

PRESS RELEASE

November 2023

THE NEW KUNSTPALAST

From 21 November 2023

The reinvention of a museum and its collection: over the past three years, the Kunstpalast has been completely renovated. When Felix Krämer became general director in 2017, he took the building's urgent need for refurbishment as an opportunity to totally redesign both the layout and the content of the 5000-square-metre tour of the permanent collection. Thanks to the generous support of the City of Düsseldorf, which has invested over 50 million euros in the renovation project, his vision of a modern, open museum that makes everyone feel welcome – regardless of their age or prior knowledge of art history – has been realised.

Many visitors will hardly recognise the Kunstpalast behind its historic façade: from 21 November 2023, following extensive renovation, refurbishment and modernisation works, the museum's collection will be presented in an entirely new light in rooms designed to the latest standards. Out of the approximately 130,000 objects owned and stored by the Kunstpalast, around 800 works from 11 centuries will be on display here. Whether miniature or monumental works, everyday objects or precious ornaments, plastic or porcelain, drawings or interactive VR installations – the selection of works unites exhibits from all genres.

Across 49 rooms, the chronological tour of the collection encompasses everything from medieval art and the collection's nineteenth-century highlights through to contemporary art. Alongside big names, works by lesser-known artists are also on display; some of these have never been exhibited before or have only recently been acquired. Works by women artists, who are notably underrepresented in historical collections, are given special prominence here.

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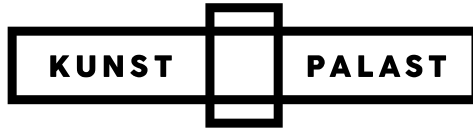
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The collection on display explores the relevance of historical and contemporary art, establishing connections to current themes and demonstrating the similarities between works that at first glance seem very different although they were created at the same time – beyond categorisations based on historical style and regardless of their origin. This is evident in the selection and presentation of the works: sculptures of the Virgin Mary, statues of Buddha, VW Beetles, Christo's oeuvre, a Boro kimono and a painting by Max Liebermann are all placed on an equal pedestal.

"The needs and questions of museum visitors today are no longer the same as they were ten or twenty years ago. Keeping a close eye on these changes and responding to them is a key challenge that we face. Our aim is to see things from the public's perspective and to appeal to people who haven't been visiting museums since they were children," says Felix Krämer, general director of the Kunstpalast. The new concept for the collection, designed by Krämer together with curators Felicity Korn and Westrey Page, offers a fresh look at the museum's holdings. Many questions were asked during the planning process: What are the criteria that lead to a work's inclusion in the gallery? How to navigate the tension between preserving history and engaging with the present? What information is given about the artworks and what prior knowledge is assumed? The result is a tour that presents numerous new discoveries and different perspectives.

"Visiting a museum shouldn't only be educational or impressive; it should also be fun!" emphasises Felix Krämer. "It takes more than just good exhibitions to create the right overall experience – it starts with the house rules and ends with the restaurant menu."

The new Kunstpalast app adds a digital dimension to museum visits. Developed in cooperation with our digital partner ERGO, the free app combines augmented reality features with the functions of an audio guide, as well as providing additional background information and fun extras. A special audio tour of the exhibition, created

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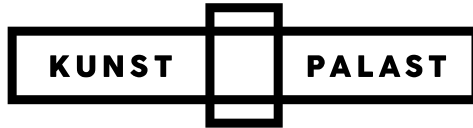
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in collaboration with the Düsseldorf-based company Tonies and playable on a Toniebox, guides children aged three to eight through the collection from one object to the next.

The internationally renowned artist and illustrator Christoph Niemann has exclusively designed rooms for the Kunstpalast that raise questions about perception and illusion for children and adults alike. And in the Palace Studio, visitors of all ages can get creative in workshops supported by our education partner Lamy.

The newly renovated inner courtyard, including the restaurant Anna Maria, makes the new Kunstpalast a place where visitors can enjoy spending time.

From 21 November, all art fans, culture enthusiasts and anyone who is simply curious can see the new Kunstpalast and explore the collection for themselves – with free admission for the first week.

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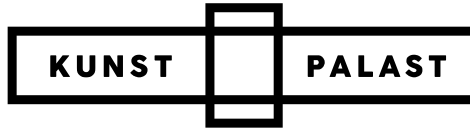
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Architecture

Sieber Architekten were awarded the contract for the renovation project after a Europe-wide call for tenders. Together with Felix Krämer and the Kunstpalast team, their plan was to unite the two parts of the Kunstpalast building – the collection wing and the exhibition wing – and to create a route through the exhibition that meets the requirements of a twenty-first-century museum. With its complex floor plan, the new layout of the collection rooms in the Kunstpalast differs from classic museum architecture, which uses opulent sightlines and clearly structured main and side rooms to classify the collection from the outset. There is no such layout in the Kunstpalast. With a plain, minimalist design, the exhibition architecture aims to take visitors on a journey through the Kunstpalast's collection, which is full of surprises. At the same time, it avoids a hierarchichal arrangement of the exhibits.

Both the permanent collection and the temporary exhibitions are now accessed via the main entrance and the central foyer. This gives the collection greater visibility and enhances its value. There are also new event spaces, such as the Anna Maria restaurant in the historic corridor between the wings and the Belvedere above with its unique view across the Ehrenhof to the concert hall. Sweeping staircases and newly uncovered windows make for bright, open and friendly spaces. "From the outside, there might not be many visible changes, but behind the old building façade, hardly anything has been left untouched during the renovation process," explains Joachim Sieber, whose architectural firm planned and realised the new Kunstpalast. "It was a unique challenge and experience to keep the existing shell of the building while completely redesigning the interior."

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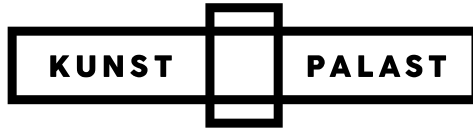
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Highlights and Special Features of the New Kunstpalast

The Rhino Palace – Christoph Niemann Designs Collection Rooms for Children

There is also plenty for children to discover in the new tour of the museum's collection: the internationally renowned artist and illustrator Christoph Niemann has exclusively developed five unique rooms for the Kunstpalast, which are spread throughout the entire collection and are specially designed for young visitors. In the Rhino Palace, children can embark on a voyage of discovery that tests the limits of their perception and allows them to playfully take over the museum.

Behind small doors with low-placed handles, a museum world especially for children awaits: pens that take on a life of their own, a fountain pen that draws stairs and a tunnel of flowing lights with something unexpected hiding at the end. Christoph Niemann has designed a wide variety of fun, creative and surprising optical illusions for children of all ages and the adults accompanying them. Using graphic elements, projections and light, he plays with perspectives, proportions and movement. The message behind Niemann's works is that seeing is always an interpretive act and that perception is a creative process – this changes the way we look at art.

The Kunstpalast is the first art museum to integrate children's spaces directly into its collection tour and views the Rhino Palace as an invitation for families to visit the museum together.

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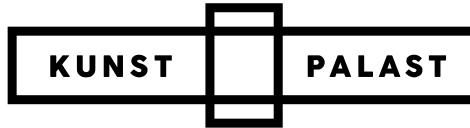
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Reconstruction of the Legendary Creamcheese

The new presentation of the Kunstpalast collection also features a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, which has its origins in Düsseldorf: Creamcheese, which opened near the art academy in 1967, was Europe's first club and a meeting place for the local art and music scene. The bar area of this legendary pub has been reconstructed in the Kunstpalast, including the original works by Günther Uecker, Gerhard Richter, Daniel Spoerri and other artists that were on display there at the time. Part of the collection tour during regular opening hours, on Fridays and Saturdays the Creamcheese room also invites visitors to stay late into the evening with drinks and music from the 1960s and 1970s.

After its closure in 1978, the Kunstpalast acquired the artistic interior of Creamcheese. The bar area has now been reconstructed here in detail and in close collaboration with the artists Günther Uecker, Heinz Mack and the estate of Ferdinand Kriwet. The idea for the bar came to the artist Günther Uecker after a trip in New York, where he had visited Andy Warhol and his club The Dom. Uecker wanted to create a similar venue in Düsseldorf for dancing, drinking and presenting experimental art of all genres. He developed the programme for Creamcheese, which was run by Hans-Joachim and Bim Reinert at Neubrückestraße 12 in Düsseldorf's old town, and invited other artists to decorate the bar. The regular programme consisted of projections of slides and films as well as lighting and acoustic effects. This was complemented by numerous artistic events and live concerts by artists such as Frank Zappa, CAN and later the band Kraftwerk.

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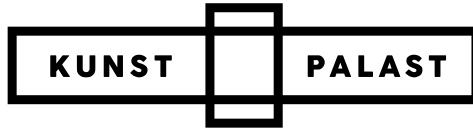
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The Kunstpalast App: Experience Art in Multiple Dimensions

Developed in cooperation with our digital partner ERGO, the Kunstpalast app now offers visitors an immersive, enhanced art experience. Available free of charge, the app enables visitors to experience works of art from the collection using augmented reality, combining learning and fun at the same time: while some features provide additional information on individual works, others are designed to amaze with surprising special effects. This is the first time that a German art museum has combined augmented reality, audio guides and other digital content in an app on such a large scale: more than 100 of the artworks on display can be experienced as part of the digitally enhanced tour of the collection, while 20 works are available to explore using augmented reality on their own special tour. For younger museum visitors in particular, these digital offerings often represent an important way of accessing the museum.

With the augmented reality features in the the new Kunstpalast app, visitors can see the real work of art on their phone first, but can also view additional digital animations and visual elements. For example, for the four-metre-high monumental gate in the first collection room, augmented reality is used to present the latest findings on its origins: visitors can use the app to learn about the history of how this object was created, which is invisible to the naked eye. In addition to these augmented reality features, 60 audio recordings, 25 videos and 100 high-resolution images of individual artworks can be accessed via the app. This makes the app a comprehensive, interactive guide for all visitors. In the medium term, the app will also replace the existing audio guides that can be loaned for temporary exhibitions.

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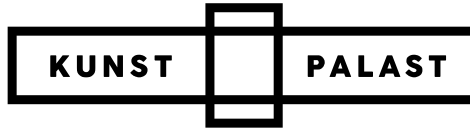
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Rhino Tour: An Audio Guide for Children

There is so much for children to discover in the new Kunstpalast: an audio tour that can be played on a Toniebox introduces young visitors to 26 selected works of art in the collection through exciting and entertaining stories. The child-friendly tour of the collection guides them from one object to the next using a map designed as a treasure hunt. From the monumental gate at the beginning of the collection, it leads to Franz Xaver Messerschmidt's *Gähner* (Yawner), Max Beckmann's *Doppelbildnis Karneval* (Carnival Double Portrait) and Nam June Paik's *Fish Flies on Sky*. As the children listen attentively to the stories, they immerse themselves in each work and learn about art in a fun way.

A total of 30 Toniebox bags, each containing five figures, are available to borrow free of charge from the Kunstpalast foyer. The audio tour is designed for children aged three to eight. Each bag includes a Toniebox, the Tonie figures and a map. Plug-in headphones are also provided. The Tonie symbols are also shown next to the relevant artworks for guidance. Listen up and off you go!

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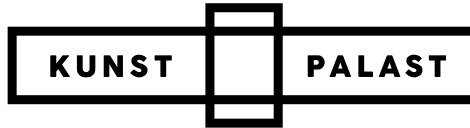
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Palace Studio

At the Kunstpalast, we don't just exhibit art – we teach it too. Visitors are regularly invited to try out a wide range of artistic techniques in practical workshops. With the reopening of the collection, the cultural education workshops are now presented in a new location with a revised concept: the Palace Studio is a 350-square-metre, light, open and accessible space for working and thinking that combines a studio and a media lab, a darkroom and a discussion venue. Integrated into the route through the exhibition, these rooms are now a central part of the museum's work and visible to all. The museum's education partner, C. Josef Lamy GmbH, is the new sponsor of this meeting place for artistic and creative exchange.

The Palace Studio is a key venue and an important part of the Kunstpalast. Giving it more visibility was a top priority for general director Felix Krämer. From now on, this is a place for visitors to paint and draw in direct dialogue with the works of art. Shortly after the reopening, a six-part workshop series aimed at teenagers and young adults will be launched in cooperation with Lamy. Whether journaling, comic drawing, design or calligraphy – every two months, anyone who is interested is invited to try out new techniques at the Kunstpalast.

The Palace Studio is a place for challenging the traditional art canon, changing perspectives and discussing current ideas – a goal that the Kunstpalast shares with its educational partner Lamy.

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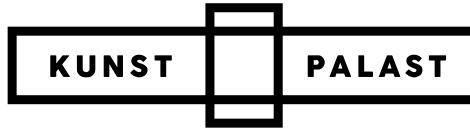
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Palace Pilots

How do you appeal to people who haven't been visiting museums since they were children? And how do you get the people of Düsseldorf excited about their museum? In 2020, the Kunstpalast issued a public call for the Palace Pilots group, who were invited and encouraged to contribute their ideas and play an active role in the new presentation of the collection – regardless of their level of prior knowledge about art and museums. All participants needed were curiosity and a desire to get involved. Düsseldorfers from a variety of age groups and professional backgrounds now present their view of the collection in their own room of the museum.

Kunstpalast Digital Art Dome

As part of the new presentation, the museum entrance area will also be given an artistic makeover: changing video art projections by local and international artists will be on display in the main foyer and visible across all floors, welcoming museum visitors as soon as they enter. A new work will be created every six months for the Kunstpalast dome, which is over 13 metres in diameter. The site-specific video artworks will become part of the Kunstpalast's Time-Based Media Collection. Whether inspired by ceiling murals or artificial intelligence, the works shown will be categorised by extraordinary aesthetics and unusual narratives. This opportunity at the Kunstpalast offers young media artists in particular greater visibility and a platform for experimentation. Johannes Bendzulla (b. 1984 in Saarbrücken), a photo and video artist who trained at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, will kick things off.

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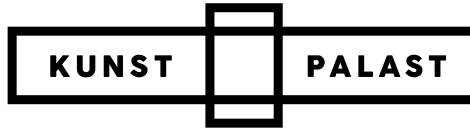
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About the Kunstpalast Collection

The Kunstpalast collection is divided into seven sections: the Picture Gallery, the Collection of Prints and Drawings, Sculpture and Applied Art, Glass, Modern Art, Photography and Time-Based Media. The Picture Gallery houses European paintings from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century and is based on the Picture Gallery of Elector Palatinate Johann Wilhelm. The Düsseldorf School of Painting is a particular focal point of the collection.

The Collection of Prints and Drawings contains around 80,000 drawings and prints dating from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century. This encompasses the historical collection of the Düsseldorf Art Academy, which also features paintings – including two large-format works by Rubens – as well as numerous works on paper.

The holdings of the Sculpture and Applied Art Collection span the period from the Middle Ages to the present day. They contain items of furniture, everyday objects and numerous exhibits of various genres.

With around 13,000 exhibits, the world-renowned Glass Collection presents the history of glass from antiquity to contemporary studio glass. This section of the collection will open separately, in early summer, although individual objects from the collection are already on display in the current exhibition.

The Modern Art Collection includes paintings, sculptures and installations from the twentieth century to the present day.

The Photography Collection only became its own department within the collection in 2018, when the Kunstpalast acquired Galerie Kicken's holdings of over 3000 photos. It also comprises the Archiv künstlerischer Fotografie der rheinischen Kunstszene (AFORK; Archive of Artistic Photography from the Rhenish Art Scene).

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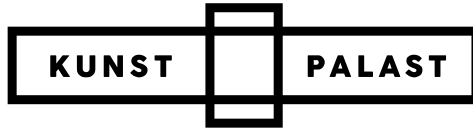
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The Time-Based Media Collection was founded in 2022 and preserves video art and technology-based works such as augmented and virtual reality.

The museum's collection is extensive, with around 130,000 objects from 11 centuries, various continents and all eras and genres. In addition to the historical holdings of the Düsseldorf Art Academy, other significant contributions to the main collection are the works from the Willi Kemp Foundation and those donated by Wolfgang Hanck.

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