

Media information
5 November 2025

Maurizio Cattelan receives the Preis der Nationalgalerie 2026. BMW supports the award since 2006, underlining its vision that artistic thinking inspires innovation and social change.

Munich/Berlin. The Preis der Nationalgalerie 2026 will be awarded to Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan. The prize honours one of the most influential contemporary artists, who will be represented in Germany for the first time with a solo exhibition. His works, which range from sculpture and installation to conceptual practice, are characterised by sharp humour, bitter seriousness, and a profound reflection on social structures. Since its launch in 2000, this prestigious award has recognised artistic positions that have had a decisive influence on contemporary art and presented them to a broad public in Berlin. BMW has been the exclusive partner of this unique initiative since 2006. The exhibition accompanying the Preis der Nationalgalerie will open at the Neue Nationalgalerie during Berlin Art Week in September 2026.

"Back in 2016, Maurizio Cattelan gave a fully electric BMW i3 a spaghetti-themed wrap as part of our partnership with 'Rencontres d'Arles'. Creative freedom has defined BMW's cultural engagement for over 50 years, through hundreds of collaborations across the globe. And it is precisely this freedom that Cattelan continues to explore to its fullest – with wit, intelligence, and often a sharp critical edge. Whether art reflects our existence or opens up new perspectives has been discussed since the Romantic era. In Cattelan's case, it is always both. Social relevance and creative excellence come together here, just as they do with the Preis der Nationalgalerie, which BMW has supported for two decades. We congratulate Maurizio Cattelan on being awarded the 2026 Preis der Nationalgalerie and on his upcoming solo exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie," says **Ilka Horstmeier, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, Human Resources and Real Estate.**

BMW and Maurizio Cattelan collaborated at "Rencontres d'Arles" in 2016; together with photographer Pierpaolo Ferrari, Cattelan created a special project based around the fully electric BMW i3. The so-called ["Spaghetti Car"](#) featured the vehicle completely covered in spaghetti-themed foil – a humorous and conceptual work that playfully addressed issues of art, consumption, and sustainability.

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Since the early 1990s, Maurizio Cattelan (born 1960 in Padua) has been one of the defining voices in international art. His iconic works – including “La Nona Ora” (1999), a figure of Pope John Paul II struck by a meteorite, “Him” (2001), a praying schoolboy with the face of Adolf Hitler, and “Untitled” (2003), an animatronic sculpture based on the protagonist of Günter Grass’s “The Tin Drum” – show how Cattelan uses shock, irritation and moral ambivalence to raise central questions of our time: guilt, responsibility, power, and collective trauma. Cattelan’s artistic practice is permeated by an aesthetic of “comic existentialism” – a combination of humour and tragedy, irony and profundity, that makes his works appear both accessible and enigmatic. With this exhibition, Maurizio Cattelan returns to Berlin, where he co-curated the 4th Berlin Biennale in 2006.

The expert jury for the Preis der Nationalgalerie 2026 is made up of outstanding international directors: Emma Lavigne (Director of the Pinault Collection, Paris) and Sam Keller (Director of the Fondation Beyeler, Basel) as well as Klaus Biesenbach (Director of the Neue Nationalgalerie). In addition to the expert jurors, the curators of the Nationalgalerie and the members of the FREUNDE der Nationalgalerie were also eligible to submit nominations.

Emma Lavigne, Sam Keller, Klaus Biesenbach say: „Nearly two decades ago, as co-curator of the 4th Berlin Biennale, Maurizio Cattelan played a decisive role in establishing Berlin’s international standing as a centre of contemporary art. Twenty years on, a solo exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie offers an opportunity to revisit and reflect on this formative influence within a new social and cultural context.

Cattelan’s practice engages enduring themes such as power, religion, death, humour and memory – concerns that resonate with particular force in Berlin, a city profoundly shaped by its complex history. As an Italian artist with an international career, he brings a distinctly European perspective to questions of identity, responsibility and collective remembrance. His works invite us to confront history in ways that are simultaneously provocative, critical and poetic.

In Germany, where forms of remembrance are currently being re-examined – between the last generations with direct connections to the NS era and a younger

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generation informed by global perspectives – Cattelan's art acquires renewed significance. His iconic gestures, oscillating between exaggeration, irony, and pain, challenge the rituals of commemoration, evoke both history and its narratives, and open new vantage points on contemporary social debates. In a time of increasing political polarisation, his art can encourage us to view remembrance not as compulsion or obligation, but as a vital and relevant engagement with the present and the future.

Cattelan's ironic questioning of authority and "truth" carries particular urgency today. At a moment when institutions – museums, politics and the media – are re-evaluating their credibility and social roles, he scrutinizes structures of power both within and beyond the art world, always without a moralizing tone. His works provoke reflection on personal responsibility, historical representation and the limits of institutional critique and authority. In an atmosphere of political and social hardening, Cattelan's subversive humour acts as a liberating force. He reminds us that provocation and wit are not expressions of cynicism but forms of resistance and constructive reflection. Particularly in the German context, where public discourse often carries a strong moral charge, his art opens up spaces for thought beyond outrage and polarization. Cattelan is not an artist of straightforwardness. His strength lies in embracing ambiguity, exposing contradictions and posing new questions. This willingness to inhabit the in-between generates productive tension and reminds us that ambiguity is not a weakness but a precondition for critical awareness.

The Neue Nationalgalerie, with its iconic building by Mies van der Rohe, is ideally suited as a place situated between modernity, the 20th and 21st centuries, and the present day, to showcase Cattelan's work in all its complexity – as a mirror and commentary on our time."

Christian Kohorst, Chairman of the FREUNDE der Nationalgalerie, says: "With Maurizio Cattelan, we are honouring an artist who addresses social issues with sharpness, wit and profundity. The fact that his first major solo exhibition in Germany is being shown at the Neue Nationalgalerie underlines the Preis der Nationalgalerie's claim to bring artistic positions of international significance to Berlin."

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Maurizio Cattelan's exhibition at Neue Nationalgalerie will be curated by Lisa Botti, curator at the Neue Nationalgalerie, with Klaus Biesenbach, director of the Neue Nationalgalerie, and will open in September 2026 during Berlin Art Week with an award ceremony.

The Preis der Nationalgalerie, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, has established itself over the decades as one of the most important art prizes, showing its winners to make a significant impact both nationally and internationally. Today, the Preis der Nationalgalerie continues to be a tribute that reflects the vital international art scene and transfer it into an institutional context. In this spirit, the prize in 2026 will remain flexible and open for changes and will be continued in a new format for the first time at Neue Nationalgalerie. From 2026, artists who set international standards and whose work has not yet been comprehensively presented in Berlin, will be honoured through a solo exhibition. The change of location places contemporary art in dialogue with the collection of the Neue Nationalgalerie and its history. The iconic hall of the Mies van der Rohe building provides the ideal setting for a concise, artistic setting. The exhibition is made possible by the FREUNDE der Nationalgalerie.

Further information on the Preis der Nationalgalerie and its comprehensive history can be found at preis.freunde-der-nationalgalerie.de.

Maurizio Cattelan, 2025:

BEING AN ARTIST IS NOT A JOB, IT'S A MALFUNCTION
ART IS A WAY TO SURVIVE, NOT A WAY TO LIVE
IF I KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING, I WOULD HAVE STOPPED A LONG
TIME AGO
SOMETIMES THE BEST IDEA IS THE ONE YOU'RE TOO ASHAMED
TO SAY OUT LOUD
FAILURE IS MY FAVORITE COLOR
I DON'T MAKE ART TO COMMUNICATE, I MAKE IT TO ESCAPE
IF YOU WANT TO SAY SOMETHING SERIOUS, WEAR A CLOWN'S
NOSE
I DON'T BELIEVE IN INSPIRATION, I BELIEVE IN GOOD TIMING AND
BETTER EXCUSES

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YOU DON'T MAKE A MASTERPIECE, YOU SURVIVE ONE
BEAUTY IS THE PERFECT ALIBI
MY GOAL IS TO VANISH COMPLETELY, LEAVING BEHIND JUST A
QUESTION MARK
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T CHOOSE, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE
BEING ORIGINAL IS OVERRATED, BEING PRECISE IS TERRIFYING
GUILT IS ONE OF THE PUREST MATERIALS AN ARTIST CAN USE
SOMETIMES I WISH I COULD COPYRIGHT SILENCE
IF I BELIEVED IN MESSAGES, I'D WORK IN ADVERTISING
I DON'T CREATE MEANING, I OFFER TRAPS FOR IT
TRUTH IS NOT AN INGREDIENT, IT'S THE AFTERTASTE
EVERY ARTWORK IS A LOOPHOLE
YOU KNOW IT'S WORKING WHEN YOU START REGRETTING IT
IF I WANTED COMFORT, I'D BUY FURNITURE
THE BEST ARTWORKS ARE MISTAKES NO ONE DARED TO FIX
A GOOD WORK DOESN'T ASK FOR ATTENTION, IT STEALS IT
A BANANA ON A WALL IS STILL MORE HONEST THAN MOST
PEOPLE I'VE MET
THE MORE YOU POLISH AN IDEA, THE LESS IT CUTS
IF YOU CAN LIVE WITHOUT IT, IT WASN'T ART
CONCEPTUAL ART? ALL ART IS CONCEPTUAL IF YOU THINK LONG
ENOUGH
I TREAT EXHIBITIONS LIKE FUNERALS: SILENT, AWKWARD, AND
FULL OF FLOWERS
SUCCESS IS JUST FAILURE THAT FORGOT TO STOP
EVERY EXHIBITION SHOULD FEEL LIKE A CRIME SCENE
A GOOD ARTWORK SHOULD MAKE THE MUSEUM A LITTLE
NERVOUS
EVERY OBJECT IS A HOSTAGE OF ITS OWN INTERPRETATION
WHEN IN DOUBT, CARVE IT IN MARBLE
I NEVER TRUSTED THINGS THAT COME WITH A LABEL
THE MOST RADICAL GESTURE IS TO DO NOTHING AND MAKE
PEOPLE TALK ABOUT IT
THE LESS I EXPLAIN, THE MORE THEY WRITE

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In addition to the Preis der Nationalgalerie, the BMW Group's long-term commitments in the capital include the Gallery Weekend Berlin, which celebrated its 21st edition in May 2025. Alongside its extensive engagement in the visual arts, BMW also collaborates with the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and annually invites audiences to the traditional open-air format, "State Opera for All" on Bebelplatz.

The BMW Group's cultural engagement, including exclusive updates and deeper insights into its worldwide cultural initiatives, can be followed on Instagram at [@BMWGroupCulture](https://www.instagram.com/BMWGroupCulture).

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BMW Group Cultural Engagement

State Opera for all Gerhard Richter **CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP** Kochi-Muziris Biennale
BMW Art Cars Ólafur Elíasson Art Basel Max Hooper Schneider Städel Invites Frank Stella
BMW Art Club **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE** Art D'Égypte Cao Fei Esther Mahlangu
Zaha Hadid Les Rencontres d'Arles Jeff Koons India Art Fair **LONGEVITY** Julie Mehretu
PARTNERSHIP BMW Open Work by Frieze Andy Warhol Lu Yang Preis der Nationalgalerie
Samson Young Bavarian State Opera **CREATIVE FREEDOM** BMW Young Artist Jazz Award
Ken Done **INTERACTION** Premio de Pintura Gallery Weekend Berlin Art Market Budapest
Paris Photo Leelee Chan Art Dubai **SUSTAINABILITY** BMW Photo Award Leipzig
Teatro alla Scala BMW Classics Jenny Holzer BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors

Why Culture? Why not! Culture is knowledge, a sanctuary of beauty and depth, of meaning and peace. An inspiring escape. Tranquil at best, even unsettling sometimes. As corporate citizen, the BMW Group takes social responsibility seriously, as part of which it has been involved in hundreds of cultural initiatives worldwide for over half a century, both in the arts, music & sound, architecture as well as in design. As a long-term partner, creative freedom is key – and as essential for groundbreaking works as it is for major innovations within a business enterprise like ours.

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Further information: www.bmwgroup.com/culture and www.bmwgroup.com/overviewInstagram: [@BMWGroupCulture](https://www.instagram.com/BMWGroupCulture)

#BMWGroupCulture

The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial services. The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2024, the BMW Group sold over 2.45 million passenger vehicles and more than 210,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2024 was € 11.0 billion on revenues amounting to € 142.4 billion. As of 31 December 2024, the BMW Group had a workforce of 159,104 employees.

The economic success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. Sustainability is a key element of the BMW Group's corporate strategy and covers all products from the supply chain and production to the end of their useful life.

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