

Press release | January 2026

THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD Breakthroughs in Art, 1900–1960

4 September 2026 to 30 May 2027

Press conference: Thursday, 3 September 2026, 11 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, 3 September 2026, 7 p.m.

THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD. Breakthroughs in Art, 1900–1960 takes a fresh look at the Hamburger Kunsthalle's Modernism Collection, one of the premier collections of modern art in Germany with more than 3,000 paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints and drawings. A selection of some 125 works – both well-known highlights and special new acquisitions – illustrate the profusion of new ideas and techniques that emerged as artists broke with tradition during six decades marked by extraordinary upheavals in culture and society.

A great diversity of approaches becomes apparent within the various modernist trends. Expressionism is embodied by iconic works produced by members of artist groups such as »Die Brücke« and »Der Blaue Reiter«, and the École de Paris is represented by painters including Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Also featured are pioneers of early modernism such as Edvard Munch, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Lovis Corinth, Max Beckmann and Anita Rée. These are joined by examples from the Bauhaus school and Surrealism as well as works exemplifying the psychologically charged realism of the New Objectivity and the Art Informel of the post-war era. New styles of abstraction and representation evolved as a consequence of people's changing understanding of nature and technology, society and human existence under the influence of the latest developments in psychology, philosophy and politics – including Nazi ideology. A gallery of works by Hamburg artists supplements the panorama of international modernism with some regional perspectives. Over the course of the show, a changing selection of drawings, prints and photographs from the museum's Prints and Drawings Collection will offer further insights into the artists' working methods.

For the first time, the Kunsthalle is no longer presenting »modernism« under the label »classical modernism«, which is usually used by museums to distinguish between »modern« and later »contemporary« works. This points to the future orientation, which will be aligned along a global history of art in the first half of the twentieth century rather than the predominantly European focus of the past.

Curator: Toby Kamps (Director & Exhibition Curator for Modern Art)

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Henri Rousseau (1844–1910)
Eve in Earthly Paradise, ca. 1906/07
Oil on canvas, 62 x 46 cm
On permanent loan from the Stiftung Hamburger Kunstsammlungen
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Photo: Elke Walford

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