

## The World of Tomorrow Will Have Been Another Present

May 23, 2025 to April 6, 2026

Press Conference  
Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 10 am

Opening  
Thursday, May 22, 2025, 7 pm



**Hans Bellmer**  
*The Mouth*, 1935  
16 x 16 cm  
Silver-bromide print, colored  
mumok – Museum moderner Kunst  
Stiftung Ludwig Wien, acquired in 1978  
© Bildrecht, Wien 2025

The exhibition *The World of Tomorrow Will Have Been Another Present* draws connections between works of classical modernism and contemporary art, between the 1920s and the 2020s. The exhibition features five large-scale installations, five exhibitions in one exhibition, linked together by the participating artists' shared interest in the topic of time.

Nikita Kadan, Barbara Kapusta, Frida Orupabo, Lisl Ponger, and Anita Witek were invited to select works of classical modernism from the mumok collection and enter into a dialogue with them. In an exchange and in debate, confronting issues against the backdrop of disparate temporal conditions, through formal analogies and aesthetic contradictions, the five artists tackle both historical and contemporary subject matters: be it image politics between propaganda and critique, from careless to sensitive practices of appropriation, body images between identity politics and universalism, or the constitution of society between the desire for clear-cut categories and the complexity of a thoroughly networked world.

### Nikita Kadan – War and Violence

Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan works with the very concrete idea of war in recent world affairs and confronts his own reality with abstract representations of violence and war from the past. Against the backdrop of the loss of a coherent historical narrative in art (and beyond), his selection of works of classical modernism as well as the formal and thematic analogies in his own works draw parallels to past and present memory politics. At the forefront: the monument, often strategically placed in public space to commemorate a historical event or figure. However, besides their original purpose, from today's perspective monuments bear witness to more than just what they represent. They also speak about the conditions under which they were erected as communication tools for a specific group of people, like a collective memory aid. The artist's installation reveals the mechanisms of forgetting and remembering as well as historiographical breaks and continuities. Not only history enters the picture but also the monument's own history of reception in the present. In his section of the exhibition, Nikita Kadan juxtaposes with own works with those of Alexander Archipenko, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Raymond Duchamp Villon, Kazimir Malevich, and Franz Pomassl.

### Barbara Kapusta – Fragile Bodies

Barbara Kapusta's colossal, gender-neutral aluminum sculptures explore the resilience of future bodies from the perspective of present-day society. In a friendly dialogue and kinship with selected works from the collection by artists such as Rudolf Belling, Alicia Penalba, Oskar Schlemmer, or Victor Servranckx, the giants rambling in the space seem to ask whether moments of fragility and weakness were also important for the body images of their predecessors. Kapusta's contemporary "technobodies," as the artist describes these queer bodies, encounter their historical

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bronze antecedents without redeeming the visionary promises that were associated with them in the past. *THIS IS THE SPACE WE INHABIT AS NEIGHBORS* is the title of Kapusta's large-format text installation: wishful thinking about temporal, spatial, and social coexistence—and at the same time its concrete manifestation.

#### **Frida Orupabo – Against the Colonial View**

A similar approach to the human body, but with a more retrospective take on history, can be found in Frida Orupabo's part of the exhibition. The artist juxtaposes the female, sexualized, and racialized bodies in her imagery and collages of found visual material, whether from the Internet or historical archives, with sculptural works from the first half of the twentieth century. The sculptures—often made by white European “masters” such as Constantin Brâncuși, André Derain, or Ossip Zadkine—enter into a dialogue with deconstructed representations of Black women from former colonies: historical female figures cast in dark bronze by Louise Bourgeois, Alberto Giacometti, or Germaine Richier mingle with contemporary images. A reversal of perspectives that exposes the complexity of prevailing conditions in society and their inherent discrepancies.

#### **Lisl Ponger – Stereotypes and Gestures of Exhibiting**

For several decades now, Lisl Ponger's photographs have exemplified how viewing habits are historically engrained in us and how objects and images incessantly produce and perpetuate stereotypes. Under the title *Work on Progress*, she presents elements from her own photographic productions as apparent museum objects on pedestals: by linking them with artifacts of classical modernism, underlying parallels with historical artistic concerns come to the surface. In a self-reflexive manner similar to Nikita Kadan, she also frames the methods and practices of the “museum” institution, including its historical and contemporary gestures of exhibiting. By turning props from previous works into the protagonists of her exhibition section, she shifts the attention, as in the photographs themselves, from the overall impression to the details—and back again. Lisl Ponger contrasts her artistic practice with works by Albert Paris Gütersloh, Florence Henri, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, August Sander, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Edward Steichen.

#### **Anita Witek – Utopian Architectures**

Anita Witek's reflection on time loops is based on her practice of reproducing and dissecting photographs from mass media. In a meticulous cutting process, she extracts abstract color gradients and shadow plays from prints for her pictorial compositions, which at times surge into three-dimensionality. In contrast to Frida Orupabo, who often disengages her bodies from their photographic context, Witek focuses on this very context: the backgrounds that remain once the subjects in the photo have been excised by knife serve as material to build new worlds. Playing with reproduced set pieces and the modernist tools of collage and montage, Witek draws on the visual repository of historical and current presents: by correlating her works with those of Julio González, Juan Gris, Raoul Hausmann, Fernand Léger, František Muzika, and Antoine Pevsner, she (re)constructs a parallel archive from the ruins of modernity.

Curated by Franz Thalmair

in collaboration with Nikita Kadan, Barbara Kapusta, Frida Orupabo, Lisl Ponger, and Anita Witek.

## Artists

Alexander Archipenko, Hans Arp, Giacomo Balla, Willi Baumeister, Rudolf Belling, Hans Bellmer, Herbert Bayer, Karl Blossfeldt, Louise Bourgeois, Constantin Brâncuși, Victor Brauner, André Derain, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Duchamp Villon, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Julio González, Juan Gris, George Grosz, Albert Paris Gütersloh, Raoul Hausmann, Florence Henri, Johannes Itten, Nikita Kadan, Barbara Kapusta, Friedrich Kiesler, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Henri Laurens, Fernand Léger, René Magritte, Kazimir Malevich, André Masson, Vladimir W. Mayakovsky, László Moholy-Nagy, František Muzika, Frida Orupabo, Alicia Penalba, Antoine Pevsner, Franz Pomassl, Lisl Ponger, Man Ray, Germaine Richier, Aleksander Mikhailovich Rodchenko, August Sander, Oskar Schlemmer, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Victor Servranckx, Edward J. Steichen, Alexander Stern, Nikola Vučo, Anita Witek, Fritz Wotruba, Ossip Zadkine

## Exhibition Design and Display

The dialogue between works of classical modernism and contemporary art, this method of working with what is already there, is also reflected in the display developed in close collaboration with Studio Kehrer. Walls and pedestals from the previous exhibition are transformed and adapted for the new set-up, and the designers conceived a similar strategy for the graphic concept. Inspired by two works titled *Schriftentwurf* (Design for Typeface) by the Austrian-American photographer, graphic artist, exhibition designer, and Bauhaus teacher Herbert Bayer from 1928, the studio devised a special typeface that connects the various elements of the exhibition—from wall texts and communication media to the accompanying publication.

## Exhibition Publication

*The World of Tomorrow Will Have Been Another Present*

Editors: Franz Thalmair, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien

Foreword: Karola Kraus; Essays: Karin Harrasser and Franz Thalmair

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