

BUNDESKUNSTHALLE



**MICHAEL JACKSON:
ON THE WALL**

22 March to 14 July 2019

Media Conference: Thursday, 21 March 2019, 11 a.m.

Content

1.	General Information	Page 2
2.	Press Release	Page 4
3.	Exhibition Sections	Page 6
4.	Publication	Page 13
5.	Current and Upcoming Exhibitions	Page 14

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General Information

Exhibition	22 March to 14 July 2019
Director	Rein Wolfs
Managing Director	Patrick Schmeing
Curator	Nicholas Cullinan, director of the National Portrait Gallery
Exhibition Manager	Angelica Francke
Press Officer	Sven Bergmann
Catalogue / Press Copy	€ 32 / € 16
Opening Hours	Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday to Sunday: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Public Holidays: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Closed on Mondays 25., 26.12.2018 and 1.1.2019: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Admission standard / reduced	€ 10 / € 6.50
Free admission	for all under 19s and for refugees
Pay what you can afford	for visitors under 26 Tuesday and Wednesday: 6 to 9 p.m.
Happy Hour-Ticket	€ 7 Tuesday and Wednesday: 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday to Sunday: 5 to 7 p.m. (for individuals only)
Guided Group Tours information and registration	T +49 228 9171-243 F +49 228 9171-244 kunstvermittlung@bundeskunsthalle.de

Public Transport

Underground lines 16, 63, 66 and bus lines 610, 611 and 630 to Heussallee / Museumsmeile
Deutsche Bahn / UN-Campus:
Lines RE 5 (Rhein-Express), RB 26 (MittelrheinBahn), RB 30 (Rhein-Ahr-Bahn) and RB 48 (Rhein-Wupper-Bahn)

Parking

There is a car and coach park on Emil-Nolde-Straße behind the Bundeskunsthalle.
Navigation: Emil-Nolde-Straße 11, 53113 Bonn

Press Information (German / English)

www.bundeskunsthalle.de
For press files follow 'press'.

General Information
(German / English)

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Press Release

Michael Jackson is one of the most influential artists to have come out of the 20th century, and his legacy continues to make itself felt in the 21st. While his significance in all areas of popular culture – music, music video, dance, choreography and fashion – is widely acknowledged, his considerable influence on contemporary art is still a largely untold story. But since 1982, when Andy Warhol first used his image, contemporary artists have turned Michael Jackson into one of the most depicted figures of the media world.

The exhibition explores Michael Jackson's influence on contemporary art. It features several generations of artists across all media. Drawing on public and private collections all over the world, the exhibition brings together works by more than forty artists, among them new works made especially for the exhibition. The singular creative potential of the iconic figure that was Michael Jackson not only gave rise to a multifaceted artistic response, it touches on the ambivalence of his personality and the issues associated with him: Gender discourse and sexuality, cultural identity and appropriation are just a few of the questions that many artists seek to address in their engagement with the celebrated musician and pop star.

Bringing together renowned established artists and younger ones whose work is less well known (at least in Europe), the exhibition presents works by Rita Ackerman, Dara Birnbaum, Candice Breitz, Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Isa Genzken, Kai Guetta, David Hammons, Jonathan Horowitz, Gary Hume, Isaac Julien, David LaChapelle, Louise Lawler, Klara Liden, Dawn Mellor, Catherine Opie, Yan Pei Ming, Grayson Perry, Paul Pfeiffer, Faith Ringgold, Kehinde Wiley, Jordan Wolfson, Andy Warhol and many others. Some of the works shown are marked by an ambiguity and ambivalence that could not be more apposite. A case in point is not only the work by Jordan Wolfson but also the pieces by Paul McCarthy and Pamela Rosenkranz which were not shown in London and Paris.

A decade after his death – Michael Jackson would have turned 60 in August 2018 – his legacy is as alive as ever, and his overall worldwide record sales exceed the one-billion threshold. His music videos are still being watched and his worldwide fanbase is still going strong. The social and cultural phenomenon Michael Jackson is as relevant today as it was during his lifetime.

Rein Wolfs, the director of the Bundeskunsthalle stressed: “Michael Jackson is a key figure in pop music of the last 50 years. There are very few musicians who have attained a similarly iconic status. His enormous influence also made itself felt in the visual arts, and we want to show the enormous reach of his cultural impact. *Michael Jackson: On the Wall* is an art exhibition. It does not seek to shed light on Michael Jackson's biography, nor does it deal with his work. Instead, it probes the impact of the 'Michael Jackson phenomenon' on the visual arts.”



Dr Nicholas Cullinan, the exhibition curator and director of the National Portrait Gallery, London said: “*Michael Jackson: On the Wall* takes an entirely new and quite radical approach by exploring the cultural impact of a unique figure through contemporary art. All the artists included – despite coming from different generations and parts of the world, and employing a range of media – are fascinated by what Jackson represented and what he invented. The exhibition will open up new avenues for thinking about art and identity, encourage new dialogues between artists and invite audiences interested in popular culture and music to engage with contemporary art.”

The exhibition was developed by the National Portrait Gallery, London, and organised with the Bundeskunsthalle. *Michael Jackson: On the Wall* is produced with the cooperation of the Michael Jackson Estate.



Exhibition Sections

INTRODUCTION

Michael Jackson: On the Wall

'I'm a great fan of art I love Michelangelo. If I had the chance to talk to him or read about him, I would want to know about what inspired him to become who he is - the anatomy of his craftsmanship. Not about who he went out with last night, or why he decided to sit out in the sun so long ...'

Michael Jackson interviewed by Oprah Winfrey, 1993.

Michael Jackson (1958–2009) was one of the most influential cultural figures of the twentieth century and his legacy continues into the twenty-first. Born in Gary, Indiana, an industrial town in the Midwestern United States, Jackson became a global icon. He was the first black musician to achieve worldwide fame and transcended the barriers, preconceptions and prejudice that had previously limited the opportunities for African-American artists.

This exhibition is not about Jackson's biography or memorabilia related to the singer. It is about art, artistry and artifice and explores the impact of Jackson on contemporary art.

Jackson's image and music had, and continue to have, an unique influence on culture. His significance is widely acknowledged when it comes to music, videos, dance, choreography and fashion, yet his impact on art is an untold story. From the 1980s to now, artists have been drawn to Jackson as a subject and a source of inspiration.

Despite coming from different generations, perspectives, parts of the world, and employing a range of media, each of these artists are fascinated by what Jackson represented and what he invented.

ROOM 2

King: Part I

In 2007 Michael Jackson was photographed for his final cover story for *Ebony*, the magazine dedicated to African American culture, which triggered his collaboration with the artist Kehinde Wiley.

The photoshoot took place at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, which was chosen on the basis that Jackson wanted to be photographed in a space 'where art lives on forever'. During the shoot, Jackson saw a work by Wiley, whom he subsequently commissioned to make a portrait of himself. Wiley explained: '[Jackson] called me. He saw one of my works at the Brooklyn Museum, a very



large equestrian portrait of a young black man in the pose of Napoleon crossing the Alps. He said to his crew: "I need to meet that artist." At first, I didn't believe it. Eventually, a mutual friend said: "Will you please answer the f***ing phone?" And so we set something up.' The result is the final commissioned portrait of Jackson and was still in process when he died. The work is inspired by a number of art historical sources, which were decided on by Jackson and Wiley together.

ROOM 3

ABC to P.Y.T. (plus E.T.)

The Michael Jackson cacophony is fascinating in that it is not about Jackson at all. I hope he has the good sense to know it and the good fortune to snatch his life out of the jaws of a carnivorous success. He will not swiftly be forgiven for having turned so many tables ... All that noise is about America, as the dishonest custodian of black life and wealth; the blacks, especially males, in America; and the burning, buried American guilt... Freaks are called freaks and are treated as they are treated - in the main, abominably - because they are human beings who cause to echo, deep within us, our most profound terrors and desires.'

James Baldwin, 'Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood', 1985

This room documents Jackson's early career and his transformation from child performer and teenage idol to global superstar and social phenomenon in the 1980s following the unparalleled success of his album *Thriller* (1982). Jackson was born the eighth of ten children and performed with his brothers in a group named Jackson 5 during the 1960s. By the late 1970s Jackson had broken away from the group and established his record-breaking solo career, the height of which was the success of *Thriller* in the early 1980s.

ROOM 4

King of Pop Art

This room charts Michael Jackson's relationship with Andy Warhol, whose image the artist used for the cover of his magazine, *Interview* in October 1982.

Warhol interviewed Jackson in 1977 about his part in the film *The Wiz*, the film adaptation of the stage production that reimagined the children's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) with an entirely African-American cast. They met again that year at Studio 54, the famous nightclub in New York. In the intervening years, Warhol photographed Jackson at public appearances and collected Jackson memorabilia. He mentions Jackson more than two dozen times in his *Diaries*, mostly referring to their meetings.



Warhol used Jackson's image for a second time when he created a cover for *Time* magazine in March 1984, for which he made a series of silkscreen portraits. A decade later, Jackson returned the compliment, featuring a late Warhol 'fright wig' self-portrait from 1986 in the short film for his 1995 song 'Scream', a duet with his sister Janet.

ROOM 5

Who's Bad?

*Some things in life they just don't wanna see
But if Martin Luther was livin'
He wouldn't let this be*

'They Don't Care About Us' [from the HIStory album]
Written by Michael Jackson
© 1995 Mijac Music

The works in this room present Jackson as an African-American figure and what he achieved and symbolised.

Faith Ringgold's painted quilt *Who's Bad?* created in 1988 takes as its inspiration Jackson's short film for the song *Bad*, directed by Martin Scorsese, specifically the scene in which Jackson dances with a street gang in a New York subway station, and juxtaposes this scene alongside the names of influential black heroes. The artist explained: 'Michael Jackson was somebody everybody loved ...'. She draws analogy to Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Malcolm X, explaining 'they were wonderful people who had done a lot for black people ... and I wanted to put Jackson alongside all of those fantastic people, because he was fantastic'.

Similarly, Emma Amos's work *Dancing on Air* from 1989 is one of a series of works that examines and celebrates African-American icons and identity through the idea of movement.

Which Mike do you want to be like?

The works in the middle of this room and on the right hand wall address the complex way in which Michael Jackson embodied African-American identity.

In David Hammons's installation *Which Mike do you want to be like ...?*, three microphone stands represent three Michaels – Jackson the performer, Tyson the boxer and Jordan the basketball player – and together make a sardonic comment on some of the 'aspirational' options open to African-American men.



Todd Gray has made a body of work stemming from his time as one of Jackson's personal photographers (1979–83) in which he documented Jackson's rise to superstardom from close proximity. The series *Exquisite Terribleness* is the result of Gray revisiting his archive of photographs and recontextualising them with photographs of the audiences at Jackson concerts, or juxtaposing them against images of Ghanaian people and architecture. In these photocollages, which include antique frames from homes in south Los Angeles or found in garage sales, Jackson is always present but also occluded, obscured, fragmented.

ROOM 6

Music and Lyrics

Michael Jackson released his breakthrough solo album *Off The Wall* in 1979, followed by his record-breaking album *Thriller* in 1982.

In Susan Smith-Pinelo's video installation, the artist dances to Jackson's song 'Workin' Day and Night' from *Off the Wall*. She recalled that the Jacksons were the first wholesome black American family who entered homes all over the US. This was during a time when most black people on television were portrayed as criminals, drug addicts, or violent. Even at the age of seven, I was proud because through them, America could see me.'

Graham Dolphin had made works based on Jackson's albums *Off the Wall* and *Thriller*. His large-scale works are comprised of multiple copies of the vinyl album covers for each, upon which he has painstakingly handwritten all the lyrics from every song Jackson ever recorded. These works provide a striking juxtaposition of word and image, form and content, the mass-produced commodity versus the handmade, and which now appear to us, due to the largely obsolete nature of the analogue format, as historical documents.

American Jesus?

The photographer David LaChapelle, who began his career working for Andy Warhol, made a triptych of large-scale photographs titled *American Jesus* in homage to Michael Jackson following his death in 2009. The biblical narrative of the series stems in part from the first time that he photographed Jackson during his lifetime for the inaugural issue of *Flaunt* magazine in 1998, for which they used saint candles. That same year, LaChapelle made his first work in tribute to Jackson, *An Illuminating Path*.

The American Jesus series deploys religious iconography. LaChapelle explained that he saw the trajectory of Jackson's life as, 'almost biblical'. Each of the works borrows a title from the lyrics of one of Jackson's songs.



ROOM 7

Ghosts

I know the creator will go, but his work survives. That is why to escape death, I attempt to bind my soul to my work.

Michael Jackson quoting Michelangelo, *Ebony* magazine 2007

Michael Jackson's presence is both everywhere and nowhere in this exhibition, haunting the works in these two rooms, which are named after his 1997 song and film of the same name.

In Michael Robinson's work in this room, Jackson and Elizabeth Taylor are brought together as ancient Egyptian deities ushering one another into the afterlife. The artist explains, 'I was thinking a lot about legacy and cultural memory. ... In watching so much Michael Jackson on Youtube in the years before and after his death, this remembering and revisiting began to feel a little like a mummification... somehow both a shell of the real thing, and a transformed, liberated version.'

Jackson and Taylor are brought together again in photographs by Catherine Opie. Mementos found in Taylor's home depict an indirect, yet deeply intimate, portrait of their friendship.

King: Part II

In 2005, Candice Breitz assembled a group of sixteen German-speaking Michael Jackson fans in a track-by-track recreation of his 1982 album, *Thriller*. She explains: 'I am interested in the biographical dimension of pop, the way that it can become the soundtrack to a life.' The fans were recruited through advertisements in newspapers, magazines and websites, the only criterion being that they identified as sincere and ardent Jackson fans. Each participant recorded the entire album, *a capella*, in a professional sound studio for which each fan chose what to wear and how to perform. The resulting recordings were collated to form a portrait of Jackson through his fans.

ROOM 8

Man in the Mirror

Doubled, divided, mirrored and multiplied - this is how many artists chose to reflect the proliferating image of Michael Jackson, and how he sought to 'wrest from the world what most performers seek: a nonfractured mirroring', as the cultural critic Hilton Als writes.



In his video works, Paul Pfeiffer takes footage of Jackson performing and divides his body, mirroring one half in the other. He explains: Jackson is a singular example of life lived in front of the camera. I think of him as an everyman for our image-saturated age.' Similarly, Paul McCarthy uses symmetry in his satirical reinterpretation of Jeff Koons's famous sculpture to create a distorted portrait of Jackson and his pet chimpanzee, Bubbles.

Jonathan Horowitz's video reverses the singer's short film for his 1995 'Earth Song' and Klara Liden performs Jackson's famous moonwalk, in which he seemingly moves backwards and forwards simultaneously. Isa Genzken's assemblage works show multiple glimpses of Jackson, presenting him as a 'shimmering mirage', as he was described by *People* magazine in 1984.

ROOM 9

Behind the Mask

In 'The Face of Garbo' Barthes sought to explore the almost universal appeal of film stars like Chaplin, Hepburn and Garbo by describing their faces as masks: aesthetic surfaces on which a society writes large its own preoccupations. Jackson's face can also be seen as such a mask, for his image has attracted and maintained the kind of cultural fascination that makes him more like a movie star than a modern rhythm and blues artist.

Kobena Mercer, 'Monster Metaphors: Notes on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*', 1986

As Michael Jackson's global fame grew, he began to reveal less of himself. The works in this room, which is named after a song Jackson recorded in 1982, reflect on this. In 1991 Jackson commissioned Mark Ryden to make a painting that would serve as the cover of his album *Dangerous* from the same year. In the painting Ryden depicts only Jackson's eyes peering out from behind an amusement park inspired by the showman RT. Barnum.

Now no longer a mask, but a metonym, the fame of Jackson was so total, as the album cover by Ryden foretold, that he could be recognised simply by his eyes alone. This idea has been picked up by Jordan Wolfson and Isaac Lythgoe, who have produced works that isolate Jackson's eyes from the rest of his face to suggest the person behind the mask. Other artists including Gary Hume have depicted Jackson focusing on his public visage.



Off the Wall: The King of Pop and Post-Communism

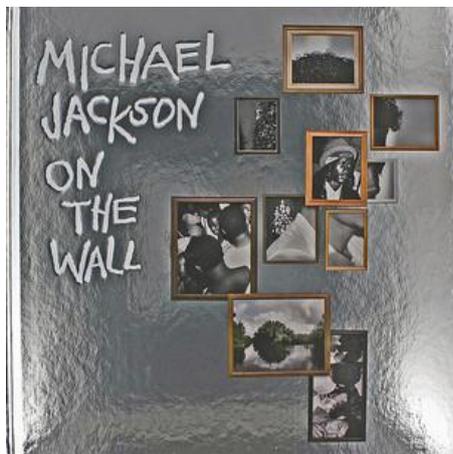
*I was wandering in the rain
Mask of life, feelin' insane
Swift and sudden fall from grace
Sunny days seem far away
Kremlin's shadow belittlin' me
Stalin's tomb won't let me be*

'Stranger in Moscow' [from the HIStory album]
Written by Michael Jackson
© 1995 Mijac Music

In 1992, as part of his *Dangerous World Tour*, Michael Jackson performed a sold-out concert to an audience of around 100,000 people at the National Stadium in Bucharest, Romania. After the 1989 revolution and the assassination of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the stadium hosted numerous concerts, the biggest of which was Jackson's, staged only three years after the fall of Communism and the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.

Dan Mihaltianu's 1992 installation, presented in this room, meditates on the remarkable meeting of the western, high-capitalist spectacle that was Jackson at his peak, and the response to him from a newly post-Communist society. As Mihaltianu explains, his work is 'based on images (portraits of politicians, intellectuals, workers, unemployed, street kids, homeless people etc.), printed in the Romanian newspapers of the time, juxtaposed with Michael Jackson's *Dangerous Tour* masks, which were offered for free at the concert in Bucharest.' Mihaltianu continues: The phenomenon that in Romania was called 'Jacksonmania' [was] a mass-psychosis that was touching a wide social spectrum - from top politicians, to street children...'

Publication



Michael Jackson. On the Wall 22 March to 14 July 2019

Michael Jackson, one of the most successful recording artists of all time, also has the distinction of being the most depicted cultural figure; an inspiration for an extraordinary array of leading artists – from Andy Warhol and Isa Genzken to David Hammons and Glenn Ligon – working in a variety of styles and media. This book, which accompanies a major exhibition, examines their artistic responses to an enduring international icon.

Nicholas Cullinan with essays by Margo Jefferson and Zadie Smith

Format 280 x 275 mm

Illustrations: over 120

Extent 252pp

€ 32

Published by National Portrait Gallery Publications



Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

POWER PLAY

Anna Uddenberg

5 April to 22 September 2019

Anna Uddenberg explores social conventions, norms and rhetorics. She challenges ingrained ways of thinking and seeing as well as our mental and physical mobility. With her sculptures and installations, she reflects our everyday life and investigates how new technologies, especially social media, affect our consumer culture. She analyses social and cultural systems and scrutinises the role and the cliché-driven role models of women. Her hybrid sculptures – pieces of ‘seating furniture’ and unrealistic ‘ideal types’ – testify to the artist’s interest in space (for the critical analysis of social conditions and utopias) and forms of representation.

By exaggerating the figure/figuration, deconstructing and constructing it as a collaged synthesis of objet trouvés and handmade objects, Uddenberg holds up a mirror to modern society. Her visually disturbing and often surprising works invite us to question our values.

GOETHE’S GARDENS

Green worlds on the roof of the Bundeskunsthalle

13 April to 15 September 2019

The Bundeskunsthalle is planting a temporary Goethe Garden on its roof terrace. Like Goethe’s Weimar gardens, it combines aesthetic, scientific and economic considerations.

In 1776, when Goethe moved into his first Weimar home not far from the river Ilm, he was particularly interested in the extensive garden and immediately set about its redesign. He planted a kitchen garden and created a small landscape garden in the English style with winding paths and shady spots to rest and read. He kept numerous flowerbeds for his botanical experiments that led him to develop his own theory on the metamorphosis of plants. When Goethe moved into the grand house on the Weimar Frauenplan, he once again devoted a great deal of attention to the garden. In a pavilion on the southern edge of the garden he even kept his collection of minerals, rocks and fossils from all over the world. As the exhibition runs from May to September, the appearance of the garden will change over the course of the summer, beckoning visitors to come more often, to enjoy a leisurely stroll, to linger, to delight in its beauty and to explore its underpinnings in the natural sciences.

GOETHE

Transformation of the world

17 May to 15 September 2019

Johann Wolfgang Goethe is the world’s best-known poet of the German tongue. A literary celebrity by the age of 25, he lived to see his fame spread all over Europe. His works were translated into countless languages. Figures like *Werther*



or *Faust* found their way into every creative discipline and all sectors of popular culture. More than any other artist of his time, Goethe reflected the dramatic changes that sent shockwaves through the political, economical and cultural foundations of Europe around 1800. Goethe was not only a critical observer of the dawn of the modern world, but also a versatile artist who continues to inspire writers, painters, sculptors, composers, photographers and film directors.

The Bundeskunsthalle and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar are devoting a major exhibition to the artist Goethe. Around three hundred objects in the exhibition shed light on his biography, his age at the dawn of our modern era and the uniquely powerful impact of his work.

An exhibition of the Bundeskunsthalle and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar in cooperation with the Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurt, the Goethe-Museum Düsseldorf and the Museo Casa di Goethe, Rom under the patronage of the Federal President of Germany

BEETHOVEN

World.Citizen.Music

17 December 2019 to 26 April 2020

In celebration of the 250th birthday of the great composer and visionary Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), the Bundeskunsthalle, in collaboration with the Beethoven-Haus Bonn, is hosting a major exhibition in the anniversary year of 2020. The exhibition traces the most important stages in the life of Beethoven against a historical backdrop, interwoven with his musical oeuvre.

The exhibition is divided into several themes, including 'Beethoven's view of himself', 'friendships' and 'business strategies', which also incorporate related musical works. The display includes unique original artefacts as well as iconic portraits, which depict the figure of the composer and question his popular public image. Original instruments and integrated audio exhibits enable visitors to immerse themselves in historical worlds of sound. The composer's working methods will be illustrated as well as the cultural and historical context of Beethoven's life and influence.

An exhibition of the Bundeskunsthalle in cooperation with the Beethoven-Haus Bonn

Subject to change!