

Press release | 3 December 2025

ART AROUND 1800 An Exhibition about Exhibitions

5 December 2025 to ~~29 March 2026~~ 26 April 2026

Press conference: Thursday, 4 December 2025, 11 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, 4 December 2025, 7 p.m.

ART AROUND 1800 revisits the legendary exhibition cycle of that name at the Hamburger Kunsthalle. That series, presented in nine parts from 1974 to 1981, examined the impact of art in the »Age of Revolutions«, launching seminal debates on the social relevance of art that continue to resonate today. The current show critiques the historical displays created under then director Werner Hofmann from a contemporary perspective, updating their approach to classifying and ordering things. Over 50 paintings, books and works on paper dating to the era around 1800 from the Kunsthalle's collection are supplemented by 70 selected loans and works by five contemporary artists. Around 100 artists are represented.

Like the original series, the current exhibition is being shown in the rotunda on the upper floor of the new museum wing inaugurated in 1919. In the 1970s, this area served as a central »space for contemplation« and for curatorial experiments. Arranged in ten stations, *ART AROUND 1800* unfolds a panoramic survey of an epoch, looking at themes such as the Enlightenment, violence, dreams, the political landscape and industrialisation as well as revolution and notions of freedom – from today's point of view. The historical exhibition series revised European art-historical narratives by focusing on themes and artists that broke with the conventions of their time: Ossian, Caspar David Friedrich, Johann Heinrich Füssli, William Blake, Johan Tobias Sergel, William Turner, Philipp Otto Runge, John Flaxman and Francisco Goya. *ART AROUND 1800* now highlights aspects that were lacking or which received little attention in the 1970s exhibition cycle: feminism, women artists, the Jewish Enlightenment, slavery, abolitionism and the Haitian Revolution.

Marten Schech has designed the current **exhibition architecture** as a sculptural intervention entitled *Binnacle (Round Lodge with Three Corners)*, 2025. Relating his work to the circular floor plan, the artist has extended the existing architecture through additions, installations and conversions. In an ensemble that alternates between solid structure and backdrop, it is difficult to distinguish between inside and outside, particularly in an artificial grotto. The rotunda becomes a space of transition displaying the uncanny materiality of an *Ancien Régime*. Contemporary works by Mark Dion and Sigmar Polke dealing with the French Revolution and by Kara Walker on the theme of slavery complement – or contravene – the ensemble. The **light projection** *Vision: Intergalactic Social Systems* (2025), conceived by Suzanne Treister for *ART AROUND 1800*, will be projected on the ceiling of the



Auguste Desperet (1804–1865)
Third Eruption of the 1789 Volcano,
1833
Lithograph, 26 × 33 cm
Private collection, Hamburg
© Photo: Petra Dwenger

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Kunsthalle's rotunda for a period of four months, bathing the constellations in the exhibition in a techno-shamanic light and calling into question any purported universalisms.

The **publication** *Kunst um 1800. Kuratieren als wissenschaftliche Praxis. Die Hamburger Kunsthalle in den 1970er Jahren* (Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2024, hardcover, in German, 440 pages, 395 illustrations) accompanies the exhibition. Edited and with essays by guest curators Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél as well as David Bindman, Johannes Grave, Charlotte Klonk, Jenny Nachtigall, Richard Taws and Monika Wagner, among others, the volume documents all the exhibitions in the original series *ART AROUND 1800*. The authors take a critical look at the decade after 1968 and offer new perspectives on that era of experimentation. The catalogue is available at a bookstore price of 48 euros at the museum shop or at www.freunde-der-kunsthalle.de.

Participating artists: Giacomo Aliprandi, Saul Ascher, Inigo Barlow, Robert Bénard, Benedict Heinrich Bendix, Pierre-Gabriel Berthault, William Blake, Louis-Simon Boizot, Henry Winsor Bond, François Bonneville, Edward Francis Burney, Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, Jacques-Simon Chéreau, John Heaviside Clark, Jacques-Louis Copia, George & Isaac Cruikshank, Louis Darcis, Erasmus Darwin, Jacques-Louis David, François Séraphin Delpech, Charles Melchior Descourtis, Auguste Desperet, Claude-Louis Desray, Mark Dion, Richard Earlom, Edmund Evans, Charles Fernique, John Flaxman, Maria Flaxman, Caspar David Friedrich, Johann Heinrich Füssli, Henry Gastineau, Jean Baptiste Gautier, François Gérard, James Gillray, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Francisco Goya, Anton Graff, William Hackwood, Isidore-Stanislas Helman, Thomas Hingham, William Hogarth, Thomas Holloway, Jean-Pierre-Marie Jazet, Angelika Kauffmann, Carl Wilhelm Kolbe, Samuel Lacey, Philibert-Benoît de La Rue, Moses Samuel Loewe, Philip James de Louthembourg, Joseph Wilson Lowry, Thomas Lupton, William Lutwyche, James Macpherson, John Martin, Johann Wilhelm Meil, Moses Mendelssohn, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, Scipio Moorhead, Jean-Michel Moreau, James Nasmyth, Friedrich Perthes, George Pickering, William Pickett, Tommaso Piroli, Sigmar Polke, Jean-Louis Prieur, Marcus Rainsford, Thomas Rowlandson, William Read, Jean-Baptiste Regnault, Philipp Otto Runge, Auguste Sandoz, Piat Joseph Sauvage, Frédéric-Jean Schall, Marten Schech, Johann David Schubert, Johan Tobias Sergel, Thomas Spence, John Gabriel Stedman, Jean-Joseph François & Jean Pierre Antoine Tassaert, Albert Teichel, Suzanne Treister, Joseph Mallord William Turner, John Walker, Kara Walker, Josiah Wedgwood, Moses Wessely, Phillis Wheatley, Loeser Leo Wolf, Joseph Wright of Derby and Johann Zoffany.

Guest curators: Prof. Dr. Petra Lange-Berndt (University of Hamburg) and Prof. Dr. Dietmar Rübél (Academy of Fine Arts Munich)

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