Press Release / Pressemitteilung

September 3, 2026

Kunst Hand Werk Brücke is the first exhibition in the Rhineland to explore the Brücke artists' work in the applied arts

Kunst Hand Werk Brücke
HLHE Dialogue: Art x Crafts
October 4, 2026–March 7, 2027 | Haus Lange

Press conference: October 1, 2026, 11 a.m., Haus Esters
Opening: October 4, 2026, 11:30 a.m., Haus Lange Haus Esters

With *Kunst Hand Werk Brücke*, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld will, for the first time in the Rhineland, turn the spotlight on a lesser-known and little-researched aspect of the artistic practice of the Expressionist group Brücke: their work in the applied arts. On view at Haus Lange from October 4, 2026 until March 7, 2027, the exhibition shows clearly that Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Erich Heckel and Max Pechstein were far more than painters and printmakers. Furniture, jewellery, home textiles, frames, everyday objects and stationery all testify to their ambition to bring art and everyday life together as an inseparable unit.

It is now clear that the applied arts were not a peripheral concern for the – especially known as painters - *Brücke* artists, but an expression of a comprehensive artistic vision. In their experimental work with wood, metal and textiles, they developed the same radical visual language that made their paintings and prints world-famous. The exhibition shows how consistently the artists broke with established aesthetic conventions and developed a modern approach to design whose relevance continues to this day. At the same time, it offers a fresh perspective on the value of craftsmanship and traditional techniques in an increasingly technologized and digitalized world.

"*Kunst Hand Werk Brücke* tells the story of *Brücke* in a new way. The exhibition presents the group as an artistic community that consciously crossed disciplinary boundaries and understood art as part of everyday life. Especially presented here at Haus Lange, it becomes clear just how closely art, crafts and everyday life were intertwined – a perspective that is very much part of also our DNA," says museum director Katia Baudin, who since taking up her position in 2016 has placed renewed emphasis on the historical profile of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld.

The exhibition also pays particular attention to the women in the *Brücke* circle, whose contribution to the creation of many of the works has long been underestimated. Erna Schilling, Lise Gujer, Helene Spengler, and Elisabeth Nielsen-Georgi translated the artists' textile designs into finished works with great craftsmanship, making a significant contribution to bringing their artistic ideas to life.
One of the highlights of the exhibition is the ensemble of textiles for an attic alcove in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Berlin studio apartment, embroidered by Erna Schilling. Also shown for the first time is a juxtaposition of Kirchner's painting *Die Familie* (The Family) from 1927/28 with a tapestry version of an almost identical motif made by Lise Gujer in 1954 – more than fifteen years after the artist's death.

Kunstmuseen Krefeld

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Haus Lange Haus Esters

Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1
D-47798 Krefeld

kunstmuseen@krefeld.de
T +49 (0)2151 97558 0
F +49 (0)2151 97558 222
www.kunstmuseen.krefeld.de

STADT KREFELD
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"As former architecture students, the *Brücke* artists were deeply engaged with the relationship between space and art. Designing the material environment of everyday life was a natural extension of their artistic thinking and their broader outlook. With their distinctive visual language, they clearly positioned themselves against an increasingly industrialized world," explains exhibition curator Ann-Kathrin Hörrlein.

The fact that the exhibition is being presented at Haus Lange adds another important historical dimension. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the late 1920s for Krefeld silk manufacturer Hermann Lange, the villa was conceived from the outset not only as a private residence but also as a setting for his important art collection, which already included works by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. In this way, the exhibition also connects with the history of the house as a venue for presenting modern art.
The connection between Krefeld and Brücke, however, goes back even further: As early as 1908 – just under three years after the artists' group was founded – the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum was one of the first museums in Germany to exhibit works by *Brücke*, helping to bring Expressionism to wider public attention at an early stage.

With *Kunst Hand Werk Brücke*, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld now offer new perspectives on one of the most important artistic groups of modernism. The exhibition reveals just how closely art, crafts and the design of everyday life were intertwined in the Brücke artists' understanding of their own work – and how surprisingly relevant this approach remains today.

Exhibition curator and assistance curator: Ann-Kathrin Hörrlein

Kunst Hand Werk Brücke is an exhibition organized by the Brücke-Museum Berlin in collaboration with the Kunstmuseen Krefeld.

A bilingual German-English catalogue accompanying the exhibition has been published by HIRMER Verlag.

The Kunstmuseen Krefeld thank the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Kunststiftung NRW, and the Rudolf-August Oetker-Foundation for their support.

HLHE Dialogue:
Since 2017, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld have presented *HLHE Dialogue*, a series held in the neighboring villas designed by Mies van der Rohe that brings historical and more recent or contemporary positions in art, design, and architecture into dialogue, repeatedly reexamining and reinterpreting the legacy of modernism. Under the dialogue title *Art x Crafts*, the exhibition *Handdschob*, curated by Slavs and Tatars, will be on view at Haus Esters alongside the exhibition at Haus Lange.

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Visit
KUNSTMUSEEN KREFELD
Kaiser Wilhelm Museum
Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1
47798 Krefeld
Haus Lange Haus Esters
Wilhelmshofallee 91-97
47800 Krefeld

The Kunstmuseen Krefeld are a cultural institution of the City of Krefeld.

Director
Katia Baudin

Press contact
Fabienne Kylla
+49-(0)2151-97558-131
fabienne.kylla@krefeld.de

https://kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/en/press