

NEW PERSPECTIVE

With the appointment of Verena Kaspar-Eisert as Director, the Heidi Horten Collection enters a new phase. The museum is conceived as an open space for thought and experience. The collection, exhibition programme and mediation are understood as equally important pillars of the institution's work. Art is not presented as a closed canon, but as a living practice with social relevance – open, accessible and in dialogue with a broad public.

The Heidi Horten Collection aims to be a place where curiosity is awakened, where the pleasure of seeing and experiencing emerges, and where the joy of engaging with art can be shared. A museum in which different perspectives coexist and enter into open dialogue – with history, with the present and with society.

— Verena Kaspar-Eisert

The starting point for this programme-oriented realignment is the existing collection of the Heidi Horten Collection. In the future, it will increasingly be read from a contemporary perspective and developed further in a targeted manner.

Historical positions enter into productive dialogue with contemporary art and current questions – particularly where art-historical narratives have so far revealed gaps or one-sided attributions.

A central concern is the visible strengthening of female positions within both the collection and the programme. Collecting is understood as a long-term, responsible process: in dealing with history, provenance and institutional power, as well as in the active shaping of future narratives. A more in-depth engagement with individual works, artists and thematic fields within the collection will be deliberately fostered. In the future, more solo exhibitions will be realised, offering comprehensive presentations and contextualisation of artists and their work.

EXPANDING THE COLLECTION

Since the early 1990s, Heidi Horten engaged intensively with art and began building her own collection. Over the course of three decades, it developed both qualitatively and quantitatively into one of the most significant private collections in Europe. Her acquisitions were always guided by the individual work. Heidi Horten lived with art and integrated it into her everyday life. This gave the collection a strongly personal character that remains formative to this day.

The collection of the Heidi Horten Collection comprises works from the 20th and 21st centuries. Its core focuses include:

German Expressionism, with outstanding paintings by, among others, Emil Nolde, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Pechstein and Erich Heckel.

American Pop Art, represented by Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Roy Lichtenstein and Keith Haring.

European post-war modernism, with works by, among others, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Gerhard Richter and Georg Baselitz.

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Contemporary art, with works by Franz West, Silvie Fleury, Jakob Lena Knebl, Birgit Jürgenssen, Anne Speier and Michel Pagel.

Today, the collection comprises around 800 works. Female positions account for just under ten percent overall; within the field of contemporary art, their share exceeds fifty percent.

The collection is owned by the HGH Asset Foundation and is made available to the Heidi Horten Collection. The Foundation conducts provenance research in accordance with the Austrian Art Restitution Act passed in 1998.

The future collection strategy builds on the existing collection, whose focal points will be further deepened in a targeted manner. A key objective is the expansion through female positions – particularly in areas where these have been underrepresented in the art-historical narratives of the 20th century. The aim is to visibly question existing canonisations and to develop the collection in a more balanced and polyphonic way over the long term.

In addition, the strategy focuses on strengthening international perspectives and increasing the international visibility of the collection. The Heidi Horten Collection understands itself as an active participant in international museum discourse and as a place of exchange between historical modernism and contemporary artistic production.

Particular importance is attached to dialogue with living artists. The collection is not conceived as a closed entity, but as a dynamic structure that grows continuously through long-term relationships, acquisitions in the context of exhibitions and the close accompaniment of artistic processes.

At the same time, the Heidi Horten Collection clearly affirms its location. Supporting Viennese and Austrian artistic production forms a further component of the collection strategy, with the aim of making local artistic positions visible within an international context.

The development of the collection thus follows an approach that combines continuity and openness: the history of the collection remains present, but is rewritten from today's perspective.

PROGRAMME 2026

ANIMALIA. Of Animals and Humans

Exhibition dates: 27 March – 30 August 2026

Press preview: 26 March 2026, 11 am

With the exhibition *Animalia. Of Animals and Humans*, the Heidi Horten Collection explores the complex relationship between humans and animals. The term *Animalia*, borrowed from biology, serves as the guiding concept for a critical examination of the human treatment of animals, as reflected in more than one hundred artworks from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Derived from *anima*, the Latin word for breath or soul, the term coined by the naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) encompasses humans and animals alike. In contrast to this model of equivalence, human interaction with animals is shaped by a pronounced hierarchy.

As the supposed “culmination of evolution,” as a rational being elevated above the animal world, humans assign ambivalent roles to animals. Artistic representations that make these different attributions visible reveal much about humanity itself; they allow conclusions to be drawn about human self-perception and

mechanisms of projection. Thus, humans are present in every image of the animal – even when they are not explicitly depicted.

The exhibition investigates the social, cultural and historical structures inscribed in representations of animals. It spans a spectrum ranging from the idea of the “human’s best friend” to anthropomorphisation and objectification, and on to exploitation. At the same time, the exhibition opens up a speculative perspective on *Animalia* as a conceptual experiment – beyond a shared biological category – proposing a model of coexistence that understands animals as fellow beings and co-actors.

Artists in the exhibition include:

Karel Appel, Cory Arcangel, Miquel Barceló, Georg Baselitz, Dominika Bednarsky, Cosima von Bonin, Rembrandt Bugatti, Marc Chagall, George Condo, Mark Dion, Jean Dufy, Gerhart Frankl, Helene Funke, Matthias Garff, August Gaul, Gelatin, Lena Henke, Damien Hirst, Edgar Honetschläger, Hörner/Antlfinger, Anna Jermolaewa, Birgit Jürgenssen, Sanna Kannisto, Gülsün Karamustafa, Erika Giovanna Klien, Stanislaw Kubicki, François-Xavier Lalanne, Maria Lassnig, Fernand Léger, Roy Lichtenstein, Angelika Loderer, Constantin Luser, Franz Marc, Sarah Morris, Alois Mosbacher, Ulrike Müller, Meret Oppenheim, Michèle Pagel, Yan Pei-Ming, Pablo Picasso, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Germaine Richier, Corinne L. Rusch, Kristof Santy, Anne Speier, Margherita Spiluttini, Curt Stenvert, Melanie Thoeni, Philipp Timischl, Wilhelm Trübner, Not Vital, Kay Walkowiak, Andy Warhol.

A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition.

Curated by: Véronique Abpurg and Annkathrin Weber

Programme highlight:

18 April, 11 am – 5 pm: *Dog Salon*. Artist Alois Mosbacher will draw live portraits of dogs. Visitors are invited to bring their dogs to be portrayed.

GOTTFRIED BECHTOLD. Concrete Porsche

Exhibition dates: 29 April – 11 October 2026

Press preview: 27 April 2026, 11 am

Gottfried Bechtold (*1947) is one of the defining figures of Austrian contemporary art. Since the late 1960s, he has developed a consistently conceptual, cross-media practice encompassing sculpture, photography, drawing, text and performative interventions in public space. His work is characterised by a precise analysis of social symbols and by questions of perception, attribution of value and the conditions of artistic production itself.

Bechtold gained international recognition in particular through his engagement with the automobile as a cultural, economic and ideological object. Since the 1970s, the car has served him as a projection surface for beliefs in progress, promises of mobility, notions of status and ideas of individual freedom.

The *Concrete Porsche* is among Bechtold’s most iconic works. The sculpture is a life-size replica of a Porsche 911, cast in solid concrete and weighing over sixteen tonnes. What normally stands for speed, elegance and technical perfection here becomes heavy, immobile and monumental. Concrete – a material associated with permanence, the construction industry and urban infrastructure – stands in radical contrast to the idea of the sports car. Bechtold thus deprives the object of its function and transforms it into a sculpture that negates mobility while simultaneously exposing its cultural glorification.

At the end of April 2026, a *Concrete Porsche* from the series *Elf Elf* (2006) will “park” in the inner courtyard of the Hanuschhof, on the so-called “Director’s parking space.” The multi-tonne sculpture subverts the

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promises of speed, freedom and individual availability associated with the automobile. Within the specific context of the courtyard, the work also unfolds a subtly ironic commentary on ownership, privilege and the hierarchical organisation of space – particularly with regard to parking spaces as markers of power and status.

Bechtold's interventions in public space are always characterised by precise placement. At first glance, the *Concrete Porsche* appears familiar, yet simultaneously unsettles through its physical presence and materiality. This ambivalence – between recognisability and alienation – is central to Bechtold's artistic strategy. His works invite viewers to reread everyday symbols and question their social meanings.

In a cabinet within the museum, complementary photographs, films and serial works will be presented, contextualising the *Concrete Porsche* and making visible Bechtold's long-standing engagement with the motif of the car, as well as with questions of reproduction, seriality and documentation. These works demonstrate that the *Concrete Porsche* is not to be understood as a singular object, but as part of an artistic conceptual space developed over decades. The sculpture will remain in the courtyard after the exhibition ends.

A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition.
Curated by: Verena Kaspar-Eisert and Rolf H. Johannsen

ELISABETH VON SAMSONOW

Exhibition dates: 19 September 2026 – 28 February 2027

Press preview: 18 September 2026, 10 am

With Elisabeth von Samsonow, the Heidi Horten Collection dedicates a major solo exhibition to an artistic-philosophical position that unfolds beyond narrow disciplinary classifications. For the first time, the multifaceted work of Elisabeth von Samsonow (*1956, Germany; living in Austria since 1995) is presented on this scale, encompassing its artistic breadth and intellectual depth.

The exhibition is conceived as a powerful, richly narrative solo presentation – a living parcours that brings together early works and recent groups of works alike. Sculptures, paintings, drawings, films and a site-specific installation make tangible an oeuvre distinguished by performative thinking, formal diversity and an interdisciplinary approach.

At the centre of Samsonow's artistic practice is an intensive engagement with the earth as a carrier of history, life, energy and collective memory. Her works draw on motifs from cultural history and translate them into a contemporary visual language. Movement – both physical and psychological – plays a central role. Samsonow's work poetically and playfully transgresses the boundaries imposed by rational systems of order, opening spaces between art, philosophy, anthropology and political thought.

A particular role is played by sculptural installations and cycles of images that revolve narratively around the Gaia myth, addressing fundamental questions of origin, body, birth, value and transformation. Many of her wooden sculptures are made from entire tree trunks, including works carved from a thousand-year-old lime tree, whose materiality makes growth and time directly perceptible.

Samsonow's visual worlds address the collective unconscious at the point where it touches nature. They draw on dream fragments and experimental perceptual patterns between diagrams and archetypal forms, inviting viewers to reconsider and reinterpret familiar images. Her works open up spaces of possibility for alternative readings of history, corporeality and community.

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The exhibition also establishes deliberate references to the collection of the Heidi Horten Collection. Works by Egon Schiele and German Expressionists are integrated and placed in relation to Samsonow's long-standing scholarly and artistic engagement with these positions.

A specially designed area for creative work by young and adult visitors is planned as an integral part of the exhibition, underscoring the open, dialogical character of the presentation.

A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition.
Curated by: Rolf H. Johannsen and Hana O. O. Haas

Programme highlights:

26 September, 11 am – 4 pm: *Pretzel Festival* – event with performances, discourse and children's programme

14 November, 4 – 7 pm: *Lantern Festival* – event with performances, discourse and children's programme

TO SHOE OR NOT TO SHOE. Warhol and Others

Exhibition dates: 20 October 2026 – 18 April 2027

Andy Warhol's graphic series *À la recherche du shoe perdu* was created in 1955 in the context of his commission to design weekly shoe advertisements for *The New York Times*. More than a dozen drawings were produced, accompanied by ironic literary references by poet Ralph Pomeroy and compiled by Warhol into a portfolio.

Taking this series as its starting point, the exhibition focuses on the women's shoe as fetish object, projection surface and subject of feminist critique. In addition to Andy Warhol, artists such as Birgit Jürgenssen, Gudrun Kampl and Lena Henke are represented with their interpretations of the shoe. Their works interrogate the object as a symbol of desire, discipline and gender roles.

Curated by: Rolf H. Johannsen

CHRISTMAS TREE 2026

Exhibition dates: 25 November 2026 – 2 February 2027

Press preview: 23 November 2026, 5 pm

With the project *Christmas Tree 2026*, the Heidi Horten Collection continues its annual invitation to contemporary artists to realise a site-specific work engaging, in the broadest sense, with the cultural, social and symbolic field of meaning surrounding the Christmas tree. As a symbol firmly embedded in public consciousness, the Christmas tree is not only a bearer of tradition and ritual, but also a projection surface for questions of community, consumption, memory, hope and transience.

This annual artistic intervention is explicitly not conceived as a decorative element, but as an invitation to critically and poetically engage with a highly charged symbol. Artists are invited to rethink the Christmas tree, to transform its form, deconstruct it or situate it within an expanded social, political or ecological context.

Through the annually changing artistic approaches, an ongoing series emerges that connects the traditional rhythm of the year with contemporary artistic questions.

The artist invited for *Christmas Tree 2026* will be announced in autumn 2026. The work will be developed specifically for the site of the Heidi Horten Collection.

ART EDUCATION

Art education at the Heidi Horten Collection understands itself as a connecting interface between art, scholarship and society. It is based on a respectful engagement with the diverse needs of visitors and on a dialogical working approach. Visitors are taken seriously as active carriers of knowledge and are involved in mediation processes. Central questions include which topics concern people today and how art mediation can respond with appropriate content and formats. The aim is to address as many social groups as possible and to enable low-barrier access to art.

Inclusive World Day of Vienna Tourist Guides

On 27 February 2026, the inclusive World Day for blind, visually impaired, deaf and people living with dementia will take place at the Heidi Horten Collection. Hourly guided tours, music, readings and studio activities, as well as tactile reliefs of works by Picasso, Magritte and Warhol, enable sensory access to art and strengthen the museum's low-barrier offerings.

Cooperation *Ich bin O.K.*

In cooperation with *Ich bin O.K.*, an inclusive dance performance involving around fifty dancers is being developed. In workshops inspired by the exhibition *The Line* and the permanent collection, performances are created and presented at the Heidi Horten Collection on 2 and 6 March 2026.

Workshop *YOUareART – Unfiltered Beauty*

Until the end of June 2026

YOUareART addresses the influence of social media on the self-image of young people. Around seventy percent of 11- to 17-year-olds use social media. Using an augmented reality app and interactive stations, the project promotes media literacy, self-acceptance and mental health. A cooperation with Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, BMASGPK, FEM Süd and MEN, dasWeil.

New Inclusive Formats

From April 2026 onwards, monthly inclusive guided tours for visitors with and without visual impairments will be offered, as well as a multisensory workshop for blind and visually impaired children and young people. In addition, art talks for people living with dementia and their companions will be held under the title *Heart Over Mind*.

Free Workshops

Art mediation programmes for kindergartens and schools are free of charge at the Heidi Horten Collection – a distinctive feature within the Austrian museum landscape. In the past year alone, more than 800 groups participated in these programmes. Since the opening of the collection, over 46,000 children and young people have taken part in free workshops and guided tours. The programme thus makes a significant contribution to educational equity and is used intensively by school classes from socio-economically disadvantaged districts, as well as by integration and inclusion classes.

THE HEIDI HORTEN COLLECTION

The Heidi Horten Collection is a private museum for modern and contemporary art located in the centre of Vienna, in the Hanuschhof between the State Opera and the Burggarten. Collector and founder Heidi Horten (1941–2022) established the museum, which opened in June 2022. The museum's operations are fully funded by the HGH Asset Foundation.

“I am proud that, with my collection and the construction of the museum, I have created something lasting – something that future generations will also experience when they visit my museum and take pleasure in the art that brought me happiness for so long.”

— Heidi Horten

The museum building originally served as the chancellery residence of Archduke Friedrich (1856–1936). It was later owned by the Austrian Federal Theatres. Heidi Horten acquired the building in 2019 with the aim of creating a permanent venue for presenting her collection, and commissioned the Austrian architectural firm the nextENTERprise with its comprehensive renovation.

Today, the building offers approximately 1,500 square metres of exhibition space across three levels, as well as an adjoining sculpture garden of around 400 square metres.

VISITOR NUMBERS

Since its opening in June 2022, more than 330,000 visitors have come to the Heidi Horten Collection, including around 115,000 in 2025.

The visitor structure is clearly dominated by adults between the ages of 27 and 64 (around 55–60%). School classes and young visitors under 19 account for approximately 22–25%. Seniors represent a particularly stable paying group at around 14–15%, while students account for approximately 4–5%. The average visitor age is around 42–45 years. In 2025, 53% of paying visitors came from Austria, 26% from Germany, and the remaining 21% from other European countries and the United States.

HISTORY

The museum's founder Heidi Horten (1941–2022) was a co-heir of her first husband Helmut Horten, to whom she was married from 1966 until his death in 1987.

During the planning phase for the Heidi Horten Collection in 2019, Heidi Horten commissioned the German contemporary historian Prof. Dr Peter Hoeres to conduct a scholarly examination of the economic origins of her first husband, Helmut Horten. The research was published in 2022 as an expert report and in 2024 as an extensive, externally reviewed book co-authored with Maximilian Kutzner.

Between 1936 and 1939, Helmut Horten acquired a number of department stores that had previously been owned by entrepreneurs of Jewish origin, deliberately accepting and exploiting the politically induced distress of their former owners. In addition, he held interests in two companies within the armaments industry, served as managing director and approved the use of forced labour.

Helmut Horten profited from the specific conditions of the National Socialist regime of injustice and derived financial gain from them. His business activities during these years formed the economic foundation for the later development of the Horten Group, which generated a billion-euro fortune in post-war Germany during the 1950s and 1960s.

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After the death of Helmut Horten, Heidi Horten began to engage intensively with art and, from the 1990s onwards, built one of Europe's most significant art collections. In 2022, the Heidi Horten Collection she founded opened to the public, making her collection permanently accessible.

PRESENT

The Heidi Horten Collection is aware that the wealth generated in the post-war period, which was used to build the collection, is based on foundations laid before 1945. We consider an open and transparent presentation of this historical reality to be necessary and regard it as part of our responsibility in the present. Museums are central pillars of an open society and places of knowledge, education and discourse.

Through its exhibitions and activities, the Heidi Horten Collection seeks to assume responsibility for an open, inclusive and democratic society. Our programme addresses a broad and diverse public, and we raise our voice in support of freedom, democracy, tolerance and diversity. In this spirit, we place particular emphasis on inclusive programmes that enable cultural participation for people of different backgrounds and from all sectors of society, opening up new spaces for action. This also includes our extensive free programme for school students.

VERENA KASPAR-EISERT, Director

Verena Kaspar-Eisert (*1981) has been Director of the Heidi Horten Collection in Vienna since November 2025. Prior to this, she served as Chief Curator of MuseumsQuartier Wien from 2022 to 2025.

After studying art history at the University of Vienna, Kaspar-Eisert began her career at Galerie Krinzinger. From 2005 to 2011, she worked at Kunstraum Niederösterreich, after which she headed Galerie OstLicht and the WestLicht Photo Museum in Vienna. From 2014 onwards, she worked as a curator at KUNST HAUS WIEN, where, as part of its repositioning as a "Green Museum," she realised numerous international exhibitions with a focus on contemporary photography and ecological and social issues. Since 2019, she has also been curator of the FOTO WIEN photography festival.

At MuseumsQuartier Wien, she initiated art projects and installations in public space, curated exhibitions and developed discourse and event formats. In August 2025, Verena Kaspar-Eisert was appointed Artistic and Academic Director of the Heidi Horten Collection following an international selection process.

Kaspar-Eisert is editor of numerous exhibition catalogues, author of essays in international publications and a member of several advisory boards and juries. She has also served as a visiting professor at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

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GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Heidi Horten Collection
Hanuschgasse 3
1010 Vienna

info@hortencollection.com

Opening hours

Daily except Tuesday, 11 am – 7 pm
Thursday, 11 am – 9 pm

Press contact

Pia Sääf
+43 664 845 4084
pia.saaf@hortencollection.com

Press material

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