



PRESS RELEASE

And This is Us 2025 – Young Artists Based in Frankfurt 10 May – 17 August 2025

Press preview: Friday, 9 May 2025, 11 a.m.

Opening: Friday, 9 May 2025, 6.30 p.m.

Participating artists: La Caoba (Larry Bonchaka and Sopo Kashakashvili, Graduates Städelschule), Elisa Deutloff (HfG Offenbach), Simon Gilmer (HfG Offenbach), Paul Haas (Graduate Städelschule), Nelly Habelt (HfG Offenbach), Nazanin Hafez (Graduate Kunsthochschule Mainz), Oscar Kargruber (Städelschule), Sargon Khnu (HfG Offenbach), Franziska Krumbachner (HfG Offenbach), Gregor Lau (Städelschule), Thuy Tien Nguyen (Graduate Städelschule), Kora Riecken (Kunsthochschule Mainz)

Curated by Franziska Nori, Lorenzo Graf, Anita Lavorano and Pia Seifüßl

From 10 May to 17 August, the Frankfurter Kunstverein will present the exhibition *And This is Us 2025 – Young Artists Based in Frankfurt*. For the fifth edition of this biennial exhibition format, twelve artists have been invited to participate. Curated and produced by the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the exhibition has served as an institutional platform and springboard for emerging talents since 2017.

In close collaboration with the Städelschule, the Offenbach University of Art and Design, and for the first time, the Mainz Academy of Fine Arts, a multi-stage selection process has resulted in a parcours that represents the themes and practices of young artists in the Rhine-Main region.

The participants are supported in the development and realisation of their own unique concepts, enabling them to produce new, large-scale works and stage them in the exhibition space. *And This is Us – Young Artists Based in Frankfurt* is an invitation to take a sensory approach to the phenomena of our time through the perspective of young artists. True to its mission, the 2025 edition captures the pulse and moods of the younger generation, making them directly tangible.

From the very beginning, the exhibition series has been generously supported from the outset by the Dr Marschner Foundation, whose commitment arose from the vision of a Frankfurt citizen to keep cultural life alive for the people of our city in the long term.

Franziska Nori, Director of the Frankfurter Kunstverein, explains: “The close collaboration with all twelve participants of this year’s edition of *And This Is Us* has deeply impressed me. The newly created works strikingly reflect the spectrum of contemplation and reflection, doubts and convictions with which young artists experience, think about, and respond to today’s reality.”

Peter Gatzemeier, Board of the Dr Marschner Foundation, on the long-standing collaboration: “For more than ten years, the Dr Marschner Foundation has enabled the biennial exhibition *And This is Us – Young Artists Based in Frankfurt*. Each time we are convinced anew of the core idea of the project and the unique artistic voices presented by the Frankfurter Kunstverein. Our foundation is particularly committed to giving the younger generation the freedom to develop independently and share their work with a broad audience. In 2025, we once again witness an impressive outcome with a reach that extends across the entire Rhine-Main region.”

EXHIBITION TRAIL

The exhibition trail has been designed to offer unique insights into twelve questions and worldviews of young people. The twelve young artists were selected from 110 portfolios and represent generational themes.

The exhibition begins on the ground floor with **Nelly Habelt**. Her video works are powerful and poetic. Habelt works in urban spaces, often at night. She uses architectural structures as platforms for bodily performances. The artist hangs at the height of street lamps or floats upside down beneath bridges. She remains motionless, while a camera circles around her, rendering her a living yet frozen sculpture in the public sphere.

On the lower ground floor, we will find a film by **Paul Haas**. The filmmaker’s work explores themes of origin and political identity in Germany. In his latest piece, Haas shifts his focus from rural East Germany to the urban landscape of Copenhagen. The film, created during a residency in the Danish capital, centres on a prophet-like figure standing on the busy square of Kongens Nytorv. Equipped with a portable speaker and microphone, he delivers a powerful speech warning of a dark future—filled with images of war, destruction, and the return of past conflicts.

On the first floor, we encounter **Sargon Khnu**. Visitors are welcomed by a life-sized white sculpture: a male body in a kneeling position. On the wall are five flat reliefs made of limewood, designed as digital drawings and created using digital milling techniques. Khnu's work explores the staging of the body in the age of digital imagery and addresses themes of gender, role clichés, and power.

Next is a gallery space where three parallel worlds are created. **Gregor Lau** has replicated an urban landscape known for decades in Frankfurt, on Sonnemann Allee in front of the ECB, as the informal day labourers’ zone. He reconstructs the street corner, casting his own paving stones and painting them with Google Street View images of a phenomenon that centres on the value of labour and human dignity.

Oscar Kargruber is a wood sculptor. He has created a stylised human figure stepping upright from a thicket, clutching plants with its hands. It is a frozen moment that resists clear interpretation yet carries a dense atmosphere. Kargruber approaches the representation of atmospheric tipping points almost programmatically – moments where beauty threatens to turn into something uncanny, blurring the boundaries between good and evil, beauty and danger.

Simon Gilmer's work only reveals itself on second glance. Through two small windows in a long wall, we peer into a parallel world: two monochrome grey rooms. Is this a backstage view? Or a life-sized architectural model? Gilmer works with grey cardboard. With impressive precision and skill, he creates replicas and models of reality that challenge the viewer's perception and sense of what is real.

The gallery opposite is dedicated to two artists exploring intimate inner worlds. **Franziska Krumbachner** paints and draws. In her oil paintings, she seeks to understand, process, and visually contain past experiences. Her subjects stem from dreams and memories that emerge as flashbacks of repressed events: rooms, narrow corridors, close-ups of body parts and dysmorphic faces in black and white, folded hands.

Elisa Deutloff works with artificial intelligence. She has created an intimate experience in which visitors pose questions to a chatbot. Surprisingly, the AI responds in the visitor's own voice. As visitors enter the space and read a poem aloud, the learning system generates a voice replica. This addresses a growing phenomenon among today's generations: AI is increasingly experienced as an artificial companion. This trend is spreading widely. Even AI-based psychotherapy apps are seeing increased use.

One floor above, we meet **Nazanin Hafez**. The photographer's work engages with her personal experience of political repression under the Iranian regime. She examines the relationship between image and oppression, representation and censorship, visibility and concealment. Using digital and analogue photography, film, and collage, she constructs resistant counter-images. Hafez has woven contrasting realities of contemporary Iran into a spatial installation. Collages transform fragments of state and public propaganda into image machines. In a separate room, we see large-format portraits of women who present themselves proudly and freely.

Kora Riecken has created a spatial sound installation based on a text she wrote, which has been read aloud by various speakers. They alternately narrate parts of a story—an urban legend about ghosts that always hovers between truth and fiction. The installation is arranged in a circle around a central, imaginary campfire.

The exhibition concludes with works by Thuy Tien Nguyen and the collective La Caoba. **Thuy Tien Nguyen** has produced three sculptures in Vietnam that resemble the furnishings of an executive office. Into these objects of financial capitalist everyday life—such as a presidential conference table or an executive chair—she has embedded a resonant mechanism of gears. The delicate system produces a sound reminiscent of a music box. These objects reflect outsourced labour within a global economy still marked by colonial divisions.

La Caoba is an intercultural collective developed by **Larry Bončhaka** and **Sopo Kashakashvili**. It was founded to support environmental restoration, sustainable community development, and economic empowerment. By integrating large-scale reforestation projects in Ghana with community-led initiatives, La Caoba aims to create self-sustaining ecosystems where humans and nature thrive together. Throughout the exhibition, workshops, research-based contributions, and materials on agriculture, food trade, and transportation animate the space.

The Frankfurter Kunstverein extends its thanks to the Dr Marschner Foundation, which has supported and made this exhibition series possible from the very beginning.



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