

Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

Katrin Plavčák Painting Reality in Surreal Times

From 18 September 2026 to 10 January 2027, Lentos presents a comprehensive retrospective of the work of artist Katrin Plavčák. In image worlds that are as humorous as they are unsettling, the artist brings the social and political present into dialogue with pop culture, art history and surreal narratives. Fake news, democracies under threat, war and violence, gender roles, social media and artificial intelligence become subjects of her painting, alongside the question of self-determined action in increasingly turbulent times.

At first glance, Katrin Plavčák's paintings are defined by luminous colours, unusual figures and often bizarre situations. Yet beneath the exuberance of her visual language lies an intensive engagement with scientific, social and political questions. Reality and surreality exist side by side in her work: historical figures encounter characters from pop culture, political events meet mythological narratives, and the tangible present intersects with ghosts and fantastical beings. The title *Painting Reality in Surreal Times* encapsulates this tension. Four key themes provide a thread through the exhibition: they critically examine growing tendencies towards violence in geopolitics, reflect on the significance of democracy, explore gender roles, and delve into very real worlds of ghosts.

"The exhibition at Lentos is the first comprehensive museum presentation of Katrin Plavčák's artistic oeuvre and brings together new works with pieces created since 2009. It reveals how consistently, yet openly, her oeuvre has evolved over the years, expanding beyond painting into textiles and three-dimensional work. Plavčák's works respond directly, sometimes almost in passing, to what surrounds us – politically, socially and personally – transforming it into multilayered pictorial worlds that reflect our present with both precision and a highly distinctive perspective," says Hemma Schmutz, Director of Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz and curator of the exhibition.

"Art creates spaces in which we can engage with the pressing questions facing our society and allow different perspectives to coexist. Katrin Plavčák's works address issues that directly affect our everyday lives and our future – from democracy and social cohesion to war and the impact of new technologies. With this exhibition, Lentos once again demonstrates how immediate and relevant contemporary art can be to public debate," emphasises City Councillor for Culture Doris Lang-Mayerhofer.

18.09.26 to 10.01.27



The GHOST World – Ghosts of a Digital Present

In Katrin Plavčak's work, the invisible takes on form. Her "GHOST World" is concerned less with conventional spectres than with unspoken matters, anxieties and barely perceptible threats in everyday life. Digital surveillance and technological systems emerge as the new ghosts of our present.

In *Big Smoke Cooking* (2025), a black column of smoke rises from burnt food and transforms into a ghost. The protagonist, absorbed in reading, is so engrossed in his book that he notices nothing. What initially appears as a humorous moment can simultaneously be read as an image of omnipresent yet scarcely perceived observation.

With the textile work *Ocean & Space* (2026), Plavčak ultimately juxtaposes two realities: in Ocean, people crowd onto an overloaded rescue vessel while others drift in the water. The second part of the textile work, Space, depicts Starlink satellites in outer space. Displacement, surveillance, technological expansion and modern warfare are thus brought into confrontation within a single work.

Die Demo Crazy Weld – Between Democratic Fatigue and Information Overload

Democracy Fatigue Syndrome (2018) translates the notion of democratic fatigue directly into an image: people sleep, yawn or are too exhausted to cast their ballots. Meanwhile, an aeroplane trails a banner across the sky reading "We need your vote".

In *Flooding the zone with shit* (2026), a large-format painting created specifically for the exhibition, Plavčak addresses a strategy of political communication in which a relentless flood of information and controversy overwhelms public attention. In the painting, this becomes a drastic metaphor: a tidal wave of excrement sweeps across an entire city.

The Ladies and Gentlemen Welty – Rethinking Gender Roles

With wit and a delight in reversing social expectations, Plavčak also engages with gender roles. In *The New Guy* (2016), a woman strolls with an extravagantly dressed man on her arm, turning the familiar image of the "trophy wife" on its head. *Er nahm das Kopftuch* (2016), meanwhile, imagines a Muslim man wearing a headscarf, deliberately detaching the garment from any unambiguous gender attribution. Plavčak also repeatedly places women artists and historical female figures at the centre of her pictorial worlds. In the exhibition's principal motif, *Is she a lady?* (2015), she brings together, among others, Hannah Höch, Sonia Delaunay, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Anni Albers and Maria Lassnig in an imaginary gathering. In her paintings, people from different centuries can meet as a matter of course: the image becomes a space of possibility in which historical orders are suspended.

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The Argument is Violence – Violence, Resistance and the “Number of Dead”

Another major focus is violence and its political and social consequences. Plavčak portrays opposition figures, activists and people who challenge existing power structures. Her 2025 portrait *Navalny* draws on the image of Alexei Navalny's face stained brilliant green, which became a symbol of resistance.

In *Cuz, it's so sad, bro / Darnella Frazier, 17 (George Floyd)* (2020), Plavčak instead centres the then 17-year-old witness whose mobile-phone video documented the killing of George Floyd. The work thus addresses not only the act of violence itself, but also the act of making injustice visible and documenting it.

The 360-degree panorama *Die Zahl der Toten (The Number of Dead, 2026)* was created especially for the exhibition at Lentos. The installation combines peaceful scenes of everyday life with war, aggression and technological surveillance. Its title points to the way individual lives can disappear behind abstract casualty figures in reporting on wars and disasters. Because the panorama can never be apprehended in its entirety from a single vantage point, it simultaneously makes differing perspectives an integral part of the work.

With her *Stuck'n'Plug Paintings*, Katrin Plavčak extends painting into three-dimensional space. The slot-together sculptures consist of wooden panels painted on both sides, which are fitted together crosswise and can be combined in different configurations. This gives rise to continually changing narratives and thematic connections. In *Jolly Dentists talking (with speakers) / Refuge for rich people x ALF im Interview / White Gods* (2022), Plavčak combines painting, sculpture and sound: affluent, cheerful dentists, exclusive refuges for the wealthy, the character ALF as a “legal alien”, and questions of migration, privilege and social space interlock. The integrated spoken passages heighten the work's simultaneously humorous and socially critical character.

A Varied Supporting Programme Featuring Concerts, Performance and Workshops

Katrin Plavčak. Painting Reality in Surreal Times is on view at Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz from 18 September 2026 to 10 January 2027. The exhibition is accompanied by a varied programme of events: at a concert by the band Kinky Muppet, Plavčak herself takes to the stage at Stadtwerkstatt as singer and guitarist. Together with Ulrika Segerberg, she can also be experienced live in the exhibition as the sewing-machine improvisation duo M.O.G. (Mothers of God) in a sound performance. The programme also includes an artist-led tour with Katrin Plavčak and Lentos Director Hemma Schmutz, a Baby Tour and a two-day painting studio for adults. At the Say It Loud! T-Shirt Workshop, visitors can use screen printing and appliqué to create their own statements and make their voices visible.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by the catalogue *Katrin Plavčak. Painting Reality in Surreal Times*, published by Verlag für moderne Kunst, with essays in German and English by Danica Đorđević Janković, Gabriele Mackert, Katrin Plavčak, Hemma Schmutz and Bart Verschaffel. 192 pages, €34.

18.09.26 to 10.01.27



Biography

Born in Gütersloh in 1970; lives and works in Vienna and Stuttgart.

Since October 2022, Katrin Plavčák has been Professor of Painting and Drawing at the abk Stuttgart (Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart). She studied painting with Sue Williams and Wolfgang Holleggha at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, having previously graduated from the Sozialakademie in Vienna.

Since 2000, Plavčák has exhibited in Austria and internationally, including at the Vienna Secession (2009), Deutsche Bank KunstHalle in Berlin (2013), Stanley Picker Gallery in London (2019) and Kunstverein Heilbronn (2022). In 2018, Denkmal für Falco – Kunst im öffentlichen Raum was installed in Gansbach, Lower Austria. In 2020, she realised the mural *History never stops* (2.5 × 55 m) for the Nye Jordal Amfi ice hockey arena in Oslo, Norway.

Alongside painting and sculpture, Plavčák is also active as a musician. Since 2017, she has been a member of the trio Kinky Muppet (Katrin Plavčák: guitar/vocals; Nicholas Hoffman: bass/baritone guitar/vocals; Oliver Stotz: drums/samples). On 7 April 2022, the electroperetta DIgiTAL BLooD (composition: Annesley Black and KINKY MUPPET) premiered at Kunstverein Heilbronn. She also performs with Ulrika Segerberg as the duo M.O.G. (Mothers of God), improvising with contact microphones attached to sewing machines and loopers.

Extended stays abroad in Mozambique, Chengdu (China) and New York shaped her artistic development. From 2012 to 2014, she was part of the feminist women artists' group ff. Together with Caro Bittermann and Claudia Zweifel, she runs the website thehistoryofpaintingrevisited.weebly.com, a growing archive documenting women painters throughout art history. In addition, she has been a member of the Board of the Maria Lassnig Foundation since 2026.



Programme

Thu. 17.09.26	Opening Welcome & introduction: Hemma Schmutz, Director, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz Official opening: Julius Stieber, Director of Culture, City of Linz	07:00pm	Free admission
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Special Programme with the Artist

Thu. 12.11.26	Konzert in der Stadtwerkstatt: Kinky Muppet Katrin Plavčák (voc, git), Nicholas Hoffman (voc, baritone, bass, key) and Oliver Stotz (samples & drums) perform as Kinky Muppet at Stadtwerkstatt Linz. Support: Sersha. Tickets available at the Stadtwerkstatt box office; doors 19:30, concert starts 20:00. The concert ticket includes free admission to the exhibition.	07:30–09:30pm	Ticket: € 14
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Thu. 19.11.26	Sound Performance M.O.G. (Mothers of God) Katrin Plavčák and Ulrika Segerberg perform live in the exhibition as a sewing-machine improvisation duo. Registration requested via the online contact form or +43 732 7030 3614.	06:00–06:30pm	Cost: museum admission
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Thu. 03.12.26	Artist-Led Tour with Katrin Plavčák Katrin Plavčák and Lentos Director Hemma Schmutz lead a joint tour of the exhibition. Registration requested via the online contact form or +43 732 7030 3614.	06:00–07:00pm	Tour ticket: €4 plus admission
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Workshop & Painting Studio for Adults

Sun. 11.10.26	Say It Loud! T-Shirt Workshop Using screen printing and appliqué, we create our own T-shirts to make our voices loud and visible. Whether statement, motto or mood: Let's say it loud! With Cécile Belmont (art educator, artist). Registration requested via the online contact form or +43 732 7030 3614.	10:00am	Cost: museum admission
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Sat. 07.11.26 Sun. 08.11.26	Painting Studio for Adults Taking Katrin Plavčák's artistic approach as a point of departure, this painting studio explores the play of different references and the artistic freedom to resist excessive seriousness. How can direct visual languages and forms drawn from comics, advertising and popular culture be developed into multi-layered pictorial worlds?	10:00am 10:00am	€ 90 for both days
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Public Guided Tours

Tue, Sun Thu	Public Guided Tours On Tuesdays, the tour can be combined, on request, with a tour of the collection display.	04:00pm 06:00pm	Tour ticket: €4 plus admission
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Tue. 29.09.26	Baby-Tour A relaxed tour of the exhibition tailored entirely to the needs of visitors with babies.	10:30–11:30	Cost: museum admission
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Sat. 03.10.26	Guided Tour with Sign-Language Interpretation Guided tour with interpretation into Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS). No registration required.	10:30–11:30am	Free admission
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Factsheet

Exhibition title	Katrin Plavčak Painting Reality in Surreal Times
Exhibition dates	18 September 2026 – 10 January 2027
Venue	Lentos Kunstmuseum Erwin-Hauser-Saal
Credits	Curator: Hemma Schmutz Curatorial Assistant: Sandra Eichinger
Publication	The exhibition is accompanied by the catalogue <i>Katrin Plavčak. Painting Reality in Surreal Times</i> , published by Verlag für moderne Kunst, with essays in German and English by Danica Đorđević Janković, Gabriele Mackert, Katrin Plavčak, Hemma Schmutz and Bart Verschaffel. 192 pages, €34.
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Image Material

Press images

Press images and installation views are available on our website for the duration of the exhibition: <https://www.lentos.at/en/museum/presse/pressekit-katrin-plavcak-painting-reality-in-surreal-times>. Royalty-free use, with full image credits, is permitted solely in connection with current editorial coverage of the respective exhibitions and in accordance with customary image-to-text proportions in the media. Specific uses and special formats (e.g. cover images, large-format reproductions, etc.) are permitted only following prior consultation with the respective copyright holders and, where applicable, Bildrecht Wien as their representative.

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