

BUNDESKUNSTHALLE

Press kit

MARK DION DELIRIOUS TOYS

8 September 2024 – 9 February 2025

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Exhibition Information

Duration	8 September 2024 – 9 February 2025
Press officer	Sven Bergmann
Curators	Marc Dion, Agnieszka Lulinska, Christine Heidemann
Combined ticket for all exhibitions	13 €/reduced 6,50 € All visitors up to and including 18 years of age have free admission

In cooperation with

STIFTUNG
STADTMUSEUM
BERLIN

Media partner

MONOPOL
MAGAZIN FÜR KUNST UND LEBEN

Cultural partner

WDR 3

General Information

Director	Eva Kraus
Managing Director	Oliver Hölken
Opening Hours	Tuesday 10 am to 7 pm Wednesday 10 am to 9 pm Thursday to Sunday 10 am to 7 pm Holidays 10 am to 7 pm
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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Media information

MARK DION **DELIRIOUS TOYS**

8 September 2024 – 9 February 2025

In the *Delirious Toys* exhibition, US artist Mark Dion, internationally renowned for his contemporary cabinets of curiosities, stages the world of play and fantasy and, with hundreds of exhibits, not only transcends space and time, but also takes a critical look at children's toys themselves.

For the exhibition, he spent months researching the Berlin Stadtmuseum's collection of around 70,000 objects, one of the largest in Germany. On this basis, he created a labyrinth of board games, a procession of animals, a circuit with an imaginary race between vehicles of all kinds, a giant chest full of teddy bears, a doll's cave and a war landscape. Historical doll's houses and a "poison cabinet" with borderline and cross-border toys can also be seen.

Mark Dion has been working intensively since the late 1980s with the question of how knowledge is generated and passed on in museums, always with a keen eye for systems of exploitation and oppression. After all, toys, usually designed by adults for children always convey ideas about people and their world. In dealing with toys, children practise certain role models, and through toys they are themes or ideologies to them.

The exhibition playfully leaves aside the usual categories of a collection, such as chronology or style. Dion's combinations of sizes, materials and times result in stagings of fantastic stories.

In line with the logic of the Wunderkammer, as it has developed in Europe in particular since the Renaissance, Dion is concerned with the principle of the 'macrocosm in the microcosm'. The great themes and contexts of the world, such as the wonders of nature, physical laws, but also ideologies and discrimination should also become comprehensible on a small scale.

An exhibition of the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin in co-operation with the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland



Exhibition texts

In the exhibition the texts are written in simple language to ensure participation for all.

A *Wunderkammer* of Toys

With more than 70,000 objects, the toy collection at the Stadtmuseum Berlin is one of the largest of its kind in Germany. The American conceptual artist Mark Dion spent months exploring these vast holdings. Sifting through the wondrous and the familiar, he eventually settled on a selection of several hundred dolls, animals, vehicles and toys of all kinds made of a wide range of materials and spanning different eras. In doing so, he picked up on the European *wunderkammer* collections – cabinets of curiosities – which have enthralled visitors ever since. As spectacular collections of antiques and natural specimens, fine art, ethnographica and rare objects, they reflected the rich diversity of the known world.

In his work, Mark Dion relied on the innate human impulse to play. We learn to understand the world through play and blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy in the process. Defying rigid categorisation and chronology, the installations and themed displays of the exhibition follow aesthetic preferences and free associations. The toys seem to lead a life of their own; they congregate in mysterious gatherings, tell astonishing stories and captivate visitors of all generations.

The exhibition is a walk-in *gesamtkunstwerk*, a kind of *wunderkammer* in which everything seems possible. Mark Dion invites us to enter the realm of the imagination, but at the same time, he takes a critical look at playing as one of the oldest cultural technique of mankind.


Miniature Worlds

The miniature reproduces the world on a smaller scale. It invites us to look at it afresh as if through a magnifying glass and to discover the big in the small. It shows the scaled-down space as an ideal model of order, proportion and balance. Every detail is carefully chosen and occupies its allotted space. Reduced in size but not in import, the reproductions become symbols of the aspects of life one wants to get a grip on. At the same time, this mysterious world *en miniature* stimulates the imagination and allows us to dream big.

Doll's houses are among the most fascinating objects borne of this longing for a manageable world in miniature format. In 17th-century Europe, these exquisitely constructed models were made of the finest materials and enjoyed great prestige. To this day, doll's houses are seen as more than merely toys; touching on aspects beyond the visible realm of everyday life, they represent a complex self-contained universe and are a gateway to a parallel world of wonder, secrets and daydreams.

School Charts

Large-format charts such as these used to be standard classroom equipment. Until the 1960s, they were regarded as key educational resources alongside textbooks. With their memorable imagery, they communicated information about a wide range of subjects. They were used extensively in the subjects of religious education, geography, history and natural history, especially during the initial, visually oriented object lessons. But



they were also indispensable for technology, needlework and even PE lessons. They bear eloquent witness to the curriculum and educational goals of their time. For generations, these elaborate wall charts, produced in different series, shaped not only academic teaching and learning but also the general “view of the world”.

Today, they have become almost entirely extinct and have been replaced with other – increasingly digital – teaching aids. However, they are of the greatest interest to researchers of period-specific cultural patterns. Their content and design are a multifaceted reflection of the *zeitgeist* and capture the everyday views and stereotypes, tastes and sensibilities of their time.

The Great Race

Whether it's the Nürburgring, the Circuit de Monaco or Le Mans – the legendary motorsport circuits are synonymous with ruthless competition and the adrenaline rush of high-speed racing. Mark Dion's circuit, which is crammed with a bewildering mass of vehicles, seems a very different proposition. It is not just cars that take part in his race; we can also see horse-drawn vehicles, scooters and even a flying object competing side by side as though it were the most normal thing in the world. It doesn't seem to be about getting to the finish line as quickly as possible. The surreal aspects of a race between aeroplanes, race cars, lorries and horse-drawn carriages, which would be unfair and against the rules in real life, are of no consequence in the world of play.

At the same time, the different materials, shapes and colours of the motley vehicles assembled here demonstrate their historical development. They suggest how our means of locomotion might continue to develop and shape the mindset of man as “homo moto”. It is intriguing to wonder if and how the circuit would change if self-driving cars or air taxis, which will become more common as technology continues to advance, were to be introduced.

The Animal Procession

They can be made of fabric, wood, metal or plastic. They can be realistic, fanciful or turned into cutesy cuddly toys. Animal figures of every type, size and geographical origin are an integral part of any child's bedroom. This is the space where friendships are forged for life, where the imagination takes off in wondrous flights of fancy. One of the most popular cuddly toys is the teddy bear. Like many other characters, it comes to life in a child's world of play. Although it is given into the care of the child, it also acts as the child's companion, friend and protector. Many adults remain loyal to their beloved teddy bear for decades: they associate it with childhood memories or see it as a collector's item. Mark Dion tries their emotional resilience by staging a funeral for a teddy bear.

In his “Procession of Animals”, the artist brings together very different specimens of the animal world on a pyramid. It recalls Noah's Ark – the boat in which representatives of all animals were saved from the biblical flood. But Dion is not concerned with the preservation of species or any visualisation of the theory of evolution. The sole organisational criterion for this assembly of toy animals is their size. In this way, traditional systems are turned upside down. It remains unclear whether this is a festive parade or a funeral cortege and what future this mysterious procession of animals is heading towards.



The Game Maze

As humans, we learn to understand the world through play. We start soon after we are born and have done so since time immemorial. It should therefore come as no surprise that games are as old as mankind itself. They are known in every culture all over the world. They provide entertainment, but they also reflect the values of the society that play them.

The earliest games were probably race and boardgames drawn in the sand and played with sticks, shells, stones or bones. Until the end of the Middle Ages, only the nobility could afford proper gameboards and playing cards. And it was not until much later that these became accessible to the population at large. Until the end of the 19th century, games of chance and gambling for money were very popular. The 20th century saw the rise of video games, which quickly became an important part of our contemporary culture.

Strategy games are among the classic types of games that have remained popular to this day. Here the aim is to defeat the opponent through a series of tactical moves. The games range from very concrete battles between two warring parties to abstractions that make it easy to forget that they are re-enactments of war.

In the Uncanny Valley of the Dolls

As cultural artefacts, dolls have a long history. Prehistoric figurines were almost certainly not dolls for children to play with, but idols with magical functions. In the 19th century, the "discovery" of childhood as a distinct and important phase of life provided a major boost to the doll industry. To this day, the archaic power and allure of dolls as an image of ourselves taps into our desires, imaginings, dreams and nightmares. Yet their effect is never entirely unambiguous. And it is precisely this ambivalence between the familiar and the strange that makes them so fascinating.


The nature of dolls oscillates between apparent animation and inanimate thingness, between childlike innocence and disturbing animism. The seamless fluidity of these transitions has turned the doll into the very symbol of the uncanny.

In his installations, Mark Dion builds on the doll's ambiguous character and perception. Warding off more than just dust, the protective curtain in front of the densely packed Doll Grotto triggers a voyeuristic impulse in the viewer. The elaborately arranged *Sleeping Beauty* stirs up memories of the fairytale awakening of Briar Rose and Snow White and at the same time references death as an integral part of human life.

The Doll Hospital

There has been a doll hospital in Bonn for more than a hundred years. As has long been the custom in Germany, the "doctor" who takes care of the dolls' ailments is a hairdresser. This is mainly because in the past many dolls had wigs made of real hair, which were made by specialist hairdressers or wigmakers.

The skillset of a doll doctor cannot be acquired at school or university. But the fundamental approach of a doll doctor does not differ all that much from that of a "normal" physician. The doll doctor takes as close a look at the patient as at the person who brings a battered doll or a tattered soft toy to the clinic. Any reputable practitioner will give an honest diagnosis of the extent to which damage can be repaired or even undone.



The owners, both young and old, who come to the doll hospital have a deep emotional attachment to their ailing toy. That's why treating these patients requires a great deal of empathy, creativity and skill. There are no hopeless cases. The aim is to preserve childhood dreams by restoring a much-loved companion and giving it a new lease on life.

When Toys Go Bad

Not every toy is innocent, cute or funny. There are plenty of toys in private homes and in museum collections that glorify violence and have racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory imagery or connotations.

Toys always reflect the time, society and region in which they were produced. Ideas and values that adults want to impart to children take concrete form in toys. If we take a closer look at them, they reveal not only the expectations placed on childhood but also those placed on society as a whole. Are girls brought up to be housewives and mothers, or are they encouraged to become scientists or astronauts? Are toy weapons made for boys only; do they prepare them to wage real ones in a real war? How do dolls portray people of colour?

The toys shown in the display case are particularly striking examples of a culture of prejudice and violence. We hope that a good hard look at these exhibits will sensitise visitors to other toys in the exhibition.

On the Battlefield

Wars as an organised form of armed conflict between people have a history that can be documented to go back at least 14,000 years, and there have been war games and war toys ever since. The military toys that have come down to us from different eras represent the latest weapons of their time. The demand for war toys was always noticeably higher in the runup to an armed conflict and during the ensuing fighting. Conversely, the horrors of the Second World War gave rise to numerous campaigns and even legal initiatives to ban war toys.

In the period of the two world wars between 1914 and 1945, the production of war toys increased dramatically to instil patriotic enthusiasm for warfare even in children. After all, children's toys – designed by adults – always reflect gendered behaviour and expectations. To this day, war toys continue to be used to mould boys into men – into men who can kill and die as soldiers. Girls were given dolls in nurses' uniforms to play with. They served to inculcate the ideal female role model of the "caring, nurturing woman", who tended to wounded soldiers in field hospitals so that they could return to the front. Mark Dion develops his installation into a powerful and powerfully violent panorama of war that draws us in and fascinates us despite our awareness of its horror and devastation.



Biography Mark Dion

Mark Dion was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1961. He received a BFA (1986) and an honorary doctorate (2003) from the University of Hartford, School of Art, Connecticut. He also has honorary doctorates from The Wagner Free Institute of Science and University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

Dion's work examines the ways in which dominant ideologies and public institutions shape our understanding of history, knowledge, and the natural world. "The job of the artist," he says, "is to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception and convention." Appropriating archaeological, museum display, field biological and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between "objective" ("rational") scientific methods and "subjective" ("irrational") influences.

The artist's spectacular and often fantastical curiosity cabinets, modeled on Wunderkabinetts of the sixteenth century, exalt atypical orderings of objects and specimens. By locating the roots of environmental politics and public policy in the construction of knowledge about nature, Mark Dion questions the authoritative role of the scientific voice in contemporary society, by tracking how ideology and pseudoscience creep into scientific discourse.

He has received numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (2019). Dion has had major exhibitions at Miami Art Museum (2006); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004); the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston (2017); and Tate Gallery, London (1999). He is in Germany by Galerie Nagel- Draxler.

He is the co-director of Mildred's Land an innovative visual art education and residency program in Beach Lake, Pennsylvania. Dion lives with his wife and frequent collaborator Dana Sherwood in Copake, New York and works world wide.



Publication



The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue.

Mark Dion
Delirious Toys – Die Spielzeug-Wunderkammer

Published by
the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany

With contributions by
Ilka Becker, Thomas Dahl, Mark Dion, Thomas Ebers, Manfred Gräfe,
Christine Heidemann, Eva Kraus, Petra Lange-Berndt, Agnieszka Lulińska,
Gorch Pieken, Randy-Noreen Rathenow, Iris Schewe and an interview
with the artist Mark Dion

Scope and format
Softcover, 21 x 14,8 cm
48 pages, 57 illustrations
In German language
Price: 5 euros



Educational Programme

GUIDED TOURS

Öffentliche Führungen

Donnerstags 17.30–18.30 Uhr

3 €/ermäßigt 1,50 €, zzgl. Eintritt in die Ausstellung

Tickets sind an der Kasse oder über bundeskunsthalle.de/tickets erhältlich.

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Führungen für Familien mit Kindern von 6 bis 10 Jahren

Sonn- und feiertags, 15–16.30 Uhr

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Kuratorinnenführungen

Mit Agnieszka Lulinska, Kuratorin der Ausstellung

Mittwochs, 18. September und 20. November, jeweils 18 Uhr

jeweils 60 Minuten

5 €/ermäßigt 2,50 €, zzgl. Eintritt in die Ausstellung

Tickets sind an der Kasse oder über bundeskunsthalle.de/tickets erhältlich.

Kunstpause

Führung in der Mittagspause

TOYS

11. September, 16. Oktober, 13. November, 11. Dezember, 15. Januar 2025, jeweils

12.30–13 Uhr

Als Ausgleich zum täglichen Arbeitsleben bieten wir Ihnen während Ihrer Mittagspause eine kurzweilige Speedführung an.

8 € (Führung und Eintritt)

Tickets sind an der Kasse oder über bundeskunsthalle.de/tickets erhältlich.

Anmeldung erforderlich, individuell für Gruppen buchbar

Information und Anmeldung unter buchung@bundeskunsthalle.de

Baby-Art-Connection

Führungen und Gespräche für Eltern mit Baby

Vom Wickeltisch ins Museum

2. Oktober, 6. November, 20. November, 22. Januar 2025, 5. Februar 2025, jeweils 10.15–

11.45 Uhr

15 €, inkl. Ausstellungsbesuch (ein Elternteil und Baby)

Schriftliche Anmeldung erforderlich: buchung@bundeskunsthalle.de


Ausstellungsrundgang für interkulturelle Gruppen⁽¹⁾

Meet & Speak

Dialogische Führung für Menschen mit und ohne Flucht- und Migrationshintergrund

Interkulturelle Gruppen können gemeinsam die Ausstellung entdecken, miteinander ins Gespräch kommen und Fragen stellen.

Kommt vorbei, bringt Freunde und eure Sprachen mit!



Kostenfrei buchbar für interkulturelle Gruppen
Max. 15 Personen/Gruppe
Schriftliche Anmeldung erforderlich: buchung@bundeskunsthalle.de

Gruppenführungen ⁽¹⁾

60 Minuten, 70 €

90 Minuten, 90 €

60 Minuten, Führung mit Kurator*in 180 €

60 Minuten, Führung mit Intendantin 250 €

zzgl. Eintrittskarte 13 €/ermäßigt 6,50 € pro Person

Schriftliche Anmeldung erforderlich: buchung@bundeskunsthalle.de

Schätze schätzen

Teddys und Puppen – geliebte Begleiter von Kindheitstagen an.

Sonntags, 27. Oktober, 24. November, 26. Januar 2025, 9. Februar 2025, jeweils 15–18 Uhr

Sie sitzen vielleicht schon seit Jahrzehnten zu Hause auf dem Sofa oder sind beim Aufräumen im Keller oder auf dem Dachboden wieder zum Vorschein gekommen. Oder sie bereichern über einen Flohmarktfund die Teddy- oder Puppenfamilie zu Hause.

Teddys und Puppen können Begleiter sein, die Familien seit Jahrzehnten oder Generationen begleiten. Wer mehr über seine "Familienmitglieder" wissen möchte, kann gerne zur Sprechstunde bei Thomas Dahl (www.pupp doktor-dahl.de) in die Ausstellung kommen - denn dort erhält man Auskünfte zu Herkunft, Herstellerfirma und dem Herstellungszeitraum des jeweiligen Schatzes (keine Wertschätzung).

Teilnahme kostenfrei mit Eintrittskarte zur Ausstellung.

VERANSTALTUNGEN

WEDNESDAY_LATE_ART

SPEEDFÜHRUNGEN_DJ_DRINKS

DANCING QUEENS AND KINGS

23. Oktober, 18–21 Uhr

Ihr Feierabend voller Kunst, Kultur und Musik!

SPEEDFÜHRUNGEN

(Deutsch, Englisch, Türkisch...)

Tanzwelten

Mark Dion: Delirious Toys

Interactions 2024

MITMACH-AKTION/INTERVENTION

Tanzkunst aus dem Handgelenk-Vom Bleistiftschwung zum Farbentanz

Mit Barbara Dörffler

INTERVENTION

Mit der THB-Crew / Hip Hop

Mit Unterstützung durch das Tanzhaus Bonn

LOUNGE & DJ & DRINKS

Mit DJ Constantin Bockamp / Eventiger

13€/6,50€ mit ELLAH-Card, inklusive eines Drinks

ELLAH – Die Jahreskarte für junge Kunstfreunde

Tickets sind an der Kasse oder über bundeskunsthalle.de/tickets erhältlich.



WEDNESDAY_LATE_ART

SPEEDFÜHRUNGEN_DJ_DRINKS

Save Land. United for Land

11. Dezember, 18–21 Uhr

Ihr Feierabend voller Kunst, Kultur und Musik!

SPEEDFÜHRUNGEN

(Deutsch, Englisch, Türkisch...)

Save Land. United for Land

Tanzwelten

Mark Dion: Delirious Toys

MITMACH-AKTION/INTERVENTION

Sandpapier eine ungewöhnliche Kunst

Mit Katharina Jahnke

INTERVENTION

Papierrausch

LOUNGE & DJ & DRINKS

Mit DJ Desertification aka @Jounce

13€/6,50€ mit ELLAH-Card, inklusive eines Drinks

ELLAH – Die Jahreskarte für junge Kunstfreunde

Tickets sind an der Kasse oder über bundeskunsthalle.de/tickets erhältlich.

Nächster Termin:

WEDNESDAY_LATE_ART

Mittwoch, 22. Januar



Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

ALL IN! RE-DESIGNING DEMOCRACY

until 13 October 2024

Does democracy need an update? Have we relied too long on the notion that nothing can shake it? The thing about democracy is that it only exists if we keep working at it. In a world that changes every day, it needs to be kept fit. It is thus high time to strengthen our democratic muscles!

Visitors will experience first-hand what it means to be empathetic, to show perseverance, or to negotiate compromises. *All In! Re-Designing Democracy* explores the current social desire for greater participation and inclusion as well as traditional forms of democracy. How has democracy been fought for in the past, how has equality and freedom been fought for? In addition to art and design, the exhibition will feature exhibits from the history of political culture, as well as from architecture, film, and photography. The exhibition will be an excursion to the turning points of history, to the beginnings and landmarks of democracy, as well as a bold speculation towards the future: What will the democracy of tomorrow look like?

An exhibition project of the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn
and the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

INTERACTIONS 2024

until 27 October 2024

In 2023, the Bundeskunsthalle has organised a summer programme of interactions, play and visual and acoustic impulses around the building, complementing the existing artworks in the outdoor space: the *Circular Appearing Rooms* water pavilion by Jeppe Hein, which presents itself in the square every summer, the *Bonn Slide* by Carsten Höller, which winds around its own axis up the façade, and *The Curve* by Bettina Pousttchi, which is also dedicated to movement.

Interactions 2024 will once again occupy various places in the public space of the Bundeskunsthalle: from the roof to the foyer to the inner courtyard and the forecourt, selected artworks, performances or workshops will be offered that invite interactive play, but also deal with visual languages, music or sound as a cross-border and universal form of communication. In addition to the works already presented last year, *Camouflage/Torwand 1 - 3* by Olaf Nicolai and *Do You Want Us Here or Not* by Finnegan Shannon, works by FAMED, Esra Gülmen, Tomas Kleiner, Gabriel Lester, LIGNA, Jonas Lund, Linda Nadji, Temitayo Ogunbiyi and Clare Strand have been added this year..



Save the dates

DANCE WORLDS

27 September 2024 to 16 February 2025

Media conference: Wednesday, 25 September 2024, 11 a.m.

Annual press conference

PROGRAMME 2025

Media conference: Wednesday, 30 October 2024, 11 a.m.

SAVE LAND

UNITED FOR LAND

6 December 2024 to 1 June 2025

Media conference: Wednesday, 4 December 2024, 11 a.m.

Subject to change

Status: September 2024