

Press release / 12 December 2024

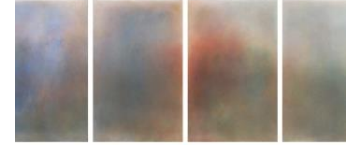
HANNS KUNITZBERGER Likeness 2002–2005

29 November 2024 to 27 April 2025

The presentation of the monumental work *Abbild (Likeness) 2002–2005* by the Austrian artist Hanns Kunitzberger (b. 1955, lives and works in Berlin) concludes the Hamburger Kunsthalle's 2024 exhibition series devoted to contemporary art. The work, which comprises 16 large-format paintings, pays homage to grand historical-painting cycles. With this show, the Kunsthalle is revisiting a tradition practised until the end of the twentieth century of mounting outstanding presentations of contemporary art in the Kuppelsaal, the domed rotunda that served as an impressive exhibition space after the museum's new wing was opened. In their serial monumentality, Kunitzberger's four groups of four paintings each dominate the space. The hanging is reminiscent of similar experiences of the interplay between paintings and space, such as Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* murals in the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris.

Hanns Kunitzberger's canvases are created in a lengthy process involving multiple overpaintings, so that various planes can be glimpsed underneath the superimposed areas of colour. This technique lends the images a translucent quality that makes the painting layers seem like time poetically shimmering through to the surface. The time we spend contemplating Kunitzberger's paintings corresponds in condensed form to the time the painter spent making them. But this paradigm, which of course applies to every painting in the world, takes on a deeper meaning here: Just as the brush painted the picture, so does the viewer's gaze scan the image in search of the traces and layers it left behind on the canvas. The works have a mesmerizing effect, and the unusual hanging in sequence on the walls of the rotunda seems to tell a story about colour, although this painting is by no means narrative. Kunitzberger considers it his task to initiate a dialogue between the artwork and the people viewing it, while the artist's personality is a secondary consideration that remains hidden.

The representative domed **rotunda of the Hamburger Kunsthalle** is part of the 1919 extension built in pale shell limestone. It was initiated by Alfred Lichtwark, the Kunsthalle's first director, and developed in collaboration with the architect Albert Erbe and, from 1909, with Hamburg's new building director Fritz Schumacher, according to Lichtwark's vision of a modern picture gallery. Schumacher then executed the limestone building, which was completed only after Lichtwark's death and was opened by his successor, Gustav Pauli.



Hanns Kunitzberger (b. 1955)
LIKENESS 2002–2005, composition,
sets I, II, III, IV – each with 4 paintings
1 to 16, 2002–2005 (detail)
Oil / mollino on wooden stretcher
frame, total 300 x 3200 x 4.5 cm,
incl. 10 cm space between paintings
© Hanns Kunitzberger

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The series of exhibitions of contemporary art during 2024 also included *BASTIAN MUHR. Commercial Graphics*, *KATHLEEN RYAN, untr tranquil now*, and the presentation of *A new work for the Hamburger Kunsthalle* by *Georges Adéagbo* (all of which opened in May 2024), as well as *ALBERT OEHLER. Computer Paintings* (since September 2024), *ISA MONA LISA* (since October 2024) and *IN.SIGHT. The Donation Schröder* (since November 2024).

Curator: Prof. Dr. Alexander Klar

Assistant Curator: Ifee Tack

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