

Digital traces, luminous imagery, pop art, and young perspectives: the special exhibitions at art karlsruhe 2026

Karlsruhe, December 18, 2025 – Curated special exhibitions have always been an integral part of art karlsruhe. In 2026, the program will comprise four clearly defined contributions: the LBBW collection presentation entitled "Digital Traces," the special exhibition on private collecting by Rolf Behm – "Color, Form, Mythical Creatures," the Pop Art presentation from the Kohlrusch Collection, and the academy:square format for young artists.

From digital imagery to narrative painting and pop art to the latest works by young graduates, they provide insights into highly relevant artistic positions while demonstrating how social issues and artistic questions are intertwined. "The special exhibitions are an important part of the fair's profile for us," says Olga Blaß, project manager of art karlsruhe. "They create spaces for dialogue, highlight thematic lines, and give collections and young talents the appreciation and attention they deserve." Kristian Jarmuschek, Chairman of the Advisory Board of art karlsruhe, adds: "Especially in Baden-Württemberg, where there are many important collections, we want to increasingly enable a contemporary view of collecting, for example through collaboration with young curators. Because behind every collection there is not only an inventory, but also a personal passion, an individual perspective, and a cultural impulse."

Digital Traces – Art in the Age of Digitalization

What happens when artists engage with the digital world? This question is at the heart of the collection presentation "Digital Traces" by Landesbank Baden-Württemberg (LBBW) – a significant partner and supporter of art karlsruhe from the very beginning. It presents artistic positions that not only reflect on digital change from a technical perspective, but also question it from a social, cultural, and aesthetic point of view. On display are works by Isa Genzken, Albert Oehlen, Stefani Glauber, Mary-Audrey Ramirez, Manuel Graf, Andreas Greiner, Morgaine Schäfer, Avery Gia Sophie Schramm, and others. They and many others show how diverse the engagement with digital technologies can be. From AI-generated imagery to gaming references and 3D printing to the digital processing of archived private recordings: "Given the ubiquitous influence of digitalization and rapid technological progress, it is exciting to see how differently artists approach these processes: as a tool, as a theme, as a social reality," says curator Sarah Haberkorn, head of the LBBW Collection. Albert Oehlen, for example, has been using computer-assisted image generation techniques since the 1990s, combining them with classical painting. Luxembourg artist Mary-Audrey Ramirez references virtual gaming worlds, while Manuel Graf uses text-to-image generators to reimagine locomotives as sculptural objects. Morgaine Schäfer brings analog slides taken with a smartphone into the digital present, and Potsdam artist Avery Gia Sophie Schramm captures memes, GIFs, and logos from the internet in old-master painting. The exhibition shows that artistic thinking does not disappear in the digital age, but finds new forms.

LBBW academy:square Award honors new perspectives**Promoting young talent at art karlsruhe with LBBW and monopol**

With the special exhibition academy:square, launched in 2024, art karlsruhe and LBBW are giving promising graduates from the three art academies in Baden-Württemberg (State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart) their own stage. From the proposals submitted by the colleges, Sarah Haberkorn, head of the LBBW collection, Elke Buhr, editor-in-chief of the art magazine monopol, and Kristian Jarmuschek each selected the six most compelling positions this year. The presentation shows the spectrum of current artistic ideas and highlights which topics will be relevant in the future. For the first time in 2026, an artist will be honored with the LBBW's academy:square Award. As part of this award, a work will be acquired for the LBBW collection.

Rolf Behm – Color, Form, Mythical Creatures: Special Exhibition on Private Collecting

The special exhibition on private collecting focuses on the work of the internationally renowned artist Rolf Behm, who was born in Karlsruhe. Behm studied at the Karlsruhe Academy of Fine Arts (under Markus Lüpertz, among others) and lived in London, Florence, Berlin, and Brazil, among other places. Stefanie Patruno, director of the Kunstmuseum Karlsruhe, curates a tribute to an artist whose work is closely linked to Karlsruhe and the cultural network of southwestern Germany. The presentation once again underscores how closely artists, collectors, and institutions in the region are connected. The exhibition brings together around twenty works from different phases of his career: current works are displayed alongside loans from important private and public collections. "Rolf Behm's work tells of perception, memory, and imagination with great richness of color and openness," says curator Stefanie Patruno. "He makes visible how consistently an artistic signature can develop over decades." In his work, Behm combines painterly abstraction with gestural condensation and pictorial storytelling. Figures, forms, and structures develop in his series—for example, in "Chimären" (Chimeras) or "Malergepäck" (Painter's Luggage), where travel scenes, myths, and fragments of perception are translated into dense color spaces.

The intense color palette is striking: light-dark contrasts, pink next to green, transparent versus dense surfaces. Behm deliberately avoids black—and creates images in which the eye is constantly in motion. The special exhibition is being realized in collaboration with the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank, whose "Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank" also features Behm's works, which were most recently exhibited at the Kunstforum Wien.

Pop Art from the Dietmar Kohlrusch Collection

Another highlight of the 2026 special exhibition program is the private collection of Kulmbach entrepreneur Dietmar Kohlrusch. The private collection is one of the most distinguished in the field of Pop Art and brings together key works by international artists from the past 70 years, such as Andy Warhol, Roy

Lichtenstein, Alex Katz, Tom Wesselmann, Heiner Meier, and Keith Haring. A selection from the collection, curated by Marwin Ackermann, will be presented to the public at art karlsruhe 2026.

Complete gallery list: <https://www.art-karlsruhe.de/en/galleries/>
Further information: [art-karlsruhe.de](https://www.art-karlsruhe.de), facebook.com/artkarlsruhe,
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