

Kunsthalle Wien

Press release

Richard Hawkins: *Potentialities* 26 November 2025–6 April 2026

Kunsthalle Wien presents a major survey of works by Richard Hawkins (b. 1961, Mexia, Texas), bringing together over 100 paintings, collages, sculpture and videos from nine distinct bodies of work produced over the last three decades. It is the first institutional exhibition of Hawkins's work in over a decade and the first in Austria.

Since the early 1990s, Hawkins has developed a singular practice based upon the intense pleasure of looking and the dynamics of desire. Employing collage as a means to structure and develop his compositions, he has described his work as 'promiscuously referential', quoting from the histories of artistic representation in sculpture, painting, literature and the performing arts alongside popular culture.

The exhibition manifests distinct lines of obsessive enquiry that has encompassed subjects as diverse as Greek and Roman statuary and the headshots of Japanese male hair models. Hawkins's fanatical approach makes reference to the often private activity of collating ephemera into scrapbooks. More recently, his video montages allude to online subcultures and shared memes. The exhibition surveys a period of production that begins with meticulously annotated compositions of cut and pasted imagery and leads on through ceramic reliefs and acrylic paintings to videos edited using artificial intelligence to generate what have been described as 'queer exorcisms'. This exhibition also sees Hawkins enlarge and cannibalise images of his own works to produce wallpapers that allow him to layer and contrast different chapters of research.

An early series of paintings reinterprets the biblical story of Salome, a subject of paintings by Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi and Titian (among many others) as well as works for the stage by Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss (whose opera was initially banned in Vienna). Hawkins retells it as a nightmarish fable of 'homo-dystopia' set outside a funhouse-cum-bordello where severed heads haunt male prostitutes touting for business. Several other chapters of the exhibition draw upon Hawkins's studies of the lives and obsessions of different artists including the Japanese choreographer Tatsumi Hijikata, the French writer Antonin Artaud and the American painter Forrest Bess.

A more recent series of work renders Hollywood celebrities in dense, colourful painted compositions. Hawkins combines candid paparazzi shots with portraits of actors in period costume, using an ostentatious collar or a gratuitous display of flesh to anchor their disembodied heads. Several demonstrate a close study of the late work of the French painter Pierre Bonnard, shifting between portraiture and still life compositions of tables laid with an abundance of fruit. Invoking Bonnard's application of colour, Hawkins recasts a company of young men in fecund landscapes replete with clouds of blossom, cats and butterflies.

Richard Hawkins: *Potentialities* is organised in cooperation with Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover where it will be presented from late April 2026.

Biography

Richard Hawkins (b. 1961, Mexia, Texas) has held solo exhibitions at Tate Liverpool (2014); Le Consortium, Dijon (2013); The Art Institute of Chicago; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (both 2010); De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam (2007) and Kunstverein Heilbronn (2003). His work has also been presented at Artists Space, New York (2023); Bonner Kunstverein (2019); Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam (2014) and the 2012 Whitney Biennial, New York. Hawkins's work is held in numerous public collections including the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate, London and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. In 2024, his work was the inspiration for the designer J.W. Anderson's Fall/Winter menswear collection for Loewe. Hawkins lives and works in Los Angeles where he is a Professor of Painting & Drawing at the ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena.

Exhibition Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication, the first on Richard Hawkins in over 15 years. It features essays by Rhea Anastas, Annie Ochmanek and Kristian Vistrup Madsen, as well as an interview with the artist by Bruce Hainley.

Limited Edition

Richard Hawkins has produced a limited edition print that will be launched alongside his exhibition at Kunsthalle Wien. *Purple Melody Vienna* (2025) reproduces a version of the 2018 painting *Purple Melody*, which is included in the exhibition. In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Kristian Vistrup Madsen describes the painting as 'quasi-scientific' in its 'ordered grid', drawing a comparison to 'Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), one man's attempt to create some sort of coherent world-view. Here is a map of the intersecting relations between the great marble head of Apollo, the majestic manes of guitarists, the particular masculine daintiness evident in some Japanese fashion photography and Arnold Böcklin's *Toteninsel* (1883) – all in the same field of vision.' Madsen describes a 'melancholy' in Hawkins' 'amassing' of images: 'Even at the point where the grid of images falters mid-way [...] we recall the god of silence and secrecy and see in the rough application of purple colour only more flesh. Hawkins punishes the terrible angels by capturing them like flies in his spiderweb of colour, pinning their ephemerality onto a form, but he is also loving them by holding them in this way inside the architecture of his art.'

Richard Hawkins

Purple Melody Vienna, 2025

Edition of 50 + 5 AP

53,3 x 40 cm

Giclée print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag® Ultra Smooth

Numbered and signed

€ 300 / € 580 framed

Kunsthalle Wien's editions are available from the shop at Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier and Karlsplatz as well as online: <https://kunsthallewien.at/en/shop>. Sales proceeds support Kunsthalle Wien's programme.

Notes to Editors

Richard Hawkins: *Potentialities*

26 November 2025–6 April 2026

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

Press conference: 25 November 2025, 11 am

Exhibition opening: 25 November 2025, 7 pm

Press images for download and further information:

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/richard-hawkins/press>

Programme

Tue, 18.11.2025, 6 pm

Artist talk: Richard Hawkins in conversation with Christian Lclair, art historian and critic (EN)
University of Applied Arts Vienna

Thu, 11.12.2025, 5:30 pm

Guided tour (DE)

Thu, 15.1.2026, 5:30 pm

Guided tour (EN)

Thu, 22.1.2026, 6 pm

Curator's tour with Sarah Crowe (EN)

Tue, 27.1., 24.3.2026, 11 am

Guided tour for parents with babies and toddlers (DE)

Fr, 6.2.2026, 6 pm

Video screening and talk (DE)

HARD ON, clubhouse LMC Vienna (18+)

Thu, 19.2., 5.3., 12.3.2026, 6–8 pm

Combined guided tour Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna x Kunsthalle Wien (DE)

Thu, 26.2.2026, 5:30 pm

Combined guided tour Qwien – Zentrum für queere Kultur und Geschichte x Kunsthalle Wien
(DE)

Thu, 19.3.2026, 6:30–8 pm and Sat, 21.3.2026, 11 am–4 pm

Two-part workshop Qwien x Kunsthalle Wien (DE/EN)

All dates for guided tours and the programme are available at:

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/programme>

About Kunsthalle Wien

Kunsthalle Wien is the City of Vienna's primary institution for contemporary art. At its locations in the Museumsquartier and on Karlsplatz, it presents an annual programme of exhibitions alongside public and educational programming that seeks to engage diverse publics. We provide a platform for artists, commissioning new works and partnering with individuals and institutions, both local and international, to develop exhibitions and publications based on original research. Kunsthalle Wien is committed to providing an inclusive space for exchange and debate and furthering the discourse on contemporary art in all its forms.

Kunsthalle Wien Thanks

Kunsthalle Wien is financed by the Magistratsabteilung Kultur der Stadt Wien (MA 7). The artistic programme is also supported by the members of the Kunsthalle Wien Club. Kunsthalle Wien is grateful to Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York and Greene Naftali, New York for their support of the exhibition.

Address and Information

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#RichardHawkins
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Opening Hours

Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–18:00
Thursday: 10:00–20:00

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