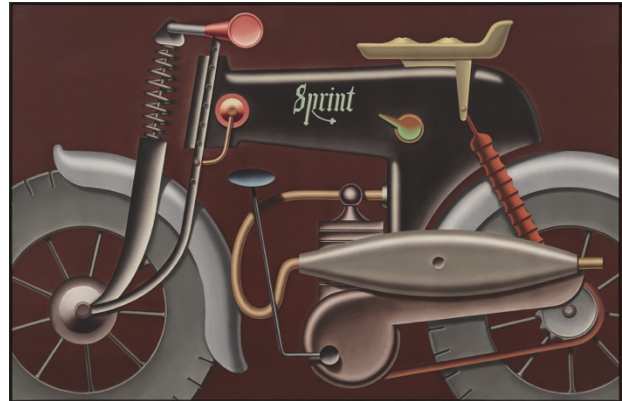


Konrad Klapheck

12 June – 8 August 2026
Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785 Berlin

Opening: Friday, 12 June, 6 – 8pm



Konrad Klapheck, *Die Jagd nach dem Glück*, 1984, photo: def image

Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of paintings by **Konrad Klapheck** (1935–2023). This is the first presentation of the artist's work with the gallery.

Across his oeuvre, Klapheck created an exceptional body of paintings, not only within the context of postwar German art. At a time when almost all international artists were painting abstractly in the 1950s, Klapheck turned against the trend and towards figuration. Between 1954 and 1958, he studied painting at the Düsseldorf Art Academy under Bruno Goller, an influential figure in the city's postwar art scene whose enigmatic, figurative painting offered an alternative to the dominant Informel. It was perhaps through the encouragement of his teacher and mentor that Klapheck painted his first typewriter in 1955, inaugurating the 'Machine Paintings' which would shape his artistic practice for the next forty-two years. The seemingly banal everyday objects that Klapheck rendered in a precise, realist style comprise an entire genealogy of domestic appliances: motorcycles, radios, hairdryers, chairs, and other devices so familiar they normally escape attention.

Stylistically poised between Surrealism, New Objectivity and Pop art, Klapheck developed a visual language, entirely his own. Through isolation, simplification, and the exaggerated use of perspective, he transformed his objects into imposing, almost uncanny presences. A Klapheck machine is instantly recognisable for its cold metallic sheen and monumental appearance. An otherwise realistically rendered bicycle or motorcycle is almost always missing a crucial functional component, whilst ordinary utilitarian objects are detached from their original context. Transformed into surreal, symbolically charged images, his works become metaphors for human relationships, power, sexuality and alienation. Abstracted, defamiliarised, aestheticised and personified, they withdraw from the logic of the consumer world. For each painting, Klapheck meticulously developed a preparatory drawing in charcoal or pencil, through which he established the proportions, precision and psychological charge of his images. Two such drawings on canvas are presented in the exhibition.

Through his decades-long engagement with machines, Klapheck aligned himself with the Surrealists, whose circle and intellectual atmosphere he closely inhabited. One might think of Francis Picabia's subversive paintings of mechanisms with no practical use; or Marcel Duchamp, who challenged traditional notions of artistic authorship, function and value with his readymades. Indeed, the upside-down bicycle in Klapheck's *Die Fragwürdigkeit des Ruhmes* (The Questionable Nature of Fame),

1978, seems reminiscent of Duchamp's readymade *Bicycle Wheel* from 1913. Running beyond this shared motif, echoes of Duchamp's work can be traced throughout Klapheck's oeuvre.

In an additional layer of interpretation, a disjunction emerges between Klapheck's compositions and their titles. Using names such as *Die Gastgeberin* (The Hostess), *Die Verführerin* (The Seductress) or *Der mütterliche Vater* (The Motherly Father), the artist assigns gendered identities to his objects: sewing machines are cast as female, typewriters as male. Other titles, including *Die Jagd nach dem Glück* (The Pursuit of Happiness), *Die Fragwürdigkeit des Ruhmes* (The Questionable Nature of Fame), and *Der Erfolg und sein Preis* (Success and its Price), reference Klapheck's personal experiences, encounters with his peers, and situations that resonate with broader human experience. Leaving them intentionally open-ended, the artist believed that explaining a title was akin to explaining the punchline of a joke.

Klapheck's work occupies a unique position between precision, irony and unease. Through the charged interplay of form, title and association, his machines become psychologically and socially resonant presences: transcending mere depiction, they embody lived experience, fear and desire. As familiarity and strangeness merge, Klapheck's unique objects resonate with universality, drawing on the viewer's own memories and emotional responses.

Konrad Klapheck (1935–2023) lived and worked in Düsseldorf. As early as 1959, his work was shown at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf. Further solo exhibitions at prominent galleries include Galleria Arturo Schwarz, Milan (from 1960); Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Essen/Cologne (from 1963); Galerie Beyeler, Basel (1976); and Galerie Lelong, Zurich/Paris (from 1985), among others.

Klapheck's work has been presented in institutional solo exhibitions at the Kunsthau NRW, Aachen; Museum Schloss Cappenberg, Selm (both 2025); Musée des Beaux-Arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds (2019); Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf (2013 and 2002); Kunstverein Ulm (2007); Kunsthalle Recklinghausen (2006); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg; Sala Alcalá 31, Madrid (both 2005); Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn (2003); Central Institute of Fine Arts, Beijing (1994); Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich (both 1985); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1975 and 1965); Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (1975); Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1974); Kunst- und Museumsverein Wuppertal; Kunst- und Gewerbeverein, Wuppertal (both 1967); Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hanover; Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal (both 1966); and Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin (1964). Klapheck's work is in the collections of Fondazione Prada, Milan; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Sprengel Museum, Hanover; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; Weserburg, Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen; and ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, among others.

Klapheck's painting *Glanz und Elend der Reformen*, 1971–1975, is currently on view at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, as part of the collection presentation *Extreme Tension. Art between Politics and Society*.

Further Exhibitions and Events

BERLIN

Vivien Zhang
Field Conditions
30 April – 27 June
Goethestraße 2/3
10623 Berlin

Albert Oehlen
12 June – 8 August 2026
Bleibtreustraße 45
10623 Berlin

PARIS

Eddie Martinez
Purple Flopper
28 May – 1 August 2026
46 & 57, rue du Temple
75004 Paris

LONDON

Ida Ekblad
Eat an Eggplant
3 June – 8 August 2026
41 Dover Street
London W1S 4NS

MARFA

Rinus Van de Velde
The Dinner
24 May – 6 December 2026
1976 Antelope Hills Road
Marfa, Texas

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