1920s | 2020s (Berlin/online, 3-4 Dec 26)

Kunsthaus Dahlem, Berlin / Online, Dec 3–04, 2026

Meike Hoffmann

1920s | 2020s: Art Markets – War Conflicts – Economic Crises.
International Symposium with Panel Discussion.

Kunsthaus Dahlem, Berlin, 03/12/2026, 17:00 – 19:30 CET
ZOOM-Uni Köln, 04/12/2026, 10:15 – 16:00 CET

Convenor: Research Center “Entartete Kunst” at the Freie Universität Berlin, Kunsthaus Dahlem, Brücke-Museum in Berlin and University of Cologne

The 1920s were internationally romanticized as the “Golden Twenties”, the “Wild Twenties”, the “Roaring Twenties”, “Anni Ruggenti” and “Années Folles”. Yet they were marked by profound economic, social, political, and technological upheavals in the wake of World War I, underpinned by a global modernization boom that also transformed the arts and art markets. The interconnected dynamics were driven by:
- fluctuations ranging from economic booms, industrial growth, and rising consumption on the one hand, to speculative bubbles, economic and financial crises, and the global stock market crash of 1929 on the other;
- the growing divide between poverty and wealth (exacerbated by economic crises), as well as by efforts at social reform;
- democratization and, at the same time, political destabilization caused by violent attacks, propaganda, and coup attempts;
- technological innovations such as the mass production of the automobiles (which increased individual mobility and revolutionized the transport of goods) and the emergence of radio as a mass medium of communication.

What exactly were these connections? And how did they manifest themselves in the arts and art market during the interwar period? Furthermore, can we identify structural similarities between the 1920s and the 2020s? What are these similarities, and what are the fundamental differences between these periods of upheaval? What new challenges have emerged in the 2020s, given the interplay between the art markets, armed conflicts, and economic crises? And what can the historical and transdisciplinary insights into the 1920s teach us about addressing these challenges?

Programm

Thursday 03/12/2026
Kunsthaus Dahlem, Käuzchensteig 12, 14195 Berlin
No registration is required. Participation is free of charge.

SYMPOSIUM KICK-OFF AT THE KUNSTHAUS DAHLEM
17:00 Admission and guided tours (in German) of the current exhibitions „Eva Frankfurther: Drawn from Life“, Kunsthaus Dahlem and „Schwedische Moderne”, Brücke-Museum

18:15 Welcome: Dorothea Schöne and Meike Hoffmann, Berlin

18:30 PANEL DISCUSSION (in German, with audio recording)
„1920er | 2020er Jahre: Babel der Künste, Märkte und Demokratien?“

On the podium:
- Dirk Boll, Berlin/London
- James van Dyke, Missouri
- Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier, Berlin
- Dorothea Schöne, Berlin
Moderation: Dorothee Wimmer, Berlin/Köln

19:30 Get together

Friday, 04/12/2026
Z O O M - U n i K ö l n :
https://uni-koeln.zoom.us/j/93181287640?pwd=Uw4wRcXPHTOC4bbyP842eTcey1y7Oa.1
No registration is required. Participation is free of charge.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM, UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE AND FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN
10:30 Welcome: Meike Hopp, Köln/Magdeburg, and Dorothee Wimmer, Berlin/Köln

10:45 Opening remarks – Impulse I: Connecting Historical Questions with the Present: The Kunsthaus Dahlem and its History
Dorothea Schöne, Berlin

11:00 Opening remarks – Impulse II: The Economic Impact of the Treaty of Versailles for the Weimar Republic: Tariffs – Reparations – Inflations
Dorothee Wimmer, Berlin/Köln

SESSION I:
War Conflicts and its Consequences for Art Politics and Markets
Moderation: Meike Hopp, Köln/Magdeburg

11:15 Art and Democracy in Times of Economic Crises.
Funding of Contemporary German Art by the Prussian Ministry of Culture, 1918–1932
Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier, Berlin

11:45 How Did Modern Art Become “Democratic”?
German Expressionism in the USA before and after World War II
Gregor Langfeld, Amsterdam

12:15 Lunch Break

SESSION II:

1920s | 2020s: Structural Similarities? New Challenges?
Moderation: Dorothea Schöne, Berlin

14:00 The Woman's Image: Technology, Progress, and the Periodical Covers in the 1920s and the 2020s
Helen Gramotnev, Queensland

14:30 Avant-Garde Art Associations of the 1920s at the Melting Pot of Culture, Society, Politics, and Crisis: An Attempt to Build a Bridge to the Present
Gloria Köpnick, Dortmund

15:00 Architecture or Reaction? Economic Instability, the State, and the Turn to Monumentalism after 1929
Matteo Trentini, Linz

15:30 Conclusion and Final Remarks

16:00 End of Symposium

Additional Information
The symposium will open on Thursday, 3/12/2026 with a panel discussion in German about „1920er | 2020er Jahre: Babel der Künste, Märkte und Demokratien?" at Kunsthaus Dahlem. The conference language on Friday, 04/12/2026 is English. Participation is free of charge. No registration is required.

Concept
Meike Hoffmann, Meike Hopp, Dorothea Schöne und Dorothee Wimmer

With
Dirk Boll, James van Dyke, Helen Gramotnev, Meike Hoffmann, Meike Hopp, Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier, Gloria Köpnick, Gregor Langfeld, Philine Pahnke, Lisa Marei Schmidt, Dorothea Schöne, Matteo Trentini, Dorothee Wimmer, Gabriele Zöllner

Contact:
Meike.Hoffmann@fu-berlin.de

Reference:
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