



Press release

IS IT ALL ART? 25 YEARS MUSEUM PRINZHORN COLLECTION

JUNE 28, 2026–JANUARY 31, 2027

UNIVERSITÄTS
KLINIKUM
HEIDELBERG

Alles Kunst?

25 Jahre Museum
Sammlung Prinzhorn

28.6.2026–
31.1.2027

www.sammlung-prinzhorn.de

Gefördert durch





Press release

ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

IS IT ALL ART? TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE PRINZHORN COLLECTION MUSEUM

JUNE 28, 2026–JANUARY 31, 2027

The Prinzhorn Collection Museum houses a collection that is unique in the world – some 40,000 works created by institutionalised patients and people with experience of mental illness between 1840 and the present day. In 2026, the museum will celebrate its 25th anniversary. With the anniversary exhibition ‘Is It All Art?’ and an extensive programme of events, the museum – in collaboration with numerous partners – is focusing on a central question that has accompanied the institution since its foundation: How can works created in a psychiatric context be exhibited when they were not originally intended for the public or were not created as art? The aim of the exhibition is to explore new ways of presenting ‘art on the fringes of art’ and to further strengthen the inclusion of outsider art within the art world.

Iconic Works Reimagined

The exhibition presents key works from the collection in a new light. These include, for example, the life-size doll by Katharina Detzel (1872–1960), which survived only in photographs and has been faithfully reconstructed for the exhibition. Visitors can thus experience its spatial impact for the first time – an object that straddles the line between a protective function and potential erotic projection.

The banknotes created by Else Blankenhorn (1878–1920), with which she intended to finance the resurrection of deceased lovers, can also be experienced in a new way: they have been reprinted and can be viewed in the exhibition space, touched and ultimately ‘exchanged’ for euros.

A particular highlight is the collection’s most recent acquisition: the ‘Staatsalbum (State Album)’ textile, sewn from scraps of linen and embellished with embroidery by Emma Mohr (1833–?). It features over 50 panels – ranging from biblical scenes to depictions of Emperor Wilhelm I and a self-portrait of the embroiderer at the centre. The reverse side features embroidered letters to the Emperor and the Minister of State. In the exhibition, the work is visible from both sides; a touchscreen provides further details about this enigmatic piece.



The Museum and its History

In 2001, some 100 years after its foundation, the collection was given its own museum in a former lecture hall building on the site of the Old Hospital in Heidelberg. The idea of a museum, however, dates back even further: As early as 1920, Hans Prinzhorn – who had significantly expanded the teaching collection of the Heidelberg Psychiatric Hospital between 1919 and 1921 – planned a ‘Museum of Pathological Art’. The project was never realised, but Prinzhorn’s 1922 book ‘Bildnerie der Geisteskranken (Artistry of the Mentally Ill)’ brought the collection to international attention. After being exploited by the National Socialists, the collection fell into oblivion – until it was rediscovered in the 1960s through a fresh perspective. In the 1980s, thanks to widespread interest, museological research and exhibition practice, the museum project took shape once more, and was realised 20 years later in 2001. The impetus came from the threatened relocation of the collection to Berlin, which a patients’ initiative had publicly campaigned against. The project was also supported by the commitment of the Friends of the Collection, founded on the initiative of students at the Berlin University of the Arts, who also brought the first advisory board members on board – including Georg Baselitz, Gerhard Richter, Jean Christophe Ammann, Eduard Beaucamp and Peter Gorsen; they were succeeded by Johann Feilacher, Peter Gorsen, Johann Kresnik, Leo Navratil, Arnulf Rainer and Maria Rave-Schwank.

The museum presents two to three themed exhibitions each year and aims to contribute to the destigmatisation of mental illness. At the same time, the museum operates as an academic institution that researches the works, the life stories behind them and related issues. Several extensive research projects funded by the DFG and the Volkswagen Foundation have already been carried out.

Programme of events

The anniversary exhibition is accompanied by a varied programme of events featuring concerts, readings, talks and guided tours. Long-standing partners such as KlangForum e.V. and Haus am Wehrsteg are taking part, alongside new partners including the City of Literature Heidelberg, the Enjoy Jazz Festival and the Mannheim-Heidelberg International Film Festival. An open day will offer a glimpse behind the scenes at the museum.

At the same time, the ‘Sammlung Prinzhorn zu Gast (The Prinzhorn Collection As Guest)’ series will begin, in which numerous museums will bring works from the collection into dialogue with their own holdings. In this way, the question ‘Is it all art?’ is deliberately explored within different institutional contexts.



The Prinzhorn Collection is a department of Heidelberg University Hospital, supported by the Heidelberg Faculty of Medicine at Heidelberg University

The anniversary year is supported by:



In Kooperation mit In cooperation with

