

Gallery II

Karla Zipfel | Hauswirtschaft

Fri 28.11 - Sun 18.01.2025

Starting with private homes and facade reliefs on savings banks, Karla Zipfel's solo presentation *Hauswirtschaft* (Home Economics) examines those surfaces in public spaces that symbolize society's longing for prosperity and convey values such as diligence and thriftiness. The starting point is often Bad Krozingen, the small town near Freiburg where Karla Zipfel grew up.

Hard work and thriftiness as the keys to modest prosperity, leading to social advancement, were propagated in Germany, especially in the post-war period. The idea behind this was that collective hard work and prudent economic management would advance society as a whole. Ulrich Beck coined the term "elevator effect" (*Risikogesellschaft*, 1986) for this promise of social climbing through prosperity. Its realization became a central political guideline in the Federal Republic of Germany. State home ownership subsidies and building society programs from the 1950s onwards served to put it into practice. From then on, the small house in the countryside embodied the dream of modest prosperity that a broad middle class in Germany aspired to achieve.

Zipfel examines the promise of social advancement in the Federal Republic since the 1960s from a contemporary perspective. In her new series of works, *Auf Sparen folgt ...* (Saving Leads to ...), she explores how young people on social media pursue and question the idea of achieving upward mobility through material prosperity.

1. Living together apart (Bad Krozingen)

In the display cases of *Living together apart (Bad Krozingen)*, Zipfel shows stamp-sized snapshots of homes in her hometown. Using this small town in southern Baden, the artist examines the Federal Republic's promise of upward mobility through field research. Here, the saying 'Schaffe, schaffe, Häusle baue' (work, work, build a house) has been realised in the form of several new housing developments over the decades.

Zipfel's work illustrates the impact that the aspiration to own a house in the countryside has had on townscape design and the resulting architectural styles. Images from other contexts, such as politics, financial advertising and trivia from small-town everyday life, are mixed in among the house façades.

5 Häuser und Maxime

In her work *Häuser und Maxime*, Zipfel presents five architectural structures that illustrate typical home styles. She developed this typology formally and associatively on the basis of her field studies in Bad Krozingen.

Each of Zipfel's house structures has a motto: the beige structure at the entrance bears the word "thriftiness," which forms the ethical basis of the promise of social advancement.

The warm white house with a shingle roof and the weights of a Black Forest clock illustrates the "Heimatstil" style that was trendy in Bad Krozingen in the 1970s. It is labeled "regionality." The pink model with the motto "modernization" shows a classic nuclear family as the ideal inhabitants of the home.

The yellow model with blue window frames bears the inscription "Aufbruch" (Departure). It represents postmodernism and stands for the style of the 1990s, when colors and shapes were somewhat wilder. "Tradition" refers to a structure that has a reduced, modernist style. Many people today can identify with this.

Zipfel's houses are a mixture of high-rise and single-family homes, with a single-family house incorporated into each structure. These hybrid forms refer to political discussions about the most suitable type of housing for post-war democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany. In line with the motto 'property creates citizenship', the decision was made to promote home ownership at the time, as this was seen as a stabilising factor for the young democracy.

6 Geschmack des Bauspar-Fuchses 1975 bis dato, 2023

In her series *Geschmack des Bauspar-Fuchses* (Taste of the Bauspar Fox), Karla Zipfel addresses the topic of building society as a state-subsidised financing model for home ownership, shaped by the Schwäbisch Hall building society since the 1970s. In her version, the Bauspar Fox, the brand symbol of the building society, is imitated as a gingerbread figure made of building materials.

The arms and legs are made of the distinctive building blocks that allude to Schwäbisch Hall's slogan, 'You can build on these bricks'. Zipfel illustrates the evolution of the fox design from 1975 to the present day through four objects whose style, glasses and clothing have repeatedly been adapted to reflect contemporary fashion trends. A female fox is added to the chronology to draw attention to the gender gap in building society. Historical disadvantages faced by women in building society continue to impact the present day, with women having less access to financial products and financial independence.

The arms and legs of the foxes are made of the distinctive building blocks that allude to Schwäbisch Hall's slogan, 'You can build on these bricks'. Zipfel illustrates the evolution of the fox design from 1975 to the present day through four objects whose style, glasses and clothing have repeatedly been adapted to reflect contemporary fashion trends. A female fox is added to the chronology to draw attention to the gender gap in building societies. Historical disadvantages faced by women continue to impact the present day, with women having less access to financial products and financial independence.

The penny pincher embodies diligence and thriftiness, fitting with the Swabian stereotype of the economically minded housewife. Both symbols represent the forward-looking use of resources and embody the Federal Republic's promise of upward mobility and work ethic.

4 Mittlere Mitten, 2025

In her wall reliefs *Mittlere Mitten*, Zipfel examines graphics from German social structure research which she expanded with fine pen drawings. Through these edited graphics, she highlights that the dream of home ownership is always embedded in social and economic contexts. At the same time, the graphics demonstrate that opportunities for social advancement are not equally accessible to everyone. They depend on social class, income and education, and change over time.

Four of Zipfel's models (Bolte, Dahrendorf, Geißler, Vester) divide society into strata. Following the Second World War, these stratum models replaced the earlier class models. They were revolutionary

because they assumed that social mobility could dissolve the boundaries between strata, in contrast to Marx's rigid notions of classes, which could only be overcome by revolution.

In the so-called Bolte onion, developed by Karl Bolte in 1967, the middle class occupies the widest zone of the bulb. It acts as mediator between the upper echelons of power and the lower strata, with its position strongly related to education, income and social status. Three of Zipfel's strata models depict society's structure as a house: The Geißler house (Rainer Geißler 2006) and the Dahrendorf house (Ralf Dahrendorf 1965) have gabled roofs, symbolising the small elite that towers above the broad middle class. Geißler expanded the Dahrendorf house with an extension in which he settled the immigrants.

The fifth model, known as the potato graph, originates from the target group analysis conducted by the SINUS market research institute in Heidelberg. Unlike hierarchical stratification models, it considers not only income and education but also values, lifestyles and attitudes. Society is divided into milieus, some of which overlap. The irregular shape of the potato graphic highlights the open, fluid structures of society and the heterogeneity of social groups.

Zipfel's wall objects resemble artistically decorated gingerbread. The artist uses this imagery as an ironic commentary: while a gingerbread house can be easily constructed, the dream of owning one's own home is no longer effortless today.

7 Auf Sparen folgt ...

(Reliefs für die Fassaden geschlossener Bankfilialen), 2025

Today, much of the saving business has moved online. Influencers have taken on the role of self-appointed financial advisers. Digital products, such as ETF savings plans, are becoming increasingly popular. These products allow even small investors to participate in the global financial market automatically and cost-effectively. Usually, this is done via an app with just a few clicks, rather than through personal advice.

In her new series of works, *Auf Sparen folgt ...*, Zipfel explores how young people discuss on social media their limited prospects for achieving material prosperity. In doing so, she demonstrates how the prospect of social advancement is considered unrealistic by her generation.

In terms of style, her work is reminiscent of the visual language of historical sandstone reliefs on the façades of savings and cooperative banks, but with a contemporary aesthetic. Reliefs from the 1920s to the 1980s often depicted idealised scenes of work, thrift and community spirit. These scenes were intended to encourage lower-income groups in particular to take financial responsibility for themselves.

Through her artistic imitation of sandstone reliefs in the form of oversized smartphones, the artist explores how financial issues could persist in public spaces as part of our collective memory. This is happening at a time when savings banks are closing more and more of their branches due to financial business shifting to the internet.

With their mottos, motifs and captions, Zipfel's reliefs echo the appearance of memes or TikTok videos. Their three-part structure is reminiscent of Baroque emblems.

Memes, which have been spreading across the internet since the mid-2010s, fulfil a similar function in digital culture. Like emblems of old, they convey complex and ironic messages in encrypted form. Zipfel's images are inspired by content circulating on the internet. Through an artistic process, she transforms them into independent forms of iconic sharpness. She designed some of the motifs by

hand and/or supplemented them with AI-generated parts. In a complex sculptural process, she modelled the motifs from architectural cardboard onto MDF boards. She sprinkled sand onto the modelled reliefs and then painted over them with acrylic paint. In certain places, she imitated the ageing of sandstone with moss-green paint.

7.1 *die schwäbische Hausfrau fragen*

The relief on the front wall depicts a woman sitting at a kitchen table, seemingly crossing out expenses in her household budget book with a red felt-tip pen. She looks directly into the eyes of the viewer, as if urging them to save too.

This depiction humorously embodies of Angela Merkel's 2008 appeal made in during the financial crisis. In it, she demanded that the national budget be managed according to the principles of a Swabian housewife.

With the motto and caption of the relief, Zipfel alludes to the legal obligation of public administrations in Germany to allocate their resources efficiently and sparingly in accordance with the principle of minimalism. The principle of minimalism comes from economics and states that a set goal should be achieved with as little expenditure as possible. This contrasts with the principle of maximisation, which aims to achieve maximum benefit with allocated resources.

7.3 *Wirtschaftliches Minimalprinzip nach Pinterest*

This image of a living room was created by the artist using AI. She instructed the 'Pinterest Create' function of the visual search engine 'Pinterest' to generate a living room based on the principle of a minimalist household. The image texts refer to Zipfel's prompts. Here, the artist ironically illustrates the economic principle of minimalism by designing the interior of a single-family home accordingly.

7.2 *"We have _ at home"*

The bust portrait of the young man in front of a detached house is inspired by memes on social media in which young people ironically question their chances of material advancement.

Zipfel has sharpened the man's facial features in the style of socialist realism. With his striking jawline, firm features and concentrated expression, the young worker in a hoodie exudes strength of will. His narrowed eyes, gazing into the distance, signal that he feels uncertain about the promise of a better future.

7.4 *auf den rechten Kurs setzen*

This portrayal is inspired by young financial influencers who share financial knowledge with their followers on social media platforms. In Zipfel's relief, a young man with a broccoli hairstyle can be seen yelling fanatically into a microphone. Through his calls to action, he tries to motivate his followers to invest. The rocket emojis signalling hype or trends visually represent the rise in stock market prices promised by the finfluencer.

7.5 *not so rare aesthetics: recession core*

In her depiction, Zipfel draws on memes in which young people make fun of the rising prices of everyday goods, such as cheese, amid ongoing inflation.

In Zipfel's relief, a young woman with polished fingernails plays an old woman by placing a towel over her head. She is counting the coins she has left after buying a small amount of cheese. The manicured fingernails highlight the so-called recession core aesthetic. This fashion trend responds

to economic uncertainty or thriftiness. According to this aesthetic, the carefully manicured nails symbolise affordable luxury that beautifies everyday life.

7.6 diversifiziert handeln

Zipfel drew inspiration for this image from an advertising campaign launched by the digital finance platform Trade Republic in collaboration with the fashion label Saint Sass to celebrate International Women's Day. As part of the campaign, a limited edition of a pair of statement tights bearing the slogan 'retire rich' were released.

The campaign aimed to encourage young women to invest in order to achieve financial security, also with regard to their later retirement provisions. To promote the campaign, short videos were distributed featuring a famous financial influencer wearing the 'retire rich' tights.

On her relief, Zipfel shows the model's leg from the add wearing a miniskirt and tights. The young woman is holding a lifestyle coffee mug in her hand. This is a controversial item among the boomer generation as they associate it with consumer culture and perceived exaggeration in everyday life.

Heidi Brunnschweiler, November 2025

Events

Interactive tour with artist Karla Zipfel (Gallery II)

Sun 30.11.25 | 2 pm

Sun 28.12.25 | 5pm

Screening

Anas Kahal: Best of Art

Tue 16.12.25 | 7 pm | Kammertheater, E-WERK

with an Artist Talk: Matthias Dämpfle, Jürgen Grieger-Lempelius und Annette Merkenthaler

Art's Birthday

with performances by Ernestyna Orlowska: Make Your Body Your Machine (2021/2024) and Natascha Moschini (in cooperation with DELPHI_space)

Sat 17.01.26 | from 7 pm | E-WERK

Public Tours

Sun 4.1.26 | 4 pm

Sat 10.1.26 | 4 pm

Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, E-WERK

Eschholzstr. 77

79106 Freiburg i. Br.

www.gegenwartskunst-freiburg.de

New Opening Hours

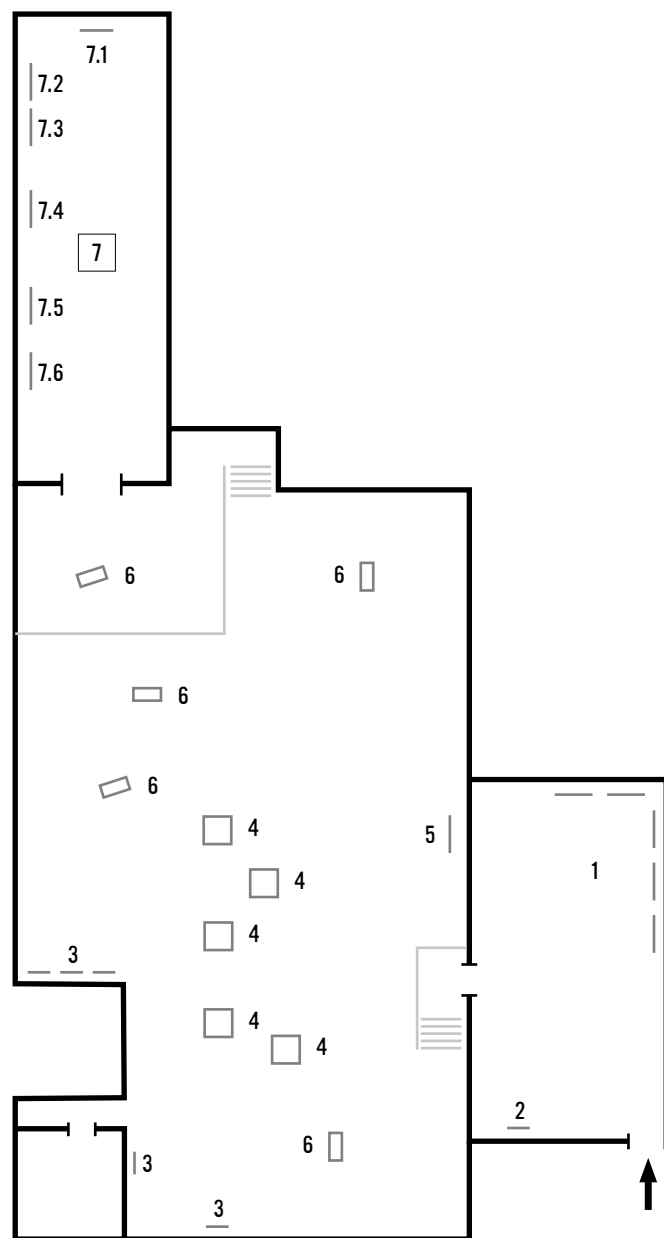
Fr 17-20 Uhr

Sa 14-20 Uhr

So 14-18 Uhr

GALERIE II

KARLA ZIPFEL, HAUSWIRTSCHAFT



① **Living together apart (Bad Krozingen), 2023**

Serie aus 5 // series of 5
MDF, Holzstaub, Sand, Holzleim, Acrylfarbe, Digitaldruck // MDF, wood dust, sand, wood glue, acrylic paint, digital print
je 70 × 50 × 7 cm

② **Postmodernisierungs-Matrix, 2025**

Gelasertem Plexiglas, MDF, Holzleim, Sand, Acrylfarbe, Beschilderungstechnik // Laser-cut plexiglass, MDF, wood glue, sand, acrylic paint, signage technology

③ **Mittlere Mitten, 2025**

Serie aus 5 // series of 5
Pigment, Holzleim, Gips, Lack, Fototransferpaste, Fineliner, Silikon, Lebensmittel-Attrappen, Stecknadeln // Pigment, wood glue, plaster, varnish, photo transfer paste, fineliner, silicone, fake food, pins
Wandobjekte // Objects on the wall
je ca. 43 × 43 × 200cm

④ **Häuser und Maxime, 2023**

Serie aus 5 // series of 5
MDF, Acrylglas, Holzleim, Holzstaub, Sand, Acrylfarbe, Werbeartikel // MDF, acrylic glass, wood glue, wood dust, sand, acrylic paint, promotional items
je ca. 43 × 43 × 200cm

⑤ **Krozingener Modernisierungs-Matrix, 2025**

Artist frame (Holz, Passepartout, Holzleim, Holzstaub, Acrylfarbe), entspiegeltes Plexiglas, Fineliner und Buntstift auf Papier // artist frame (wood, passe-partout, wood glue, sawdust, acrylic paint), non-reflective plexiglass, fineliner and colored pencil on paper
Wandobjekt // object on the wall
ca. 40 × 60 × 5 cm

⑥ **Geschmack des Bauspar-Fuchses 1975 bis dato, 2023**

Skulptur, Serie von 5 // sculpture, series of 5
MDF, UV-Druck, Holzleim, Sägemehl, Pigment, Silikon, Glas, Stahl, Ziegelsteine // sculpture, series of 5; MDF, UV print, wood glue, sawdust, pigment, silicone, glasses, steel, bricks

⑦ **Auf Sparen folgt... (Reliefs für die Fassaden geschlossener Bankfilialen), 2025**

Serie von 5 // series of 5
Finnpappe, Gips, Holzleim, Sand, Acrylfarbe, Aquarell // Cardboard, plaster, wood glue, sand, acrylic paint, watercolor
Je 47 × 89 × 8 cm

⑦.1 **Die schwäbische Hausfrau fragen**

⑦.2 **„We have _ at home“**

⑦.3 **Wirtschaftliches Minimalprinzip nach Pinterest**

⑦.4 **Auf den rechten Kurs setzen**

⑦.5 **Not so rare aesthetics: recession core**

⑦.6 **Diversifiziert handeln**

Alle Werke mit freundlicher Genehmigung von Karla Zipfel
All work courtesy Karla Zipfel