Presseinformation

KUNSTHALLE
GIESSEN

Kunsthalle Gießen
Berliner Platz 1
D-35390 Gießen | Germany
+49 (0) 641–306 1040
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Jürgen Klauke

Schlachtfelder

Opening

Friday, 27th November 2026, 7pm, KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN

Duration

28th November 2026 – 07th March 2027

Curated by

Dr. Nadia Ismail

Pressview

Wednesday, 25th November 2026, 11 am

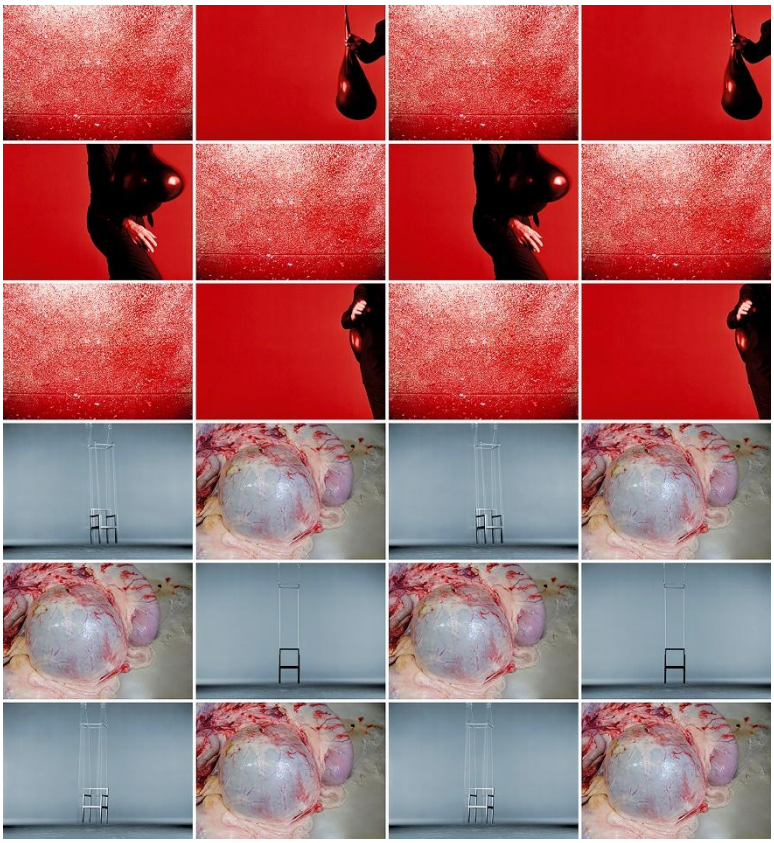


Fig.: Jürgen Klauke, Schlachtfelder (Detail), 2009 - 2010. Courtesy of Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, VG Bildkunst.

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In November 2026 the KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN presents a solo exhibition by the German artist Jürgen Klauke. Titled ***Schlachtfelder***, the exhibition brings together photographic series and performance records spanning several decades. At its centre are the interconnections of body, identity, and societal violence. Klauke's visual worlds offer a view into the tensions between individual self-conception and societal normalization, between visibility and anonymity, vulnerability and the exercise of power. He often refrains from the sensation of the individual image and instead employs serial photography, whose individual exhibits combine to form a monumental overall work.

Since the 1970s, Jürgen Klauke (born 1943, lives and works in Cologne) has been one of the defining figures of international contemporary art. His work combines staged and conceptual photography with performance to create an independent artistic language that radically questions the construction of social interaction and societal norms. Particularly his meticulously composed photographic works have significantly influenced artistic engagement with gender, self-image, and identity, making him to this day a central figure in European photography and performance art. Klauke reveals what often remains invisible or is content-wise taboo: He addresses fragility, pain, and exhaustion, coupled with a targeted use of humor.

The title-giving work ***Schlachtfelder*** (2009–2010) forms a central reference point of the exhibition. The monumental work comprises 144 photographs that combine to form a large tableau. In it, Klauke draws on the tradition of battle painting, which reached its peak especially in the 17th and 19th centuries, and translates it into the medium of photography. Instead of the heroic staging and glorification of military power, Klauke confronts viewers with close-up images of battlefield waste. Rosa-blue and whitish discolored surfaces of inflated animal stomachs contrast with organic structures in rich red. Empty chairs repeatedly appear, hanging on overly long threads and evoking associations with swings, puppets, or electric chairs. The images resist a clear interpretation: Between organic materiality and threatening staging unfolds a visual language that brings the physical and existential consequences of violence into view. The historical visual tradition of battle painting is not continued, but stripped of its heroic rhetoric. In place of the depiction of victory and power stands the confrontation with the traces of destruction and vulnerability.

Another perspective on societal violence is opened by the 96-part series ***Antlitze*** (1972–2000). It shows hooded face, whose portraits Klauke has been collecting since the terrorist attack on the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. The event forms the starting point of a decades-long engagement with the covering of the human face, in which the boundaries between 'hunter' and 'hunted' blur. The faces rendered unrecognizable by textile covering evade individual identification and become projection surfaces for questions about identity, perception, and societal insecurity. At the same time, the mask gains a face (Antlitz) through its constant presence in the media.

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In addition to these two central work complexes, further works open up different approaches to Klauke's engagement with existential experiences and the possibilities of photographic staging. In the work *Die Lust zu Leben* (1976), for example, which was exhibited at Documenta 6, Klauke confronts self-portraits with staged representations of his possible demise. The twelve-part photographic work combines the motif of the self-portrait with the depiction of his potential destruction, thereby undermining the title's apparent clarity. Between affirmation of life, self-staging, and existential threat, an image sequence emerges that questions the relationship between life and death as well as the possibilities of making one's own body the subject of artistic representations.

The photographic works are complemented by selected performance records. They illustrate how closely Klauke's artistic practice has been connected from the beginning with the relationship between action, body, and image. The performative gesture is enacted and filmed, then transferred into new visual contexts. Photography and video thus appear not as separate media, but as interwoven forms of artistic inquiry that repeatedly put the relationship between self-conception and external perception up for discussion.

With the exhibition *Schlachtfelder*, the KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN dedicates a solo exhibition to the artist Jürgen Klauke, illuminating his work from a contemporary perspective and presenting his works as highly current, politically legible images for discussion. In a time when questions of gender identity, body politics, social normalization, vulnerability, and societal violence are being negotiated with new urgency, his work proves itself to be unbrokenly radical. The exhibition therefore explicitly understands Klauke's works not only as art-historically relevant key works, but as contemporary contributions to current political and societal discourses.

*Jürgen Klauke (*1943 in Kliding, lives in Cologne) has been developing a multifaceted body of work since the early 1970s at the intersection of photography, drawing, performance, and installation, exploring questions of identity, the body, gender. Since the 1980s, the artist has been creating a cosmos of images that stages our fragile existence, an approach he himself describes as an "aestheticization of the existential." His work has been presented in numerous institutional solo exhibitions and retrospectives, including the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Hamburger Kunsthalle, ZKM Karlsruhe, Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Museum of Modern Art Saitama, Maison Européenne de la Photographie Paris, and the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn. Klauke was represented at documenta 6 (1977) and documenta 8 (1987), as well as at the Sydney Biennale (1979), the Venice Biennale (1980), and the Moscow Biennale (2011). His work continues to receive international attention and is repeatedly re-examined in current survey and contextual exhibitions.*

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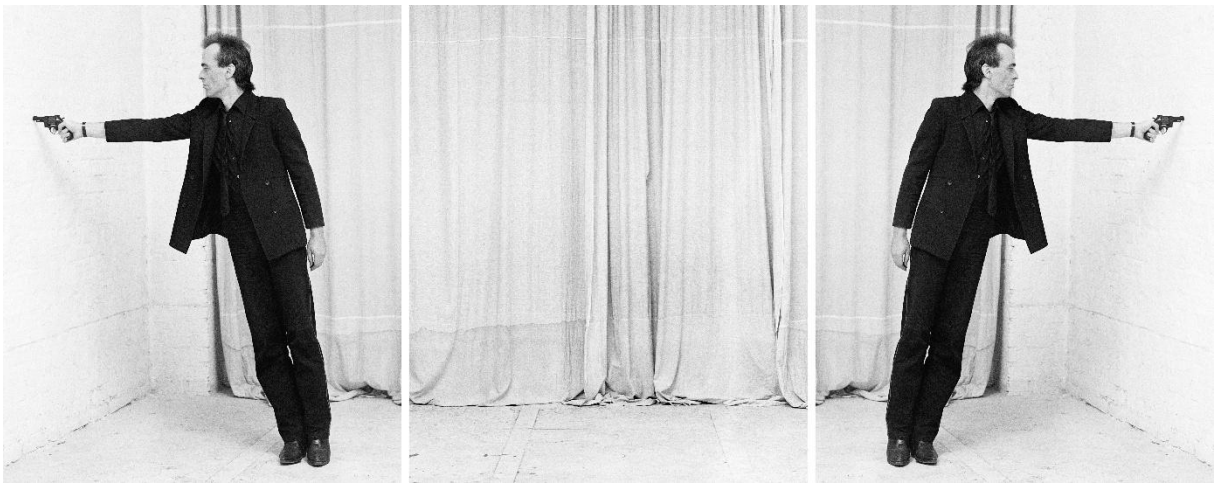


Fig.: Jürgen Klauke, Formalisierung der Langeweile from the series Formalisierung der Langeweile, 1980 - 1981, C-Print, 3 parts, each 60 x50cm. Courtesy Zander Galerie Paris. VG Bild.

With special thanks to
Sebastian von der Heide
Attila Kormos
Alwin Lay
LVR-Landesmuseum Bonn
Sammlung PUS

With kind support
City of Giessen

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Accompanying Programme

Art Buzz – Short guided tours + drinks for young culture fans
Thu. 10.12.2027, 6 – 8 pm

Guided tour by the curator Nadia Ismail
Sun. 17.01.2027, 3pm

Art and Coffee
Wed. 20.01.2027, 3 pm
Registration by 18.01.2026
kunsthalle@giessen.de , +49 306 1041
Participation fee 2,50 €

Artist Talk
Thu. 04.03.2027, 6 pm
Jürgen Klauke in conversation with
Dr. Andreas Beitin (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg)
Prof. Dr. Ursula Frohne (Universität Münster)
Dr. Nadia Ismail (KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN)

Art education in individual conversation
every Sat. 2 – 4 pm

Sunday guided Tour
Sun. 3 pm
06.12.2026 + 07.02.2027

Visitor information
Further information and events at:
www.kunsthalle-giessen.de | www.giessen.de