

1_Press Release 2026 Exhibition Preview, December 2025



Considering the Collection & The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves
An Insert by Ana Torfs, exhibition view, Paintings Gallery, 3.10.2025–30.8.2026
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Academy of Fine Arts Vienna
Art Collections
Paintings Gallery, Graphic Collection and Plaster Cast Collection

Schillerplatz 3, 1010 Vienna
www.kunstsammlungenakademie.at

Exhibition Programme 2026

Overview

Considering the Collection &
*The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were
Picking Autumn Leaves*
An Insert by Ana Torfs
Runs until 30 August 2026

The Great Michelangelo Is Dead!
Avant-garde and Academicism
2 October 2026 to 22 August 2027

All current events and full details can be found on our homepage at
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For all questions or queries, contact:
Claudia Bauer
Head of communication
+43 1 588 16 2211
c.bauer@akbild.ac.at
kunstsammlungen_presse@akbild.ac.at

The Art Collections Review of 2025 – Preview of 2026

The Art Collections look back on yet another successful year in 2025, with three new exhibition projects and a further step towards becoming a climate-friendly museum with the completion of its major window renovation project.

Up until February 16, visitors were able to enjoy the exhibition *Considering the Collection & Cranach's Holy Productivity An Insert by Klaus Scherübel* as a space-defining installation in the Paintings Gallery. It featured Klaus Scherübel's artistic take on the painting *The Holy Kinship* (1510–1512) by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

From March to April, the exhibition *Wild Apollo's Arrows. Klopstock Cult & Ossian Fever* considered the liminal period between the 18th and 19th centuries, with insights into a period of conflict between the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment. As a collaborative project between the Art Collections and the Exhibit Gallery, the exhibition juxtaposed historical works with contemporary works by students from the Academy.

In summer 2025, the exhibition *A Vista on Italy and France* combined with Francesco Guardi's views of Venice featured many other highlights of the French and Italian schools of the 16th and 17th centuries. This showcase was prompted by the publication in 2025 of the comprehensive inventory catalogue of the works of the Romanesque schools in the Paintings Gallery collection.

Over the summer break, the windows of the Paintings Gallery were fully renovated to ensure a more effective and gentle air conditioning of the premises.

The *Insert* inaugurated in the autumn as part of the series *Considering the Collection & An Insert by ...* was created by the Belgian artist Ana Torfs and will run until 30 August 2026. Entitled *The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves*, it features for the first time Torfs' new cycle of 28 jacquard tapestries, which the artist worked on from the outbreak of the Covid pandemic through to the completion of the series and its premiere in Vienna.

Visitors also have the opportunity to enjoy thought-provoking lectures on various aspects of the themes featured at the exhibition as part of the [Lektionen / Lessons](#) series.

Considering the Collection showcases collection highlights from the Paintings Gallery in various configurations. On display are popular masterpieces – such as Anthony van Dyck's *Self-Portrait*, Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Trompe-l'Oeil Still Life*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's *Young Boys Playing Dice* and Martin Ferdinand Quadal's *Life Class at the Vienna Art Academy in the St Anna Building* – not to mention the *Portrait of a Young Woman* by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, which is scheduled to go on tour in April.

Until then, Rembrandt's painting, along with other portraits from the collection, will be the main focus of a series of workshops entitled *YOUareART – Ungefiltert schön* (www.youareart.at). This initiative aimed at self-acceptance, diversity and mental health among young people is a joint venture between the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMASGPK), Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG), the FEM Süd women's health centre and dasWeil. At workshops held at the Paintings Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and at the Heidi Horten Collection – which are already proving a huge success – young people use resources such as an AI app among others to examine how social media filters affect our body image.

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The dispute over the merits of classicism and anti-classicism ignited in *Wild Apollo's Arrows* is set to continue in October 2026 with another theme-based exhibition entitled *The Great Michelangelo is Dead! Avant-garde and Academicism*. The project curated by Helmut Draxler will examine the creative tension between these two concepts, firstly with an in-depth historical review and, secondly, its expression within the field of modern and contemporary art. The exhibition is designed to coincide with a special anniversary at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, namely the drafting of the Statutes for the 'Imperial & Royal Court Academy of Paintings, Sculptors and Architecture' as part of its refounding by Jacob van Schuppen in 1726, based on the French model.

Considering the Collection & *The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves* An Insert by Ana Torfs

An autumn stroll, an ancient epic and a global pandemic: these were the ingredients chosen by the Belgian artist Ana Torfs to create her latest work entitled *The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves*. The 28-part cycle of works comprising jacquard tapestries is now on display for the first time as part of the exhibition series *Considering the Collection & An Insert by ...* organised by the Art Collections of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

These installations and groups of works by contemporary artists are conceived as 'inserts' into temporary displays of works from the Academy's main exhibition collection, which are then showcased alongside highlights from the collection of the Paintings Gallery, ranging from Bosch to Rubens.

The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves An Insert by Ana Torfs

During the momentous times of the Covid pandemic, Ana Torfs re-read parts of Virgil's ancient epic *Aeneid*. So it is probably no coincidence that, on her walks during that time collecting all manner of colourful autumn leaves, she should think of the Sibyl of Cumae, who would write her prophecies on leaves and guided Aeneas into the underworld to seek out his father Anchises; indeed, it was in Cumae that Aeneas had landed, destined thereafter to become the ancestor to the founders of Rome.

The artist made a selection from her herbarium of collected leaves, which she dried between pages of newspaper print and later photographed in selected snippets against a text backdrop of news sheets. Then, she finally combined them with her own thoughts on personal feelings and reflections on the world and natural events, written down in verse on scraps of paper. This palimpsest of various layers of media gains added weight and import through the elaborate process of tapestry weaving.

The tapestries confer to the fleeting nature of quotidian life a supposed permanence through the textile medium, emphasizing the nature of a historically memorable present whose repercussions on the future are unforeseeable. Just as the breeze scattered the leaves after the Sibyl's prophecy, it seems impossible to draw any reliable prospects for action from the incessant flow of media broadcasts. And given the possibilities offered by manipulative digital techniques, news events remain increasingly Sibylline and, indeed, enigmatic.

In her cycle, Torfs weaves a tableau of a pandemic event, as it were, incorporating two mythical strands: that of the prophetess Sibyl and that of the weaver Arachne, creating a series of woven – from the Latin *texere* – text images. By the same token, the exhibition itself weaves together prophetic and eschatological narrative strands using Torfs's installation with works from the Academy's own collections and loans from Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum to create a space of diverse references between media, myths and iconographies, between past and present.

The art of weaving can be read not least with reference to the heyday of tapestry-making in the Netherlands from the 16th century onwards. Torfs's tapestries were produced in collaboration with the TextielLab, the professional workshop of the TextielMuseum Tilburg.

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Art Collections

Ana Torfs

Ana Torfs (* 1963) lives and works in Brussels. Her conceptual approach to her work usually involves a search for clues. Her meticulous research draws on image-based and written sources from historical, cultural, ethnological, cinematic and scientific contexts. These sources are not just the starting point for her research: once transposed into other media and poetically enhanced, they are usually incorporated into her works. Thematically, they are often situated within the world view of a dominant West and its various forms of appropriation of 'other' cultures – their 'seizure', monopolisation and even approval of destruction – in favour of the idea of progress. The human voice and straight theatre are frequently used to make testimony present in its embodiment.

Curated by Sabine Folie and Synne Genzmer

Considering the Collection

Considering the Collection ... focuses on works from the Baroque period, first and foremost from the legacy of Anton Franz de Paula Graf Lamberg-Sprinzenstein in 1822, and on works from the ambit of Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts around 1800. On display alongside popular masterpieces such as Anthony van Dyck's *Self-Portrait*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's *Young Boys Playing Dice* and Martin Ferdinand Quadal's *The Life Class at the Vienna Academy in the St Anne Building* are rarely seen works that include *Pond in a Forest* by Jacob van Ruisdael, *Peddler* by Godfried Schalcken, and *Self-Portrait* by Friedrich von Amerling. There are repeated references between the paintings in the collection and the 28 tapestries by Ana Torfs, divided into four sections of seven pieces each.

Curated by Claudia Koch

Works by:

Willem van Aelst, Friedrich von Amerling, Herri met de Bles, Hieronymus Bosch, Dieric Bouts, Ugo da Carpi, Joos van Cleve, Bartolomeo Coriolano, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Giuseppe Maria Crespi, Domenico Cunego, Anthony van Dyck, Barent Fabritius, Heinrich Friedrich Füger, Jan Fyt, Luca Giordano, Jan van Goyen, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Hans Baldung Grien, Jan van den Hoecke (Workshop), Jacob Jordaens, Johann Baptist von Lampi the Younger, Alessandro Magnasco (Workshop), Nicola Malinconico, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Martin Ferdinand Quadal, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, Salvator Rosa, Peter Paul Rubens, Jacob van Ruisdael, Isaack van Ruisdael, Rachel Ruysch, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, Elisabetta Sirani (Circle), Francesco Solimena, Pierre Subleyras, Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller et al.

Printed works after Michelangelo Buonarroti, Giacomo Conca, Vincenzo Dolcibene, Francesco Giangiaco, Hans Holbein the Younger, Girolamo Francesco Mazzola known as Il Parmigianino, Nicolas Poussin, Guido Reni, Raffaello Santi known as Raphael, Salvator Rosa, Peter Paul Rubens

An Insert by Ana Torfs: *The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves*

Exhibition

Considering the Collection & The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves – An Insert by Ana Torfs

Exhibition: 3 October 2025 – 30 August 2026

Location: Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Paintings Gallery

Schillerplatz 3, 1010 Vienna; +43 1 588 16 2201

Opening hours: daily except Monday, 10 am to 6 pm

Lektionen / Lessons and guided tours

The exhibition is accompanied by lectures as part of the *Lektionen / Lessons* series.

Curator's tour

The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves – An Insert by Ana Torfs

with Sabine Folie and Synne Genzmer (in German), 24 March 2026, 4 p.m.

Considering the Collection & An Insert by Ana Torfs

with Synne Genzmer and Claudia Koch (in German), 12 May 2026, 4 p.m.

Overview tours

on Sundays, 10.30 am

Publication on the exhibition

3 *The Day You Were Thinking About the Sibyl While You Were Picking Autumn Leaves – An Insert* by Ana Torfs

The publication accompanying the exhibition is part of the art collection series *Considering the Collection & An Insert by ...* and is edited by Sabine Folie and Synne Genzmer.

Texts by Sabine Folie, Synne Genzmer, and Ana Torfs.

German/English, 68 pages, 27 colour illustrations, VfmK Verlag für moderne Kunst, Vienna.

ISBN 978-3-99153-224-8.

Price: EUR 8

The publication is available at the Gemäldegalerie shop; it can also be ordered at kunstsammlungen@akbild.ac.at.

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The Great Michelangelo Is Dead! Avant-garde and Academicism

2 October 2026 to 22 August 2027

Avant-garde and Academicism aims to give a new twist to an age-old debate. Academicism is not seen as a pejorative term for everything that is outdated in art, nor is avant-garde perceived as having a monopoly on all that is new. Rather, it seeks to reveal the creative tension between these two concepts, both from an in-depth historical perspective and its place within the field of contemporary art.

The title of the exhibition alludes to a paradox: Giorgio Vasari, who was directly involved in the founding of the first modern art academy, namely the Accademia del Disegno in Florence (1563), regarded Michelangelo's works as the unsurpassable apogee of art, achieved for the first time since Antiquity. That perfection, in a sense tantamount to the end of art as such, represented the starting point for the academy, the essential purpose of which is to provide the divinely inspired artist with an academically accomplished counterpart capable of emulating this great role model without necessarily having to be a creative genius himself. Accordingly, the celebrations marking Michelangelo's funeral (1564) represented the Accademia's first public activity. Clearly distinct from the traditional model of the *bottega* and its guild-based organisational structure, the academy positioned itself within the ambit of modern institutional structures precisely because of this division between ideal and efficiency. In doing so, it also triggered the anti-academic reactions discernible since the 18th century and, later, its equivalent expression in the avant-garde.

The exhibition aims to trace this fundamental interplay between the founding of academies, the criticism thereof and academy reform through selected examples, through to the present day. That interplay can be understood as the truly productive and dynamic moment of modern art; it is evident in individual artistic practices as well as in theoretical reflections and institutional structures.

Working from the extensive inventory of the Art Collections of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna complemented by important loans, major works of European painting since the 16th century are correlated with the emerging discursive and institutional field of the academies. The image of the 17th century gallery, in which modern collections are reflected for the first time, is re-enacted as it were, in a sort of revival in the three-dimensional space of a studio-like setting with alternating protagonists.

The exhibition is designed to coincide with a special anniversary, namely the refounding by Jacob van Schuppen in 1726 of the Imperial & Royal Court Academy of Painters, Sculptors and Architecture based on the French model as well as the heated debates surrounding such topics as identity politics, diversity and geopolitical shifts that continue to shape contemporary education policies and present-day society.

On display are works by – among others – Giorgio Vasari, Sandro Botticelli, Titian, Charles Le Brun, Nicholas Poussin, Sebastien Bourdon, Joachim von Sandrart, Pierre Subleyras, Franz Anton Maulbertsch, Johann Heinrich Füger, William Hogarth, Joseph Wright of Derby, Johan Zoffany, George Stubbs, Januarius Zick, Asmus Jakob Carstens, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Friedrich Overbeck, Johan Peter Hasenclever, Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, Gustave Courbet, Herbert Boeckl, Albert Paris Gütersloh and Wolfgang Hollegga. The original paintings and prints are complemented by academic practice as such: the copy, in our case old and new copies after Raphael, Michelangelo, Claude Lorrain, Titian and Poussin, as well as re-enactments by contemporary artists such as Abel Auer, Alice Creischer, Stephan Dilleuth, Thomas Eggerer, Michaela Eichwald, Abdulnasser Gharem, Andy Hope 1930, Stefan Janitzky, Martin

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Art Collections

Kippenberger, Jutta Koether, Louise Lawler, Ariane Müller, Chris Reineke, Katharina Sieverding, Heimo Zobernig, and others.

Curated by Helmut Draxler

Complemented by conferences, workshops, lectures as part of the *Lektionen / Lessons* series and performances.

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