

Press contacts

Larissa Grotebrune (Exhibitions)

Tel +49 221 221 23491

larissa.grotebrune@museum-ludwig.de

Anne Niermann (General Enquiries)

Tel +49 221 221 22428

annegret.niermann@museum-ludwig.de

MUSEUM LUDWIG

Exhibitions 2025

April 12 – August 3, 2025

Francis Alÿs – Kids Take Over

The Museum Ludwig presents Francis Alÿs – Kids Take Over, a remarkable exhibition in which children are the focus. The internationally acclaimed artist Francis Alÿs has had major solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Modern in London, and numerous other museums in cities such as Houston, Shanghai, Mexico City, and Basel. His work was featured at the Venice Biennale in 2022 and in 2023 he received the Wolfgang Hahn Prize of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig.

Thirty video works from Alÿs's ongoing series Children's Games, showing children from around the world at play, will be presented at the Museum Ludwig in dialogue with a group of paintings by the artist. An outreach project with local Cologne schoolchildren adds a participatory dimension to the exhibition.

For the past twenty-five years, Francis Alÿs (*1959 in Antwerp, lives in Mexico City) has documented children's games in a diverse range of countries. His videos depict children engaged in various activities such as jump rope, rolling tires, and a snowball fight, in different climate zones, in cities and in the countryside, in the steppes or in the forest. While some of the games are familiar to us, the rules of other games only gradually become apparent.

The universality of play is witnessed in the children's concentration and anticipation, in their excitement and delight. Many of the films have a timeless quality due to the landscapes in which the children play and the analogue nature of their games. Other films are linked to a specific time, such as a game of tag played by children wearing masks during the COVID pandemic or more recent videos in which children in Ukraine integrate the war into their games. Sometimes geopolitical power structures and colonial inequalities are revealed, as in a film showing Congolese children using an old car tire to roll down a hill, which turns out to be the slag heap of a cobalt mine.

Children's Games attests to the creativity, resilience, and deep bond between children, whose games appear as utopian expressions of community and tradition beyond cultural and climatic differences.

Alj's has turned over part of the exhibition space to fifty children from two local elementary schools in Cologne who have collaborated on a project that forms a special part of the show. These children – from class 3b at the Gemeinschaftsgrundschule in Köln-Lindweiler and class 6a/b at the Adolph Kolping-Hauptschule in Köln-Kalk – aged between eight and thirteen, like those featured in Children's Games, have designed a play zone and a children's museum. They have worked on the project for over a year, choosing artworks from the Museum Ludwig's permanent collection for their own curated museum. This collaboration is an experiment by children for children, allowing them to draw on their own perspectives to engage with paintings, sculptures, and video works and to invite others to do the same.

A new film in the Children's Games series, made by Alj's in Cologne with the participation of the local schoolchildren, will premiere in the exhibition in June.

Francis Alj's – Kids Take Over is the largest outreach program the Museum Ludwig has ever undertaken. To encourage as many children as possible to visit the exhibition, over one hundred classes have been invited to visit the show. For many, it will be their first time to a museum, and their travel costs, often an obstacle for potential visitors, will be covered by the institution.

This exhibition will transform the Museum Ludwig into a place where global and local perspectives merge. It invites visitors to discover the power of art and games, appreciate the perspectives of children—the voices of the future—and, through them, experience the museum in a new way.

Curators: Rita Kersting, Santi Grunewald

The exhibition has been supported by the Landschaftsverband Rheinland (LVR) and the Gesellschaft für moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig as well as by Russmedia, the Victor Rolff Stiftung, the Brigitte Wagner-Halswick Stiftung, the RheinEnergieStiftung Kultur, the Imhoff Stiftung, the MoBeyer Stiftung, and the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation. Additional support has been generously provided by Galerie Kilchmann.

Curators: Rita Kersting and Santi Grunewald

Social Media:

We use the hashtag **#MLxFrancisAlj's** in our posts about this exhibition.

May 17 – November 9, 2025

Pauline Hafsia M'barek. ENTROPIC RECORDS

Artist Meets Archive #4: The Internationale Photoszene Köln

Every two years, the Internationale Photoszene Köln organizes research residencies that allow artists to explore photographic archives and collections in Cologne. The Artist Meets Archive program highlights the complexity of archives as a source of artistic inspiration and creation. The results will be exhibited across various venues in the city, starting May 17, 2025. Alongside Museum Ludwig, participating institutions for the fourth edition of Artist Meets Archive include Kölnisches Stadtmuseum, Dombauarchiv Köln, the Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, and Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum.

At Museum Ludwig, artist Pauline Hafsia M'barek (b. 1979, based in Brussels and Cologne) unveils a new project inspired by photographs from the Agfa advertising archive, which the museum acquired in 2005. Agfa, a German chemical company, was among the world's leading producers of photographic film and lab equipment for many decades. M'barek's research explores the fragility of photographic materials, focusing on their chemical and physical composition, the conditions of their production, and the challenges of preservation.

A photograph is more than just a medium of visualization and representation—it possesses a vibrant materiality and plays an active role in conservational, economic, and political processes, often intertwined with (neo)colonial structures. Analog photographs are composed of both organic materials, such as cellulose and gelatin, and inorganic elements like glass, silver, or copper, forming complex, multilayered surfaces. Over time, these light-sensitive materials bear traces of the recording process and the conditions that shaped them.

This awareness led M'barek to examine the vulnerability of photographic archives and the challenges of exhibiting them, as their long-term preservation depends on protection from external influences. Conservation efforts, in essence, are attempts to manage the uncontrollable—negotiating the inevitable transformations of material over time.

Photographs continuously react to their surroundings, responding to changes in temperature, humidity, pollutants, and microorganisms. Over time, they are prone to silvering, fading, brittleness, and mold. On a molecular level, chemical processes remain in motion, as all material is inherently entropic. Yet, decay and deterioration do more than signal loss—they open up new possibilities for interpretation and meaning. This evolving transformation is at the center of the exhibition ENTROPIC RECORDS, where the artist explores the shifting nature of photographic material over time.

M'barek's immersive work at Museum Ludwig weaves together photographs of the Agfa-production, toxic documents, and microscopic material analyses with her exploration of the museum's biotope, creating a speculative multimedia experience. Through dazzling light phenomena, shimmering microstructures, ticking measuring instruments and crawling insects, she creates a space shaped by the tension between preservation and decay, order and entropy. The installation approaches an elusive visuality that repeatedly slips away and remains precarious.

Pauline Hafsia M'barek studied visual art in Hamburg, Marseille, and Cologne. In her practice, the body and its perceptual systems serve as both instruments and subjects of investigation. By approaching her subject as closely as possible, she exposes herself to precarious and unstable

moments between observation and experience. Her videos, photographs, installations, and performative lectures emerge from an open, experimental process—not as finalized works, but as transitory stages of an artistic research in movement.

The exhibition is funded by the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation and Russmedia.

Curator: Barbara Engelbach

Consultant curator: Miriam Szwast

#ArtistMeetsArchive

#EntropicRecords

October 3, 2025 – January 11, 2026

5 Friends.

John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly

The exhibition *Five Friends. John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly* tells the story of an influential yet often overlooked network of five prolific, prominent artists. Although all of them have been recognized as individuals, their strong reciprocal influence, artistic friendships, and romantic relationships have been widely overlooked and rarely studied.

Both individually and as a group, they played central roles in postwar art and made decisive contributions to the history of art, music, and dance with their interdisciplinary work. They continue to inspire generations of artists.

With its focus on the interaction between the five artists, the exhibition also reflects on what it meant to be a gay artist in the 1950s, casting new light on the dynamics of postwar art in the United States and beyond.

This is the first time that Cage's theoretical influence on Rauschenberg and Twombly, the stage sets by Rauschenberg and Johns for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and the formal and content-related dialogues between Twombly, Rauschenberg, and Johns are the subject of a major exhibition. The performative and collaborative dimension of their practices exemplifies their shared cultural conceptions of a nonhierarchical, multipolar, and anti-imperialist society.

In addition to the intellectual and political affinities of the five artists, the exhibition will examine the surprisingly strong formal and material similarities between scores, drawings, paintings, choreographies, and (moving) sculptures. Artworks that were created in the same studios will be shown in dialogue for the first time in a museum space, making the artistic exchange tangible. In cooperation with music and dance ensembles, works by Cage and Cunningham will be restaged in the exhibition, anchoring them in the present.

The exhibition is in cooperation with the Museum Brandhorst in Munich, where it will be presented from April 10 to August 17, 2025.

#FiveFriends

Curators: Yilmaz Dziewior, Achim Hochdörfer and Arthur Fink

November 8, 2025 – April 19, 2026

2025 Wolfgang Hahn Prize: Evelyn Taocheng Wang

Evelyn Taocheng Wang (*1981 in Chengdu, China) is the recipient of the 31st Wolfgang Hahn Prize of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig. Wang works with drawings, paintings, video, installations, and performances. The themes in her work are as diverse as the media used: she frequently returns to the question of how identity is formed, as well as ethnicity and gender roles. Her approach is both autobiographical and fictional, dealing with her own story as a migrant who came to Europe from Asia and had to build a new identity here, interweaving it with content from classic fairy tales, colonial history, and queer theory. Wang is influenced by traditional Chinese painting as well as by Western modern and contemporary art. This results in complex, paradoxical narratives that shake up categorical ideas and assessments. Wang's works were last presented to a wider audience at the 2024 Venice Biennale. She lives and works in Rotterdam.

The Wolfgang Hahn Prize is awarded annually by the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig. The award is primarily intended to honor contemporary artists who have already made a name for themselves in the art world through an internationally recognized oeuvre, but who are not yet as well known in Germany as they deserve to be. The prize money, amounting to a maximum of 100,000 euros, comes from the members' contributions and goes towards the acquisition of a work or group of works by the artists for the Museum Ludwig collection. The prize is associated with exhibitions organized by the Museum Ludwig of the work(s) acquired by the prizewinners as well as the publication of an accompanying publication.

Presentations in the Photography Room

May 3 – October 12, 2025

Street Photography

Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, Joseph Rodriguez

With its frank view of everyday life in urban spaces, street photography made a radical break with traditional photographic approaches. Instead of staged poses, it aimed to capture the fleeting moments in which light, composition, and event meld into a meaningful story. This presentation features photographs by Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, and Joseph Rodriguez, three famous protagonists of street photography in the United States who have significantly developed the genre. Iconic photographs from the 1960s to 1980s are presented alongside lesser-known examples from their respective oeuvres. The photographs come from donations from the

Bartenbach family in 2015, a donation from Volker Heinen in 2018 and from acquisitions since 2001.

#StreetPhotography #MLxPhotography

Curator: Barbara Engelbach

November 1, 2025 – March 22, 2026

Smile! How the smile came into photography

The people depicted in old portrait photographs often look into the camera with expressions that are quite serious. Today, in an era when smiles are an integral part of photography, their countenances seem strangely stiff. How did this change come about? Is it really only due to improvements in dental hygiene, or does the promise of happiness in advertising play a part? This retrospective in the Photography Room investigates these questions to better understand why our “photography faces” have changed over time.

#PhotographyFaces #MLxPhotography

Curator: Miriam Szwast

Press Contact:
Larissa Grotebrune (Exhibitions)
Tel +49 221 221 23491
Larissa.grotebrune@museum-ludwig.de

Anne Niermann (General inquiries)
Tel +49 221 221 22428
annegret.niermann@museum-ludwig.de

MUSEUM LUDWIG

PRESS IMAGES

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Kids_Take_Over_Polke

Preparations for the children's museum in the exhibition Francis Alÿs. Kids Take Over In the background Sigmar Polke, *Fensterfront*, 1994

© The Estate of Sigmar Polke, Cologne / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024



Kids_Take_Over_Seiwert

Amar and Alessio in front of Franz-Wilhelm Seiwert, *Stadt und Land*, 1932

Photo: Rita Kersting



CG26

Francis Alÿs

Children's Game #26 Kisolo

Tabacongo, DR Congo, 2021, 6:23 min.

In collaboration with Félix Blume, Chloé Despaxm and Julien Devaux

© Francis Alÿs



CG33-Schneespiele-2022-STILL-4

Francis Alÿs

Children's Game #33 Schneespiele

Engelberg, Schweiz, 2022, 5:26 min.

in collaboration with Julien Devaux and Félix Blume

© Francis Alÿs



CG40_Chivichanas-2023-STILL-7

Children's Game #40 Chivichanas

La Haban, Cuba, 2023, 4:43 min.

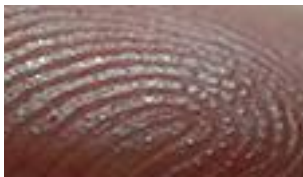
in collaboration with Julien Devaux and Félix Blume

© Francis Alÿs

Pauline Hafsia M'barek. ENTROPIC RECORDS

Artist Meets Archive #4: The Internationale Photoszene Köln

May 17 – November 9, 2025



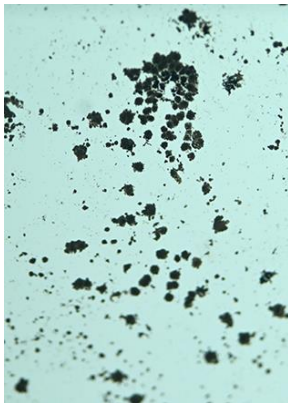
Minutien_M'barek

Pauline Hafsia M'barek

Minutien, 2021

Video, 4 K, color, 2'30 min

© Pauline Hafsia M'barek and Thomas Rehbein Galerie



Feinstaub_M'barek

Pauline Hafsia M'barek

untitled (fine dust), 2024

Photography

© Pauline Hafsia M'barek



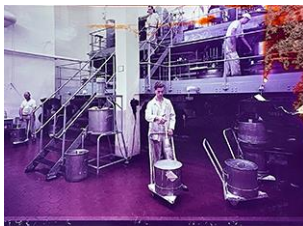
Blende_M'barek

Pauline Hafsia M'barek

Aperture (Blende), 2025

Color photography

© Pauline Hafsia M'barek



Barytküche_Agfa

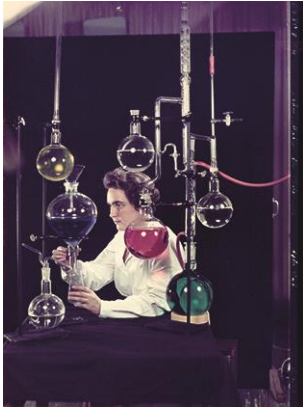
Pauline Hafsia M'barek

Baryt kitchen (Barytküche), 17.12.1956

Color photography

12,4 x 16,8 cm

Museum Ludwig, Agfa Advertising archive (Werbeearchiv)



Labormotiv_AMA

Laboratory motif for Photokina, 5.9.1958

Color Photography

Museum Ludwig, Agfa advertising archive

Five Friends: John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly

October 3, 2025 – January 11, 2026



Gruppenfoto

From left to right:

Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg,
John Cage, M.C. Richards, Bob Catoin and
Jasper Johns, 1958



1974

Postcard invitation to the opening of the
exhibition

Robert Rauschenberg / Cy Twombly

Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, USA,

May 4, 1974

Photo: Robert Petersen. Robert
Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New
York



scala_0154969

Robert Rauschenberg

Bed, 1955

Combine painting: oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports, 6' 3 3/4' x 31 1/2' x 8' (191.1 x 80 x 20.3 cm). Gift of Leo Castelli in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Acc. n.: 79.1989

© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
Archives, New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn
2024

Photo: Haydar Koyupinar, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Museum Brandhorst Munich



rba_c013485

Robert Rauschenberg

Odalisk, 1955–58

wood, fabric, paper and other material,
205 x 58 x 58 cm

© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
Archives, New York/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn
2024

Repro: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Cologne



Travelogue

Rauschenberg's monumental stage set for Cunningham's choreography *Travelogue* (1977), consisting of silk fans and chairs; Cage also participated.

© Johan Elbers, Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Wolfgang-Hahn-Prize 2025: Evelyn Taocheng Wang

November 8, 2025– April 19, 2026



Evelyn Portait

Evelyn Taocheng Wang, 2024

Photo: Sol Archer

© Evelyn Taocheng Wang

Presentations in the Photography Room

Street Photography Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, Joseph Rodríguez

May 3 – October 12, 2025



rba_d030528

Lee Friedlander

New York City, 1966

Gelatin silver paper, print after 1966

22 x 32,9 cm

Museum Ludwig, Cologne

© Lee Friedlander, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Repro: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Cologne



rba_d058412_01

Joseph Rodríguez

East Village, NY, 1984

Gelatin silver paper, print 1988

25,3 x 37,4 cm

© Joseph Rodríguez, Courtesy Galerie Bene Taschen

Repro: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Cologne



rba_d046397

Garry Winogrand

Untitled, from: Women are

Beautiful, around 1970

Gelatin silver paper, print 1981

21,7 x 32,4 cm

© The Estate of Garry Winogrand/Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Repro: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Cologne

Smile! How the smile came into photography

November 1, 2025 – March 22, 2026



rba_d042255

Hugo Erfurth

Hildegard Seemann-Wechler (painter), 1929

Cardboard, oil pigment print

38,3 x 26,6 cm

Museum Ludwig, Cologne

Repro: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Cologne



Agfa Werbung

Unknown Photographer

Advertising motif, Test, around 1965

Color Photography

Museum Ludwig, Agfa advertising archive



Agfa Werbung_smile

Unknown Photographer

Advertising motif, around 1965

Color Photography

Museum Ludwig, Agfa advertising archive