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20 years of partnership: ADKV and ART COLOGNE celebrate two decades of joint awards for art associations and art criticism

The working group of German art associations (ADKV) and ART COLOGNE are celebrating a special anniversary this year: since 2006, and thus for more than 20 years now, the two partners have jointly presented the ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Associations and the ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Criticism. The awards are unique in the German cultural landscape and have since their founding provided important impulses for the promotion of innovative art education and independent art criticism.

With the awards, ADKV and ART COLOGNE pursue a clear objective: making extraordinary achievements in curatorial programme work and in critical art education visible and honouring them. Art associations and art criticism are thereby closely linked with one another. Art associations present young, contemporary positions that often move outside of the mainstream, while art critics reflect upon and convey these positions in the public sphere. Both areas complement and are dependent upon one another.

In this interrelationship, both art associations and art criticism make an important contribution to a plural and quality-conscious cultural landscape. Both awards honour this commitment and the continual work behind it.

The ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Associations

The award, endowed with 8,000 Euro, has been presented annually since 2006 and is the only award of its kind awarded Germany-wide. In the past 20 years, art associations of all kinds have been honoured - from the art association in rural areas to institutions in urban centres.

With more than 308 member associations distributed throughout Germany, art associations are an indispensable pillar of the German art and cultural landscape. They also secure offerings in the field of visual arts in rural regions and create spaces for contention with themes of societal relevance. This engagement, which is decisively borne by volunteer work, was included in 2021 in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Associations contributes to permanently reinforcing this work and keeping it visible for the public.

Award winners: Kunstverein Dresden (2025), Kunstverein Global Forest (2024), Dortmunder Kunstverein (2023), Bonner Kunstverein (2022), Halle für Kunst Lüneburg (2020), KV-Verein für zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (2019), Temporary Gallery Cologne (2018), HartWare MedienKunstVerein Dortmund (2017), Kunstverein Arnsberg



ART COLOGNE
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and Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof Hamburg (2016), Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen Düsseldorf (2015), Bielefelder Kunstverein (2014), n.b.k. - Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (2013), Badischer Kunstverein Karlsruhe (2012), Kunstverein Nürnberg - Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft (2011), Kölnischer Kunstverein (2010), Heidelberger Kunstverein (2009), Salzburger Kunstverein & Westfälischer Kunstverein Münster (2008), Kunstverein Wolfsburg (2007), ACC Galerie Weimar (2006).

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ADKV - ART COLOGNE Award for Art Criticism

The award for art criticism, endowed with 5,000 Euro, looks back at an even longer history: the ADKV has already been presenting it since 1999, since 2006 in cooperation with ART COLOGNE. The award is directed to freelance art critics who deal with contemporary art and its societal context in the trade and daily press, in weekly and monthly publications as well as in digital media. Thereby honoured have been entirely different formats - from essayistic art appreciation to market-critical analysis.

The structural transformation in the press landscape, namely the consolidation of editorial offices, the downsizing of culture departments and decreasing fees, has altered the basic conditions for freelance art criticism considerably in past decades. Art associations, with their focus on contemporary art, are thereby dependent upon a culture journalism that preserves independent quality criteria and experiments with a variety of perspectives. The ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Criticism is dedicated to reinforcing this journalism, always in the interest of artists, art associations and a living art public.

Award winners: Noemi Y. Molitor (2025), Martin Conrads (2024), Oliver Koerner von Gustorf (2023), Magdalena Kröner (2022), Noemi Smolik (2020), Antje Stahl (2019), Radek Krolczyk (2018), Kito Nedo (2017), Jörg Scheller (2016), Stefan Kobel (2015), Barbara Buchmaier and Christine Woditschka (2014), Astrid Mania (2013), Kolja Reichert (2012), Jens Kastner (2011), Jennifer Allen (2009), Rudolf Schmitz (2008), Ludwig Seyfarth (2007), Catrin Lorch (2006), Dominic Eichler (2005), Gregory Williams (2004), Raimar Stange (2003), Renate Puvogel (2002), Jan Verwoert (2001), Stefan Römer (2000), Hans-Christian Dany (1999).

An anniversary as affirmation

The 20th anniversary of the cooperation is not only an occasion for celebration, but also an affirmation on the part of both partners of the importance of a living, critical and diverse art public. Quality culture journalism and committed art association work are not self-explanatory. They require recognition, support and visibility. The awards have been providing precisely this for two decades.

"Particularly at a time when attention shifts ever more rapidly, art needs places and voices that allow for the new and initiate debates. Art associations and art criticism assume precisely these roles. That we as ART COLOGNE have been able to reward this commitment together with the ADKV for 20 years makes me very proud", says Daniel Hug, Director and artistic director of ART COLOGNE.

"Art associations and independent art criticism play an indispensable role in an open, democratic civil society. The ability to respond to contemporary developments

in a nuanced way and to act as a barometer of important issues is what distinguishes art associations and art criticism. These awards serve as a testament to this vital commitment. We would like to thank ART COLOGNE for its long-standing cooperation and support,” says Ursula Schöndeling, Chair of the ADKV.

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About the ADKV

The working group of German art associations (ADKV) is the national German umbrella organisation of German art associations and represents 308 member associations throughout Germany.

About ART COLOGNE

As the most important meeting point for galleries, collectors and art institutions in Germany, the world's first art fair annually provides not only a broad offering of modern and contemporary art, but also a place for exchange, inspiration and social reflection.

Note for editorial offices:

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