been Director of Tate Modern since 2016. Curator, writer, and broadcaster, Frances joined Tate in 1987, becoming Head of Displays at Tate Modern in 2000 and Director of Collections, International Art from 2006. Alongside many exhibition projects and publications, including acclaimed retrospectives of Louise Bourgeois, Yayoi Kusama and Agnes Martin, Frances has led the transformation of Tate's International Collection, strategically broadening and diversifying its international reach and representation, developing the collecting of live art and performance, and pioneering new forms of museum display. Frances has played a leading role in Tate's strategic response to the climate emergency since its Declaration of Climate and Ecological Emergency in July 2019.

Raqs Media Collective

Artist Collective, New Delhi



Monica Narula, Shuddhabrata Sengupta, and Jeebesh Bagchi formed Raqs Media Collective in 1992 in New Delhi. They follow its self-declared imperative of "kinetic contemplation" to produce a trajectory that is restless in its forms and exacting in its procedures. Raqs articulates an intimately lived relationship with time in all its tenses through anticipation, conjecture, entanglement, and excavation. Conjuring figures of

cognitive and sensory acuteness, Raqs' work reconfigures perceptual fields and demands that everyone looks at what they take for granted, anew. Raqs has exhibited widely, including at Documenta and the biennales in Venice, Istanbul, Taipei, Liverpool, Shanghai, Sydney, and Sao Paulo. Recent solo exhibitions include Pamphilos at Fast Forward Festival 6, Athens (2019); Still More World at Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2019); Twilight Language at Manchester Art Gallery (2017–2018); Everything Else is Ordinary at K21, Düsseldorf (2018); If It's Possible, It's Possible, MUAC, Mexico City (2015); and Untimely Calendar at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi (2014–2015). Exhibitions curated by Raqs include Afterglow, Yokohama Triennale (2020), In The Open or in Stealth, MACBA, Barcelona (2018–2019); Why Not Ask Again, Shanghai Biennale (2016–2017); INSERT2014, New Delhi (2014); and The Rest of Now & Scenarios, Manifesta 7, Bolzano (2008). Forthcoming exhibitions in 2021 are The Laughter of Tears, Kunstverein Braunschweig, and Hungry for Time – an invitation to epistemic disobedience with Raqs Media Collective at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

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Nora Sternfeld

Art educator & curator, Hamburg/Vienna



Nora Sternfeld is an art educator and curator. She is professor for art education at the HFBK Hamburg. From 2018 to 2020 she was documenta professor at the Kunsthochschule Kassel. From 2012 to 2018 she was Professor of Curating and Mediating Art at Aalto University in Helsinki. In addition, she is co-director of the /ecm - Master Program for Exhibition Theory and Practice at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, in the core team

of schnittpunkt. ausstellungstheorie & praxis, co-founder and part of trafo.K, Office for Art, Education, and Critical Knowledge Production (Vienna) and since 2011 part of freethought, Platform for Research, Education and Production (London). In this context she was also one of the artistic directors of the Bergen Assembly 2016 and is since 2020 BAK Fellow, basis voor actuele kunst (Utrecht). She publishes on contemporary art, educational theory, exhibitions, politics of history and anti-racism.

Ann Temkin

The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Ann Temkin is The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent exhibitions she has curated or co-curated at MoMA include *Judd* (2020), *Picasso Sculpture* (2015), *Robert Gober: The Heart Is Not a Metaphor* (2014), and *Jasper Johns: Regrets* (2014). Ms. Temkin has focused on transforming the Museum's collection galleries into a dynamic, rotating presentation, and on strengthening and widening the Painting and Sculpture holdings.

Rein Wolfs

Director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam



Rein Wolfs, Director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam since December 2019, was born 1960 in Hoorn (the Netherlands). He studied modern and contemporary art at the University of Amsterdam and worked as a critic and curator between 1986 and 1991. His prior engagements included Directorship of the Bundeskunsthalle (Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany) in Bonn from 2013 to 2019, Artistic Director of the Kunsthalle

Fridericianum in Kassel (2008–2012), Exhibition Director of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2001–2007) as well as founding Director of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich (1996–2001). In 2003 he curated the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Biennale.