kunstmuseum basel

Media release
Basel, October 20, 2026

When I'm Here

November 28, 2026–March 21, 2027, Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart
Curators: Stephanie Seidel and Team Gegenwart

The exhibition *When I'm Here* at the Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart gathers works from between 1970 and 2026 by over fifty artists, almost half of whom live in Basel. The works on view are drawn from three major collections in Basel—the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel (the public art collection of Basel), the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, and the collection of Kunstkredit Basel-Stadt—and reflect a wide range of approaches to art-making.

The exhibition title is drawn from a work by Rémy Zaugg: "And would the world look at me when I'm here"—the words with which a painting from 1995/98 addresses the viewer. A work of art has a history of its own, but each encounter with it takes place in the here and now: and while the artwork may appear to remain unchanged, times change, as do the people who look at it and the contexts in which they see it.

This poetic proposition is at the exhibition's core. It suggests that works of art never stand alone; they always generate meaning in interaction with a specific site, their surroundings, and the viewer. Unfolding across two gallery floors at the Gegenwart venue, the show invites visitors to reflect on how they relate to spaces, bodies, pictures, and landscapes—while demonstrating the richness and range with which these concerns are explored across the three Basel-based collections. Six sections, each titled with a preposition, suggest possible answers: *In, With, Behind, Across, In Front, Between*.

In considers the space in which we are. Works by artists including Ayşe Erkmen, Ruth Buchanan, Gina Folly, Nuri Koerfer, Renée Levi, Edit Oderbolz, and Mia Sánchez focus on elements of everyday spaces—floors, furniture, architecture—only to subtly defamiliarize them and present them in new contexts. In *With*, Monika Dillier, Karin Hueber, and others scrutinize the interplay between body and space, with sculptures resembling athletic gear or fluid depictions of bodies in watercolor. *Behind* probes the question of what lies beneath the surface of things. With a nod to the idea of the

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readymade, artists like Saâdane Afif, Simon Denny, Jana Euler, Henrik Olesen, and Monika Sosnowska extract ordinary objects from their familiar contexts and transplant them into the exhibition gallery, where they take on new meaning.

The body is the focus of the section *Across*. VALIE EXPORT, Sidsel Meineche Hansen, Hilary Lloyd, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Wolfgang Tillmans, Hannah Villinger, Mark Wallinger and others use portraits and representations of bodies to redirect attention from the object of the gaze to the beholder's own body as an interface with the world. In *In Front*, Sylvie Defraoui, Jan Dibbets, Hamish Fulton, Cécile Hummel, and Paula Santomé reveal that a landscape is not a neutral image but is always inflected by personal perception and experience. Finally, *Between* brings into view the familiar and the strange: Miriam Cahn, Klara Lidén, Thomas Ruff, and Cindy Sherman toy with ambiguities, allowing the visible and the concealed to blend into one another.

The exhibition is supported by:
Fonds für künstlerische Aktivitäten im Museum für Gegenwartskunst der Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung und der Christoph Merian Stiftung
Foundation for the Kunstmuseum Basel

Imagery
www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

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