

No. 7 / October 2026, Cologne
#artcolognefair

Art in turbulent times.

Special exhibitions at ART COLOGNE 2026 - LBBW Collection and ZADIK

The international art trade will gather in Cologne from 5 to 8 November 2026 for the 59th edition of ART COLOGNE. A total of 165 galleries from 22 countries will present a broad selection of modern and contemporary art. The programme of the world's oldest art fair will also feature two special exhibitions - the LBBW Collection explores art as a mirror of societal developments, while ZADIK investigates the interconnections of the art trade between the GDR and FRG.

LBBW Collection: "What moves us - art as a mirror of the times"

How does art make visible the moods, upheavals and experiences of society? Curated by Barbara Thomann, the LBBW Collection's special exhibition in Hall 11.2, Stand B319, explores this question. The show's starting point is a selection of works by Adolf Hölzel and Ida Kerkovius, two artists who played a vital role in the emergence of modernism in Germany. The works are linked to the Stuttgart Hölzel Circle, where the collecting activities of the present-day Landesbank Baden-Württemberg (LBBW) began in the 1970s.

The other works featured in the exhibition were acquired over the past two years. Artists represented include Yalda Afsah, Robert Elfgén, Andreas Greiner, Jody Korbach, Jonas Roßmeißl, Mona Schulzek, Noemi Strittmatter, Sophia Süßmilch, Julius von Bismarck, Ivana de Vivanco and Felix Wagner. Addressing current social issues, they highlight the collection's key themes - identity and cultural memory, economisation, digitalisation, the power of language, the aestheticisation of everyday life, image appropriation, and the environment and sustainability. The presentation thus bridges the collection's origins and its present-day focus.

Taken together, the works invite critical reflection on the present - with all its ruptures, overlaps and blind spots. The LBBW Collection represents the cultural engagement of the bank and its commitment to social responsibility.

ZADIK: "Art without borders? The art trade between the GDR and FRG"

In Hall 11.1, Stand D13, the special exhibition by ZADIK (Central Archive for German and International Art Market Studies) examines the diverse interconnections of the art trade between the GDR and the FRG. How was art produced, presented and marketed in the state-regulated system of the GDR? Who were the key players shaping the exchange between East and West? How did works of art make their way across the inner-German border - and what role did ART COLOGNE play? The exhibition explores the art trade amid the tensions between cultural policy, economic interests and cross-border networks.



ART COLOGNE
05.11. - 08.11.2026
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Programme highlights - ZADIK special exhibition

Page
2/3

On 6 November 2026 at 3:00 p.m., Dr Claudia Müller (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden) and Lucia Seiß (ZADIK) will join Prof. Dr Nadine Oberste-Hetbleck (ZADIK) for a talk about the GDR art market and the inner-German art trade. Müller heads the research project “Private art trade in Dresden after 1945”. The talk will be followed by a tour of the special exhibition.

On 7 November 2026 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the panel discussion “When art becomes loot: Art theft past and present” will take place in the Europasaal at Koelnmesse. Moderated by Prof. Dr Nadine Oberste-Hetbleck (ZADIK, University of Cologne), the discussion brings together René Allonge (Berlin State Criminal Police Office), Jasmin Hartmann (KPF.NRW) and Thole Rotermund (art dealer and BVDG board member). The panel will examine both recent art thefts and art looting in contexts of historical injustice. The focus will be on the protection of cultural heritage, the responsibility of private and public stakeholders, and the importance of provenance research in today’s art market. Prior registration is required at zadik-info@uni-koeln.de.

ARTtours x ZADIK

In addition, ZADIK will offer guided tours of ART COLOGNE on all days of the fair. Experienced art educators share the stories behind the artists and works on display, along with insights into current trends and the history of the art trade. Guided tours in German take place daily on 6, 7 and 8 November at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. On 7 and 8 November, special tours for children aged 6 to 12 take place at 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Tickets for all tours are available in the online ticket shop.

About the LBBW Collection

With more than 3,000 works, the Landesbank Baden-Württemberg possesses one of the largest German corporate collections of modern and contemporary art. The collection was founded in 1971 with the aim of promoting art and bringing the bank’s employees into direct contact with contemporary art in their everyday working environment. Today, the LBBW Collection collects works that have been produced in Germany or by German artists within the last decade, in keeping with the guiding principle of “Collecting Contemporary”. Exhibitions, partnerships and loans ensure public access to the collection, which spans a wide range of media.

About ZADIK

ZADIK (Central Archive for German and International Art Market Studies) is an academic institute of the University of Cologne dedicated to the archiving, processing, critical study and dissemination of the history, structures, contexts and developments of international art systems. Today the central archive comprises more than 200 holdings of gallery owners, art dealers, auction houses, art critics, curators, specialised photographers and other participants in the art market, with a focus on the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. ZADIK was founded in 1992 as the world’s first special archive for the history of the art trade and was transferred to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Cologne in 2020.

Note for editorial offices:

Page

ART COLOGNE photos are available in our image database on the Internet at <https://www.artcologne.com/press/image-database/> in the “Press” section.

3/3

Press information is available at: <https://www.artcologne.com/press/press-releases-of-art-cologne/>.

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