

OFFICIAL OPENING OF GALLERY MERZ - A NEW EXHIBITION SPACE AT HENIE ONSTAD KUNSTSENTER

OSLO, NORWAY, Tuesday, 27 July 2021 — Henie Onstad Kunstsenter is delighted to announce the official opening of Gallery Merz, a new space dedicated to the German avant-garde artist Kurt Schwitters, his contemporaries, and the artists he later inspired. On September 3, Gallery Merz will be formally inaugurated with an event featuring a newly commissioned work by the Norwegian performance artist Marthe Ramm Fortun and a performance by the German-born musician and performance artist Florian Kaplick, based on texts by Kurt Schwitters.

To register interest in attending, please email gv@hok.no or amanda@picklespr.com.



Gallery Merz, a new exhibition space at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. Photo: Ivar Kvaal, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter.

The new 430-square-metre exhibition gallery is spread across two levels and is integrated into the original Henie Onstad Kunstsenter 1968 building. It is the result of a close collaboration between the internationally renowned architecture practice Snøhetta and the artist Luca Frei, who has been responsible for the exhibition design. Sustainability and the reuse of materials in existing rooms are central to the project.

Gallery Merz takes its name from Schwitters' (1887–1948) own word “Merz,” which he used to signify his entire life and work. Before emigrating to Norway in January 1937, Schwitters had established a close relationship with the country through many stays there. His time in Norway ended after the war broke out in 1940 and he fled to England, where he died in 1948. His considerable output during this period consists of collages, portraits, landscapes, several prose texts and an unfinished script. He also created two interiors, or so-called Merzbaus, one outside Molde at Hjertøya and the other at Lysaker, located close to Henie Onstad.

Tone Hansen, director of Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, says: *“Together with the Savings Bank Foundation DnB, we have conceived a completely unique exhibition framework for a distinctive collection. The ambition of collecting and presenting with innovative methods like this will have implications for both long-term research and the public experience. In close collaboration with Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, the architects at Snøhetta and Luca Frei have created a space for curiosity and discovery.”*

The gallery features the semi-permanent exhibition, *Merz! Flux! Pop!*, which presents works by Schwitters, his contemporaries, and the artists he later inspired. The presentation tells the story of Schwitters' years in Norway, introduces his unique working method and philosophy “Merz,” and highlights the artists who, at the turn of the last century, were united together with Schwitters in a revitalization and transformation of art.



Cabinet by Fluxus artist George Maciunas designed in 1975 for American collector Jean Brown. Photo: Ivar Kvaal, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter.

The exhibition also includes material from Henie Onstad Kunstsenter's Fluxus collection which was established in the latter half of the 1980s. Unique to Gallery Merz is the display of a cabinet that Fluxus artist George Maciunas designed in 1975 for the prominent American librarian and collector Jean Brown (1911–1994). Henie Onstad Kunstsenter acquired parts of

Brown's archive in 2013, including her personal correspondence, and a selection of this material is now on display in the cabinet for the public to study.

Caroline Ugelstad, chief curator and curator of the exhibition, says: *“Schwitters was one of the most distinctive and versatile artists in the first half of the 20th century. As the exhibition shows, the artistic tactics and strategies he developed have significantly impacted later generations. It is outstanding that Henie Onstad Kunstsenter has been able to create a permanent presentation of its Fluxus and Jean Brown material, which underscores the institution's continuous dedication to works that are experimental, innovative and defy easy categorization. Gallery Merz is a fabulous starting point for further work with the avant-garde at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in new exhibitions and activities.”*

Merz! Flux! Pop! presents more than 150 works by artists such as Eric Andersen, Arman, Jean Arp, Lene Berg, Constantin Brancusi, Henri Chopin, Merce Cunningham, Sonia Delanuay, Max Ernst, Robert Filliou, Ken Friedman, Juan Gris, Geoffrey Hendricks, Alice Hutchins, Jacqueline de Jong, Ray Johnson, Tadeuz Kantor, Paul Klee, Jiří Kolář, Shigeo Kubota, Fernand Léger, George Maciunas, Larry Miller, Joan Miró, Yoko Ono, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, Mieko Shiomi, Olav Strømme and Robert Watts, among others, while works by Hannah Höch and René Magritte are presented for the first time in Norway.

The media kit can be accessed [here](#).

To arrange a press visit or for further information, please contact:

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Editors' notes

At a glance

- Gallery Merz is a new exhibition space for avant-garde art at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter
- It opened to the public on June 2, 2021
- Its total area is 430 m²
- The architect is Snøhetta
- Gallery Merz features the semi-permanent exhibition, *Merz! Flux! Pop!*
- The exhibition runs until 29 May 2022 and features more than 150 works
- Caroline Ugelstad is the curator
- Exhibition design is by artist Luca Frei

About the Gallery Merz collection

From 2009, Sparebankstiftelsen DnB (The Savings Bank Foundation DnB) has developed a collection of work by Schwitters and his colleagues in close collaboration with Henie Onstad. Since its establishment in 1968, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter has offered a space for avant-garde and artistic projects across the arts, and holds a unique position in this field in Norway. The semi-permanent exhibition combines Sparebankstiftelsen DnB's deposited works, together with works and material from the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter collection and archives, as well as loans from Christen Sveaas' Kunststiftelse and the Erling Neby collection.

About Snøhetta

Snøhetta was founded by Kjetil Trædal Thorsen, Christoph Kapeller and Craig Edward Dykers. For more than 30 years, Snøhetta has designed some of the world's most notable public and cultural projects, kick-starting its practice in 1989 with the competition-winning entry for the new library of Alexandria, Egypt. This was later followed by the commission for the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet in Oslo, and the National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion at the World Trade Center in New York City, among others. Since its inception, the practice has maintained its original transdisciplinary approach, and integrates architectural, landscape, interior, product, graphic, digital design and art across its projects.

About Luca Frei

Born in 1976 in Lugano, Switzerland, Luca Frei has been based in Malmö, Sweden, since 2000. His practice reflects a long-time interest in the everyday, the production of space, and the archive. As an exhibition designer, his interest lies in unpacking existing material, in extracting concepts and images from archival sources and amplifying these in space, bringing topics, contexts, and artworks in dialogue with one another. As an artist, his work has been presented in solo shows, group exhibitions and biennials around the world.

About Marthe Ramm Fortun

Marthe Ramm Fortun is a Norwegian performance artist, born in Oslo in 1978. In site-specific works, she subjects classical references to structured improvisation, where audience members are invited to contribute, their input giving structure and choreography to the performances. Fortun actively refers to the relationships between performer and audience, art object and society, revealing flaws and vulnerabilities rather than sublimation. She involves the audience partly in a formal exercise, within a critical and hopeful environment.

The dynamics shift between participation and alienation in unscripted moments where the individual may or may not assume power over his or her own conditions.

About Florian Kaplick

German-born Florian Kaplick follows a versatile career as a musician and performance artist, as well as a psychiatrist and lecturer. He has devised a diverse array of themed concerts, speech and theatrical performances, and sound installations. Recent appearances include e.g. Dada performances, Kurt Schwitters' Ursonate and 20th-century music in locations such as the Henry Moore Institute Leeds, Hauser & Wirth Zürich, Tate Late London, Goethe-Institut San Francisco, Ruhrtriennale Dortmund, Ludwig Forum Aachen, and Arp-Museum Rolandseck.

About Henie Onstad Kunstsenter

Founded in 1968, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter is a private foundation established by Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad at Høvikodden in Norway. A leading arena for national and international art, it features a broad programme of interdisciplinary work presented in exhibitions and events that showcase both modern and contemporary art. <http://hok.no/>