KOLUMBA

»make the secrets productive!«

Art in times of unreason

we are unsure of ourselves
we look at facts
we grow with the trees
we search for our roots
we head into the open
we advocate going slowly
we live with dreams
we try out models
we question our roles
we constantly retell (hi-)stories
we appeal to the senses
we tolerate ambivalences
we lower the pulse
we bear the Earth in mind
we reflect on existence
we adopt different perspectives
we create complexity
we take liberties
we play with colours
… and with the marble run
we go to the circus
we are guests
we meet God in people
we work with our hands
we do research with things
we think with our bodies

we make connections
we read against the grain
we experience bleak policies
we warn about propaganda
we practise humility
we ask ourselves questions
we raise questions
we fly with a locomotive
we seek shelter
we deliver ourselves up
we make proposals
we issue invitations
we are keen to unlearn
we are eager to learn

»make the secrets productive!«
Art in times of unreason
15 September 2025–14 August 2026

We live at a time that allows us little room for manoeuvre. Much is out of joint, and not only since the pandemic; the foundations we thought we could rely on are coming apart at the seams. Things appear strange and have lost all sense of proportion. Numbers and facts prevail, shaping our personal experiences and predominating in images that go well beyond reasonable limits. While climate change involving natural disasters makes the preservation of Creation an individual and collective challenge, the power fantasies of certain individuals produce brutal battlegrounds, human disasters and mindboggling levels of military expenditure. As autocratic tendencies gather pace, it is all the more important that reason informs political action, yet it is being substituted by the drive to power along with unbridled greed for money and influence, with as yet unforeseen consequences.

Although during and after times of crisis, culture matters more than ever in order to give every society a meaningful identity and to stabilise each individual, as cultural players we have our backs to the wall. For alongside the cuts affecting education and science, which mean that their freedom is being thrown into question, expenditure on culture is being cut everywhere. Not only are the already precarious livelihoods of artists at stake, but the very existence of many cultural institutions. Our supporting body, the Archbishopric of Cologne, also sees the need to make substantial cuts in our budget, which is why we are dependent on third party

funding more than ever before; we are very grateful to all those who have supported our work and the building up of the collection so generously for many years.

The intention of our annual exhibition is to make a statement about the systematic importance of art in a functioning democracy. We delve into the painful issues of the present day and at the same time evoke freedom of thought, collaborative social processes and the playfulness and power of utopia – in the face of mounting threats. What connects religion and art is that they are radically beyond words. We make use of words to describe something that preoccupies all our senses, but which, in principle, is neither accessible through language nor exclusively through reason. In religion it is the belief in our connection to higher powers, in art it is the indissoluble tension between being and appearance. Both fields offer spiritual experiences in their own ways, which can deliver pastoral care and have a stabilising influence. This is in keeping with our task, which we formulate in the words of Joseph Beuys on a board at the start of this year's exhibition: »Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler« – every human being is an artist – it says, »make the secrets productive!«

Stefan Kraus, Marc Steinmann, Barbara von Flüe
and Jonas Grahl

Joseph Beuys, 1977

The old trees die
and new ones
take their place.
They are our future.

Architecture

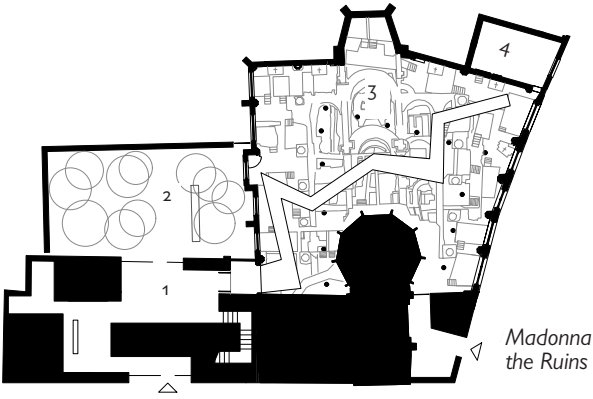
Peter Zumthor (*1943 Basel; lives in Haldenstein) Collaborator
Rainer Weitschies (*1965; lives in Chur) ***Kolumba. Art Museum of the Archdiocese of Cologne*** 1997 – 2007

The plan to erect a new museum building at such an historically charged location came with our specification at the start of the 1990s that all vestiges of previous buildings at the site were to be respected. The new building, which was inaugurated in 2007, arose seamlessly on the remaining ruins of the late-Gothic Kolumba church, and was able to integrate the whole and lend to it a new meaning. This was made possible thanks to a carefully-designed architectural competition and a 10-year planning and building phase. The explicit intention »we just go on building« (Peter Zumthor) became the decisive axiom of this special place: its history became its name, with St. Kolumba becoming Kolumba. St. Kolumba was one of the most important parishes and the oldest in medieval Cologne. According to legend, its patroness Saint Kolumba was saved by a she-bear from being raped, but was beheaded in Sens under the rule of Emperor Aurelius. As a Christian, she refused to marry the son of a heathen ruler. Archaeological excavations in 1974 brought to light the remains of numerous buidings that preceded the five-nave Gothic church erected around 1500. In terms of urban development, Kolumba represents the restoration of the lost heart of what was formerly one of the most beautiful districts in the inner city of Cologne. At its centre, a quiet garden replaces the medieval cemetery. The largest room provides a membrane porous to air and light. It covers the archaeological excavation of the church ruins and the autonomously functioning chapel.

Koho Mori-Newton (*1951 Katsuyama/Japan; lives in Tübingen)
Curtains 2007, Japanese Kimono silk dyed with ink

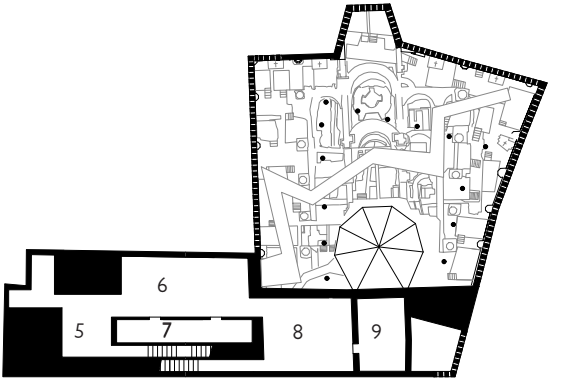
The Japanese artist Koho Mori-Newton designed the curtains in front of the large windows on the second floor of Kolumba. Whether open or closed, they form a striking counterpoint to the clay plaster walls and give a private atmosphere to the rooms.

Floor Plan

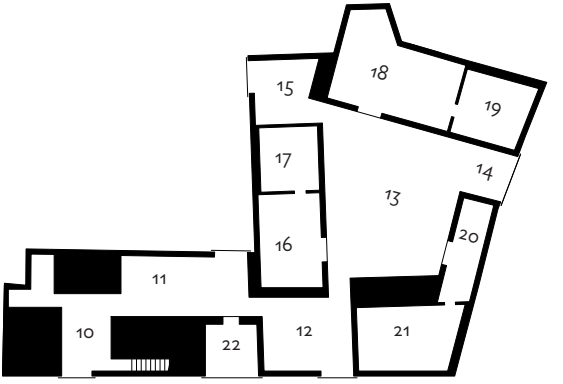


Ground Floor

1	Foyer	12	
2	Garden	13	
3	Excavation / Chapel	14	
4	Former Vestry	15	View of Cathedral
5		16	North Cabinet
6		17	North Tower
7	Cabinet	18	East Cabinet
8		19	East Tower
9	Armarium	20	South Cabinet
10		21	South Tower
11		22	Reading Room



1st Floor



2nd Floor

Vestibule

Felix Droese (*1950 Singen/Hohentwiel, lives in Mettmann)
Sicherheitsschrank (Safety Cabinet) 1986, steel (donated by the Sylvia and Claus Schröder Collection, Hamburg/Berlin, Alexander Schröder, Berlin)

The symbolism of a battered safe, once installed for a few years in the bourgeois ambience of Jenisch Park, Hamburg, can unfortunately claim to be highly topical. The *Safety Cabinet* was made prior to Droese's *Haus der Waffenlosigkeit* (House of Weaponlessness), the German contribution to the Venice Biennale in 1988. »Opposite the park, separated by the River Elbe, the MBB hulk stands out: Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (formerly and still today something to do with weapons). Now, in-between, this security cabinet. With outdated security technology: door open, nothing inside. A bit of steel, a lick of paint. No way of accessing any of the interesting things. The end of artistic freedom, no sign of public transparency. Everything secured, the spaces already occupied«,
as Felix Droese wrote in 1986.

The picture is
a model of reality.
The picture is a fact.
It is like a scale
applied to reality.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractactus logicus philosophicus*, 1921

Room 1 Foyer

Felix Droese *Keine Kunst aber Tatsachen* (Not art, but facts) 1987/1992, the carcasses of 2 seabirds, tar, painted wooden box with glass pane, slice of wood, glass bowl, ball glass bottles, water, hemp and nylon ropes

This year's exhibition opens with »facts«. At this point, its status as an art show is negated in order to reclaim the aspiration to say something about our present times, to make reality visible and to comment on it. Two dead seabirds, evidently hit by an oil spill, are laid out in a simple display case, balanced on a plain sawn slice of wood – acting rather like a raft. The image Felix Droese conjures up of a passage into the realm of the dead rooted in Greek mythology is linked with an arrangement of two laboratory bottles, thus bringing science and thus human responsibility towards creation into play. The connecting rope – both a restraint and an umbilical cord simultaneously – culminates at the neck of a spherical bottle filled with pure water, as the essence of a precious fluid. Felix Droese, who spent his childhood on a North Sea island, brings together historical awareness, political denouncement and ecological warnings with spiritual experiences, a combination which can be expressed through art.

Bethan Huws (*1961 Bangor/Wales; lives in Berlin and Paris) ***Untitled*** (Through our eyes we see; through our ears we hear) 1999, aluminium, Plexiglass, rubber

We are familiar with the commercial showcases in restaurants or official offices. Their everyday context suggests an idiom with a referential function: usually something will be advertised here. The use of flexible, white plastic letters is relatively awkward, which is why such display cases often contain messages that are not necessarily up-to-date, but seem to be exceptionally long-lasting. The Bethan Huws' word display is precisely designed in lingual and formal terms, and its message is topical: she takes further what art in the twentieth century began and links those achievements back to our subjective experience and feelings, by encouraging us to use our senses.

Room 2 Garden

Hans Josephsohn (Königsberg 1920–2012 Zürich)
Große Liegende (Large Lying Figure) finished 2000, naturally patinated brass

Josef Wolf (*1954 Andernach; lives in Cologne) ***Untitled*** 2007, tuff, 2 parts

As a stonemason, Josef Wolf can only take something away from the material. The sculpture cannot be preconceived nor drawn, but can only be arrived at by working with his hands. And yet even before this manual handling, an initial process of seeing begins, given that his raw material of found tuff stones already possesses body and form. Josef Wolf combines the volumes and achieves a tension between the parts, resulting in sculptures of an unspectacular matter-of-factness.

Bethan Huws *The Unicorn (or Hortus Conclusus)* 2016–2017, copper, stainless steel

The unobtrusive intervention by Bethan Huws is limited to a linguistic comment on a pre-existing situation and to the simple offer of perception and individual or verbally shared reflection. It sharpens the eye for the complexity of what is there and encourages reviewing the given repeatedly.

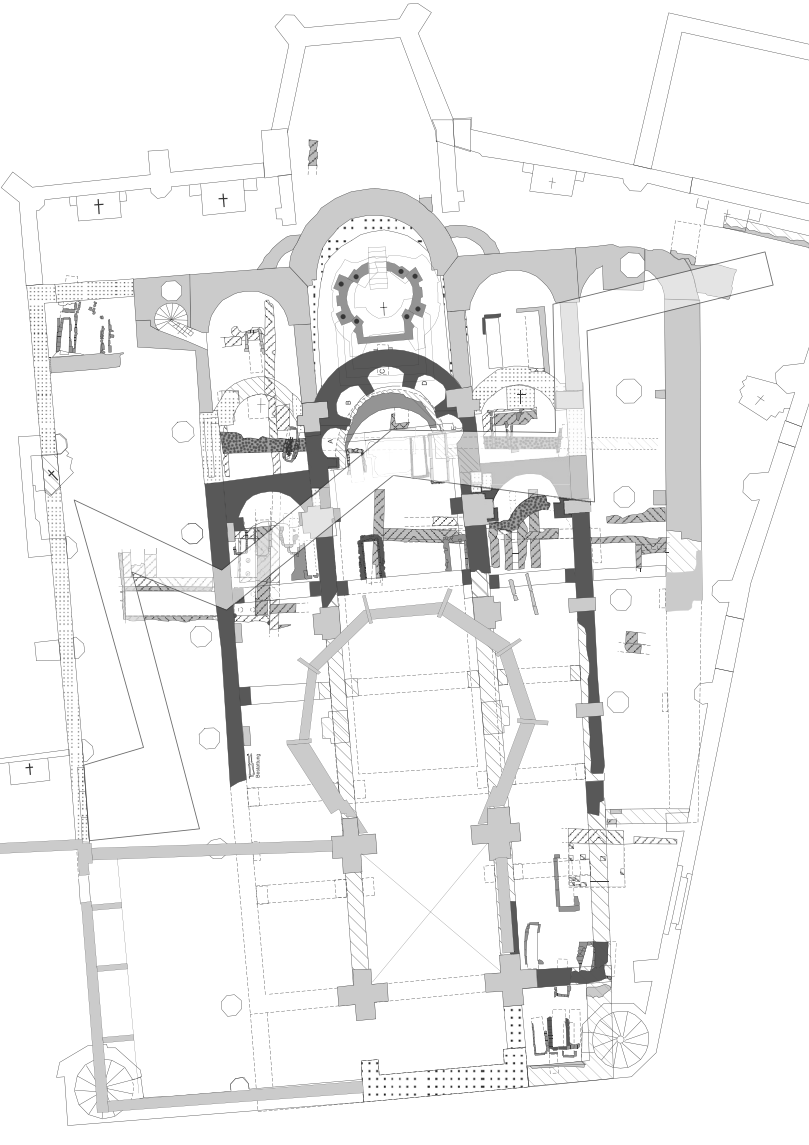
Room 3 Excavation

A Roman building with an adjoining 7th century apse marks the likely beginning of the Kolumba parish complex. A single-nave church was erected next to this building in the 9th century (?), and was extended several times up to the 13th century until it was finally replaced by a five-nave church. The Gothic new build was financed by the families who chose to be buried in the numerous tombs underneath the church. The exposed remnants show clearly that the older buildings were not completely replaced by new ones. Large parts of the old structures were rebuilt and extended. In keeping with this, Peter Zumthor has positioned the new museum on top of the ruins of the Gothic church.

Excavation Box at the end of the gangway: ***Floor tiles*** from St. Kolumba, early 16th century and late 19th century | ***Roof and hypocaust tiles*** from the Kolumba excavation, 1st–4th century

The Romanesque buildings (III and IV) had floors made in part from recycled Roman thermal, wall or roof tiles. The stamp *L(egio) XXX V(lpia) V(ictrix)* on the round thermal tiles points to Xanten as their place of manufacture. The green, yellow and brown glazed Gothic tiles from the former chapel of the family Wasserfass (which now serves to link the excavation to the foyer) create a tracery pattern and a second ornamental composition with eagles and circles. The morerecent tiles are fine stoneware from Mettlach by Villeroy & Boch.

		Roman residential development, 1st to 3rd century
		late Roman, 4th to mid-5th century
	Phase I	Frankish incl. apse on Roman building, 7th century
	Phase II	Carolingian single-nave church
	Phase III	three-nave Romanesque church, mid-11th century
		two reconstruction phases, 12th century
	Phase IV	four-nave late Romanesque church, 12th to 14th century
	Phase V	five-nave Gothic church, 15th to 16th century
		and more recent buildings
		invisible sections of wall



Room 3 | Room 4 Former Vestry

Gottfried Böhm (Offenbach/Main 1920–2021 Cologne)
Kolumba chapel 1949/1956

At the end of the Second World War, a late-Gothic figure of the Madonna with Child escaped destruction amidst the devastation and was soon being venerated as *Madonna in the Ruins*. The senior priest Joseph Geller promoted the creation of a new contemporary chapel building, in spite of considerable opposition. The chapel was built according to a design by Gottfried Böhm, inaugurated on 6 January 1950, and in 1956 a Chapel of the Holy Sacrament was added. The high-quality interior is indebted to the contributions of leading artists of the time with whom Geller was in personal contact, including Elisabeth Treskow, Ludwig Gies, Ewald Mataré, Georg Meistermann and the young Rudolf Peer.

Bill Fontana (*1947 Cleveland; lives in San Francisco)
Pigeon Soundings 1994/2007, sound installation

Richard Serra (San Francisco 1939–2024 Orient/New York)
The Drowned and the Saved 1992/1997, Corten steel, solid, two-part

The sculpture *The Drowned and the Saved* was made in 1992 for an exhibition in the synagogue of Pulheim-Stommeln. Serra took the title from the author Primo Levi, who was arrested in 1944 for being a Jew and a member of the Italian Resistance; he was deported to Auschwitz. In 1993, the sculpture was acquired by Kolumba and erected here on 24 February 1997 in the Old Vestry as the ideal foundation stone of the museum's new building. Until that time, Serra had ruled out having his works translocated, but in this case, he accepted the shift of context, because the commemorative function was retained: the crypt under what is now an open space harbours the bones that were reinterred after the excavation and emptying of the tombs underneath the church.

Stairwell | **Room 5**

Josef Beuys (Krefeld 1921–1986 Düsseldorf) ***Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler – make the secrets productive*** (every person is an artist – make the secrets productive) 1977, wood board, paint, dough, flour (on loan from Werner Krüger)

The challenge which Joseph Beuys wrote on a weathered wooden door in 1977 is as unequivocal as it is enigmatic. Is it a call to join the cultural revolution or more of an invitation? The door is like a manifesto, which brings together the ideas that developed in Beuys' work over the years: the »expanded art concept« and the »social sculpture«. In his view, every kind of forming something, from thinking to writing to artistic and even professional work amounts to sculptural creativity. There was an action dedicated to the communication of this conviction, *Richtkräfte* (Directed Forces), at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1974. While engaging in conversation with the audience, Beuys sketched concepts and ideas with chalk on 100 school blackboards. There were three boards at the centre of the growing installation: one with a hanging walking stick (energy), the second inscribed with the elemental sounds »ö ö« (incipient language) and the last with the call to »make the secrets productive!« (thought/spirituality) complete with a chalk drawing, which depicted a horse-shoe magnet oriented towards a rock formation. The magnetic extraction of secrets demonstrates Beuys' ecological thinking, which is rooted in German Romanticism and aims to research the inwardness of things. Four years later, in the year the wooden doors were done, a temporary representative group from the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research, founded by Beuys together with Heinrich Böll and Klaus Staeck, held a colloquium at the *documenta 6* in Kassel. The political conversation conducted as an artistic happening was accompanied by the installation *Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz/Honey Pump at the Workplace*, an organism that pumped honey up the stairwell of the Fridericianum and around the Discussion Room. Beuys' preferred materials, namely felt, fat, honey or bread dough, which act as putty to fill the joins of the wooden doors, possess their own natural qualities that transmit warmth or react when energized. They become symbols of the response capacity within social processes.

Room 5

Bernhard Johannes Blume (Dortmund 1937–2011 Cologne) ***Die reine Vernunft ist als reine Vernunft ungenießbar*** (Pure reason is as pure reason inedible) 1981, b/w photographs, text

Bethan Huws *3 Boats* 1983–1991, sedge reeds

Bethan Huws' *Boats* are flimsy miniatures formed from reeds. It is necessary to make a single continuous movement in order to make one, which demands practice and concentration, transforming a line (Nature) into an object (Culture). The *Boats* have been produced since 1983; meantime, there are a thousand in number. They could be seen as attempts to be sure of one's own origins or starting point. For making them is a child's game that has been passed down through the generations and which the artist played herself in her home country of Wales. She has transferred this practice, taken from outside the world of art, into the realm of art. For a long time, Bethan Huws was not sure if the boats belonged to her art practice or were only an accompaniment. She herself has always presented them like precious items on plinths and behind glass, thus opening up for debate the shift in context and the gesture of the Ready-made. In spite of the radicality of the questioning of the effect of museum presentation conditions and the aura thus lent, the *Boats* maintain an immediate intimacy that continues to move us, and might even lead us to where art begins.

Mladen Stilinović (Belgrade 1947–2016 Pula) ***Umjetnik radi / Artist at Work*** 1978/2014, b/w photographs, 8-part

»I would prefer not to« is the polite response of Bartleby the Scrivener in Hermann Melville's eponymous narrative of 1853, turning down any summons to work. Neither negation nor acceptance, the friendly not-wanting-to amounts to radical refusal, making any objection pointless. With his not-doing, Bartleby became not only an icon of modern literature, but also an agent of the political and ethical social movement opposing the productivity and self-optimisation of upcoming capitalist society. The self-taught, conceptual artist Mladen Stilinović can also be considered

as belonging to this movement: his action *Artist at Work* realized in socialist Zagreb in 1978 shows the artist lying in bed fully clad in broad daylight. His plea for doing nothing is directed against the concept of the artist as producer, as embodied by Jackson Pollock painting in overalls in the 1950s, for example, which in the West has become the rule, driven by the art market. 15 years later, Stilinović wrote his programmatic text *The Praise of Laziness*, in which he exalted boredom and doing nothing as the pivotal conditions of art practice. Laziness becomes a token of opposition: not only the dividing line between work and leisure is annulled, but furthermore, the concept of taking one's time or *otium*. Working as an artist means creating purpose-free spaces, opposing the System and, from this »outlying« standpoint, contributing to society.

Terry Fox (Seattle 1943–2008 Köln) ***Untitled*** no date, ink on paper

The undated ink drawing by Terry Fox depicts a human figure. It is reduced to the bare essentials – to the skeleton or frame, which is made up of plant-like filigree roots and spindly branching lines. These grow inwards as well as outwards. They are emblematic of the sensibility and transparency which Terry Fox demands of himself as a human being and artist. »For me, the most important thing is to treat the body as an element in its own right rather than the initiator of an action. Not to ignore it when making a sculpture, but to use it directly as a tool.« (T.F., 1971)

Room 6

On the wall
Monika Bartholomé (*1950 Neukirchen-Vluyn; lives in Cologne)
Brenda, Lee and the others 2006 – 2008/2025, ink and tempera on paper

In her series *Brenda, Lee and the others* Monika Bartholomé condenses aspects that are part of her art practice such as accurate observation, a great sense of humour, the relationship between person and space, the inscrutability of the individual (*Kosmos Personalis*), response to older artistic masterpieces, and last but not least, her situation as a woman and female artist in a male- dominated world. She takes famous paintings from art history as her starting point (e.g. by Max Beckmann, Edward Hopper, or Ernst Ludwig Kirchner), in which women – whether clothed or in the nude – are relegated to objects as the artist's model. More or less abstract drawings, which articulate spatial effects by means of contrasts between painted and unpainted areas, intercommunicate. They are augmented with textual images in which the names of women along with inner monologues and descriptions of personal states are written with a brush. The literary quality of the polyglot texts suggests quotations, although all the texts were in fact composed by the artist. This demonstrates the empathy and a profound detailed understanding of the world which Monika Bartholomé in youthful years admired in Lucy Snowe, a partially autobiographic character in a novel by the author Charlotte Brontë. Reduced to white, black and red, the appropriated inspirational material develops into autonomous works, in which the artist can boil down the found atmospheres to their essence. The texts, which are partially smudged, thus imparting the fleeting nature of thought, lead us into open-ended intervals in the passage of time that connected the painters to their objects. One could easily forget that it is not Brenda Lee and the others, but Monika Bartholomé, who with subtle humour reveals some secrets of her perception.

Room 6

On the display tables
René Zäch (Solothurn 1946–2023 Biel) #1 ***GALAK-Tisch*** (GALAK-Table) 2000 | #2 **Am Tisch** (At the table) 2011, each composed of wood and acrylic gloss paint | #3 ***MOBIL*** 2004, watercolour on paper | #4 ***Mehrfamilienhaus*** (Multiple Dwelling) 2021, ink on paper | #5 ***HAPPY FAMILY*** 2005, wood and acrylic gloss paint | #6 ***Bandtisch*** (Table with conveyor belt) 2010, wood and acrylic gloss paint and fabric | #7 ***Untitled*** 1998, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper | #8 ***Untitled*** 2022, ink on paper | #9 ***Chair*** 1997, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper| #10 ***Fahren statt Essen*** (Travelling instead of Eating) 2004, wood and acrylic gloss paint | #11 ***Fahren statt Essen*** (Travelling instead of Eating) 2005, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper

René Zäch's work with and using models is decisive for the art practice of the Swiss sculptor, in so far he »understands art itself to be a model, as a thought-object. With his critical analysis of power structures and his sense of humour and irony, Zäch resembles the representatives of Dadaism.« (Christoph Vögele). Yet whether his sculptures, abstracted from the everyday, create a model of the world remains an open question, or whether it is more that he conceives of them in his small formats as being a model of a model of reality. Zäch was a constructor among artists. With the precision of a civil engineer, he conceived of objects at the drawing board that remind one of everyday objects and evoke a multitude of associations on account of their minimalist aesthetic. At the same time, they elude any kind of functional allocation.

Bernhard Johannes Blume ***Designs for porcelain editions*** 1985, porcelain

What ordered structures and systems are we born into? In which everyday and/or sacred rituals do they become apparent? Where can an aura be found in the banal, where is there banality in an aura? In the designs for tradition-steeped German manufacturers like KPM (Royal Porcelain Manufacture) or Fürstenberg, Bernhard Johannes Blume, who had also trained as an advertising designer, put the inherent complexity of material and form on the table.

Room 6

Simone ten Hompel (*1960 Bocholt; lives in London)
Six utensils I 2016, brass, copper and silver

Bettina Gruber (*1947 Minden; lives in Cologne, in the Ardennes and on Sant'Erasmo island) ***Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*** 1971/2019 | ***Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man*** 2019, pigment print on handmade paper

Bettina Gruber realised her *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in the same year that American art historian Linda Nochlin wrote her ground-breaking essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists*? Nochlin investigated the structural and social barriers that have prevented women in the Western world from achieving success in fine arts. She sees one reason as being the expected roles that limit women to the function of mother, wife, model and muse. Bettina Gruber's self-portrait takes up this theme precisely at this point. Her art practice is closely related to the work of Meret Oppenheim, Cindy Sherman or Claude Cahun, who reflect critically on the construction of gender roles by way of masquerade and travesty. As so often, the artist is both director and model at one and the same time, and in Bettina Gruber's case amounts to a mixture of radical pragmatism and playful self-empowerment. In her piece with the same name as James Joyce's novel, she takes on the role of the young artist (Joyce's Stephen Dedalus) and questions, not only her role as a woman, but above all that of being a female artist. Playing around with a super-8 film camera becomes joyful self-staging, by which the choice of individual images is reviewed and refined using a photo camera and a magnifying glass.

Duane Michals, 1989

Everything which happens around us is queer, but we spend all our energy on trying to make it unqueer.

Room 7

Duane Michals (1932 McKeesport/Pennsylvania; lives in New York) ***I Build a Pyramid*** 1978 | ***Things Are Queer*** 1973, b/w photographs, silver gelatine on baryta paper

The American artist Duane Michals crosses the borders between photography, painting and poetry. He uses the medium of photography in utter contradiction to the properties with which it is normally attributed. In his poetic sequences of photographs that he has been making since the 1960s, metamorphoses take place in which the invisible becomes visible, and memory, dream and vision take shape. Going beyond documentation, he finds simple yet striking images for existential questions such as ones about our perception of »reality«, of social norms and values, and about desire, lonesomeness or transience and death. *Things are Queer* is one of his early series, made at a time when the English word »queer« (strange, dubious, odd), was at best a slang expression for homosexual and at worst a homophobic swearword. In the meantime, the concept has become more positively evaluated in the context of Queer Theory, which analyses the social norms of heterosexuality and gender dualism and their impact on fields such as politics and culture. The queerness of *Things are Queer* is mainly applied to the world itself, rather than a question of sexual identities or sexual desire (although the English expression »coming out of the closet« means roughly »to come out«). Each image in this series makes us aware that attribution of meaning depends on our knowledge, on relationships and on constructions. Thus, the ascription is relative and is reformulated from one picture to the next, so that the focus here is less on the world and more on the »mechanics« of our perception and how we categorize it.

On the plinth

Paul Thek (Brooklyn 1933–1988 New York) ***Portable Ocean*** 1969, toy wagon with building blocks and a comet made of wood, painted

Portable Ocean served as a leitmotif during the planning and construction phase of Kolumba. »To move an ocean. Would this be

possible in Kolumba too? […] In *Portable Ocean* the artist spans such contradictions between reality and the ideal aspiration in the simplest of manners and using the most basic components. The poetic manner in which the work allows the necessary space for the imagination to unfold depends on precision and on the simplicity of the means that when taken together, constitute the artistic idiom.« (*Kolumba. An architecture competition in Cologne*, 1997)

Duane Michals *Harlequin* ca. 1985, b/w photograph, silver gelatine on Baryta paper

The Harlequin character plays the part in comedies of the shape-shifter. He can transform himself using masks and can jump from one world to another in a trice. He usually appears in a costume covered with appliquéd triangles, which makes his role clear. Switching playfully between the good and the bad, his jests are a challenge to the existing order as he undermines its boundaries and thus becomes a rebellious role model. The constant updating of the Harlequin relocates the character in the prevailing consciousness of the society of the times. Accordingly, in the Age of Enlightenment he became a bogeyman who contradicted reason; he is still celebrated today as a carnivalesque stock character – Duane Michals small format black-and-white photo pick up on the style of the lascivious melancholic, whom Cezanne and Picasso had already depicted. »I like the idea of seeing a magical character in an anonymous interior, a cheap hotel in Cambridge, New York. It was an empty floor of the hotel.« (D.M., 2025) Lived reality and dream collide, opening a window onto the magical realm of the in-between, where utopia can arise.

Room 7

Paul Thek ***Newspaper Painting [Earth Mandala]*** 1974, 8-part, gouache on newspaper

The *Apollo 8* mission at Christmas 1968 was a technical milestone ahead of its time, given that, never before, had people left the Earth's orbit and circled the Moon. The view the astronauts had of the Earth has become an icon of collective visual memory in the 20th century, and it was launched as a major media event. The image captured, not only the beauty, but also the vulnerability of the Earth. »The vast loneliness up here of the Moon is awe inspiring, and it makes you realize just what you have back there on Earth. The Earth from here is a grand oasis to the big vastness of space.«

(Jim Lovell during one of the live broadcasts of the *Apollo 8* mission on 24.12.1968)

On the plinth

Hartmut Esslinger (1944 in Beuren near Altensteig; lives in San Francisco) stereo system ***Concept 51K*** 1978, Wega, Fellbach, synthetic casing (donated by Werner Schriefers)

Among experts, the light grey audio system *Concept 51K* originally manufactured by Wega in Fellbach is known affectionately as »Luke Skywalker« and the dark model as »Darth Vader«. Hartmut Esslinger designed a sleek, but futuristic design with a sophisticated operating feel, which already heralded the design of early Apple products, for which he became famous as of 1983. It combines a turntable, cassette deck, radio receiver and amplifier as four clearly structured modules in an all-in-one stereo system.

David Bowie (London 1947 – 2016 New York) ***Starman*** 1972, A number from the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, audio

In the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* David Bowie tells the story of one of the most influential figures in pop music from the 20th century, the story of the fictional character Ziggy Stardust, who tried to warn humankind about the imminent demise of the Earth. He broadcasts via radio

that a supernatural being named *Starman* can still avert this catastrophe. Unheeded by the people, Ziggy's prophetic mission fails and he falls prey to drugs, thereby taking on the role of the *Damned Messiah*. Musically, David Bowie appropriates an octave jump from the song *Over the Rainbow* by Judy Garland taken from the film *The Wizard of Oz*. The rainbow becomes a utopian symbol for the premonition of cosmic world salvation.

There's a starman waiting in the sky
He'd like to come and meet us
But he thinks he'd blow our minds
There's a starman waiting in the sky
He's told us not to blow it
'Cause he knows it's all worthwhile
He told me
Let the children lose it
Let the children use it
Let all the children boogie
[…]
La, la, la, la, la […]

David Bowie, *Starman*, 1972

Room 8

Anna (Bork/Wephalia 1936–2020 Cologne) **& Bernhard Blume**
Transzendentaler Konstruktivismus (Transcendental Constructivism)
1992/1994, large format photo series, 20-part

Anna and Bernhard Blume are among the pioneers of staged photography. Having come of age in the context of the anarchic Düsseldorf art scene in the 1970s, their visual narratives bring to mind a crazy philosophical dialogue about the perplexing conditions of human existence. They themselves almost always take centre stage of the visual stories they develop together. In the 20-part large format photo series *Transcendental Constructivism* white entities fly around the room and join together in constructivist formations, which push the supposed active subjects of the scene (Bernhard Blume in a chequered jacket, Anna Blume in a patterned dress) to the margins of the action. This staged lack of control can be interpreted as a critical and also humorous reflection on the exaltation that art and artists have experienced with respect to the universalistic idea of Classical Modernism. Kandinsky, Malevich, Mondrian and, a generation later, Josef Albers (whose painting exhibited here comes from the collection of Max Bill, the Concrete artist from Zurich) developed Concrete Art. This art movement foresees an exclusive reliance on visual means (such as line, colour, area). Rather than abstracting from visual reality, it extends it by adding an autonomous object. The validity of the geometric form purged of anything accidental becomes a substitute for the validity of the experience of the senses. The concrete goes in search of the metaphysics behind the things and attributes a spiritual, almost sacred value to the artwork. This supercharging of sacred space transferred to the sphere of the museum was thematized by Anna Blume in 2015 in Kolumba, when she installed *Transcendental Constructivism* in the topmost gallery 21 and chose a wall for it where, in a church, one would normally expect the altar to be. »(…) how beautiful and impressive and rigorous these images of salvation are! Are they still comforting, do they still assist with orientation? At least, once again, they radically formulate in holy naivety the metaphysical needs of people in the Industrial Age.« (B.B., 1986)

Room 8

Joseph Albers (Bottrop 1888–1976 New Haven) ***green and grey against large brown*** (Study for *Hommage to a Square*) 1955, oil on aluminium

On the plinth
Pensive Christ Upper Rhine, ca. 1480, lime wood with a visible ground and vestiges of coloured paint (acquired and restored with the financial support of the Renate König-Stiftung)

The scene in which Christ waits to be crucified on Calvary is part of the Passion narrative, although the episode was not mentioned in the Gospels. Rather, the image is indebted to »mystical« piety, addressing the themes of being alone and out in the cold, nakedness and Christ's despair on his path of suffering. The source of this interpolation of strong feelings into the sober historical account lies in the Old Testament and the way its narratives are interpreted to refer to Christ – for example, the story of Job. A striking type of figure was invented for this through recourse to the heathen pictorial cipher for melancholy from antiquity, (cf. August Rodin, *The Thinker*). How the carver rose to the challenge posed by this image, which in the mid-fifteenth century was without precedent, is easy to comprehend: contour lines running in parallel, along with the hardly detectible lengthening of the limbs, provide tangible evidence of the struggle to compose a sculpture to be seen from all sides.

We do not lack
communication.
On the contrary, we have
too much of it.
We lack creation.
We lack resistance
to the present.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,
What is Philosophy, 2000

Room 9

Duane Michals Short films 2016–2025, video, colour, sound, length per screen ca. 15 mins. (on loan from Duane Michals)

In 2015, Duane Michals turned his attention to making films; he now resolutely pursues in this medium the same aspects that have interested him in photography since the 1960s: the narrative power of image sequences, movement, effects, cutting techniques and the rendering of metaphysical themes. The resulting funny and poetic short films can be loosely described as an interpretation of the Dadaistic-like principle »The best defense against common sense is nonsense.« (D.M. in: *The Revenge of the bearded Lady* 2025) The artist makes fluid transitions between the genres. His staged burlesque sketches combine singing, screaming and theatrical performance (*The Concert* 2023). He presents dream journeys which blur fantasy and reality using long cross-fades (*Les Fleurs du Mal* 2021), while remaining true to the visual idiom he developed in photography, but bringing it up-to-date using the technical possibilities of the video cut. He makes the aesthetic of enchantment his own in overblown variety shows or childish iconography with handmade stars, wizards hats or cardboard props, enhanced by kaleidoscopic video effects and colour filters (*The Magical Yort* 2019). Through the inclusion of self-performed songs and self-composed sound effects, a touching proximity to the making of film arises, oscillating between deliberate dilettantism and emphatic professionalism. What in effect appears as escapism is actually an attempt to find an approach to the world through artistic means. Duane Michals' distribution of his own film repertoire is democratic. The films can be accessed through social media and on video platforms and downloaded. They are withdrawn from the exclusivity of the art market with the aspiration of having an effect on the real events of the day. – The films exhibited here show a cross-section of this decade of Duane Michals' filmic work and will be augmented in the course of the exhibition year by the latest productions.

Stairwell

René Zäch *Proposition* 2002/2006, inkjet print, artist's frame

Room 10

19 December 2025 – 14 August 2026
Le Musée sentimental de Kolumba
An exhibition to say farewell to Stefan Kraus

We could certainly manage to live in the absence of objects. But it is doubtful that we would be able to remember anything without them. Have you got some particular thing at home that owes its significance to a memory you attach to it? The objects exhibited here are precisely such vehicles of emotional meaning. Whether banal, unassuming or works of art – one might describe them as remnants, vestiges or relics. For in effect, they bear witness. The objects refer to the unseeable: times lived through, memorable experiences, past locations. They are storage facilities in the sense of batteries or aggregator platforms; stories have been deposited in them, although we don't realise this at first glance. All the objects assembled in this exhibition are connected with Kolumba. They were brought together by the people who work for the museum – above all, by Stefan Kraus, who has helped to shape the institution as a co-curator since 1991. In 2008, he became its director. The objects belong to a branch of the collection that developed on the fringes of the institution, so to speak, and meantime has grown to 73 items to date.

The *Musée sentimental de Kolumba* has an important forerunner which is connected with both Cologne as well as Stefan Kraus' biography. Cologne Kunstverein was the place where Daniel Spoerri and Marie-Louise von Plessen presented their *Musée sentimental de Cologne* in 1979. At the invitation of Wulf Herzogenrath, the director at that time and later mentor to Stefan Kraus, they installed a temporary museum about the history of the City of Cologne. The exhibits were remnants with the aura of relics fostered by their respective story and the manner of presentation. In alphabetical order from A(denauer) to Z(oo), Spoerri and von Plessen devised a collection of Cologne events, whereby their selection was less indebted to historical relevance than to a wealth of anecdotes. Instead of relaying the grand accounts of important personages, they accumulated small subjective snapshots.

Room 10

On the occasion of Stefan Kraus' retirement, we have selected 25 objects from the *Musée sentimental de Kolumba*. These have been augmented by a few additional works from our holdings and one work on loan. Together they tell the story of the founding and development of Kolumba, vividly representing what has shaped us and still keeps us alive to this day. The objects communicate the need for a surrounding shell, or for a building where that which a museum can achieve as an organic body can be manifested; they record the choice of location and an address. They also communicate the informed vision which has become realised as a »Museum of Reflection« and has been carried forwards and developed by very many people; about art and the collection that was there at the start and guided us on our path towards fulfilling our vision over the years; about the organisation and its structures that shape the institutional body and coordinate the voices of individual employees; about the care taken to keep individual artworks alive and present them properly, about the plants and animals that live in Kolumba and exert their influence on it; about shared moments that spur us on, encouraging us to transcend our limits; and last but not least: the failures, bad luck and mishaps that, just as in real life, are also part of our everyday museum routine.

Use the QR code to obtain more information about the individual objects.

Room 11

The cliché of the »White Cube« is refuted by the fact that it was the Bauhaus artists, of all people, who helped to make colour the dominant theme of 20th century painting. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy wrote in 1925 in *Bauhaus Book 08* that the ›theme‹ of painting is colour itself and that with it one can achieve pure, primary and configured compositions while foregoing objective references. And it was the Bauhaus master Josef Albers, who also emigrated to America, who published one of the definitive investigations of colour in his *Interaction of Color* published in 1963. For Albers it was about establishing a »didactics of seeing«, according to the subtitle of the German edition. »It's not just passively allowing the colours to work upon you, but rather actively viewing, searching, feeling, recognising and experiencing them« as he stated in the book. In his series that he started in 1950 entitled *Homage to the Square* Albers drew attention to the relativity of colour perception; he described the interplay of colour relationships and the possibility of activating meditative insights through interrelated colour values. – The American Minimalist, sculptor and architect Donald Judd, who started off as a painter, never made a secret of his admiration for Albers, which is why we open our »colour lab« which is focused on yellow and orange, with a series of his woodcuts, nearly all of which are to be found in our collection. With our selection of works from all parts of the collection, we demonstrate that Kolumba is effectively an aesthetic workshop, in which existential questions are tied to all issues of form and composition.

#1 **August Macke** (Meschede 1887–1914 Souain-Perthes-lès-Hurlus) ***Untitled*** 1914, pencil and watercolour on paper (loan) | #2 **Josef Albers *Study for Homage to the Square*** ca. 1964, oil on paper | #3 ***Variante*** 1947, gouache on painting board | #4 **Irmel Kamp** (*1937 Düsseldorf; lives in Aachen and Stäfa, Switzerland) from the series ***Zink: Chaineux*** 1981, silver gelatine on polyethylene-coated photo paper, glossy

Room 11

Display table 1
Bernhard Cella (*1969 Salzburg; lives in Vienna and Trieste) ***Color Inventory*** Vienna, 2023 (donated by the artist)| **Clarence Book of the Hours** London, ca. 1428 (donated by Renate König) | **Bärbel Messmann** (*1955 Münster; lives in Cologne) ***Ingwergelb – Schattengrün*** (ginger yellow–shaded green) Cologne, 2019 | **Emma** (aged 13) and **Lina** (aged 12) ***Das depremierende Leben einer Karotte*** (The depressing life of a carrot) Leipzig, 2012 | **Ingo Meller** (*1955 Cologne; lives in Leipzig) ***Colour samples*** vol. 3, Cologne, 1983/84 (donated by Edith and Steffen Missmahl)

In the three display tables
Objects from the *Collection of Works and Forms*, donated by Werner Schriefers, incl.: ***Travel iron 0690*** Komet | ***Lady Braun air cushion dryer hood HLH 1*** 1971, Braun | ***Carpet sweeper Super 2900*** 1974, Siemens | ***diet +letter scales 8600*** 1974, Rido Busse (1934–2021), Soehnle | ***Cofina Super 223*** 1976 Krups | ***Meat grinder KFW*** Stiebel Eltron | ***Moulinette 32002*** food processor 1960s–1970s, Moulinex | ***Powder sugar mill Süße Müllerin 297-30*** | ***Sinus Ashtray*** 1966, Walter Zeischegg (1917–1983) Helit | ***Teardrop salt and pepper shaker*** 1980s, Luigi Massoni (1930–2013), Guzzini | ***Funnel*** Gerda | ***Table cigarette lighter domino T3*** 1970 Dieter Rams (*1932), Braun | ***Portable record player S 180*** Philips | ***Pocket Radio AIE 1241*** Aitron | ***Spherical television Nivico 3240 GM*** 1970, JVC | ***Rotary dial telephone FeTAp 611-2*** Deutsche Bundespost | ***35 mm camera Beirette SL 100 N*** 1980s VEB camera manufacturer Freital | ***Mobile telephone C 10*** ca. 1980, Julian Schlagheck and Birthe Löhndorf, Siemens | ***Teacup form with bast (raffia) decor pattern*** 1954 Heinrich Löffelhardt (1901–1979), Arzberg | ***Tea and milk jug*** Haarlem 1932, Ursula Fesca (1900–1975) | ***Ceramic Type Taxis*** and ***Urania*** undated, all Wächtersbach ceramics manufacturer | ***Spray-painted vase 3263*** undated, Steingutfabrik Paetsch | ***Lemon squeezer*** 1920s (?) | ceramic ware from the Schramberg Majolika factory Ltd. | ***Glass vase*** undated, Erik Höglund (1932–1998), Boda, Schweden | ***Robot*** from the Krimhild Becker donations

Room 11

#5 **Robert Klümpen** (*1973 Issum; lives in Cologne and Braunschweig) ***Untitled*** 2020, oil pastel on cotton duck from the series *Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat. – Noch Fragen?* (If there's time, there's good counsel. – any questions?) from 2019

Display table 2
Josef Albers *Interaction of Color* Starnberg, 1973 | **Lene** (aged 8) ***Gelbbuch*** (Yellow Book) Leipzig, 2024 | **Claus Boehmler** (Heilbronn 1939 – 2017 Hamburg) ***Claus Boehmler shows: Pinocchio. A Linear Program*** Cologne, 1969

#6 **Donald Judd** (Excelsior Springs, Missouri 1928 – 1994 New York) ***Untitled*** 2/4, 1988 – 1990, woodcut on Japanese paper

Display table 3
Peter Tollens (*1954 Kleve) Studies 1981 – 1987 oil on paper | **Jon Fosse** (*1959 Haugesund, Norway; lives in Oslo, Norway) – **Olav Christopher Jenssen** (*1954 Vesterålen, Norway; lives in Berlin) ***diese unerklärliche Stille*** (this inexplicable stillness) Münster, Kleinheinrich, 2025 (purchased with the financial support of the Kunststiftung NRW)

#7 **Werner Schriefers** (Dülken 1926 – 2003 Cologne) **Im Süden** (In the South) ca. 1948, pencil and watercolour on paper

#8 **Victoria Bell** (*1942 Evanston/Illinois; lives in Cologne) ***Yellow (2)*** 2001, pencil and oil on paper

Display table 4
Per Kirkeby (Copenhagen 1938 – 2018 ibid.) ***Ludwig Wittgenstein: Remarks on Colour*** Münster, Kleinheinrich 1998 (purchased with the financial support of the Kunststiftung NRW)

#9 **Josef Albers *Homage to the Square – Yellow*** 1962, oil on Masonite hardboard

Room 12

Manos Tsangaris (*1956 Düsseldorf; lives in Berlin and Cologne) ***Marble Run Design I*** 9.3.1997, pencil on typewriter paper (donated by the artist)

Manos Tsangaris ***Kugelbahn – Räumlich installative Komposition für eine Person im Zentrum*** (Marble Run – spatial installative composition for one person at the centre) 1997, mixed media

The *Marble Run* was created in 1997 at the former location of the museum: at Roncalliplatz opposite the south side of the cathedral. So, is it just a toy or perhaps more of an experimental setup, a kinetic sculpture or a spatial drawing, a sound sculpture or a Gesamtkunstwerk? As a »spatial installative composition«, it surrounds the »person at the centre« with their scope of view, enabling her or him to experience an inner and external outlook on the situation simultaneously. The *Marble Run* demonstrates »that the ›survey‹ of the human world and self-orientation intended by Tsangaris is not tied to music, theatre or film, but can be realized in any medium, likewise in an installative mode.« (Rainer Nonnenmann) This happens as an analogue process, with immediacy and authenticity. The *Marble Run* is a low-tech machine, which was assembled in order »to ultimately arrive at sounds«, according to Tsangaris addressing schoolchildren during the building phase in 1997.

Thomas Lehnerer (Munich 1955 – 1995 Munich ***Selbstbewusstsein*** (Consciousness) 1993, ballpoint pen on paper

»In principle, cloud pictures are no different to my drawings and figures« (T.L., *Homo pauper*, 1993), in the view of Thomas Lehnerer, an artist, philosopher, theologian and art historian who died young. The figure drawn with a ball-point pen at first seems en passant, sketched at the margin of a school notebook and floating placeless in space. The small format encourages a close-up view of the shell-like delicate gestalt. Yet at this scale it does not lose its connection to the process of making and to the hand that the artist described as »our most intelligent tool«. Lehnerer's scientific theoretical

involvement with and search for answers to questions such as how life and a picture arise is evident in a formal sense in the exploratory line that aspires to capture physiognomy, posture, body language and facial expression. From 1986 until his death, Lehnerer was a member of a workgroup which aimed to invent a conscious machine through experimentation. Other members of the team were the electrical engineer Robert Schörghuber, the physicist Eckhard Lessmüller and the sociologist Jochen Kade. These scientists were investigating what artificial life and consciousness mean and whether one is a condition for the other, or can exist on its own.

Room 13

Walter Schels (*1936 Landshut; lives in Hamburg) ***Roncalli – Eine Reise zum Regenbogen*** (Roncalli – Journey to the Rainbow) 1981/2025, b/w photographs, pigment prints on paper, clockwise: René Irek: Operations manager | Jörg Richter: Chinese Mandarin | Pic & Pello: Props masters | Fredi Codrelli: Clown | Beatrix Faulhaber, Anna Özden: Zebra | Pello: Young woman | Pic: One last spectator | Walter Joss, Martin Ender: the Lindors: Flying people | Hanne Schwarz: Girl With the Number | Elvira Lühr: Queen of Lippiza, horse dressage | Ladislas Tazlari: Gold Man Statue Performer | Christiane Friedhoff: Seamstress | Pello: White Clown | Christiane Friedhoff: Chinese dragon| René Strickler: Animal trainer | Pic: One last spectator | Werner Wührer: Groom | Walter Joss: Animator | Ascension Chy: Chinese Acrobat | Salomon: Props master | Pic: The bell ringer | André Faulhaber: Gold Man Statue Performer | Cornelia Irek: Chinese mask | Pello: Juggler from Italy | Aniko Buchleitner: Shen Te, Partner of the fire mage | Pic and Pello: One last spectator | Joe Schwarz: Band conductor | Fredi Codrelli: A Viennese waiter | Beatrix Faulhaber: A Girl With the Number | Salvatore Pennisi: The guest of a Viennese waiter | Pello: One last spectator | Günter Flaum: Factotum | Boris Buchleitner: Bimbo | Deh Sui Peter Chy: Acrobat and knife thrower | Daniel Candela: Gold Man Statue Performer | Bernhard Paul: Circus Director | Les Olympiads, Ladislas, André, Daniel: Gold Man Statue Performers | Aurora Berini: Butterfly | Walter Joss: Animator | Hanne Schwarz: Masks | John Ak: Frog | Aurora Berini: A girl with balloons | Chaterine Burgaud: A Girl With the Number | Martin Ender: White clown | Franzisko Chy: Chinese Acrobat | Animator | Isabell Chy: Chinese Acrobat | André Faulhaber: Animator | Melitta Chy: Chinese Acrobat | Martin Ender: Flying person | Aurora Berini: Assistant of the animal trainer | Ursula Parra: Chinese Masks | Boris Buchleitner: Shang, the fire mage | Walter Joss: flying person | Pic: Pierrot Lunaire | Pello: Big head mask with feet | Ursula Parra: Animator | John Ak: Frog | Martin Ender: White clown

Room 13

Like Duane Michals, who was his senior by a few years, Walter Schels originally worked as a window dresser in New York before turning to photography in the 1960s, probably not a bad precondition for encountering the extremes of human existence spanning wealth and poverty. This still preoccupies him today in projects that last for years. Schel's keen interest is documented in an exemplary manner in his photographs of members of the Circus Roncalli. He travelled with them in order to record all of the circus participants in their respective function He also spotlighted double functions, which are commonplace to small companies in the cultural sphere. This is not only true of the circus director, whose role as Clown Zippo is legendary, but also of the supportive roles. Schels could remember their names decades later. A good portrait photo depends on trust, so it always says something about the photographer himself too.

On plinths
Erich Bödeker (Recklinghausen 1904–1971 Recklinghausen)
Cowboy mit Pferd (Cowboy with horse) | ***Fotograf mit Hochzeitsgesellschaft*** (Photograph of a Wedding Party) each 1966, wood, concrete, metal, fabric

The figure of the cowboy as he appears in Westerns, comics or cigarette commercials embodies the white male archetype that carried connotations of freedom, adventure and moral codes for generations. The sculptor Erich Bödeker's cowboy on his horse, a protagonist from the heyday of the Western, serves as a sculptural projection screen. The artist was once a miner, but was forced to take early retirement due to silicosis (miner's phthisis). He turned to sculpture as of 1959 and was self-taught. He created many figures, which he put in his garden in Recklinghausen. They represent the roles of stars, politicians and professionals, identified by their clothing and props. Bödeker's works have an expressive air due to the painted wood or coloured cement. The figures' static postures and rough faces with indistinct physiognomies seem strange and aloof. They become more accessible through the roles they play, fed by (pop-) cultural influences, which give wings to the imagination.

Room 14

Crucifix Rhineland (?), 2nd half 12th century, ivory (purchased with the financial support of the Kulturstiftung der Länder, the Federal Representative for Culture and Media, the Kunststiftung NRW, the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung and other public and private benefactors.)

This figure of the crucified Christ was made of ivory, a substance which can be polished to achieve a surface with luxurious sensory appeal. This encourages the eye to wander over the sculpture. According to medieval notions, the line of vision is an extension of the body, so that while looking at a picture, a person becomes unified with it. Except for the arms, this figure of Christ is made up of two pieces fashioned from the same elephant tusk. Both parts were turned at 180° in opposite directions and dovetailed together, with the joint hidden behind the bead of the loincloth. As a result, the inclination of the head and the grain of the surface are given by the growth rings of the tooth, which appear like hatching lines to model the torso. However, it is not certain that this effect could be anticipated at the time of production, or whether it emerged unintentionally, after centuries of pollution had acted on the figure.

Konrad Kuyn (†1469 Cologne; attributed) ***Four Crowned Martyrs from the Epitaph Ensemble of Nikolaus von Bueren*** (†1445), Cologne, after 1445, Baumberg sandstone with the exposed original paint and vestiges of the second version (restored with financial support from the Renate König-Stiftung)

The four figures from the epitaph ensemble of the Cathedral master builder Nikolaus von Bueren represent Christian stonemasons from antiquity, who refused to make pagan idols and were therefore sentenced to death. The martyrs were, and still are, the patrons of the building workers. However, instead of being depicted as such, they appear as proud representatives of the intellectual upper class. Building such challenging Gothic architecture was not just a matter of skill, but also of comprehensive geometric and arithmetic knowledge. Their tools, now partly lost, served to

identify the bearer as a mason (mallet; lost), sculptor (large compasses; lost), foreman (angle iron; plumb) and master workman (small compasses; lost; sketchbook). The figures were placed in the choir of Cologne Cathedral, where they became a monument to the self-esteem of the ecclesiastical workshop, which established confraternities as of the mid-15th century. Nikolaus' successor Konrad Kuyn, who was the sculptor of this ensemble, was appointed as master builder of the workshops north of the Mosel in 1459. The treatment with colour of the sculptural ensemble is particularly advanced for the times both technically and artistically. It was probably not carried out by Kuyn himself, but by specialists.

Room 15

Werner Schriefers *Kleiner Garten* (Small Garten) 1946, behind glass | ***Gartenbild*** (Garden picture) 1949, oil on pressboard | **Joseph Beuys *Untitled*** 1947, watercolour over ink drawing

Kolumba has many reasons to commemorate the centenary of the Cologne painter and collector Werner Schriefers. His studies began in 1946 at the School of Textile Design in Krefeld when he was 20 years old. He joined the class of the former Bauhaus tutor Georg Muche, who was to be a lasting influence on him. In 1949, he transferred to the Wuppertal Art School in order to lead the class for Surface Pattern Design and Textile Art. In the 1950s, he developed the fundamentals of design theory. He became director of the Cologne School of Design in 1965 and taught the painting class there until 1989. The selection of works shown in Room 15 enable us to evoke his refined idiom, which set an example of how to fight for freedom of artistic expression in the aftermath of 1945. The painter, who later turned to Art Informel, demonstrates here his great interest in the multiplicity of shapes that can be inspired by Nature. – It was probably his experience of loss and total destruction during the war that led him for many decades to compile one of the most extensive collections of the wares of the twentieth century world of commodities in its rapidly evolving state of flux. It was not the temporal limitation of use, but the enduring value of their beauty, that legitimated the securing of these examples in his *Collection of Works and Forms*, which he donated to Kolumba some 25 years ago. (See rooms 7, 11, 17, 20)

Display case 1
below: **Joseph Beuys *Element*** 1982, copper and iron, 2-part (loan from Werner Krüger) | **Giampaolo Babetto** (*1947 Padua; lives in Arquà Petrarca in the Colli Euganei) ***Ramo*** 2013, bronze cast | centre: **Rudolf Bott** (*1956 Stockstadt am Main; lives in Kirchbuch) ***Bowl*** 2000, silver | ***Spoon objects*** 1990/2011, silver, wood and rock crystal | above: **Rudolf Bott *Paper models for the T-Model*** 2012, paper (donated by the artist) | ***T-Model*** 2012, silver

Room 15

Display case 2
below: **Jan Adam** (*1948 Liberec, Czech Republic; lives in Hamburg) ***Bowls*** 2012, 2015 and 2018, Glas | centre: **Veronika Beckh** (*1969 Forchheim; lives in Berlin) ***Tiefe #5*** (Cavity #5) 2013, glass | **Frank Meurer** (*1976 Solingen; lives in Karwitz/Lenzen in the Wendland) ***Bowl rods*** 2015, glass | above: **Frank Meurer** ***Hemispherical bowls*** transparent (blue and green) both 2016, glass

Display case 3
below: **Juliane Schölß** (*1977 Ingolstadt; lives in Nuremberg) ***Crystalline Bowl*** 2023, brass | **Beate Leonards** (*1967 Constance, lives in Lübeck) ***Vase*** 2017, tombac alloy | **Sanghoon Kim** (*1986 Seoul, Korea; where she lives) ***Memory Droplets*** 2017, fine silver | centre: ***Reliquary*** Cologne, ca. 1220, silver, copper, gilded, brass, rock crystal, precious stones, pearls (loan from the parish of St. Kolumba, Cologne) | **Giampaolo Babetto** ***Vaso*** 2015, silver, gilded and 2019, silver | above: **Johan Gerard van Loon** (Rotterdam 1934–2020 Breda) ***Vase*** 1993, porcelain, copper lustre glaze | **Juliane Schölß** ***Cup with a folded base*** 2020, silver

Display case 4
below: **Young-Jae Lee** (*1951 Seoul, Korea; lives in Essen) ***Vases*** 1990–2021, clay, with feldspathic glaze (donated by Hartmut Griepentrog) | centre: **Ingeborg** (Bochum 1919–1998 Bochum) **and Bruno Asshoff** (Essen 1914–2003 Bochum) ***Double-walled vessel*** 1973, stoneware, glazed | ***Vase*** 1963 clay, ceramic glaze frit | **Enno Jäkel** (*1967 Dortmund; lives in Cologne) **Pot** 2017, clay, coated with porcelain | above: **Gertrud Bilstein** (?) ***Bottle-shaped vase*** undated, clay, glazed | ***Vase*** after 1948, clay, glazed (both donated by Werner Schriefers) | **Ingeborg and Bruno Asshoff** ***Cylinder vase*** 1964, stoneware, glazed | **Ilse Ludwig-Korbel** (*1925 Wetzlar; lives in Tittmoning) ***Bottle vases*** 1977 and 1981, stoneware, glazed | **Johannes Makolies** (*1979 Dresden; where he lives) ***Spherical-neck vase*** 1999, stoneware, glazed | **Görge Hohlt** (Munich 1930–2022 Rosenheim) ***Narrow-neck vase*** 1998, Porcelain,

glazed (all donated by Adolf Egner) | **Walter A. Heufelder** (*1926 Höhr-Grenzhausen; lives in Oberganghofen) ***Vase*** 1989, stoneware, glazed (all donated by Jochen Heufelder); (purchased with financial support from Petersen Tegl, if not otherwise noted)

Vessels evoke containment and storage. This anthropological function gives rise to a fascinating way of reading them, with fluid transitions between ritual, spiritual and sacred contexts. Our selection confirms people's ability to fashion things (artefacts) with their hands. Knowing how to treat the materials and technical prowess require decades of practice by an individual. Each of these pots is a unique testimony to an artistic life. »Handicraft and humanism appear to have been sidetracked in our times or need to be redefined. They are not up to the fast pace and hubbub, they require heedfulness. The uniqueness of such work is not in keeping with marketing principles. Craftsmanship isn't profitable.« (Rudolf Bott).

Jürgen Paatz (*1943 Wernigerode; lives in Kleve) ***Untitled*** 1989, egg tempera on canvas

Jürgen Paatz is a »handworker«, his way of working is handling. Instead of finding his paintings inside his own head, *coups de main* are what enable his works to develop. This results in succinct interventions that consist of spontaneous strokes and almost ›written‹ marks that in sum make up the essential materiality of his pieces. And yet they are still paintings in the best sense.

Room 16

Jannis Kounellis (Piraeus 1936–2017 Rome) ***Tragedia civile*** (Civil Tragedy), 1975/2007, spatial installation

»The artist today […] puts together a one-act play that sums up the drama that arises between two or more people in conflict with others, with the state, which modifies the laws in accordance with social requirements.« (J.K., 1992) He works with requisites from the theatre, but uses them to create a picture, in his view, rather than a classical stage set. The past (tradition) and the present are constantly interwoven. A Viennese coffee shop stand with empty coverings (a hat and a coat) points to absence and loss. The light, warmth and smell emanating from the oil lamp also hint at the person who lit the lamp, who at just this moment is absent. The golden wall is reminiscent of medieval mosaics in churches and the backdrops of sacred icons, but what is reflected in them is one's own image, without it really becoming tangible in a spatial sense. A blurred view beyond the limits of the everyday experiential world.

Olaf Eggers (*1959 Hamburg; lives in Cologne) ***Trip*** 2015/2025, installation with offset printed book, video on iMac, 3 secs. loop

Clapping or applause (Latin *applaudare* – to strike together) means wordless approval in western culture; depending on the intensity it may also express enthusiasm. There is nothing to be seen of this in the short video loop, however. The two elderly men appear stereotypical, like uniformed representatives of ritualised politics. The reasons for the approval are just as exchangeable as the people being applauded. One might conclude that political behaviour has become quite arbitrary. Olaf Eggers' piece indicates quite the opposite. He reduces the form to the minimum of means employed. It is not a matter of artworks here that could be traded, but of minimal pronouncements that negotiate something: not arts, but facts. The two people in question are Dick Cheney (to the left) and Dennis Hastert, two high-ranking republican politicians whose careers expose the murky depths of power. Cheney, who was once White House deputy chief of staff, then Minister of Defence and finally Vice President was found guilty of corruption in several cases, in that he had abused his political position to further private

financial interests. Although he represents the dismantling of ecological regulations and immoral financial deals with dictators on the one hand, on the other he was one of the few republicans to warn about the re-election of Trump in public. Dennis Hastert, a former teacher and wrestling coach, long-time Speaker of the House of Representatives, was convicted of the systematic abuse of children to 15 months in prison for payment of hush money. He has the inglorious record of being the most high-ranking American politician to have ever served time in jail.

Room 16

Season 2025/26

Requiem für eine marode Brücke (Requiem for a dilapidated bridge) Musical theatre piece by Schauspiel Cologne

»For here we have no permanent place, but we seek the one to come,« as is sung in The German Requiem by Johannes Brahms. What is meant by the future »place« is clearly the kingdom of heaven – so far up that even the tallest skyscraper or a sky-high loan cannot reach it. But what if one were to bring Brahms' Requiem down to Earth? To Germany, to Cologne, right here to us, close up and immediately available? The music theatre *Requiem für eine marode Brücke* event attempts to do just that. Three actresses from Schauspiel Cologne who are also singers will be performing in the art museum Kolumba, along with two Cologne choirs: the Cathedral Choir and the experimental choir Alte Stimmen. For at the present time, hardly anything preoccupies Cologne more than how the city could, should or must be redeveloped or transformed. Almost interminable building sites shape the cityscape. Discussions about the question of »restoration or demolition« go the rounds, urban mobility plans and city strategies are adopted … although the gaping holes in the municipal budget make it seem ever more unlikely that the pressing tasks of today will actually be solved. But did these problems of infrastructure really fall from the heavens or are thoroughly worldly hands at work? And with a little more insight, could we perhaps identify what inherited burdens we could collectively relinquish for once? Are innovation and posturing less the key to success than the opposite, namely ex-novation, unlearning, renunciation, leave-taking. And so, Brahms' music comes back into play, intertwining the mundane and sublime, physics and metaphysics, life and death, while road construction meets the Milky Way and urban development interlaces with art. We cordially invited you to join us, so that we can undergo transformation together since, »Behold, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed«. (For further information about the dates of performances see Kolumba's homepage; tickets are only available on the Schauspiel Köln website.)

Art and science, research and teaching are free.

Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949, Article 5, para. 3

Room 17

Terry Fox *Left Sided Sleeper's Dream* 1981, performance, 28. November 1981, 1 o'clock, Foyer of Graz Opera House, audio-recording 09:53 mins., concept paper, b/w photograph by Gery Wolf (exhibition copy)

Left-Sided Sleeper's Dream was made for the foyer of the opera house in Graz: In the context of the *Steirischer Herbst*, after a performance of the two operas of Sergei Prokofiev on 28 November 1981, there was a »Night of the Opera«. Terry Fox borrowed a kettledrum from the orchestra and in a performance lasting just about 10 minutes brought to life not only the space and its noble neo-baroque architecture but also caused the audience to throb. Inspired by Antonin Artaud's »Theatre of Cruelty«, Terry Fox created a situation whose intensity and urgency we can hardly escape even today.

Radio Volksempfänger Mod. 301 Dyn G. Schaub Apparatebau, 1933 design by **Walter Maria Kersting** (1892–1970) Bakelite casing (donated by Werner Schriefers)

When in May 1924 the results of the German federal election were made public, this was broadcast on public radio equipment, which at short notice had been mounted in the window of the radio station of the *Berliner Lokal Anzeiger* at Potsdamer Platz. Thus, this picture of the vacuum tube loudspeaker, which addressed an almost immeasurable number like a star, demonstrates the effectiveness of new devices at the onset of their technical development. The radio soon found its way into the home with the promise of information, education and entertainment for all social classes at low cost. The »people's receiver«, the *Volksempfänger VE 301* is regarded as a symbol of the ubiquitous standardisation that was just gathering momentum. The original model from 1928 was developed by Walter Maria Kersting according to the motto »modern means moderation« and became the most important propaganda instrument for the National Socialists as of 1933. Its name means what it says: the type category *VE 301* refers to the day Hitler seized power on 30 January 1933. Given that all manufacturers

were required by the state to produce identical radios and to hold the price at the lowest level, the standardised device had a normative impact. After 1945 the *VE 301* was taken out of circulation and the industry obliged to avoid any hint of similarity to its design. (Thomas Schriefers).

Joseph Beuys *Untitled* Munition chest with *Kreuz mit Sonne* (Cross with sun), 1947/48; spruce trunk and miner's lamp, 1953

The two found objects and two small sculptures grouped together confront us with a heap of ambivalences. The signs of wear and tear are of prime importance, as they help to define what the things mean more precisely. The spruce trunk is dead Nature and at the same time, in its current state, can be read as what is left of a Christmas tree. Thus, it should be a discarded symbol of light, life and peace, but it looks more like a weapon or a spear in view of the mysteriously threatening pointed end like a wooden stake. The traces of usage on the wooden case suggest various possible original functions, somewhere between a treasure chest and a coffin, until one discovers the »label«, which gives precise information: »army munitions«. Does the tree as a Christian symbol prevent the chest from being opened, or is it ineffectual, given that the chest is already empty, because its contents have already reached »soft targets«? The two bronze sculptures made previously are nailed to the two found objects: firstly, a crucifix bending double with pain, its head wreathed with grapes, topped by a sun-wheel and secondly, a crystalline form hovering above the spiral-shaped centre of the wheel, to which a monstrance-like disc is attached. Just as the bipolar combination of the four parts culminate in the intermediate space between the *Berglampe* (miner's lamp) and *Kreuz mit Sonne* (Cross with sun), in the cosmic force field, so the evocative power of Beuys' sculpture oscillates between hope and resignation, between life and death. The energy potential of related objects and their ambivalent symbolism is what gives his art its politically explosive impact to this day.

Room 18

In the gallery space
Philipp Wewerka (*1965 in St. Louis, Missouri/USA, lives in Weißenseifen in the Eifel), all: ***Untitled*** undated, pencil/coloured crayon on paper (in an exhibition display based on a design by Ivan Geddert and Camillo Grewe, realized by Philipp Höning and Carl Siepen)

The Greek verb *graphein* (Greek: γράφειν) means something like to write or to draw. It can even mean to paint – the common element is the moment of recording, writing or describing. I think *Graphein* with its felicitous ambiguity applies rather well to what Philipp Wewerka succeeds in doing in his artistic work. His brightly coloured and yet constructively stringent drawings describe what he finds in his surroundings. Trains with totally empty carriages, huge ships with individually drawn windows, buses illuminated at night, heavily laden fruit trees. The *Eurofighter Typhoon* developed in the 1990s by the arms industries of Germany, Italy, Spain and Great Britain is also to be seen. Yet the drawings also bring into the open what Wewerka finds within himself. Words attract ever more words, which, like beads in a necklace, lead from the sphere of thought to the realm of formulation and communication and white paper. The inner pictures resemble the outer ones. This is thanks to the attention to detail, which is what makes them so unique and rich, so multifaceted and multicoloured (»bluegreenyelloworange-redbrownlilacpinksilvergreywhite«). In this activity of drawing/writing the artist is always physically present and his presence can be felt, the lines track his movements (the print of his hand, the connectivity of his arms and torso), his meandering thoughts, and desires. The pictures with writing are especially emphatic as he not only uses repetition but addresses them to his mother Ingrid (Wewerka) as epistles. The urgency conveyed by these sheets is also evident in the way the formats of the paper are exceeded and the double-sided painting of the same. Thus, the sheets come alive as vibrant objects, like conversation partners, communicating to us something of the energy that the artist has inscribed in them. Philipp Wewerka is 60 years old this year, a fitting occasion for us to

exhibit most of the works on paper in our possession and two of his notebooks. (From 9 October to 8 February 2026 the Forum für Gestaltung in Magdeburg is showing the exhibition *Seltenland*, in which Philip Wewerka's work is put in the context of contemporary artists and writers.)

In the display table
Philipp Wewerka ***2 artist's notebooks*** both 2011, lead pencil, coloured crayon and felt-tip pen on paper, thread binding, 34 pages | ***Bruges Book of the Hours*** Master of Saint-Omer 421, Bruges, 1475–1480 (donated by Renate König)

Book of Hours are private books for prayer and devotion that were commissioned by rich nobles who were capable of reading. They are mostly small and easy to handle and they structured the day of the believer through hourly prayers. The intimacy of the format and the damage to the miniatures lead to the conclusion that there was a close relationship between the supplicant and the book. It is possible that particular places were touched by the fingers during prayers.

On the wall
Victoria Bell ***DECIPHERMENT*** 1981, pencil on paper | ***Kerr Blackhole in Indian Cosmos – 4*** 1979, pencil and gouache on paper | ***USING A MODEL FOR UNCONNECTED SLICES OF 3D SPACE IN A 4D SPACE-JORDAN*** 1979, pencil, chalk and gouache on paper | ***ELEMANTARY PARTICLES – YEIA*** 1980 | ***RADIANT ORIGIN*** 1980 each in pencil on paper | ***Neutrino*** 2022, oil and acrylic on canvas | ***Night flights*** 1993 | ***RACING*** 2005, each in pencil and oil on paper | ***Colère Natur*** 2022 | ***Pleistocene*** 2022, each in oil and acrylic on canvas | ***Untitled*** 1974 | ***Development of mechanical ability*** 1975, each in pencil on paper

The lonely landscapes and deserts and the vast sky of south-western America may well have become inscribed in the work of Victoria Bell. In the 1960s, the 20-year-old became interested in Land Art. The best-known representatives of this art movement,

Room 18

Michael Heizer and Walter de Maria, did not provide landscape with art, but aimed to realise works that engaged with landscape. Ecological awareness and the consumerism of the burgeoning big cities were also crucial for these trends. Victoria Bell brought this approach with her to Europe in 1969 and went on to develop her own distinctive work – in Cologne from 1969 (»because of the Romanesque churches«, V.B.). Her interest in the universe and its cosmic powers was already evident in her early drawings, along with the laws of physics, matter and the warping of time, which hypothesise non-linearity. Her imagery speaks of the precarious equilibrium in Nature and leads us way back into prehistoric times (*Pleistocene*), while at the same time and self-evidently imagining a utopian future (*Colère Natur*). Victoria Bell's fascination with technology, but humble respect for Nature, informs her efforts to bring the elements into balance; she warns against the hubris of the feasible and calls for creation to be protected. While the early sheets are conceptual using basic artistic means (pencil, watercolour), the most recent works are imbued with opulent and baroque colourfulness, which bear the imprint of European painting tradition and with their loose brushwork testify to great freedom and delight in experimentation.

Room 19

Victoria Bell ***Fliegende Lokomotive*** (Flying Locomotive) 2005, red cedarwood, glued, plywood, steel and stainless steel

Thinking big through time is characteristic of Victoria Bell's sculptural practice. This involves huge tree trunks which the artist works on using manual tools such as hand saw, axe, hammer and chisel, without the aid of machinery. The idea of the tree with its anthropomorphic verticality and strength is of prime importance to her. She employs red cedar from western North America and Canada, but only in the form of squared timber (in contrast to oak and elm), because she wants to leave the thick trunks to the »First Nations« for whom the tree has a spiritual significance and is associated with healing, protection from disease and renewal. She joins the wooden bars together carefully with wooden dowels, so that they point in very different directions like branches. Individual features like knotholes, annual rings (= visible evidence of the spacetime of a gravitational field) and patterns of wood grain are integrated into the work process. In this sense, the artist works on what Nature has already created. Although she develops concepts with the help of preliminary drawings and models for visualisation, she often changes her mind during the work process. As she noted in 2011, the process is open and gives rise to new ideas. Working with her hands sets a rhythm that depends on how energetic her handling is, allowing her enough time to engage with the qualities of the wood and to evolve her ideas. The handmade marks remain visible and form a finely-nuanced tactile surface. Given that she always works by herself, she is reliant on aids such as wedges, round logs, and a portable crane that, given her detailed knowledge of physical mechanics, enable her to shift heavy items. This manner of working allows her maximum autonomy and freedom. The industrial steel offers a counterpoint to the natural material and is attached loosely by the artist to the wooden frame using shaped rods, beams and panels. Spatial and temporal models in physics provide the theoretical basis for monumental sculptures. Almost all of them address the theme of movement, as does *Flying Locomotive*.

Victoria Bell, 1988

Something in the universe is always irretrievably lost – one cannot go back along the same path.

It weighs a ton and yet is as light as an insect, thus giving wings to our imagination and capturing the impossible in a work of art.

Walter Ophey (Eupen 1882 – 1930 Düsseldorf) ***Kalkwerk bei Hochdahl*** (Limeworks at Hochdahl) ca. 1928, oil on canvas

Walter Ophey from Düsseldorf was one of the artistic pioneers of Classical Modernism in Rhineland. He died at the young age of only 47, while in the midst of formulating his main work. As the painter and art critic Otto Freundlich wrote, one could »only ever expect rejuvenations« from him, which is why his paintings from the 1920s are especially revealing. Ophey belonged to a generation who, even before the First World War, were radically re-evaluating Christian iconography. This is the context in which, from 1919, he set about reconciling Nature and Technology in pictures with unusual subject matter. In Ophey's landscapes, railway lines crisscross in the distance; they were regarded at that time as being just as much of an eyesore as our wind turbines are today. The artist offers close-up renderings of bulldozers and cranes in the foreground, transforms building sites and anthropomorphizes technical devices with titles such as *Lonely Locomotive*. In his early work, although faced with considerable opposition, he put into effect the intrinsic value of colour as a content bearer, independent of the motif. He surrounded the *Limeworks at Hochdahl* – which were actually covered in whitish-grey dust – with unadulterated blue like a cathedral to technology against a rainbow-coloured sky, the symbol of god's covenant with humankind. (Gen. 9.8-16/1.Moses 9).

Room 20

Susanne Kümpel *UHR SOFA TEPPISCH* (CLOCK SOFA CARPETT) 2011, acrylic and oil pastel on paper

Which objects and items do I have a personal or close relationship with? How do they fit into my home? In her colourful work with perspectival simultaneity, Susanne Kümpel gives us a glimpse of a living room – her own, as she explained in conversation. A decorative interior space opens up which is put in order by the inserted writing by which she affectionately »calls things by their names«. Although a table or a chair might seem obvious and mundane, for Susanne Kümpel they have personal and multifaceted significance and even appear animated in her depiction of them.

Joanna Pietrowska (*1985 Warsaw; lives in London) ***Untitled***
5 works from the series *Shelters*, 2016/17, all b/w photographs, silver gelatine prints, printed 2020

In her series *Shelters* that Joanna Pietrowska realised over many years, she asked people in various cities to make provisional constructions in their own homes for her to photograph as »shelters«. This playful childish making of dugouts, castles and fortresses resulted in fabulous architectural structures in which the artist could precisely stage her models. Each space being put together in an individual manner and containing personal items, the shelters pose questions about identity and self-image: what emotions and meanings are evoked by the objects that surround me? How do I make space my own and create a feeling of security and protection? Some of the make-shift shelters are stable and symmetrical, while others appear fragile and mysterious or uncomfortable and constrained. The large lethargic positioned bodies with their inexpressive faces are unnerving and leave open the question of why there is a need for protection in the interior of the private space. The concentrated black-and-white photographs capture the architectural structures and their performative genesis; their spatial constructive character is marked in the exhibition space by the colourful framing.

Room 20

Herbert Hirche (*1910 Görlitz – 2002 Heidelberg) Music cabinet ***HM 5*** 1957, Braun, Frankfurt am Main, wooden cabinet, teak, walnut (donated by Werner Schriefers)

Herbert Hirche's design for a music cabinet *HM5* for Braun is based on the tradition of concealing technical apparatus in a compact piece of furniture, a concept derived from the coffer or trunk. The music cabinet is made of high-grade wood and has a prestigious appearance. The corpus rests on a delicate steel base in keeping with the constructive play with mass and lightness in Modernist architecture with which Herbert Hirche was familiar as a Bauhaus student of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Room 21

Bernhard Cella *Ein Jahrhundert der verletzten Männer* (A Century of Injured Men) Vienna 2022 art book, offset printing (for use as teaching material for alternative teaching of history in Grammar School sixth form at private and state schools.

»Bernhard Cella's panopticon of convalescent men does not only demonstrate an iconography of medical progress and a typology of the mis-en-scène of those about to return to everyday life. It exposes a flaw in each presentation contradicting the image of vital, unadulterated and impregnable masculinity. The moment when the accident, the wounding, or the war injury occurred, when no camera was available, is invariably captured nonetheless by each photographic image. The insistence on quietness, slowing down, naturalness and light-heartedness for the camera lens cannot disguise this truth. Or as Paul Virilio put it, ›images are ammunition, cameras are weapons.‹« (Roland Fischer-Briand)

Ecce homo Cologne, ca. 1460–1500, limewood with four paintlayers (restored with the support of the Renate König-Stiftung)

The almost life size figure of the prisoner Jesus presented to the crowd by the Roman ruler Pontius Pilate (behold the man!) served as a devotional image without being connected to an altar. This figure type was deliberately removed from its scenic context. A desire for personal identification with the events of the Passion was particularly widespread in the Netherlands and the Lower Rhine. The drastic exposition of extreme torture and utter humiliation makes the overcoming of His subsequent death by crucifixion through resurrection appear all the more significant. Comparable figures are to be found in two Cologne churches: the Basilica of the Holy Apostles and Great Saint Martin Church. The addition to the back of the loincloth is solely due to the lack of material from the tree trunk used.

Room 21

Paul Thek *Plumed Serpent*, 1969, coloured chalk on school blackboard

In a fictive interview Paul Thek made with himself, he named D. H. Lawrence as his favourite writer alongside Susan Sonntag. The *Plumed Serpent*, a novel by D. H. Lawrence published in 1926, is about the Aztec god Quetzalcóatl, who withdrew when the European invaders seized land and power in order to »relinquish political and spiritual dominance to Jesus and his mother«. After being regenerated through a long sleep of death, Quetzalcóatl returned rejuvenated and replaced the European god, thus leading the Mexicans back to their former identity. Paul Thek was probably fascinated by this idea of death and resurrection, given that these concepts define many of his works. *Plumed Serpent* does not seem to portray a live snake, but be more concerned with its shed skin as a testimony to a transformation that was completed in water. *Plumed Serpent* dates from the late 1960s and is part of the work cycle *Blackboards*, along with the board *Two Tailed Whale* (also in our collection) a rendering of toadstools in the ocean, a seemingly endless expanse of water and the globe sinking into the sea: the *Blackboards* appear to address the theme of water as an element and the sea as a topos loaded with mythological significance. The large 3-part blackboard triptych is formally reminiscent of medieval altarpieces, while at the same time placing the chalk drawing in the context of learning and teaching. On the back of the board there are some scribbles including the quote »Hallo, I love you. Won't you tell me your name?« from the song of that title by the American band *The Doors* dating from 1968, which suggests that the folding blackboard may have come from a school classroom.

At alternating locations

Whispering
Questioning
Sparkling

Does the museum like me and me it?
Who does the museum belong to?
Does it belong to me, to you, or no one?

We are young, multilingual people and make our presence heard. Not in the background, but as resonance in space. We meet on an equal footing. We foster continuity and participation. We practice caring, connecting and sharing. We put our heart into our work – with intensity, inclusivity, as the situation demands.

this is us – THE GEMS – the precious stones: Emma, Amalia, Celine, Betiel, Shazya, Elena, Elma, Sofiya, Rama, Ecrin A., Ecrin Ö., Simone and Raimas. With Susanne Heincke and Suzanne Josek: *THE GEMS_sparkles* 2025, Audio pieces (Production: Susanne Heincke)

Exhibition

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Curational internship: Lisa Obwandner
Guest curators: Rüdiger Joppien, Andreas Speer, Manos Tsangaris
Inventory: Eva-Maria Klother
Restoration: Christina Nägler, Heike Bommes, Franziska Elbers, with: Verena Ebel, Sarah Grimberg, Katja de Grussa, Andreas Hoppmann, Helene Kuster, Andreas Weisser
Conservation archiving/Framing: Pia Bergerbusch, with: Krystyna Daniel, Philipp Höning, Lucia Tollens
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Colophon

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15. September 2025 – 14. August 2026
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Vases for floral arrangements (on loan from Keramion, Frechen)

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