Georg Kolbe Museum

Press release
06.06.2025

David Hartt – Metabolic Rift

14 June – 28 September 2025

Opening: June 14, from 3 pm (the artist will be present)
Interviews: on request

To mark the 75th anniversary of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Canadian artist **David Hartt** (*1967, Montréal) is presenting the new video sculpture *Metabolic Rift* as part of the annually changing commission for the sculpture garden. The site-specific installation enters into a multi-layered dialog with the historic garden - in particular with the *Dancers' Fountain* (1922) by Georg Kolbe.

The tall LED screen is embedded in a bed of narrow-leaved willowherb (Epilobium angustifolium) and Siberian balsam (Impatiens parviflora). The plants are known for their resilience in degraded or inhospitable landscapes. Both species have been politically charged throughout the history of vegetation science. The balsam found its way into theories that were transferred into racist ideologies and instrumentalized by the National Socialists. In the immediate vicinity of the historic *Dancers' Fountain*, David Hartt's video work shows the contemporary dancer Will Meadows interacting with the poses of the historical fountain figures in concentrated movements. The figures supporting the fountain - Black men supporting a *white* dancer - reflect colonial-socialized representational conventions of modernity. The model for Kolbe's sculptures was a Black man whose biography has yet to be reconstructed. The moving story of the fountain, which is told in parallel in the museum's viewing depot on the building's lower level and in the publication **The Fountain**, is the starting point for David Hartt's artistic contemplation on the interwoven relationships between culture and environment, periphery and center, home and alienation.

In *Metabolic Rift*, David Hartt combines art historical references and ecological theory. Based on the geographer Otto Karl Siegfried Passarge and the botanist Reinhold Tüxen, as well as their role in thinking together natural science and political ideology, a contemplative work about image power, memory and belonging unfolds. The concept of the metabolic rift is based on a Marxist view of nature coined by John Bellamy Foster. It describes the disruption between man and nature in the course of capitalist exploitation - a separation whose effects David Hartt negotiates in poetic form: What does it mean to be alienated from one's own body in an alien landscape? And how can a soil be revitalized through poetic Otherness?

David Hartt's essay on the work can be read **here.**

The exhibition will open on **June 14, 2025 at 3 pm**. You will be welcomed by **Katharina Fichtner** (Cultural Attaché Canadian Embassy Berlin). The artist **David Hartt** will be present and gives an insight into his artistic practice in a public conversation with **Kathleen Reinhardt**. (in English)

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David Hartt Biography

David Hartt (*1967, Montréal) is a Canadian artist who creates multimedia works that unravel the social, cultural and economic complexity of his various subjects. Through films, photographs, sound, textiles, exhibition displays and installations, he explores how historical ideas and ideals persist or change over time. His interest in modern architecture, the built environment and botany informs many of his artistic works. David Hartt lives and works in Philadelphia, where he is Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania. Hartt's works are in the public collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Jewish Museum in New York, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, among others.

Highlights of the anniversary year 2025

Parallel to the anniversary exhibition **Tea and Dry Biscuits**, the exhibition **David Hartt - Metabolic Rift** forms the starting point for a varied supporting program in the **anniversary year** 2025, which celebrates the **Georg Kolbe Museum** as a vibrant place of art and research. The exhibition is accompanied by the publication **The Fountain / Der Brunnen** (2025, Distanz Verlag), which approaches the challenging object history of the Dancers' Fountain (1922) from an artistic and art-historical perspective. It includes texts by Kirsty Bell, Max Czollek, Markues, Jimmy Robert and Kasia Fudakowski, among others. The artist David Hartt has written an essay for the publication, which can be downloaded on the museum's webseite. The new educational program for adults, children and young people developed for Hartt's *Metabolic Rift* exhibition focuses on the museum's sculpture garden as a place where nature and culture meet. As part **of Berlin Art Week, which takes place from 10 to 14 September 2025**, the **Georg Kolbe Museum** is hosting a multi-day festival program together with the **Villa Romana** in Florence. To mark the 125th anniversary of the Villa Romana, whose first scholarship holder was Georg Kolbe in 1905, and the **75th anniversary of the Georg Kolbe Museum**, the program will highlight the history, present and future of both institutions. The continuing lecture series **From the margins. Rediscovered Lives from Archives** is dedicated to the life and work of extraordinary personalities from the broad field of visual arts who have been forgotten and marginalized for a variety of reasons. Following the lecture on **Hans-Hasso von Veltheim** in May 2025, the focus will be on **Hanna Kiel**, art historian and writer, in a lecture by Eva-Maria Tühne on September 18, 2025. Further details on the individual events can be found on our website.

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Image material

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David Hartt, video still from *Metabolic Rift*, 2025, commissioned by Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin. Courtesy of the artist & Galerie Thomas Schulte.

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Wed–Mo 11am–6pm, closed Tuesdays
10€ (reduced 6€), free admission up to 18 years, for art students in Berlin, and members of the Freundeskreises

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