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Frieze

Critics' Guides /

The Best Shows to See in Dusseldorf



BY STANTON TAYLOR

15 NOV 2018

With Art Dusseldorf in town your guide to the shows not to miss



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Ulrike Müller, Diavolaki, 2018, monotype, 74 x 57 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

Ulrike Müller, 'Container'

Kunstverein Düsseldorf <<https://frieze.com/event/ulrike-muller-0>>

15 November 2018 – 17 February 2019

'Container' at the Kunstverein Düsseldorf marks Ulrike Müller's first institutional show in Germany. The current presentation sees Müller expand her painterly interests in colour and

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composition into a variety of new media – including enamels, rugs, collages, and monotypes – as well as the exhibition space itself. Müller’s formal language draws heavily on the vocabularies of 20th century modernist abstraction. Yet her pointedly warm palette and crafty materials suggest more of a smirking, sidelong engagement with this tradition – a kind of engagement that has itself, by now, become its own kind of tradition – as opposed to outright endorsement. Indeed, Müller toes the line so well it’s hard to know whether she’s up to no good, or just smiling.

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Alain Dupéron, *Reconstruction of the 'Palais Idéal' by Ferdinand Cheval*, installation view, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2018.
Background: Armand Schulthess, *Enzyklopädie im Wald*, 1952–72. Courtesy: © J. Paul Getty Trust. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; photograph: Katja Illner

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Harald Szeemann

Kunsthalle Düsseldorf <<https://frieze.com/event/harald-szeeman-0>>

13 October 2018 – 20 January 2019

Across the hall, the Kunsthalle has devoted three rooms to an overview of the life and work of Harald Szeemann, the curator who, perhaps more so than any other individual, gave rise to the figure of the curator as meta-artist. Interestingly enough, the Kunsthalle devotes relatively little space to Szeemann's landmark exhibitions, such as 'Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form' or documenta 5. Instead, the heavily archival exhibition strives for a balanced presentation of Szeemann's achievements, which inevitably charts his journey away from contemporary art and towards the figure of the utopian visionary, with a surprising excursus into esotericism. Overall, it doesn't spend much time recapitulating Szeemann's well-documented historical influence, but rather illustrates in great detail his uncanny ability to curate, well, anything.



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Lutz Bacher, *What's Love Got to Do With It*, 2018, installation view, K21, Dusseldorf. Courtesy: the artist and K21, Dusseldorf

Lutz Bacher

K21 <<https://frieze.com/event/lutz-bacher-3>>

7 September 2018 – 6 January 2019

After a brief month of renovations – and years of languishing in the shadow of its sister institution, the K20 – the K21 recently reopened its doors under the new directorship of Susanne Gaensheimer and seems well poised to redeem the director's promises of a 'sharpened' institutional profile. The current display offers two large scale solo presentations. Half of the museum's second floor is devoted to the fragmentary, and at times frustrating, multimedia installation *What's Love Got to Do With It* (2018) by Lutz Bacher. Bacher's presentation weaves together fragments of political nausea with cheap commodities and thoroughly alienating moments of grandeur by way of Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, producing an effect that is as inscrutable as it is indelible.



Cao Fei, 2018, installation view, K21, Dusseldorf. Courtesy: the artist and K21, Dusseldorf

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Cao Fei

K21 <<https://frieze.com/event/cao-fei>>

6 October 2018 – 13 January 2019

At the same time, the museum's labyrinthine basement spaces are devoted to a dizzying retrospective by Cao Fei – who has also co-curated the current show at the Julia Stoscheck Collection across town – which spans the artist's work from 1995 to 2017. Admittedly, Cao's videos are at the heart of this presentation, moving between familiar documentary idioms and fully rendered excursions into the virtual world of Second Life. Fei's consistent focus on everyday life affords viewers anecdotal portraits of the changes that swept through China following the economic reforms of the 1970s and '80s, which are all the more compelling for their idiosyncrasies. Meanwhile, the museum's characteristic 'artists' rooms' presentations have been rehung to emphasize the more international aspects of the collection, featuring the likes of Jeff Wall, Robert Gober, and Wael Shawky alongside more renowned regional offerings, such as Thomas Schütte and Rosemarie Trockel.



Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *YGRG159: SULK*, 2018, performed by Belle Santos, Petros Touloudis and Hara Kiri at ANTI-6th Athens Biennale, 2018. Courtesy: the artists and Lucas Hirsch, Düsseldorf

Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, 'I get those goosebumps every time you come around'

Lucas Hirsch Gallery <<https://frieze.com/event/dorota-gaweda-and-egle-kulbokaite>>

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17 November – 21 December 2018

Better known as the initiators of the Young Girl Reading Group, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė present an installation based on the video documentation of their recent performance *YGRG159: SULK* (2018), at 'ANTI' the 6th Athens Biennial. Gone are the days of 'No documentation!' It even feels quaint to imagine something might be lost in translating the performers' 'presence' onto screens, when the 'presence' of their performers is already so heavily mediated by their phones anyway. On the other hand, it also seems to be the lossiness of this translation that Gawęda and Kulbokaitė seem to enjoy. Perhaps one reason why they have also turned to using smell as a form of documentation, a powerful stimulus that remains notoriously vague in its content and, for this reason, remains all the more difficult to control.

Advertisement

Paul Maheke
A fire circle for a public hearing



Magdalena Kita, *Absolut Vanilla* (Altar), 2018, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood, 80 x 53 cm closed; 80 x 105 cm open.

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Courtesy: the artist and Setareh Gallery, Düsseldorf

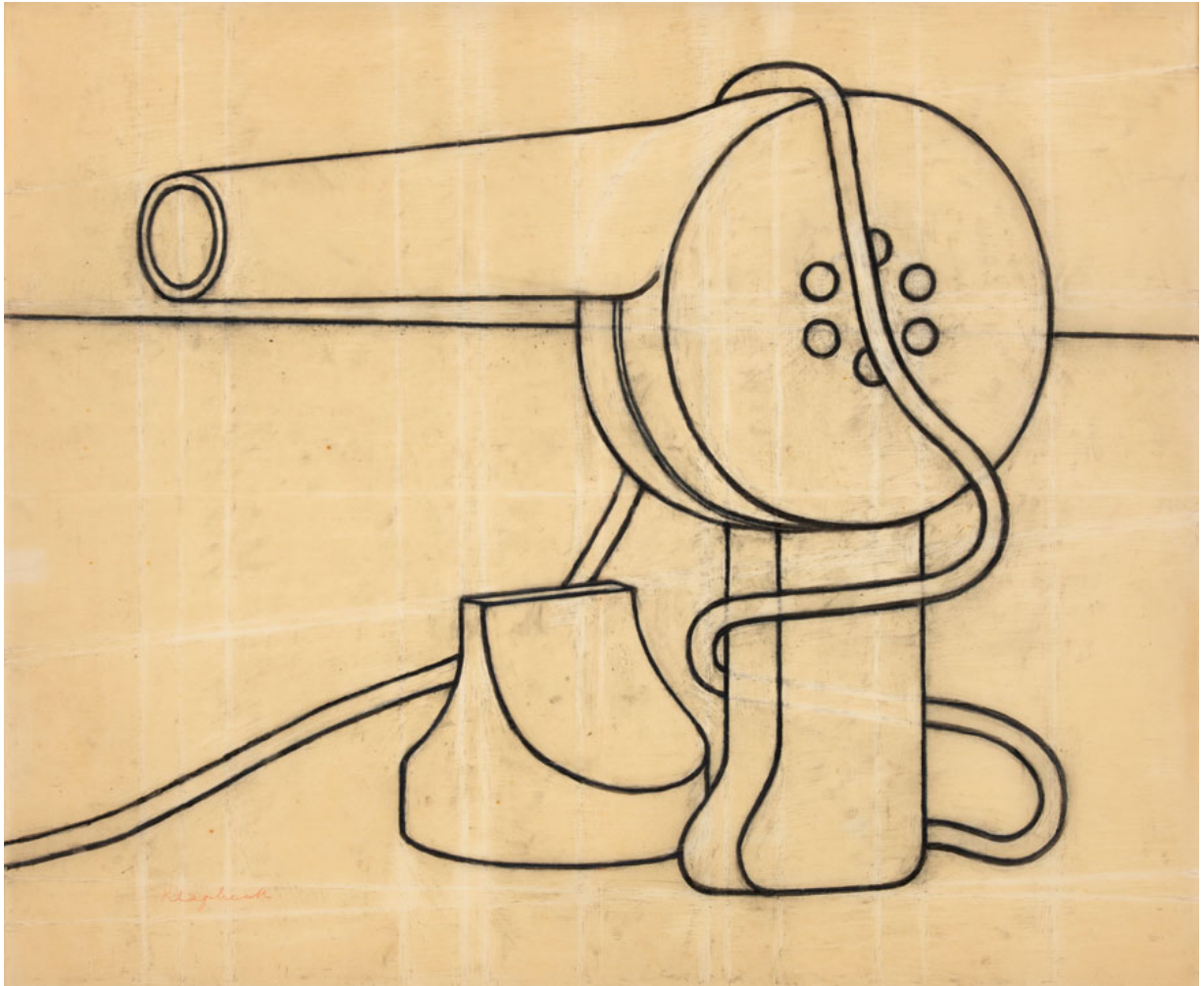
Magdalena Kita, 'Absolut Vanilla'

Setareh Gallery <<https://frieze.com/event/magdalena-kita>>

26 October – 8 December

Magdalena Kita's 'Absolut Vanilla' presents a selection of new paintings distilled from an eclectic array of references – BDSM, Art Brut, iPhones, Scientology, and counting. Based on the traditional format of icon painting, the simplistic contours, graphic flourishes, and bright colours belie their heavily laboured surfaces. Kita's motley female cast in manic cyans, magentas, and golds populate a succession of scenes that range from banal or ribald to outrightly absurd. In *Roses* (2018), for example, two curiously anime-like faces peep out from behind a rosebush as scrolling chat bubbles quote *Leviticus* 26:31 before them: '...I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas...' Strange isn't the half of it. Yes, it is difficult at any point in the exhibition to imagine what exactly might be going on here. But perhaps for eyes weary of the self-assured 'what you see is what you see' of one too many geometric abstractions, Kita's kitschier than kitsch icon panels may come as a welcome, and joyful, refreshment.

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Konrad Klapheck, *Drawing for Vor der Abfahrt*, 1993, charcoal and pencil on tracing paper, 62 x 75 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Linn Lühn Gallery, Düsseldorf

Konrad Klapheck

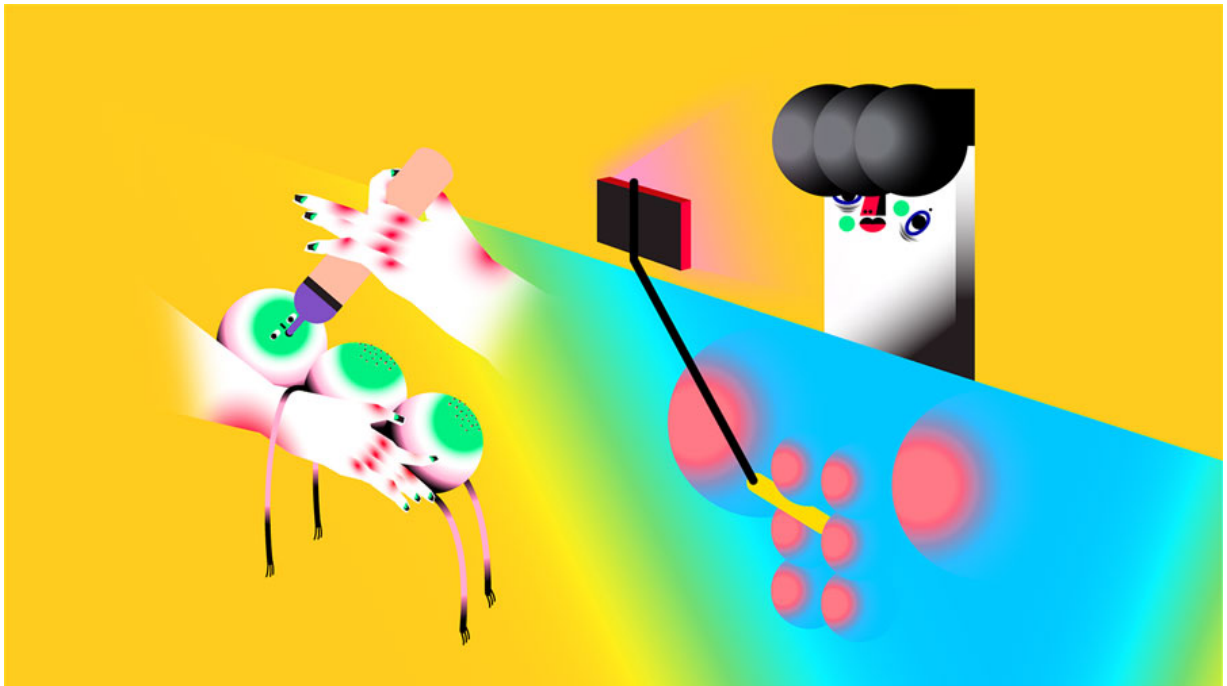
Linn Lühn Gallery <<https://frieze.com/event/konrad-klapheck>>

16 November – 20 December

For the Düsseldorf Art fair, Linn Lühn will present a selection of rarely shown drawings by veteran artist and son of the city Konrad Klapheck at her gallery on Birkenstraße. Like many German artists who came of age shortly after the war, Klapheck's paintings developed in response to the unprecedented explosion of consumer culture that accompanied the Marshall-Plan reconstruction in West Germany and the subsequent 'Economic Miracle'. Unlike his contemporaries, such as Gerhard Richter or Sigmar Polke, a large part of Klapheck's 'realism' was devoted to painstakingly dissecting and reconstructing the imagery of the then-new

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commodities with a deep-seated ambivalence, oscillating between an irresistible eroticism and thinly-veiled horror. For many years, Klapheck's drawings were seen largely as preparatory materials not meant for public viewing. Nonetheless, their layered geometric grids and laboriously reworked contours offer much insight into Klapheck's process, promising a detailed close-up of his work for existing fans and a worthwhile introduction for newcomers alike.



Wong Ping, *Who's the Daddy?*, 2017, digital video still. Courtesy: the artist and CAPRI, Düsseldorf

Wong Ping, 'Who's the Daddy?'

CAPRI <<https://frieze.com/event/wong-ping-0>>

16 November 2018 – 26 January 2019

Wong Ping's short animated films are enjoyable precisely for their lack of academic 'artiness.' Their bright colours and anachronistic graphics recall late nights plugged into adult swim and less than user-friendly segments of the internet. The humour is deadpan and surreal; the sexuality, fraught and unabashedly male. Sex is not so much about sex in Ping's animations as it is about the host of anxieties that go with it: bodily hang-ups, fragile self-images, and all-round feelings of inadequacy. But just as it so often happens, it can also become a process of self-discovery, however wretched that process might be. The exhibition's titular animation, 'Who's the daddy?' (2017), recounts the familiar enough course of a Tinder date gone spectacularly wrong. Yet for all its exaggeration, the forces at play aren't all that different

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from when you first met the last unreturned phone call. If you find yourself laughing here, it may often be because you are laughing at yourself.



'museum global. Microhistories of an Ex-centric Modernism', 2018–19, installation view, K20, Düsseldorf. Courtesy: K20, Düsseldorf

'museum global. Microhistories of an Ex-centric Modernism'

K20 <<https://frieze.com/event/museum-global>>

Until 10 March 2019

'museum global' is part of an ongoing large-scale curatorial research project based on the collection of the Kunstsammlung NRW. Focusing primarily on the collection's paintings – this is a painting show – the multi-faceted exhibition uses the transnational histories of many of the artists and works represented in the collection to focus the visitor's gaze on the development of various, nationally-specific modernisms which developed in dialogue with Europe throughout the 20th century. It begins with a grouping of 88 Paul Klee paintings which the museum bought in 1960 and subsequently exhibited around the world, then moves throughout

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various stages of the collection's history. The show often strikes a successful balance between summarizing overarching national narratives while presenting individual artistic developments. Though, it is at times hard to shirk the feeling that many of the works on display by non-European artists are being used as placeholders or shorthand illustrations in a way that their European counterparts are gladly spared of. This pitfall is perhaps inevitable given the grand format of 'exhibition as research project.' All curatorial nitpicking aside, the show offers a rare opportunity to see unparalleled works by remarkable 20th century painters whose work is scarcely accessible in Germany, including the likes Amrita Sher-Gil, Tarsila do Amaral, and David Siqueiros.

Main image: Harald Szeemann, installation view, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2018. Courtesy: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

STANTON TAYLOR

Stanton Taylor is an artist and writer based in Düsseldorf. His show together with Tobias Hohn, 'Reproduction (Coins = Smile = Food = Cry)', runs at Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf from 16 November – 21 December, 2018.

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KUNSTVEREIN DÜSSELDORF

KUNSTHALLE DÜSSELDORF

K21

K20

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