

21.03. - 28.06.2026, *something that flees the hands*, Museum Kurhaus Kleve

Artists: Wisrah C. V. da R. Celestino, Sultan Çoban, Rashiyah Elanga, Xheneta Imeri, Hanni Kamaly, Arthur Stachurski, Stanton Taylor & Tobias Hohn

Museum Kurhaus Kleve (MKK) and Residence NRW⁺ are pleased to present the exhibition *something that flees the hands*. Works by seven international artists are placed in dialogue with elements of the current MKK's collection presentation, situating the exhibition within the museum's own conventions of display and interpretation. In doing so, the exhibition both inhabits and interrogates the museum's conventions of presentation and mediation, making them the very subject of its inquiry.

What flees the hands resists being secured, named, or held in place; It remains caught in transition, in motion. The title of the exhibition points to the moment when grasp turns into slippage, when systems of order run into that which cannot be stabilized. In this sense, the title refers both to the literal notion of grasping something with one's hands and, in a metaphorical sense, to non-hierarchical forms of knowledge that are in motion and inherently fleeting. The exhibition thus also questions the epistemological premises of the museum and seeks concrete ways of moving within and beyond them.

What escapes the hands cannot be held. It is in transition, in a state of movement. The exhibition's title points to the moment in which something slips away before it can be grasped, when systems of order encounter something that resists stabilization. In this sense, the title refers both to the literal notion of grasping something with one's hands and, in a metaphorical sense, to non-hierarchical forms of knowledge that are in motion and inherently fleeting. The exhibition thus also questions the epistemological premises of the museum and seeks concrete ways of moving within and beyond them.

something that flees the hands incorporates traces of works from the previous collection display, thereby resisting the conventional temporal sequencing of art presentations. Bodies, collections, and works do not appear as coherent, stable, and legible, but rather as being in transition. The invited international artists present new productions and existing works that operate within this tension—between the institutional demand for legibility and control and artistic strategies of opacity and refusal. The works explore the conventions and value systems that structure the collection and presentation of art, as well as institutional bureaucracies and administrative processes.

Tobias Hohn and Stanton Taylor turn their attention to the museum itself as a dispositif. *In the Service of Reality (Mass Death - Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr, Dresden)* was developed for the exhibition and includes a large-scale photograph and a frame made of safety glass. The conceptual work is based on an image of two vitrines displayed at the Military History Museum of the Bundeswehr in Dresden, which, however, are barely visible due to reflections in the glass and lighting. The abstract image reflects on museum displays that promise visibility while in fact obscuring the objects presented and embedding them in economic frameworks. Between commodity and exhibit, a distinct phenomenology of display emerges in which what is meant to be shown becomes elusive, while underlying claims of ownership and logics of commodification come to the fore. In this way, the work also exposes the ambivalent relationship between exhibition and market, demonstrating that museum operations are embedded within multiple economic logics.

Hanni Kamaly's large, seemingly fragile steel sculpture *George Camerbach* (2022) stands precariously balanced with one foot on a pile of sand originating from the previous MKK collection display. The sand was part of Paloma Varga Weisz's installation *Galgenfigur, gehängt* (2003–2004) and now serves as a backdrop for Kamaly's works in *something that flees the hands*. Despite the use of heavy materials such as steel, copper, and brass, Kamaly's sculptures appear unstable, as if subjected to constant pressure. Named after victims of state violence, the works reflect absences in archives and public discourse and oppose nationalist and anti-immigration politics. George Camerbach was a migrant who came to Sweden in the 20th century and was deported shortly thereafter. His mugshot was handed to Herman Lundsberg, a proponent of so-called "racial hygiene," who used the image in his book *Svenska folktyper* (1919) ("Swedish Racial Types") as a warning against "racial mixing." Kamaly's second sculpture, *Amad Ahmad* (2019–2021), refers to the 26-year-old Syrian Amad Ahmad, who died in 2018 after a fire in a detention center in the city of Kleve, where he had been wrongfully incarcerated for more than two months. In their abstraction and scale, both works propose an anti-racist monumental politics beyond imitation and recognition, thereby resisting generalization and appropriation.

Xheneta Imeri engages with administrative processes and questions of belonging, particularly in relation to her own family and migration history. The works presented in the exhibition, *Attestation, 2001* (2024), *Maillot Stade Genève, 1997* (2024), and *Archives Course de l'Escalade, 1997* (2024)—include archival materials such as a sports jersey, a photograph, and a certificate. These materials relate to her father and his membership in a local sports club in Geneva. In the context of his naturalization process, however, they also served as evidence of his local engagement

and involvement, demonstrating his “advanced level of integration.” In this way, the work exposes the obstacles and bureaucratic procedures of naturalization processes and reflects on how objects and documents mediate the construction of biographies and belonging.

The three works by Rashiyah Elanga move between fiction and documentation. The series of staged images produced specifically for the exhibition as archival pigment prints presents historically charged objects alongside everyday items: Congolese banknotes, matches, historical writings, and packaging materials. These constellations evoke ambivalent narrative spaces and speculative archives in which different histories overlap. The photograph *Une décennie de chance* (2025) shows two French franc banknotes, in which Elanga has replaced the original image of the French physicist Blaise Pascal with the face of the Congolese singer Mbilia Bel. *By the Blanking Press* (2026) is a collage integrating a photograph of a staged scene at the Musée de la Monnaie de Paris alongside various documents and objects, including a Zaïre banknote—a currency introduced shortly after Congo’s independence and abolished in 1997. The photograph *Série C 6, 1976, Bobine 45* (2026) presents another archival scene, this time at the Musée des Archives Nationales in Paris: hands wearing white lace gloves reading microfilm. The figure of an archivist is suggested, yet slips into the theatrical and grotesque. Elanga has framed the three works in thick, differently tinted frames reminiscent of display or specimen cases.

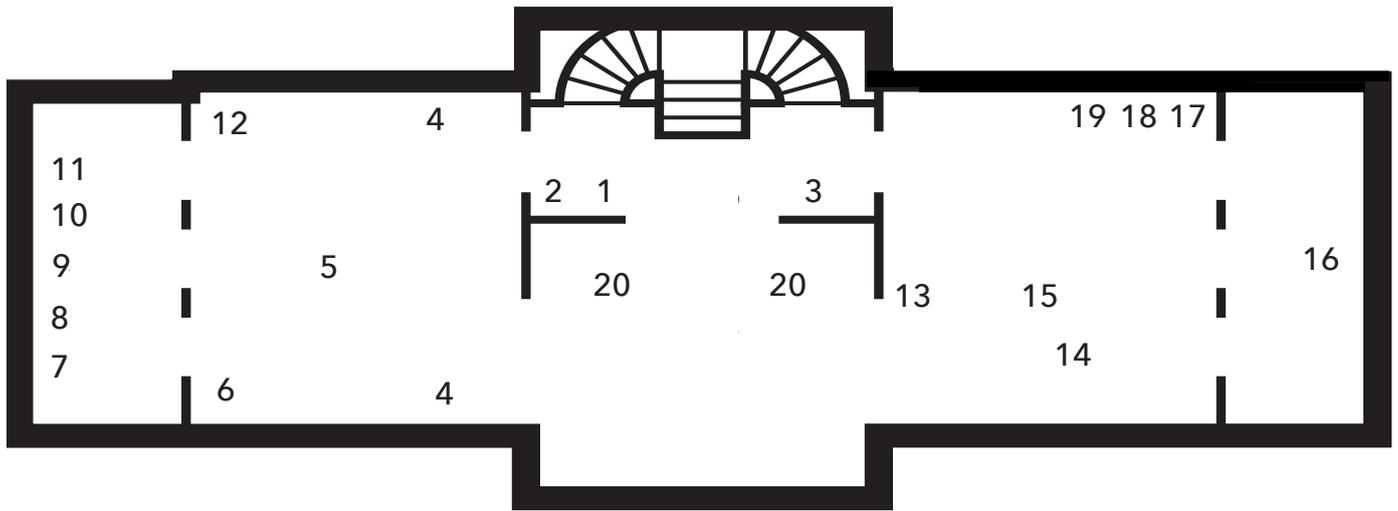
Sultan Çoban’s work *Berfîn, unfinished, gifts and desires* (Berfîn is a Kurdish female name meaning “snow flower” or “a flower that grows in the snow”), developed for the exhibition, makes use of the museum’s civil wedding room. Within the historical setting of the former spa building, the work reflects on the institution of marriage from an intergenerational perspective. The installation incorporates materials used in rituals and cultural practices such as dowry, evoking the imagination of a past event or a former wedding. At the same time, the work introduces the narrative of a fictional figure, revealing how personal biographies are entangled with social conventions and economic dependencies. The wedding room thus appears as a symbolic site between individual choice and social norm. During the opening, Çoban complements the installation with a performance, the script of which is presented as a text in three languages (German, English, and Turkish) in one of the vitrines.

Wisrah C. V. da R. Celestino address institutional power and systems of value in their conceptual works. The exhibited works, *Belonging* (2022), *Keys* (2021), and *Peso* (2024), intervene at different points within the museum. *Belonging* is a score-based work that draws on objects from collections. For the presentation in Kleve, the artist selected two items during period of time spent at the museum: a small radio with its receipt and a perfume in its original packaging. Subtly placed within the exhibition space, they create a discreet movement while offering insights into the museum’s own collection and its peripheral scenes and banalities. *Keys* makes a copy of the museum’s master key available within the exhibition space. Loosely attached to a hook, the key tempts visitors to steal it, playing with the risk of opening and granting access to the institution to an unknown person. The large-scale installation *Peso* translates the artist’s body weight into an equivalent quantity of municipal water, presented in metal canisters throughout the space. The work also recalls the building’s history as a spa and source of supposedly health-giving water.

Arthur Stachurski’s *Handmade Prison Reliefs* (2024) depict prison bars and locks with small keyholes. Their visual language evokes state authority, control, and punishment. At the same time, they address the relationship between contemporary art and craft: each relief is unique. Rather than casting from a positive mold, Stachurski models the works in wax, which is then coated with ceramic and melted out to create the casting mold for bronze. Across the series of five reliefs, the motifs repeat with slight variations, creating a tension between formal precision and references to sites of confinement. As visitors move along the exhibition wall, they encounter different sections of what appears to be the same set of bars. Presented in a public institution such as a museum, the bronze reliefs also reflect on accessibility and security policies, pointing to systems that classify, monitor, and restrict bodies, while simultaneously alluding to the fragility and absurdity of such orders.

Mona Hatoum’s deformed walking stick, *Untitled (stick)* (2011), is a work from the MKK collection that was previously part of the collection display. The piece undermines any sense of security that might be associated with the object. Made of soft silicone, the material yields under its own weight even when unused, embodying both material and psychological fragility. Previously presented upright in the collection display, the nail used to fix it to the wall has been deliberately omitted in something that flees the hands. Unsecured, the work follows the logic of its material and escapes curatorial fixation. In doing so, it also calls into question the notion of museum stability itself: the work not only evades physical fixation but symbolically eludes institutional control.

Curated by Anneliese Ostertag & Antoine Simeão Schalk.



1. Rashiyah Elanga, *By the Blanking press*, 2026, paper, plastic, matches. Courtesy of the artist.
2. Rashiyah Elanga, *Série C 6, 1976, Bobine 45*, 2026, archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist.
3. Rashiyah Elanga, *Une décennie de chance*, 2025, archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist.
4. Wisrah C. V. da R. Celestino, *Belonging*, 2022, variable materials. Courtesy of the artist.
5. Wisrah C. V. da R. Celestino, *Peso*, 2024, variable materials. Courtesy of the artist.
6. Wisrah C. V. da R. Celestino, *Keys*, 2021, variable materials. Courtesy of the artist.
- 7 - 11. Arthur Stachurski, *Handmade Prison Relief #1-5*, bronze. Courtesy of the artist.
12. Mona Hatoum, *Untitled (stick)*, 2011, polyurethane rubber. Courtesy of the artist and MKK.
13. Hanni Kamaly, *AMAD AHMAD*, 2019-2026, steel. Courtesy of the artist.
14. Hanni Kamaly, *GEORGE CAMERBACH*, 2022-2026, steel. Courtesy of the artist.
15. Sand / remnants of: Paloma Varga Weisz, *Galgenfigur, gehängt*, 2003-2004.
16. Tobias Hohn + Stanton Taylor, *In the Service of Reality (Mass Death - Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr, Dresden)*, 2025-26, layered UV and latex prints on mirror dibond and safety glass, stainless steel artists' frame, distance rings, stainless steel screws. Courtesy of the artists.
17. Xheneta Imeri, *Archive Course de l'Escalade, 1997*, 2024, photo. Courtesy of the artist.
18. Xheneta Imeri, *Attestation, 2001*, 2024, certificate. Courtesy of the artist.
19. Xheneta Imeri, *Maillot Stade Genève, 1997*, 2024, running shirt. Courtesy of the artist.
20. Sultan Çoban, *Berfin, unfinished, gifts and desires*, 2026, text, sound, embroidery, found objects, mixed media. Courtesy of the artist.