

**Klodin Erb
Curtain falls
dog calls**

21.9.2025–4.1.2026

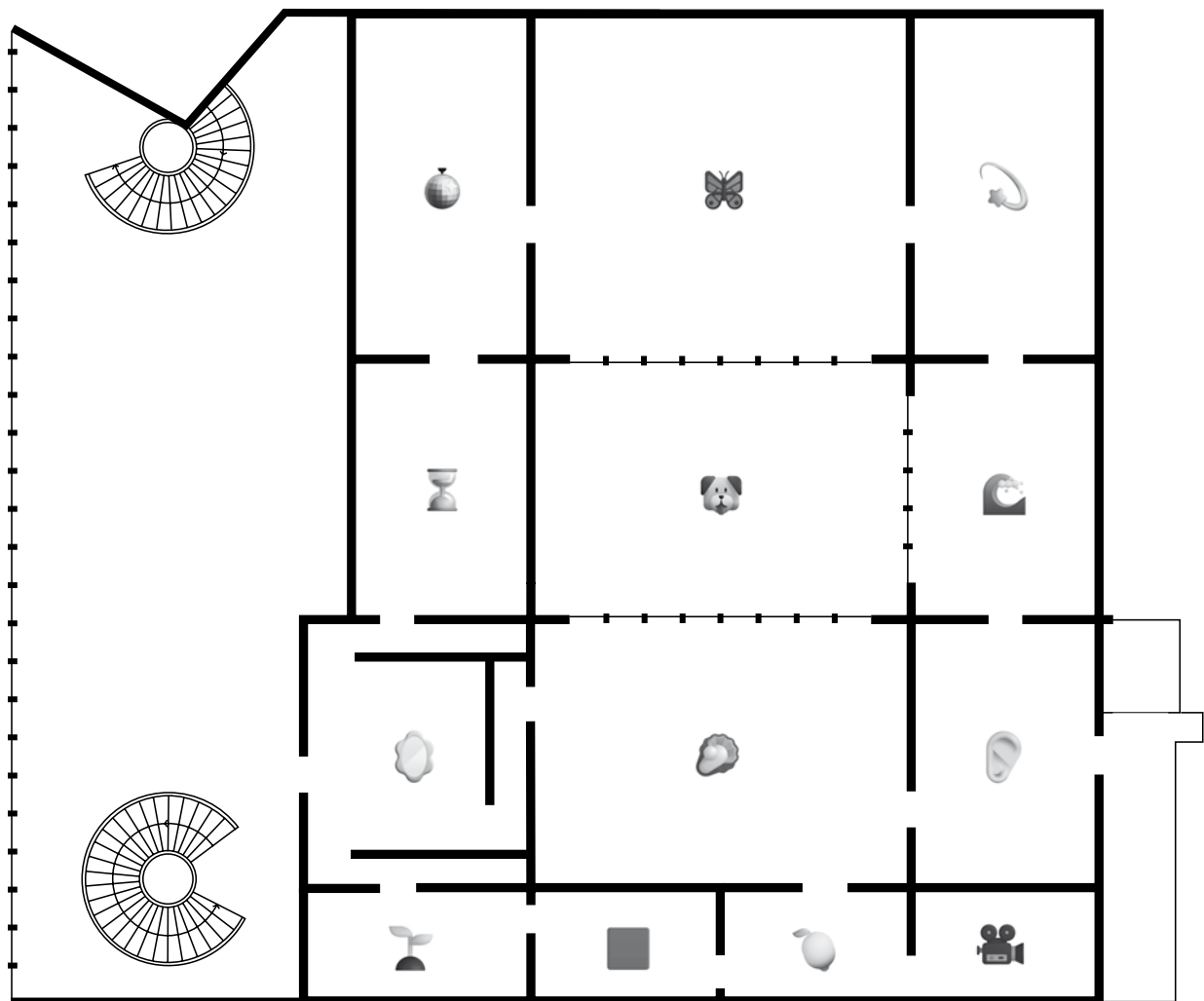
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Klodin Erb's art gets under the skin. Layer by layer, she reveals expressive, fantastical imagery that is both strong and fragile, serious and humorous, sensual and profound—Klodin Erb's paintings, textile works, installations, and videos dissolve contrasts and hierarchies. Since her early days as an artist in the 1990s, Klodin Erb (*1963, based in Zurich) has been testing the boundaries of painting, exploring and expanding the medium.

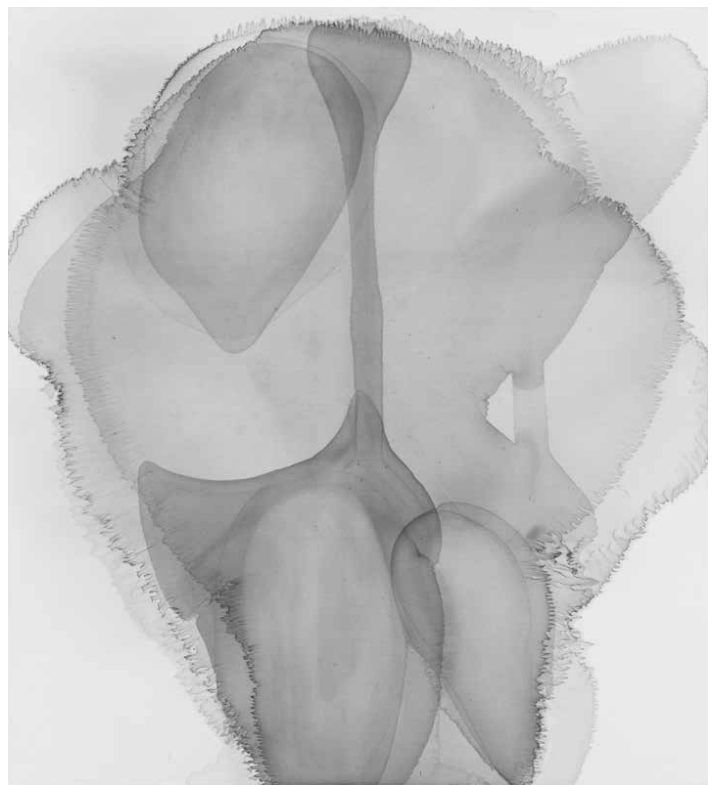
In the artist's largest institutional solo exhibition to date, we find ourselves in a dramatic overall staging. In an associative itinerary, relationships between different creative phases become visible: early works in textile meet current, stage-like paintings; motifs and figures roam through space and time. Klodin Erb's art, with its diverse metamorphoses, has a liberating effect.

Metamorphose, Vorhang, Orlando I, Striptease and *Illusion* are words from the dictionary by author Eva Seck, created for the exhibition publication (in German).





Der Vorhang, 2000/2018



Transformation #5, 2016/2017



The first room of the exhibition invites visitors to get lost—in the best sense of the word: three different entrances open up and branch out like a network of roots, giving us the freedom to choose which entrance to take.

Three early works by Klodin Erb mark each of the entrances and demonstrate the artist's interest in textiles, a material she continues to use in her work to this day. To the right is *Alice* (1999): a boudoir-like dressing table made of fabric, whose mirror-like opening shows not a reflection but an idyllic natural scenery. The wood pattern turns out to be a trompe-l'oeil, with the folds appearing to be painted while they are in fact sewn. In reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), the artist plays with scale and logic to question norms.

In the centre of the room, *Der Vorhang* (2000/2018) creates a theatrical moment. The heavy, royal-blue velvet evokes associations with a theatre, which are dispelled when the curtain falls to reveal a salmon-pink silk layer. Opening the curtain becomes a symbol of vulnerability and power, of destruction and renewal. Klodin Erb sees the curtain as a painting that cyclically destroys and rebuilds itself.

In front of the entrance on the left, the work *Spiegel* (2001) reminds us that reality and illusion often lie close together. Padded and upholstered, the mirror remains a purely symbolic object. It reminds us of the familiar verse "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" from Grimm's fairy tale *Snow White* (1812), or of Lewis Carroll's mirror-image world in the children's book *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). So, let us venture down one of the three possible paths and over to the other side of the mirror.



This is where the transition to the metaphorical death forest begins, a place of contemplation where forms dissolve. The *Transformation* series (2016/2017) consists of six large-format ink works on canvas, whose translucent blue colours unfold in space like flowers—or perhaps bodies? Transformation thus can be experienced as a poetic process—fluid and permeable. Some forms are reminiscent of organic structures, others of raised knees or crossed arms. Flowers become people, people become landscapes.

Small paintings are hung between the large canvases like the pearls of a necklace. They show



Plant's Life, 1999



Nach der Landschaft II, 2014

different variations of a lemon, a motif that recurs throughout Klodin Erb's oeuvre. In the oil paintings, the lemon becomes the subject: Sometimes it is bloody, sometimes peeled, sometimes stuck in a cup covered with fur or in the teeth of a skull.

Growth and decay are also central to the film *Ein langer Tag* (2018), which is based on a glass painting that transforms into a floating, infinitely vast landscape in the moving image. A contemporary response to the genre of landscape painting, this work is a counterpoint to the fast pace of digital life.

Metamorphose

Verwandlung von Menschen in Frösche, also known as freudsche Frösche sowie Verwandlung von Farbe in Fabrikat und wieder zurück. Verwandlung von Flossen in Füße und wieder zurück. Fuchschwanz hängt am seidenen Faden der Ariadne: Vorsicht vor Verirrung im Labyrinth.



Can death also be a celebration? This room invites visitors to explore our mortality from a philosophical perspective: not as the end, but as evolution, a merging into a greater whole from which something new can arise. Between a sparkling disco ball, a mirror-like lake and a forest of death, an atmosphere of solemnity and silence develops. The *Plant's Life* series (1999–2025) consists of artificial potted plants covered with floral fabrics, arranged on stools and other household furniture. While at first glance the sculptures are no more than decoration, they carry deeper meanings: The exotic plants—often replicas of colonial imports—refer to the transformation of organic life into sterile design objects. Using readymade and pop-art aesthetics, Klodin Erb creates symbols that embody our alienation from nature.

Like tombs, four goddesses, the *Glossy Idols* (2022), watch over the room. Inspired by neolithic steles, Klodin Erb combines archaic symbols with the shiny world of smartphones and emojis in this series. The works stand next to the painting *Nach der Landschaft II* (2014), a shimmering, abstract image of nature. Created during a guest showcase at the Aargauer Kunsthau, the five-part series is the result of an intensive exploration of Caspar



Spiegel-Paravent, 1998

*Johnny Woodhead &
The Nightmärlies, 2022*

Wolf's landscape paintings. Klodin Erb recreated the view from a cave in the outlines of the canvas. Glaciers, streams, and rocks crystallise into smooth colour gradients. The painting combines romantic landscape motifs with the idea of a cycle in which humans transform into matter after death. In the *Ahnen* (2011) series, where the artist transforms portraits into skulls, this dynamic transition between creation and decay can be experienced even more intensely. In this contemporary form of vanitas still life, human identity dissolves.

Vorhang

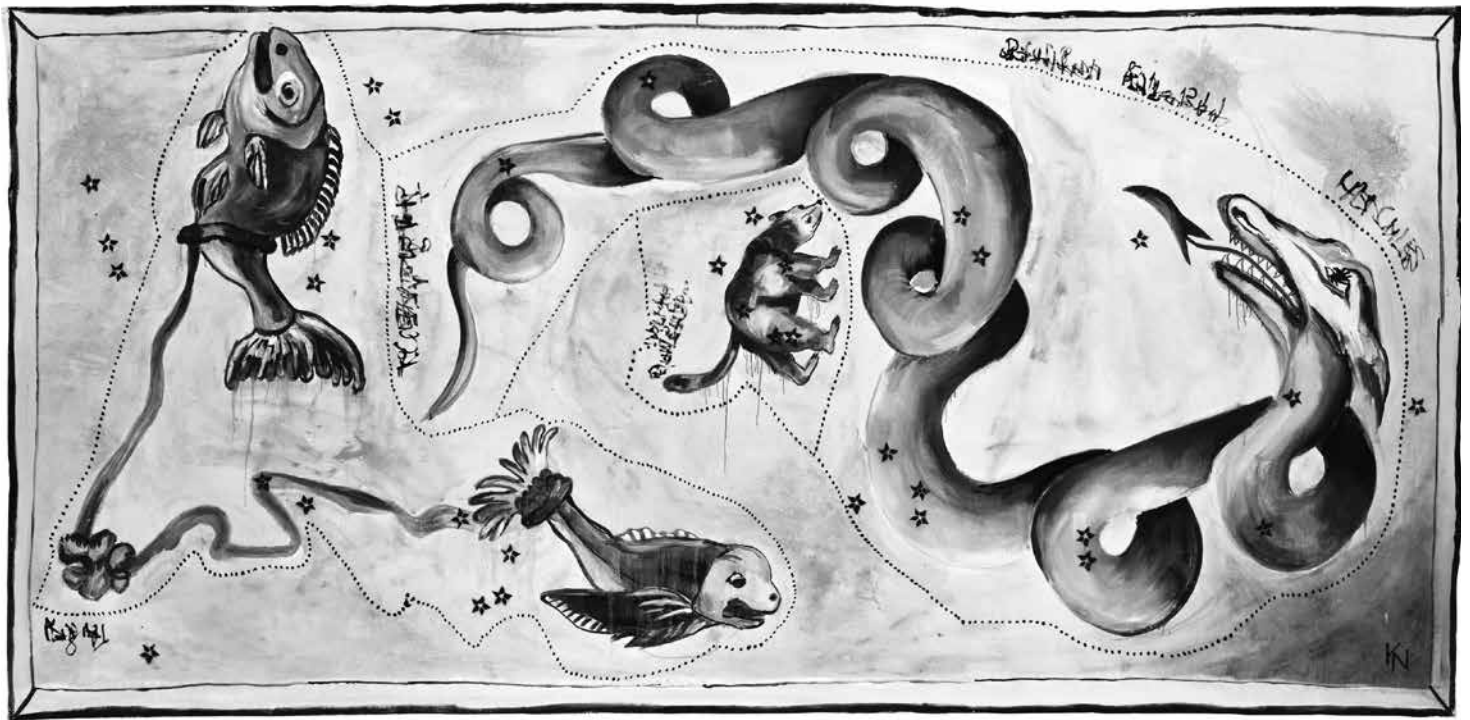
Dahinter verbirgt sich ein Mensch, eine Künstlerin, eine Autorin, ein Werk, ein Apfel, eine Schlange, eine Erdnuss, ein Knochen, eine Nase, ein Messer, deine Neugier – gerahmt in den wolkigen Ausdruck einer Sprechblase.



We enter a transformation salon, a place between stage, dressing room, and dream world. In the *Babel & Bubbles* series (2018 – 2019), Klodin Erb focuses on language: She interprets emojis as contemporary hieroglyphs, as signs of universal communication. In contrast to this, *Spiegel-Paravent* (1998) stands as an important early work that, first, appears minimalistic: Printed fabrics with repeating patterns are reminiscent of op art and minimal art. Is the screen a changing room? Or a walk-in picture? As an object, it stands for both retreat and revelation.

In this intimate space between the private, traditionally female-connoted environment and the public, traditionally male-connoted space is where the *Rokokokokotten* (2025) move. They were created from costumes in the textile collection of the Zurich Opera House and carry stories of past dances within them. In a choreography by Sophie Germanier (*1996), Lan Perces (*1996), Jessica Tamsin Allemann (*1997) und Dustin Kenel (*1997), they will be brought to life twice during the time of the exhibition, expanding Klodin Erb's visual world to a performative level.

In the video *Johnny Woodhead & The Nightmärlies* (2022), a fantasy figure with a puppet-like



Fische, Drache um Bär drapiert (from the series *Planetarium*), 2025

wooden mask wanders through a surreal, somewhat nightmarish dream. Real and animated figures, filmed scenes, found footage, flying emojis, as well as quotations from her own and other artists' works merge into a collage-like universe—accompanied by the song *Mr. Sandman* by the first American “girlband” The Chordettes, with the artist herself a singer.

The light installation *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (2002) dances a flickering choreography to the rhythm of the music, as imagined by Klodin Erb on her late-night walks. She sends us behind the facades of the night, where both lust and loneliness can lurk.



A cosmos of stars, myths, and metamorphoses opens into the depths of the ocean or the vastness of the universe, depending on the perspective. Three large-format paintings unfold to form a walk-in celestial map. The *Planetarium* series (2025) invites visitors to experience astrological constellations with their senses. Zodiac signs like Gemini, Aquarius, and Pisces appear alongside symbols such as unicorns and foxes, which were inspired by medieval maps from the artist's family archive.

With a nod to the past and the current popularity of astrology, Klodin Erb explores the influence of cosmic forces on our lives.

The series *Leda und der Schwan* (2024) brings us back to physical desire. In this Greek myth, Zeus transforms himself into a swan to approach the mortal Leda. Klodin Erb transposes the ambiguous myth from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into a coolly gleaming, otherworldly visual universe. The classic subject, often idealised in art history, is reinterpreted here as an ambivalent encounter between desire, deception, and violence. Instead of romantic idealisation, Klodin Erb shows a self-determined Leda. With fluid transitions between human and animal, the small-scale images break away from their models created by the old masters.



The monumental series of paintings *Orlando* (2013–2021) is based on Virginia Woolf's eponymous novel from 1928, in which the main character lives for over 500 years and changes gender. In some 200 small-format portraits, about half of which are on display here, the cycle of works tells the story of an ever-changing identity through times, bodies, classes, and cultures. Politicians appear alongside



Orlando #167, 2020



Orlando #164, 2020



Cerberus, 2001



Ohrenkopf, 2011

pop-culture icons such as Amy Winehouse and characters from the film *Avatar*. From cubist fragments to allusions to the portraits of Dutch Renaissance painter Jan van Eyck, the faces, animals, objects, and fantasy figures shift through a wide variety of styles. Between quotation and reinvention, a collective portrait of a fluid existence emerges.



A barking sound echoes in the courtyard. But instead of the fearsome hellhound from Greek mythology, we encounter a harmless doghouse while the animal itself remains invisible. In *Cerberus* (2001), Klodin Erb intertwines myth with dadaist irony. Although the edge of the underworld looms menacingly close, Eros and Thanatos, the life and death instincts, seem to balance each other out in an eternal game.

Orlando I

Je länger ich dich ansehe, desto mehr zerfällst du in eine grössere Wahrheit. Ich greife nach dir, erstaste Mundwinkel, Nasenflügel, drücke zart in deine Augenhöhle, fahre dir gegen den Augenbrauenstrich, nur um deinen Widerstand zu spüren. Laufe mit zwei Fingern über deine Stirn und hinunter zu deinem Kinn. Weiss ich jetzt, warum sich dein Antlitz ständig verwandelt, vom Kind zur Greisin, vom Präsidenten zum Papst, von der Adligen zur Sängerin? Wie klopfe ich sanft dein Geheimnis aus dir heraus, was klingt so hohl unter deinem Schädelknochen?



Klodin Erb repeatedly transcends the boundaries of the medium of painting, but she sees herself first and foremost as a painter. The paintings from the early 2010s gathered here show Erb's intensive engagement with Surrealism. Created without conceptual preparation, they are freer, gestural expressions of inner images. *Ohrenkopf* (2011) shows a portrait consisting of intertwined ears. Figure and space dissolve, lending the painting a dreamlike appearance. *Der Hüter* (2012) combines a hare figure, a child's face, and floating forms into a hybrid



Metamorphosis (from the series *venusinfurs*), 2023



Nude #6, 1996

creature. The title refers to protection, but it remains unclear who is protecting whom or what. The topic of showing and concealing is also expressed in the painting *O.T.* (2010): What secret is hidden behind the flute player's covered face?



Klodin Erb repeatedly addresses themes such as vigour, creative power, sexuality, and femininity (in all their facets) in her work.

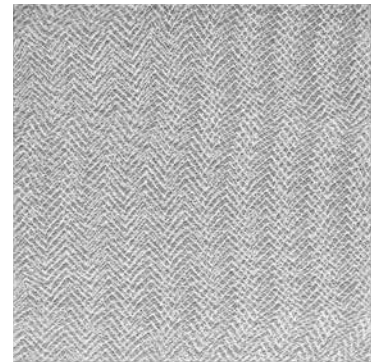
The *venusinfurs* (2022/2023) dominate the space with their exuberant, sensual imagery. Plastic, faux fur, and tulle form lavish frames around the paintings. Presented back-to-back, they are full of ambiguous allusions: legs grow from blossoms, lemons rest between thighs, wigs hang over feet. The play with erotic symbols shows the mutability of bodies and desires. The title is a reference to the song *Venus in Furs* by Velvet Underground and to the novella *Venus in Furs* (1870) by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, a popular author of his time who sometimes turned the power dynamics between the sexes upside down in his books.

In *Der Aufstand der Sabinerinnen* (2022/2023), Klodin Erb reinterprets the founding legend of Rome: instead of being kidnapped, the women

appear as resistant figures. The *Nude* series (1996/2025) of canvases covered in pantyhose forms a delicate counterpoint. Like layers of human skin, they are soft and vulnerable, yet elastic and robust. The pantyhose is also part of the image as everyday fashion item, as fetish, or as coverings.

Striptease

Das Abstreifen von Hautschichten, von denen wir gar nicht wussten, dass wir sie hatten. Erstaunt betrachten wir sie, wie sie jetzt so vor uns liegen: zartgelb und durchscheinend. Das Abtasten der übrig gebliebenen Hautoberfläche. Warm, weich, weiss. Mit dem Finger lässt sich durch die Oberfläche stechen wie durch die Haut einer verfaulten Frucht. Die Hautschichten kehren wir mit dem *Schüffeli* und *Wüscherli* auf und ab in die Ecke damit. Dort schrumpeln sie noch Tage vor sich hin.



The Sweet Lemon Ballad, 2016

For Ryman #7, 1995



Like entering an underground cinema, we step into the universe of *The Sweet Lemon Ballad* (2016). Klodin Erb's best-known film to date illustrates the absurdities of human existence through the life and death of a lemon, representing the artist's attempt at a self-portrait. In the spirit of a making-of, we are first confronted with a juxtaposition of delicate drawings and colour-intensive canvases. Inspired by pop art and advertising graphics (including those from the film industry), Klodin Erb imagines possible film posters for her work in the series *Titelbilder* (2017).



The Sweet Lemon Ballad combines music, painting, performance and film into a wild ride through images and space: a stubborn lemon falls out of a painting, wanders through the studio at night, undergoes ever-changing transformations, lands in Meret Oppenheim's painted fur cup, wanders through Robert Zünd's *Eichenwald* (1882), dies several times and is reborn. Using analogue stop-motion technique—painted, filmed and modelled—the artist takes us on a journey into her constant

search for the right motif and, dressed in a bright yellow lemon costume, moves along the border between subject and object.



Klodin Erb's interest in fabrics, textures, interiors, and art history practically began in the cradle. As a child, she created her first collages from scraps of fabric under the worktable of her grandmother, a seamstress. For the first time in many years, important early textile works that have received little attention are now on display here. In her works, Klodin Erb enhances radical minimalism or the iridescent effect of optical art with the social connotations of everyday fabrics. An industrially manufactured curtain fabric thus becomes a tribute to Robert Ryman's lifelong preoccupation with the basic colour white (*For Ryman*, 1995).

The walk-in installation *Eckstück* (2001/2025) is an exploration of the rules of art itself as well. The artist connects the front and back and invites us to become part of the artwork ourselves. The rotating red square represents art's potential to challenge conventions.



Kräfte und Säfte #15, 2021



Kräfte und Säfte #6, 2021

Illusion

Hierarchie als die grösste Illusion unserer Zeit: Der Mensch sei der Wurzel überlegen, der Affe der Auster, die Kirsche der Karotte. Ein männlicher Körper dem weiblichen (menstruierenden, gebärenden, milchproduzierenden) Körper. Weiss Schwarz. Mensch Natur. ILLUSION. LOL.



In the series *Kräfte und Säfte* (2021), delicate root creatures sprout in diverse constellations. Alone or in groups, they dance, stride forward, argue with each other, and embrace each other tenderly. They are reminiscent of vegetables such as carrots and parsnips, and bring to mind the roots of a mandrake. Painted on transparent Japanese paper, they move playfully between plant and human. The magical beings symbolise growth and fusion, representing the childlike but also that which is gnarled and old. Inspired by her own vegetable garden, Klodin Erb imagines a possible kinship between human and non-human life. The luminous root dance creates a space that unites beginning and end, conflict and tenderness, but also birth, death, and rebirth, inviting us all to celebrate life in all its facets.

Publication

A richly illustrated, bilingual artist's book accompanies the exhibition. The publication includes an in-depth text by co-curator Céline Eidenbenz, an essay by curator and author Elise Lammer, and a poetic dictionary of Klodin Erb's universe by writer Eva Seck. The pages of the publication are divided down the middle, which allows an almost infinite number of combinations of images and text. In this way, the book—much like Klodin Erb's art—can be rearranged, re-viewed, and re-considered again and again.

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Vivien Pöhls

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Sarah Mühlebach

Curatorial Assistant

Sandrine Huet

Events

Tour and Dialogue with Klodin Erb
Sunday 28 Sept 2025 1–2 pm
Thursday 4 Dec 2025 6.30–7.30 pm

Meet your prejudice!

Library of Encounters

Thursday 9 Oct 2025 5–7 pm
Saturday 29 Nov 2025 2–4 pm

Performance

Sunday 19 Oct 2025 1–3 pm
Thursday 11 Dec 2025 5.30–7.30 pm
Sophie Germanier, Lan Perces,
Jessica Tamsin Allemann and
Dustin Kenel

Curtain falls

Sunday 16 Nov 2025 1–2 pm
Conversation with Klodin Erb and
Barbara Weber with a reading by
Eva Seck

Textiles rule the world

Saturday 6 Dec 2025 2–4 pm
Workshop for adults with Mara
Danz

Sunday 4 Jan 2026 1–2 pm

Finissage and tour with co-curator
Sarah Mühlebach

Public Tours

Saturdays at 3 pm

Sundays at 11 am

Every last Thursday of the month
at 6.30 pm

All events and detailed information about the complementary programme can be found at www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch

Acknowledgements

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With *Toutes le savent, même les anges*, Klodin Erb also reveals part of her unique painterly universe at the art museum in Le Locle.

11 October 2025 – 1 March 2026
Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle
www.mbal.ch

Opening Hours

Tuesdays – Sunday	10 am – 5 pm
Thursdays	10 am – 8 pm
Closed Mondays	
Free admission	
Thursdays	5 pm – 8 pm

Special Hours of Operation

10 am – 5 pm	
St. Stephen's Day	26.12.2024
New Year's Eve	31.12.2024
New Year's Day	1.1.2025

Christmas Eve 24.12.2024 closed
Christmas Day 25.12.2024 closed

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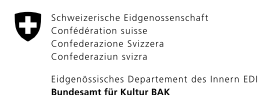
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