



ARISING

**Art Summer
Wertheim Castle 2026**

**Collage, printmaking, painting,
object art, plastic art, sculpture and drawing**

A new interpretation of biblical illustrations

**Edition I: Judit shows the head
of Holofernes (Judith 13:15–16)**



Edition II: The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)



Edition III: Noah's Ark – The Sending of the Dove (Genesis 8:8)





Julia Murakami • 'Kate beheading Holofernes' • 2010
• Oil on canvas • 100 x 80 cm

Art Summer Wertheim Castle 2026

Antes, Aaron • Bremer, Tanja • De Vocht, Yves • Feser, Kathrin
• Fuchs, Adrian • Gros, Sieglinde • Gubik, Uli • Heyer, Kathrin •
Jaxy, Constantin • Klerx, Simone • Kruser, Nina • Liermann, Renato
• Lucker, Thomas • Murakami, Julia • Römhild, Kerstin • Schiefer, Welf •
Schneider, Ilka • Smildziņa, Ilze • Szvath, Zsuzsa • Vega, Antje •
von Streng, Rubica • Voss, Reinhard • Schneider, Roul • Werner, André

DIE
HEILIGE SCHRIFT

des alten und neuen

TESTAMENTS

illustrirt von

G. Doré.

The starting point of the art project

Arising

Many years ago, as part of my mother's estate, a large, two-volume edition of the Holy Scriptures became available. Much to the surprise of my two sisters – given that I had left the church immediately after my confirmation at the age of 14 – I asked for the heavy printed volumes.

Right from the start, it was Gustave Doré's 230 woodcuts, which illustrated the individual passages from the Bible, that made a deep impression on me with their dramatic power and technical quality. I took my time looking at all these black-and-white compositions and noticed that quite a few of the illustrations struck a deep chord with me and aroused my curiosity; even today, they still strike me as socially relevant.

So the idea of creating a contemporary art project took shape very quickly. For a long time, however, I struggled to work out how I – particularly as a self-confessed atheist – could tackle the great complexity of the Holy Scriptures. The idea of exhibiting artists' reinterpretations of selected illustrations and Bible passages then proved to be the starting point I had been looking for. Another difficult step was limiting the project to a small, manageable number of illustrations and Bible passages.

In October 2025, I published the multilingual call for entries, which focused on three illustrations and provided further guidance on how to interpret the brief. In total, well over forty artists submitted sketches and texts.

In this context, I am very grateful to Prof. Dr Gerhard Kilger, who not only helped me select the participants but also contributed to the art project by providing suggestions regarding the content and a comprehensive introductory text entitled 'The Power of Images' (see page 16 onwards).

Axel Schöber



Illustrations by Gustave Doré • taken from
'The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments'
4th edition, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart

Open Call

The three Bible passages I have chosen, together with the accompanying illustrations by Gustave Doré (see figures on page 8), demonstrate in various ways how humankind has dealt – and, it seems, continues to deal – with power, trust, hubris, technology and hope, amongst other things. In all three passages, it appears as though human action has its limits, ultimately depends on the will or the order of a higher power, and follows certain fundamental themes:

- **Edition 1 – Violence/Eros:** Judith places her trust in God as she carries out her bloody deed, and through her courage and faith becomes an instrument of Israel's salvation.
- **Edition 2 – Hubris/Technology:** In the story of the 'Tower of Babel', human arrogance fails because of its excess and disregard for divine limits.
- **Edition 3 – Hope/A New Beginning:** After the destruction wrought by the Flood, Noah experiences God's new beginning – the dove as a symbol of hope.

How do we interpret these millennia-old stories today? Are their messages still comprehensible – or how might they be reinterpreted in the present day? Has humankind truly evolved as a result of technological, social and scientific progress, or does its fundamental psychological structure – caught between the pursuit of power, greed, fear, faith and hope – remain essentially the same? How do 'a new beginning', 'failure' and 'redemption' manifest themselves in today's social, environmental or personal contexts?

Selected artists from Europe were invited to use their art to open up new perspectives on old narratives and suggest corresponding courses of action – and to breathe new life into the dialogue between 'myth, faith and progress' through images and texts of their own.

Axel Schöber, October 2025

JUDITH 13:19

The first opening illustration



Gustave Doré (1832–1883) • Judith shows the head of Holofernes •
Woodcut • taken from my personal copy of the Holy Scriptures

EDITION I

An exemplary reinterpretation



André Werner • Judith is singing (after Doré) I •
Central panel of the triptych • see page 94 et seq.

GENESIS 11:1–9

The second opening illustration



Gustave Doré (1832–1883) • The Tower of Babel • Woodcut •
taken from my personal copy of the Holy Scriptures

EDITION II

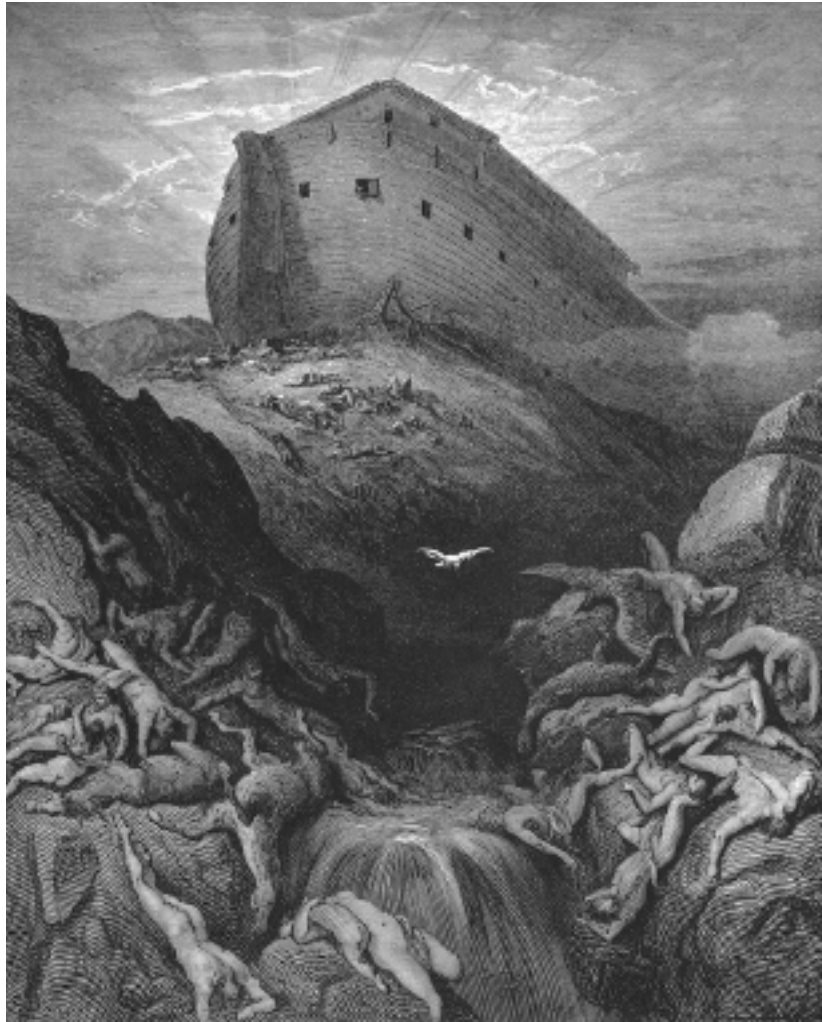
An exemplary reinterpretation



Welf Schiefer • Builders of the Tower of Babel
• 2026 • Drawing on paper • 53 x 38 cm • see page 70 et seq.

GENESIS 8:8

The third opening illustration



Gustave Doré (1832–1883) • The Sending of the Dove • Woodcut •
taken from my personal copy of the Holy Scriptures

EDITION III

An exemplary reinterpretation



Tanja Bremer • The Ark • 2025 • Oil on canvas • 80 x 120 cm • see page 30 et seq.



Kaspar Memberger
The Noah's Ark cycle for Prince-Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau:
Detail from Noah's Ark, 1588, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 163.5 cm
Residenzgalerie Salzburg, Inv. No. 632
© Residenzgalerie Salzburg, photograph by Fotostudio Ulrich Ghezzi, Oberalm

The Power of Images

It is widely recognised that Martin Luther's translation of the Bible and Gutenberg's invention of the printing press made the Bible accessible to the masses. However, less attention is paid to the significance of biblical illustration since that time. This may well be due to the fact that, since Martin Luther, greater importance has generally been attributed to the Word: 'In the beginning was the Word', we still read today in the Gospel of John, although the translation of 'Logos' is not entirely accurate: a better translation would be 'reason' or 'the meaning of a universal order'. Yet when the life's work of a cleric living in the late Middle Ages consists of an extensive translation of biblical texts, the great significance of the 'Word' is understandable.

Martin Luther – a view that remains largely uncontested to this day – described illustrations in the Bible as a 'second language': a language for children or illiterate people who do not have a full command of the language.

This assessment is astonishing when one compares it with the design of the Sistine Chapel, whose ceiling paintings by Michelangelo are illustrations of the highest quality, exerting a profound impact on the viewer every time they are viewed. They were created almost simultaneously at the beginning of the 16th century.

It is therefore hard to understand why illustrations of the Bible are rarely found today and are usually published by both major churches only as children's Bibles. The power of images has long been described in communication studies, and not just in our media-saturated present. Not only is education through images of great importance, but perception and awareness are also shaped by how these images are mentally absorbed, processed and committed to memory. Images, in the sense that we gain insight by being 'in the picture' about something, possess a particularly formative power. Thus, biblical images are not merely illustrations of text that has been read or spoken, but are primary impressions of biblical content.

It is therefore worth taking a look back at the centuries-long 'ban on images' and, using a few examples, illustrating the varied development of biblical illustrations over the few centuries since they first became widely available.

The 'prohibition on images' as interpreted in the Commandments is held responsible for the centuries-long banishment of art in the Judeo-Christian context. This prohibition referred to images used for the worship of the divine. We find the earliest pictorial

evidence on the walls of the catacombs used by the early Christian communities. Over the centuries, however, these artistically rendered biblical motifs were accessible to the people only in churches and cathedrals, whilst only monks and nuns in monasteries saw the artistically designed illuminated initials in biblical manuscripts.

It was only with the advent of translation and the reproduction of texts that illustrations became accessible to the general public.



Fig. 1: Woodcut • Noah's Ark • German Koberger Bible • 1440–1513 (licensed via Alamy)

One thing is immediately apparent at first glance: the illustrations primarily reflect the perspective of the era in which they were created and viewed. In fact, woodcuts from the

16th century are generally highly narrative. They illustrate what is written. For example, Noah is depicted in devout humility, watching as countless pairs of animals board his enormous ship – the Ark.



Fig. 2: Noah's Ark • François de Belleforest • 1575 • Woodcut after an Old Master print
<https://www.vintage-maps.com/de/grafiken/altmeister/de-belleforest-arche-noah-1575::11620>

As early as the 17th century, in the wake of the Renaissance, Noah was a brilliant engineer who, having carefully calculated his plans, achieved a technical masterpiece.

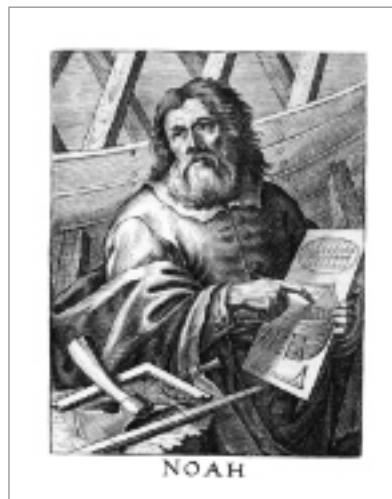


Fig. 3: Noah • Engraving by Peter Paul Troschel • for Christoph Gerhard • 1659 (licensed via Alamy)

With the Enlightenment in the 18th century, masterful copperplate engravings became highly realistic: the colourful diversity of exotic animals was depicted just as vividly as the immense weather catastrophe that signalled the inevitable doom of humanity (see also the illustration on page 6).

In the 19th century, illustrations became popular not only in Bibles but also in so-called devotional pictures. This was also linked to the rapid development of printing techniques, particularly lithography, which, in the wake of industrialisation, made mass production possible. With the 'hunger for reading' among the emerging middle classes, so-called 'intensive reading' – of the Book of Books – gave way to 'extensive reading' of a wide variety of literature. Above all, it was Romantic depictions that served as models for illustrations in Bibles and devotional pictures.

It was during this period that Gustave Doré's dramatic illustrations were also created; these were published as the 'Grande Bible de Tours' in folio format (the very largest print format) in France and England as a deluxe edition.



Fig. 4: Gustave Doré • The Sending of the Dove • Genesis 8:8

Doré's illustrations remind us above all of the 'God of Wrath', of massacres, murders, beheadings and avenging angels, as his biographer Joanna Richardson describes it. A hallmark of the era is also evident: the angels are Victorian angels, full of sentimentality. The women, in turn, are idealised, whilst the children are stylised in the Victorian manner: sentimental and unusually wise for their age.

Almost at the same time, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's 'Bible in Pictures' was published in Germany, ten years before war broke out between France and Germany. This life-affirming interpretation of the images can be traced back to the Nazarenes, whose aim, during the period of social upheaval following the Napoleonic era, was to pursue the renewal of art in the spirit of Christianity, taking the old Italian and German masters as their models. Through an association founded for this purpose, Schnorr von Carolsfeld began organising competitions for artistic interpretations of the Bible as early as the 1820s. The best entries were to be included in the Illustrated Bible. His idea failed to gain acceptance for decades because he insisted, as a matter of principle, that illustrations should not merely supplement the text: they should replace it!

He thus produced, on his own initiative, 160 woodcuts on the Old Testament and 80 on the New Testament, which were published by Wiegand-Verlag in 1860.



Fig. 5: Excerpt from 'The Ark' • Woodcut • Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (licensed via Alamy)



Fig. 6: The Tower of Babel • Woodcut • Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (licensed via Quagga)

In contrast to Gustave Doré's dramatic scenes, his romantic depictions are visions of an unspoilt, sacred world in the tradition of the Nazarenes.

In the 20th century, the illustrations of the Romantic period continued to exert an influence within the Church. The art-historical movements of Expressionism, Surrealism and abstract painting are scarcely to be found in biblical depictions. Nevertheless, there were some artists, such as Marc Chagall, who repeatedly devoted themselves to biblical themes in their work and even received commissions for sacred art in church interiors and stained-glass windows.



Fig. 7: Noah's Ark • Marc Chagall • 1961–1966 • Oil on canvas
The National Marc Chagall Museum, Nizza

The artistic contributions to the ARISING art project are undoubtedly representative of the engagement with biblical themes in the first quarter of the 21st century. In none of the exhibited artworks can one speak of a 'second language' of the biblical passages concerning Noah's Ark, Judith and the Tower of Babel. All the works are explorations that often constitute a clear cultural critique of contemporary problems. Figurative and fantastical visualisations predominate, whilst in some cases new methods – such as artificial

intelligence or adaptations – are employed. Many also express concern for our future through reflection on biblical themes.

The art project – including its curation – was not carried out with the official involvement of the churches. Whilst both major churches do have art commissioners, and the journal 'Kunst und Kirche' is published to facilitate specialist discourse, there is hardly any record of art projects or other forms of art funding.

This makes it all the more remarkable that this art project was initiated by a gallery owner who could hardly have expected to make a financial profit from it. Rather, his keen interest in artistic creativity beyond mere commercial viability has led to a cultural event featuring exhibits of particular artistic and supra-regional significance.

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kilger
and Barbara Wilhelmi

Wilhelmsfeld, May 2026



Kathrin Feser • Judit II • 2026 • Etching • sheet 37 x 53 cm •
framed to 50 x 70 cm • see page 38 et seq.

Works by the artists

Aaron Antes

*1963 • lives and works in Winnenden

Originally, such an act would have spread within a smaller circle at that time, in contrast to the present day with its technological possibilities. The beheading is highly likely to give rise to a new plot development in the story. In my work 'Headless Bird as a Head with a Touch of Hope', a decapitated bird simultaneously becomes a new head for the viewer.

The 'new head' also embodies a sense of hope, as mentioned in the title. This new hope is symbolised by the green shoots pushing through the tree's bark. For me, the dead bird represents the violation of nature; the newly formed head symbolises technological development; and the small green shoot stands as a sign of hope that humanity can still manage, with the help of technology, to live in harmony with nature.

For me, the main question in this context is not primarily whether killing is justified or not, but whether humanity as a whole can survive.

Even though I myself reject any form of violence, I realise that there are individual cases where a decision must be made in advance as to which use of force will cause less suffering. But it is also clear to me that every form of human violence has a history. And this raises the question once again of whether humankind can find ways to prevent violence.



Headless Bird as a Head with a Touch of Hope • 2025 • Plum • approx. 36 x 18 x 18 cm



Linguistic diversity is on the decline. In the past, almost every village had its own dialect. Modern media are causing this linguistic diversity to be lost, whilst at the same time making it easier for people to understand one another. This is also due to technology, which enables translation in the blink of an eye. Naturally, this gives rise to new problems.

My work 'Wave Head II' depicts a head with four heads and, for me, symbolises the different roles a person has to fulfil in their life – roles they fulfil sometimes better, sometimes worse. But it also represents the multi-layered nature and complexity of the world, in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to find one's way. It also reflects the fact that people would love to have several heads so they could better cope with the demands of everyday life.

I think it is absurd for virtually everyone to want to be on a par with God, if indeed he exists. Rather, for the vast majority of people, it gives rise to a sense of being overwhelmed and powerless. The story of the Tower of Babel is a regional event in which every individual can contribute something to the construction. Today, so much is organised on a larger scale, which means the individual has less influence. The title 'Wave Head' refers to the shape of the head, but can also be understood as an allusion to the forces of nature.

Aaron Antes

*1963 • lives and works in Winnenden



Wave Head II • 2024 • Ash • approx. 42 x 23 x 25 cm



Tanja Bremer

*1969 • lives and works in Hattingen

Noah's Ark – I believe that in this biblical passage, the existential situation of humankind remains relevant even today – perhaps even more so than ever: the state of being caught between power and, at the same time, (mostly repressed and/or unacknowledged) powerlessness in the face of the forces of nature, in this case specifically the elements of water and air.

I am particularly interested in the biblical content of this passage (Chapter 8 of the First Book of Genesis), as it mentions not only the dove, which carries a fresh olive branch in its beak after being sent out of the Ark by Noah. I find it significant that the raven is mentioned first: 'It flew out and in until the water on the earth had dried up' (Gen 8:7).

In other words, Noah first chose the raven to find out whether the Great Flood still covered the earth; the raven is, as it were, given a task. And this raises the question for me: why is this fact not given greater attention? Isn't this perhaps an even more important symbol than the dove?

I therefore believe we should focus more on the raven as a symbolic animal: it is both a symbol of divine providence, new beginnings and wisdom – and is thus interpreted positively – as well as a symbol of darkness, death and the divine judgement at the end of time. The raven is thus the animal of 'both-and', in contrast to today's tendency towards 'either-or'. This is also evident in the often dominant association of the colour white with goodness, positivity and a celebration of life, and black as its opposite. In my view, these two poles of life should be integrated into our lives on an equal footing. If we (consciously or unconsciously) repress the dark, the night and death from our lives, this creates an imbalance in our outlook and a failure to recognise (or blindness to) the truth.

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Noah's ark • 2026 • Oil on canvas • 70 x 100 cm



One could also equate darkness with God, the invisible, that which is shrouded in darkness and can only be described through metaphors and symbols. In this respect, we should confront the darkness, the fear of God, of the divine power that lays bare our powerlessness.

In my painting 'The Ark', I make a very explicit reference to Caspar David Friedrich's work 'The Monk by the Sea'. I see modern-day humanity as likewise being forced to turn inwards. Today, however, we are not merely at the mercy of nature; we must also take responsibility for the exploitation of the Earth's natural resources in the name of progress.

This reminds me of Walter Benjamin and his famous essay on Paul Klee's painting 'Angelus Novus':

'There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. It depicts an angel who looks as though he is about to turn away from something he is staring at. His eyes are wide open, his mouth is agape and his wings are spread wide. The angel of history must look like this. He has his face turned towards the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees a single catastrophe that ceaselessly heaps ruin upon ruin and hurls them at his feet. He would surely like to linger, to rouse the dead and piece together what has been shattered. But a storm blows from Paradise, which has caught itself in his wings and is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him inexorably into the future, to which he turns his back, whilst the heap of rubble before him rises to the heavens. What we call progress is this storm.'

Walter Benjamin

[Quote from: 'Walter Benjamin – Eine Reflexion in Bildern', exhibition catalogue, Walther König, Cologne/Germany, 2011, p. 93 ff.]

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Tanja Bremer

*1969 • lives and works in Hattingen

In this respect, it is not far-fetched to associate Edition 3 with the theme of hubris, which is, after all, explored in Edition 2 and the Tower of Babel. Here, too, boundaries are neither acknowledged nor respected, but are crossed in an act of that all-too-human desire to be capable of anything.

Our alienation from nature is also reflected in the wishful thinking that we might one day be able to colonise another planet. It is telling that we now rarely question our actions or our faith in progress. Our pride in what we have achieved through technology and science is increasingly blinding us to the complex interdependencies of living beings on planet Earth and the fragility of ecosystems, as we are confident that, with the help of genetic engineering, AI and technology in general, we can find solutions to everything. A reversal in the sense of a return to the human scale – that is, a scale worthy of human-kind – seems to me to be emerging only at a local level amongst individuals.



In this respect, we can only hope that humanity will find a way to face the darkness of this (spiritual?) crisis with courage: the raven as a symbol of trust in God, even when He appears as He does in St John of the Cross's 'Dark Night of the Soul'; that hope for a change in ways of thinking and living will endure; and that the catastrophe will be followed by salvation, in which people will play a part by changing their way of life.

Tanja Bremer

Together, the two works form a dialogue between the past and the future, between myth and modernity. 'Judith – Triumphus' revisits an ancient narrative through personal reflection and symbolic vision, whilst 'Noah's Dove – The Drone Ark' projects a biblical motif into a technologically shaped future.

Both drawings explore how stories that shape human identity – justice, redemption, agency, hope – endure across the centuries and evolve as our world changes. Taken together, they raise a single question: how do ancient archetypes continue to guide us in an age shaped by technology and uncertainty?

Judith – Triumphus

'Judith – Triumphus' reinterprets the biblical heroine Judith by combining historical iconography with a contemporary visual language. A modern fortune-teller holds Tarot card VII ('Triumphus') in her hand, which depicts Judith as the victor over Holofernes. Judith reappears in the reflection of the glasses – she contemplates her own myth, thereby creating a multi-layered confrontation between past and present, vision and memory.

The golden elements are reminiscent of medieval book illumination, whilst the tarot layout alludes to Renaissance symbolism. The work explores how ancient narratives persist in contemporary culture as active forces that shape identity and agency.

Noah's Dove – The Drone Ark

This work reinterprets Noah's dove as a futuristic, mechanical messenger – part bird, part drone. Hovering above a stranded cargo ark, the creature becomes a symbolic navigator between myth and modernity. Instead of bringing hope through an olive branch, it returns as a technological guardian – searching, warning, bearing witness. The golden disc behind the dove alludes to Byzantine iconography and contrasts with the creature's constructed anatomy.

The modern Ark – a stranded cargo ship – becomes a metaphor for ambition, fragility and the changing meaning of salvation in a technologically driven world.

Yves De Vocht

*1964 • lives and works in Antwerpen/Belgium

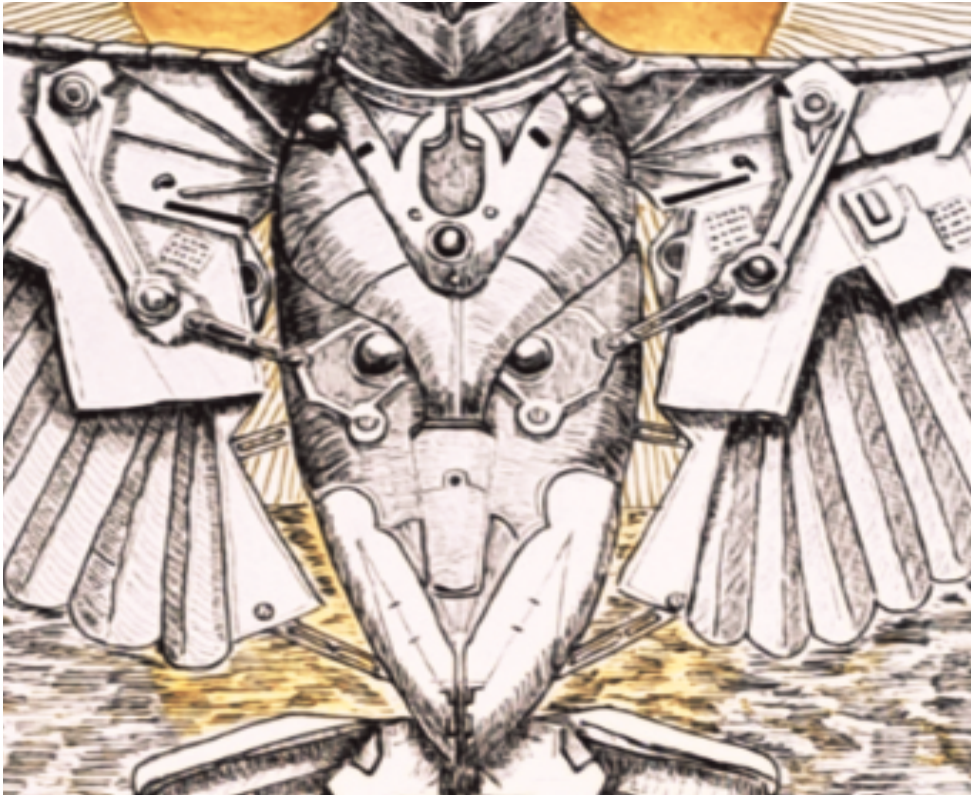


Judith – Triumphus • 2025
• Ink and gold acrylic paint on paper
• 65 x 50 x 4 cm



Noah's Dove – The Drone Ark • 2025
• Ink and gold acrylic paint on paper
• 65 x 50 x 4 cm

[Both works are framed with anti-reflective glass; the photos are distorted in perspective.]



Distinctive features of artistic technique

An exemplary statement

"I draw to silence the world. At a time when everything is becoming faster, louder and more superficial, I make a conscious choice to embrace slowness, mindfulness and craftsmanship. The moment the pencil or ink touches the paper, the noise falls silent. Drawing is not relaxation; it is a necessary state of concentration in which haste, pressure and chaos dissolve. After a few minutes, all that remains is pure concentration. Meaning emerges from this stillness. My work begins in the past, but does not look back nostalgically.

For me, history is not merely stored information, but a living source. I draw inspiration from art history, architecture, mythology, symbolism and ancient techniques – not to imitate them, but to transform them. I want to show that the past is not dead. It is still breathing, if you look closely. I bring the past into dialogue with the present and, sometimes, with the future. In my work, time is not a straight line, but a circle, an echo, a constant presence.

Slowness is also a form of resistance. Resistance against a superficial visual culture, against digital consumption, against art created solely for the sake of 'sharing' or 'scoring points'. I believe in work that takes time. In this context, detail is not mere decoration, but an invitation to slow down. Anyone looking at my drawings should feel the urge to pause. To draw closer. To really look. In that moment, something can unfold:

A sense of wonder, recognition, an awareness of transience, or the realisation of how the past and the present merge."

Yves De Vocht

Kathrin Feser

*1956 • lives and works in Schorndorf

While exploring the figure of the biblical Judith, I came up with the idea of replacing Holofernes' head with a flower head. For one thing, I asked myself: For what purpose was this story told, and how can we understand it today?

Judith remained true to her core beliefs. She followed her God's dietary laws and drew strength from prayer. Her love for her people led her to take unusual – perhaps even reprehensible paths. She draws the strength for her actions from prayer. What kind of prayers might those have been? She sees God as a counterpart to whom she alone reveals her plans. She uses her talents, her beauty, her wisdom, and her life experience – to achieve her goal of saving her people from foreign rule. Judith emerges from her spring and blazes a new trail through uncharted territory.

How can we understand the story of Judith today? She beheads Holofernes and thus saves her people. She presents the head to the authorities. This is very unusual behaviour for a young, beautiful widow. It's a story we generally wouldn't tell today as an example to follow.



Judit I • 2026 • Acrylic paint on canvas • 60 x 80 cm

Adrian Fuchs

*1955 • lives and works in Dortmund

The 'modern Judith' depicted here exemplifies a society in which power is no longer exercised primarily through physical violence, but through access to information, consciousness and self-regulation. The historical beheading as an act of disempowerment is transformed into a digital intervention into the subject itself – the point of intersection shifts from the neck to the neural interface.

The terminals integrated into the skin and the glowing fibre-optic cables point to a technologised culture in which the human body is increasingly becoming infrastructure. The body is no longer the bearer of autonomy, but rather the hub of a networked system of control, optimisation and algorithmic evaluation.

It remains unclear whether this access to the brain is based on voluntary participation or whether the glowing connections embody a life of their own, shaped by structural constraints:

the logic of constant availability, self-monitoring and performance enhancement. This visual ambivalence points to a central paradox of late-modern societies – the simultaneous promise of self-empowerment and the creeping erosion of individual sovereignty.

The original public display of the severed head is transformed in the digital age into a narcissistically coded self-staging. The selfie replaces the trophy image; the marketplace stage becomes a platform economy. Power no longer manifests itself in the possession of another's body, but in control over one's own visibility and its algorithmic exploitability. Thus, Judith becomes a symbol of a present in which violence is dematerialised, subjectivity is networked and identity becomes a curated surface.

[ChatGPT based on a text Adrian Fuchs wrote himself –
editorially revised and responsible: Axel Schöber]



Judith 2040 • 2025 • KI platform NightCafe Studio
Pigment print • Edition of 5 + e.a. • variable size, up to approx. 60 cm in height

Between Revelation and Collapse – A Re-examination of the Story of Noah

This reinterpretation of Gustave Doré's depiction of Noah's Ark shifts the biblical scene from the mythical realm of the Flood to a post-apocalyptic landscape. Whereas Doré portrays a moment of hope – the release of the dove as a sign that God's judgement is receding – here we see a world in which that hope has become questionable. The white drone replaces the dove: a technological eye that does not seek out life, but rather maps the devastation.

The gigantic wooden ship lies abandoned in an endless desert. The Ark, originally a place of salvation and the preservation of creation, becomes a relic of a lost civilisation. Its emptiness points to a paradoxical present: humanity possesses enormous technological capabilities, yet is increasingly losing the spiritual and moral foundation needed to deal responsibly with nature and the future. The ship is no longer the bearer of a divine promise, but a memorial to an anthropogenic age in which humankind itself has become the Flood.

The work 'Inventory' thus transposes the story of Noah to a contemporary ecological and political context. The Great Flood becomes a drought; the water has vanished, leaving behind a landscape hostile to life. The scene alludes to the climate crisis, resource depletion, and the notion of the world's permanent technical controllability. The drone symbolises a civilisation that responds to its crises through control, surveillance and data collection, without fundamentally altering its destructive structures.

It is precisely in this substitution of the dove with a machine that the religious tension of the image lies. In Genesis, the dove signifies the possibility of a new covenant between God, humankind and creation. The drone, by contrast, recognises neither hope nor redemption. Its sterile presence and the precision of the 3D camera reveal what has been lost: the idea of a responsible relationship with the world.

[ChatGPT based on a text Adrian Fuchs wrote himself –
editorially revised and responsible: Axel Schöber]

Adrian Fuchs

*1955 • lives and works in Dortmund



Inventory • 2025 • KI platform NightCafe Studio
Ink print • Edition of 5 + e.a. • variable size, up to approx. 45 cm in width

Sieglinde Gros

*1963 • lives and works in Michelstadt

The scene depicts the situation some time after Judith's act. The act recedes into the private sphere, into Judith's memory.

What happened continues to resonate within her; it no longer needs to be displayed to the outside world; it has become her inner secret, which she holds protectively in her hands. The awareness of her strength now radiates from within. She is aware of her self-efficacy and draws strength from it. With this confidence, she looks to the future with an open mind and inner calm.

Her act once had an outward impact and now continues to resonate within her.

The 'secret' symbolises any kind of liberation from oppressive situations, all the battles fought in silence.



Secret • 2025 • Tulip tree,
painted in colour • 128 x 43 x 8 cm

Sieglinde Gros

*1963 • lives and works in Michelstadt

A tower built of people.

Striving upwards, each person seeks their place. The higher they climb, the tighter it gets, and the harder it is to hold on.

Amidst life's uncertainties, everyone must find their own place. Nothing is certain; everything could come crashing down at any moment. The decision is up to each individual.

Beherzigung

Ach, was soll der Mensch verlangen?

Ist es besser, ruhig bleiben?

Klammernd fest sich anzuhängen?

Ist es besser, sich zu treiben?

Soll er sich ein Häuschen bauen?

Soll er unter Zelten leben?

Soll er auf die Felsen trauen?

Selbst die festen Felsen beben.

Eines schickt sich nicht für alle!

Sehe jeder, wie er's treibe,

Sehe jeder, wo er bleibe,

Und wer steht, daß er nicht falle!

J. W. Goethe

Consideration

Oh, what more could one ask for?

Is it better to stay calm?

To cling on tightly?

Is it better to just go with the flow?

Should he build himself a little house?

Should he live in tents?

Should he trust the rocks?

Even the solid rocks tremble.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution!

Let everyone do as they please,

Let everyone look after themselves,

And let everyone who stands take care not to fall!

Translation: DeepL

"... Und wer steht, daß er nicht falle!" • 2026
• horse chestnut, painted • 182 x 38 x 34 cm





My collage depicts the construction site of a tower, the Tower of Babel. The tower is built from building blocks – individual paper rectangles – inscribed with the translation of the words ‘The Just War’ in many different languages and scripts. The perspective of the individual storeys of the structure appears disturbingly distorted. It is intended to hint at the builders’ misguided objective – the imminent danger of collapse that is already looming!

But where are the people on this building site? You’d expect such a mammoth project to be teeming with workers! They are missing. It seems they have already ‘made a name for themselves’ by laying their bricks, fulfilled their quota and made their statement. After all, translation apps allow for a global understanding, thereby overcoming language and script barriers.

So why even remain on site, why show one’s face? Anonymity is enough, after all: ladders, scaffolding, piles of sand and gravel are now nothing more than props. The statements have been set in stone; face-to-face encounters are a nuisance; conversations are unwelcome and a waste of time. The collapse of the building is, of course, already inevitable given the construction described above. Hubris, complacency and egocentricity – reflected in both the private and the political-social spheres – are driving this catastrophe forward: the ideologies used to justify this war in Russian, American, Ukrainian and European media coverage/reporting have drifted, and continue to drift, extremely far apart. The war is being dehumanised.

Could nuclear escalation be the modern-day end of the Tower of Babel? Greeks and Romans such as Plato and Cicero, along with many subsequent philosophers and peace researchers, have racked their brains over the topic of ‘just war’. In my view, the question of a just war, like the Tower of Babel, leads to disaster: the original concept falls apart and escalates into even more injustice, violence and destruction. Dialogue falls by the wayside, as described by the confusion of tongues at Babel.

What remains are ‘human sacrifices’, ‘urban destruction’, ‘escalation’ and ‘famines: tanks instead of wheat’ – my four further visual interpretations of our Ukrainian/European/American/Russian hubris, driven by deals and a lust for power.

[The editor has made a slight abridgement at the beginning of the text.]

Uli Gubik

*1958 • lives and works in Rieneck



The Just War? • 2025 • Collage, acrylic
and chalk on canvas • 120 x 80 cm

The interplay between narrative and illustration provides a starting point for my work. Whilst the biblical/apocryphal text is characterised by a linearity that is as simple as it is compelling – which Doré illustrates in his drawings by focusing on striking elements of the plot – in my linocuts I endeavour to capture the complexity of the depicted interplay, intertwining and conflict between human action, higher 'divine' inspiration and the problems arising from them. To this end, I work with the techniques of motif-based linking and fusion, doubling, the reversal of positive and negative, and the principles of repetition and variation.

The heads of Holofernes and Judith serve as central motifs; these have been adapted from historical woodcuts using the linocut technique and integrated into the compositions as visual references. Just like the figures themselves – Holofernes, the marauding warrior and general, and Judith, the pious widow full of physical and erotic allure – their heads, too, stand in stark contrast that could scarcely be more stark. Thus, the bearded barbarian, brutally beheaded and sinking into the folds of the bedding, is juxtaposed with the upright posture of the triumphant femme fatale, whose depiction – both indoors and outdoors – is characterised by precious jewellery and Orientalist ornamentation.

In each of my linocuts, only a single head will be visible: in 'Holofernes', the severed head of the besieger of Bethulia, held by a tuft of hair and dangling from a hand that appears to be Judith's, but which in fact protrudes from an amorphous tangle of intertwined, faceless bodies. In 'Judith', it is the two-faced head that fills the void in 'Holofernes' but here symbolises the Janus-faced ambivalence of seduction and aggression, in which Judith, through her act inspired by higher powers, sacrifices herself in a sense twice over – both physically and spiritually.

In this way, the works explore the significance of 'propaganda of the deed' for the ideal of female (self-)empowerment. At the same time, by dissolving Judith's body into the crowd, they question the stylisation of the human individual into an icon. The act of crossing boundaries – a central element of my working method – is manifested thematically in further visual references, such as the human bodies or the play of clouds, which allude to the other biblical narratives in this art project.

Kathrin Heyer

*1979 • lives and works in Lippstadt



Holofernes • 2026 • Linocut on paper •
80 x 60 cm • framed 100 x 70 cm



Judith • 2026 • Linocut on paper •
80 x 60 cm • framed 100 x 70 cm

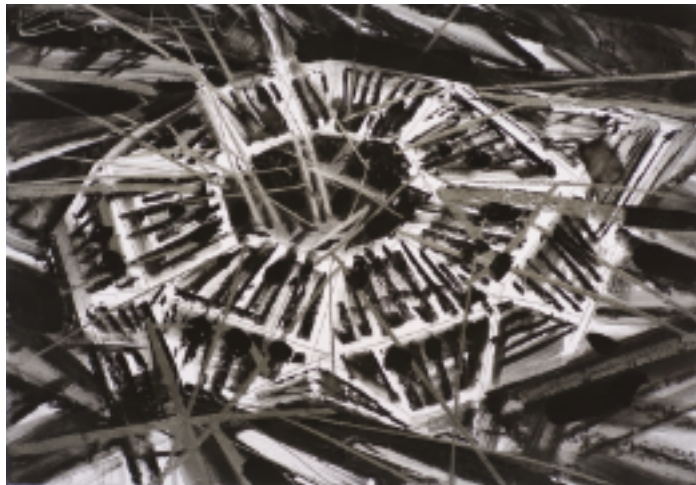
Constantin Jaxy

*1957 • lives and works in Bremen

Babylonian Trio

The expressive, sketch-like motifs from contemporary architecture, rendered in a painterly style, evoke associations with the Tower of Babel.

In the drawing 'Installation', a large-scale stadium construction site appears to transform into the modern foundations of a tower block. In 'Oil separator', an oil rig is stylised into a new tower, whilst 'roll around' – which is the rear cladding of a parabolic dish (a 'lost place' object) – takes on an enigmatic form in terms of both function and architecture – much like the Tower of Babel itself, whose actual appearance remains a mystery to this day.



Installation (Einbau) • 2023 • Graphite, chalk and ink on paper • 40 x 60 cm



Oil separator (Entöler) • 2023 • Graphite, chalk and ink on paper • 40 x 60 cm



Roll around (Umkugel) • 2023 • Graphite, chalk and ink on paper • 40 x 60 cm

Simone Klerx

*1980 • lives and works in Neuss

Playing God or God Plays Alone

Jesus asks us: “Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” (Luke 14:28–33)

Are we wise enough to understand what it means to integrate artificial intelligence into our lives? Have we calculated the costs and do we have everything under control?

What is our foundation when it comes to dealing with AI? The biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) recounts humanity’s plan to build a tower reaching up to the heavens in order to ‘make a name for themselves’ – through science, architecture, human strength and strategy. It serves as an example of humanity ‘playing God’ and overestimating itself.

When I look at Gustave Doré’s woodcut ‘The Confusion of Tongues at Babel’, my eye is drawn to the multitude of billowing clouds passing close by the massive tower. The sense of upheaval, the approaching storm, and God’s judgement on humankind’s plan to play God on their own seem to be brewing inexorably.

I am drawn to the monumental boulders in the foreground – and to the man standing on top of them. He seems to be celebrating himself with his arms raised high, as if he were trying to hold up the tower all by himself. The tower has been built on the backs of many labourers. It appears to have been erected using the massive stones that I have now made into the foundation of my picture. I have replaced the tower itself with a house of cards. In doing so, I have adopted the colour scheme of the woodcut.

There are no people in my picture. The clouds in my picture represent the divine and hold up the tower. Here, God does not confuse languages, but rather sustains that which is precarious and in danger of collapsing – just like all human constructions and inventions that cannot be controlled down to the very last detail.

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Series of works: Playing God or God Plays Along •
House of cards at Babel (1) • 2026 • Watercolour on paper • 32 x 24 cm

In Judaism, 'Shekhinah' refers to the visible (indwelling) presence of God on earth. It is represented, amongst other things, by clouds. The word is derived from the Aramaic word 'shakan', meaning 'to rest'. In my painting, the clouds also symbolise 'divine pillows of rest', which help me to find peace in God amidst the fast pace and flood of information in today's world. Nor do I need to have an answer to every question. I can let go and relax when I trust that God is in control of everything. Against the backdrop of the New Testament, I wish to paint a picture of hope that depicts God's positive intervention.

Gustave Doré's illustration depicts the punishing God of the Old Testament. I emphasise the merciful God of the New Testament, who took the punishment upon himself in Jesus Christ in order to reconcile us to him and acquit us of his judgement. Human beings have a fundamental need to understand the world – not least to ensure their own survival. The desire for knowledge also corresponds to the human urge to create and build, which is in keeping with our god-like nature.

I asked ChatGPT:

'Is artificial intelligence a fragile house of cards?'

Answer: 'Technologically speaking:

"No."

Modern AI is based on decades of mathematics, computer science and engineering. The foundation is stable in terms of linear algebra, probability theory, computing architecture and data theory. But socially? That's where it can become fragile. A house of cards arises when: regulation is lacking, power is concentrated, transparency is low, and education fails to keep pace. Then it is not the technology that becomes fragile – but the way we handle it.

I believe it is important that we take the time to reflect on what the foundation of AI is. What values guide us? Are we acting responsibly? The foundation of my faith is that every creation springs from God's inspiration. Behind everything we create lies God's Spirit, from which we all derive our creative power. God is therefore always involved. In everything we think we have control over, we can assume – in our faith in God – that He, above all, is in control.

[AI use – editorially revised and responsible: Simone Klerx]

Simone Klerx

*1980 • lives and works in Neuss



House of cards at Babel (2) • 2026 •
Watercolour on paper • 32 x 24 cm



House of cards at Babel (3) • 2026 •
Watercolour on paper • 32 x 24 cm

The depiction of Judith with the head of Holofernes forms the starting point for my work, which centres on the question of how images generate meaning and why certain interpretations have remained stable over the centuries.

Is Judith an image that is constantly being reinterpreted? Over the centuries, she has been seen as a heroine, a seductress, a murderer or a saviour. Each depiction relates to earlier images and becomes part of new visual contexts in its own right. Meaning does not arise from the individual image; it develops through the relationship between images, their cultural references and the viewers' experiences.

The work consists of two interconnected layers: on paper, a painterly portrait is developed, treated with acrylics and drawn textures. Recurring patterns, ornaments, lines and symbols cover the surface, forming a network of visual information. These patterns act as visual codes that structure perception and allow for different interpretations.

A transparent Plexiglas sheet lies on top of this, into which the same patterns are engraved: the drawing is transferred to a different material and appears there as an etched mark. A dialogue emerges between the different planes – between painting and printmaking, between applied paint and engraving, between the visible and the invisible. Depending on the light, the angle of view and the distance, the relationships between the layers shift: patterns become denser, dissolve or emerge anew. The image remains in a state of openness; its interpretability only emerges through the interplay of the planes and in the viewer's gaze.

[JENSEITS: CICATRIX] describes this state as a trace (the scar) of an ongoing transformation. The engraving adds an extra layer to the image and reveals that images always bear within them traces of other images, signs and cultural codes. PATT XLII depicts Judith as a process of becoming an image: how is the story of Judith understood as a cultural system of images that is constantly changing through repetition, displacement and new contexts? Judith thus appears as an image that is constantly being recreated.

Nina Kruser

*1982 • lives and works in Hockenheim



PATT XLII [JENSEITS: CICATRIX - GRAVURA] • 2026 • Painting, print on paper, engraving on plexiglass • 30 x 21 cm, framed to 50 x 40 cm



Renato Liermann

*1956 • lives and works in Bochum

Babel. Desperat.

The sense of desperation that can be derived from the ancient story of Babel is a familiar part of life for me, as it is for other artists. It has been and remains the subject of magnificent paintings, films and stories – particularly during the Mannerist period and also in (post)modern times, in many different thematic variations.

The loss of social cohesion, an inability to engage in conversation or communicate despite the most advanced means of communication, isolation and loneliness, the possibility – following God's punishment for the attempted construction of the Tower – of permanently misunderstanding one another, of being liable to fail at any moment, and, as a result, of no longer being able to act together, is a highly topical issue.

Accordingly, contemporary principles that can also be interpreted as a response to the Babel narrative – such as the primacy and optimisation of individuality, the singular, the capitalist pursuit of profit and power or the rejection thereof, and the increasing control of societies through technocratic processes, overall democratic and internationalised societies and alliances are currently, in many cases, being simultaneously questioned, rejected or opposed in terms of both their significance and their practices.

Is Babel returning as a secularised narrative of biblical history, with all its updated force? Do all human endeavours and actions, and the focus on 'attitude' and 'identity', along with the simultaneous global digitalisation or virtualisation of all areas of life, fundamentally contain a 'Babel-like' dimension that continues to relativise all endeavours and ultimately causes them to fail? What if, despite all the tools and AI, language is no longer a common ground because the stubborn clinging to positions no longer opens the way to dialogue? What if trade and even culture no longer bring people together, and everything becomes a matter of identity and power – what significance, then, does art still hold, with its visual worlds, its freedom and boundlessness? What if people no longer



Babel I • 2025 •
Mixed media • Sheet size 59.4 x 42 cm, framed to 80 x 60 cm



accept the interpretation of the Tower of Babel story – that the punishment, or the failure, is to be understood as an ongoing challenge for humanity to find common ground and reach agreement?

For me, art is the medium through which to explore these themes, the medium through which I can communicate about them beyond any textual or verbal language. My work has produced paintings, drawings and installations on these themes; in the last two years, this has explicitly taken the form of the 'Babel Pictures' series.

I juxtapose personal images of my life experiences with related imagery from the mass media, assembling, combining and contrasting them to create new visual worlds, some of which are turned upside down. I underlay fleeting black drawings on transparencies with further layers of paint, adding dimensions that both confuse the viewer's perception and, at the same time, bring the whole together.

Thus, my pictures tell of our efforts, inspired by the failure of the Tower of Babel, to find a way forward, to seek utopias, to fail once more, to take on the resulting challenges time and again, and to find common ground with one another: to overcome Babel and not to seek to dominate one another – an artistic responsibility.

Renato Liermann

*1956 • lives and works in Bochum



Babel III • 2026 •

Mixed media • Sheet size 59.4 x 42 cm, framed to 90 x 70 cm

Thomas Lucker

*1959 • lives and works in Berlin

The hegemonic power of Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar II, is waging war against the Israelites and laying siege to the small town of Bethulia.

The Jewish widow Judith sneaks out of the besieged town into the enemy camp and into the tent of the commander Holofernes. She appears to offer herself willingly to the general, makes him drink wine whilst remaining sober herself, and stirs up his lust. Then Judith loosens her robe, draws her dagger from it in the same movement, and beheads Holofernes. It happens too quickly for him to react. She puts an end to the terror and the threat by killing the general, risking her own life in the process. Unprotected, in heroic nakedness – which for her is simply a means to an end – she strikes down the seasoned warrior. For Holofernes, the blow comes completely out of the blue. To him, her naked body is nothing but a temptation. Drunk, still in his boots and with his trousers down, he has nothing on his mind but the satisfaction of his lust.

The moment immediately following the beheading. Holofernes' headless body stands there, as if he were still unaware of his death. Judith had seized the general's head by the ear just before the bloody deed and is now holding it up to her chest. She has lowered her sword arm. Her robe touches the floor of the tent, which is littered with rubbish.

War is waged primarily by men against men – for power, wealth and land. They are male primates striving for dominance. But war is always, too, a war against women.

As part of male military strategy, they are to be made into victims, threatened with abduction, enslavement, rape, mutilation and murder. Judith refuses to accept this label. Her deed is an act of female self-empowerment. In a brutal, male-dominated world, she overcomes fear and revulsion and, through cunning and bravery, turns the fortunes of her desperate city around.

[Translation via DeepL]

Judith and Holofernes OR How to End a War • 2026 • Thüster limestone,
black-and-white print, gold leaf, ink, acrylic paint • approx. 172 x 76 x 36 cm



Julia Murakami

*1969 • lives and works in Berlin

Influenced by the heroines and images of my childhood, in my painting 'Kate Beheads Holofernes' (2010) – a variation on Cristofano Allori's 'Giuditta con la testa di Oloferne' (1610) – I contrast contemporary visual symbolism with archetypal visions of power and resistance. The juxtaposition of beauty and crime, desire and death unfolds an unsettling dynamic in which seduction and violence are fatally intertwined.

Kenton Turk writes ...

"Julia Murakami [...] is an artist whose work runs the gamut between the gory and the guileless, juxtaposing beauty in historical and contemporary iconic forms with visions of violence, both explicit and implicit. Her work employs a plethora of media and often results in an unsettling search for balance between mutually repelling poles."



Kate beheading Holofernes • 2010 • Oil on canvas • 100 x 80 cm
[an adaptation of Cristofano Allori's 'Giuditta con la testa di Oloferne']



The olive branch is generally regarded as a symbol of peace, particularly in the context of the relationship between God and humankind. My two-part work 'Peace' – written in the languages of the two superpowers – carries this symbol out into the world. My olive branches represent hope, peace and new life, whilst the olive tree also symbolises patience and steadfastness. God punished humankind with the Flood because the earth had been corrupted by violence and wickedness and humankind had sinned. The belief that only a catastrophe can bring about a genuine new beginning has deep roots. Major crises, wars or natural disasters force change. They compel reconstruction and, where necessary, a fresh start accompanied by reforms. Destruction creates space for a new order.

The story of the Flood reminds us to treat the Earth, nature, people and animals with responsibility. Crises bring priorities into sharper focus and trigger a realisation. We must learn that mercy and reconciliation are more important than revenge. The conflicts in today's world have complex political, social, historical and also geopolitical causes and cannot be directly equated with the biblical story. However, one injustice cannot be righted by another injustice. Wars cannot be justified, nor are they ended by weapons. As a pacifist, peace is important to me and I do not support the production or supply of weapons; I refuse to do military service and hope that my grandchildren will not be dragged into ongoing or future wars by politics.

Peace can only be achieved by becoming aware of the problems, through dialogue, and, where necessary, through compromises that lead to a new form of cooperation between nations. Peace is what all people hope for.

Romans 12:18 states: 'If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.' Here, the emphasis is on the practical, interpersonal act of peace, whilst Genesis 8:11 focuses on a cosmic new beginning. Applied to the present day, I personally consider the interpersonal pursuit of peace to be important.

No, the world does not first have to experience a Flood in order to be 'recreated'. We are all called upon to actively work towards peaceful coexistence and to live this out in our daily lives.

Kerstin Römhild

*1961 • lives and works in Lohr am Main



PEACE • 2025 •
Mixed media • 73 x 53 cm



PEACE – МИР • 2025 •
Mixed media • 73 x 53 cm

Welf Schiefer

*1980 • lives and works in Hamburg

Judith After the Cut – Guilt, Redemption and the Ambivalence of the Righteous

The accompanying drawing removes the biblical scene from its heroic narrative context and transposes it into a psychological and social liminal space. Whilst Gustave Doré's illustration depicts the moment of triumph – Judith presenting the severed head of Holofernes as a sign of divine salvation – this reinterpretation focuses on what follows: on the inner state of a woman who became the saviour of her people by killing another human being.

The figure does not appear as a triumphant heroine. Her body looks emaciated, almost exhausted, as if bearing the burden of an act that, whilst necessary, has not been without consequences. Branches with few leaves grow from her back. These can be interpreted as a symbol of social interdependence: Judith does not act as an autonomous individual, but as the bearer of collective expectations. Her body becomes the place where the interests of the community are inscribed. 'Regicide' is not a private act, but a social function. At the same time, the branches evoke genealogies of power, violence and memory that extend far beyond the individual moment.

Psychologically, the depiction alludes to the ambivalence of moral decisions. Holofernes' severed head floats in isolation within the pictorial space and possesses a peculiar presence. He appears less as a defeated enemy than as a persistent inner figure. The victim does not disappear with the act; they remain as a memory, a symbol of guilt or a psychological shadow. Judith does not look at the head, but she cannot escape its existence. The drawing thus explores an experience that modern psychology would describe as a moral violation: the conflict between one's ethical self-perception and an action that contravenes the fundamental prohibition against killing, even if it is considered justified.

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Judith and Holofernes • 2026 • Mixed media on paper • 55 x 77 cm

Welf Schiefer

*1980 • lives and works in Hamburg

From a sociological perspective, the drawing 'Judith and Holofernes' raises the question of the legitimisation of violence. Societies create narratives that justify extraordinary acts when they serve to protect the community. In the biblical tradition, Judith becomes a heroine because she averts the threat to Israel. Yet the drawing refuses to present her as an unambiguous heroine. The small architectural setting at the bottom of the picture appears fragile and makeshift – as an indication that every political order, even one that has been saved, rests on precarious foundations. The murder removes the 'tyrant', but not the fundamental possibility of violence.

It is precisely here that the religious dimension of the work comes to the fore. In the Book of Judith, the deed is not understood as a personal act of revenge, but as an instrument of divine providence. The question of guilt nevertheless remains. For even though God makes victory possible, Judith carries out the act with her own hands. The drawing reveals what the biblical triumph obscures: the tension between divine legitimacy and human responsibility. It asks whether a just cause can lift the moral burden of killing – or whether all violence, even that directed against a tyrant, leaves its mark on the soul of the perpetrator.

Thus, Judith does not emerge as the victor over Holofernes, but as a figure embodying an existential borderline experience. Between redemption and guilt, liberation and wounding, she embodies the paradoxical realisation that even what is recognised as just does not leave a person unscathed. The drawing thereby shifts the focus from the biblical heroic tale to the timeless question of the price of moral action.

[ChatGPT – based on the uploaded image data for the corresponding woodcut by Gustave Doré and the drawing by Welf Schiefer. Editorially responsible: Axel Schöber]



Tower Builder (Babel) • 2026 •
Mixed media on paper • 70 x 50 cm



Tower Dancer (Babel) • 2026 •
Mixed media on paper • 55 x 43 cm

Ilka Schneider

*1968 • lives and works in Berlin/Reichenow

'Hello'

The picture shows a stylised, headless female figure, next to which lies a severed head. She is surrounded by a halo that gives way to a sort of eruptive chaos. The figure's elongated neck is interrupted by bared fangs. Above this, the neck – contrary to anatomical logic – tapers into a spine. Overall, it remains unclear whether she is a victim or a perpetrator. Despite the unsettling teeth, she cannot, after all, have bitten her own head off. The only certainty is that this is not a portrait of a radiant heroine, but of a contradictory figure.

The vertebral bones symbolise essence or the essential. That which remains. The association with 'backbone' evokes a spirit of resistance and resilience. However, as the bones are situated roughly where one would expect a skull to be, they can also be interpreted as obstinacy or rigid thinking. Or, quite fundamentally, as a lack of spirit and reason.

There is a long tradition in art history of depicting women solely as torsos, or rather, a societal tendency to reduce women to their bodies. Whilst this applies only to a limited extent to depictions of Judith, it is alluded to here through the portrayal of a less-than-ideal, headless body. It remains unclear whether the head lying on the ground belongs to Judith or to Holofernes.

[The title refers to the song of the same name by the band 'Wir sind Helden' – performed/sung by Judith Holofernes in 2003.]



'Hello' • 2026 • Ink and graphite on linen • 70 x 43 cm



Ilka Schneider

*1968 • lives and works in Berlin/Reichenow

Ball of Confusion

In the storm-tossed waters, a small sailing vessel (cog, sloop) drifts helplessly, at the mercy of the waves. A white, bird-like shape hovers above the chaos. No olive branch is to be seen.

In a time of distress caused by multiple crises, there is a great desire to receive a sign that not only offers hope but also fulfils it. But what form might that take?

The opportunity to preserve the Earth ecologically in the way we know it has been missed in recent years, and there will be no 'business as usual'. For many species, the idea of an ark is already too late. We will have to embark on the great journey of change. There is no land in sight; the dove remains a mere shadow. Whether the journey will be bearable and sustainable depends on us – on how much community spirit we can muster.

In anticipation of an impending economy of scarcity – drawing on Rosa Luxemburg's 'Socialism or Barbarism' – the philosopher Kohai Seito advocates socialism amidst barbarism. Either way, no saviour will come; we must do it ourselves.

[The title refers to the song of the same name by the band 'The Temptations' from 1970.]



Ball of Confusion • 2026 • Acrylic, ink and graphite on linen • 70 x 43 cm



"Never in the history of humankind has it been more important than it is today to embark on a journey into the heart and to understand it. The shift from the heart to the brain, which took place thousands of years ago, has cost us dearly. Learning to focus on the heart once again is not merely a spiritual matter, but, given the circumstances, may even be crucial if we are to continue our lives on this planet."

A long time ago, we humans were able to understand one another through a common language. "We communicated and felt in a way that had nothing at all to do with the brain, but instead sprang from a sacred space within the human heart."

The biblical story of Babylon tells us that, in the beginning, all people spoke the same language, and people were even able to communicate with animals using it. After the Tower of Babel, however, we were scattered into hundreds of language groups, which separated us from one another and created boundaries, and we withdrew into our own little worlds. 'Brothers' and 'sisters', born of the same cosmic source, were no longer able to share their thoughts and feelings with one another and soon became enemies. Over the centuries, the ancient way of sharing in the common dream through the heart was lost in the isolation of the human mind. Archaeologists, however, have never found any trace of this one language. I wonder why?

I believe it is because it was not a spoken or written language of words, but a language of sounds from the heart. Only when the hearts of humankind open up again can we remember this language and connect – not just with one another and with animals, but with all life everywhere.

There is something within the human soul that is far greater than anything science or logic can even begin to fathom. "The outer world is created by an inner world – and this lies within the human heart."

Our thoughts and feelings can shape the world around us, and anything is possible when we connect from the heart with Mother Earth, who provides us with everything we need as human beings. The language of the heart is a form of wordless communication that can take place not only between people but between all forms of life.

Drunvalo Melchizedek

Roul Schneider

*1967 • lives and works in Dortmund



Language of the Heart • 2026 • Earth, synthetic resin, pigments on canvas • 102 x 81 cm



Ilze Smildziņa

*1973 • lives and works in Riga/Latvia

The painting 'The Tower of Babel, the Will of God' reimagines the Tower of Babel as a silent, inevitable development.

From the very foundation, movement begins to loosen the structure, as if it were gradually losing its stability. The upper levels sway gently between earth and sky, while some people continue their usual activities, still unaware of the changing direction.

This is not a sudden collapse, but a slow retreat from the heights of human will – submission to the order that has always been present.



Der Turm zu Babel, der Wille Gottes • 2026 • Ölfarbe auf Leinwand • 100 x 100 cm



I believe that nothing happens by chance and that everything follows a divine plan. We are here to learn, and in my view we have been going through this process for a very long time, over and over again. And this brings us straight to the question (which also ties in with the theme of 'The Tower of Babel'): how far are we, as human beings, allowed to go? Are we allowed to influence 'divine creation' through technology? Are we allowed to 'outwit' nature through technology and create life, as in the example mentioned, with the help of seed banks? Might it not be the case that certain individuals develop ideas that go beyond the divine, and that only genetically modified babies are 'produced'? In my view, our modern understanding of technology entails not only helpful medical advances but also enormous risks.

These extreme times are shaking people out of their slumber. In the 1990s, the aim of a large proportion of the younger generation was to build up material wealth as quickly as possible (inspired by the film *Wall Street*); by contrast, the attitude of young people today is quite different. In Western countries, they have enjoyed a comfortable childhood, security and prosperity, but over the last 5–6 years, that security and trust have been taken away from them. I believe that these younger generations (Gen Z, Gen A) have gone through an enormous learning process in recent years, one which their parents and grandparents were either unable to undergo at all or could only manage at a much slower pace.

The younger generation is currently challenging old ways of thinking and stepping outside their comfort zones in order to build a life that is individual and self-determined. They will act out of a deep understanding of the natural order, rather than out of greed for profit. They are happy to use AI, but they do not become enslaved by it. We are witnessing processes in which human understanding surpasses AI. I am delighted to see how AI, driven by programmers, is expanding a context learnt from society which encompasses the sum of all opinions. In this way (I hope), no one will espouse centralist ideas in the future. The younger generation of our time is leading humanity back to the divine.

I believe we are currently witnessing a 'breakdown' of the familiar, much like a spinning top that spins uncontrollably just before coming to a standstill (wars, new diseases, etc.) until it finally stops, only to be set back on its course (a new beginning).

In my view, the time has come for insights, and at the same time, artists now have the important task of using art to draw attention to new perspectives in the process towards a 'self-thinking society'.

Zsuzsa Szvath

*1972 • lives and works in Dettelbach



One of two submitted application sketches • 2025 • charcoal pencil, pastel chalk

Zsuzsa Szvath

*1972 • lives and works in Dettelbach

Since 2020, my artistic work has focused primarily on the search for truth. My aim is to look beyond the visible and ask questions. In my paintings, I depict human emotions in a world that has become surreal.

For the art project 'ENTSPRUNGEN/ARISING – New Interpretations of Biblical Illustrations', I wanted to create a new painting that interprets the 'search for a new beginning' in a fresh and modern way. When applying to take part in the art project, I had produced two sketches (see also the previous page) for paintings.

My painting 'Search for a New Beginning II', which I have now completed, depicts two young women, friends, sitting on a wooden structure (an ark). Everything around them is black; they are gazing into a black abyss without a glimmer of light, without any discernible signs of human presence. In front of them are two oversized concrete windows, through which beautiful colours reveal a new, positive world.

The young women symbolise the younger generation; they are strong, courageous and united. The two windows represent the future, a new beginning. Through the two windows, I wish to convey that we have several options when it comes to our decisions. God supports our decisions; everything we do leads to insights.

The dove, a symbol of freedom and new beginnings, shows the two young women the way!



In Search of a New Beginning II • 2026 • Oil on canvas • 100 x 100 cm

Antje Vega

*1941 • lives and works in Hamburg

Judith's Rückkehr

Schläfer, schwarz ist das Nass noch an meinen Füßen, ungenau. Tau sagen sie.

Ach, dass ich Judith bin, herkomme von ihm, aus dem Zelt aus dem Bett, austriefend
sein Haupt, dreifach trunkenes Blut. Weintrunken, trunken vom Räucherwerk, trunken
von mir - und jetzt nüchtern wie Tau.

Niedrig gehaltenes Haupt über dem Morgengras; ich aber oben auf meinem Gang,
ich Erhobene.

Plötzlich leeres Gehirn, abfließende Bilder ins Erdreich; mir aber quillend ins Herz alle
Breite der Nacht-Tat.

Liebende, die ich bin.

Schrecken trieben in mir alle Wonnen zusamm, an mir sind alle Stellen.

Herz, mein berühmtes Herz, schlag an den Gegenwind:
wie ich geh, wie ich geh

und schneller die Stimme in mir, meine, die rufen wird, Vogelruf, vor der Not-Stadt.

Rainer Maria Rilke, July 1911, Paris • Poems 1906 to 1926
(A collection of miscellaneous and posthumous poems)

Before the 16th century, the story of Judith and Holofernes was seen as a heroic deed. I
have set Judith's story in the present day. It could be either a private act of revenge or a
political act.



Night-time Deed II • 2026
Mixed media on canvas • 60 x 60 cm



Night-time Deed III • 2026
Mixed media on canvas • 60 x 60 cm



Rubica von Streng

*1992 • lives and works in Berlin

The idea for this work took shape during the height of the Covid pandemic and was inspired by the TV broadcasts from the Bundestag at the time, which often featured speeches that were light on substance but all the more full of clichés.

With her work 'Tower of Maturity', Rubica von Streng draws a clear parallel with the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. The work consists of numerous denture frames arranged side by side. Together, they form the tower's characteristic conical shape, which Pieter Bruegel the Elder had already depicted in his painting 'The Tower of Babel' (1563)."

A virtual dialogue emerges between the skeletal structures of dentures visible in the sculpture. The flow of speech [narrator: Christian Harting] is reminiscent of the debates familiar from political forums: loud babble and snatches of words which – sometimes unintentionally – reach the public through cracks in the façade.



Tower of Maturity • 2021 • Plaster, denture frameworks (mounted on a plinth with an acrylic glass cover, including a sound installation from 2026) • 165 x 40 x 40 cm

Reinhard Voss

*1959 • lives and works in Wissen

Reflections on the Design and Creation Process of the Relief Sculpture 'Study of Judith and Holofernes'

My own ideas about this biblical story from the Apocrypha were initially inspired by the numerous visual representations of it in art history, which have already been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. In addition to the events themselves, the focus is on the head of Holofernes and the figure of Judith as subjects. But I did have a quiet hunch from the start that, beyond the fact of a severed head, the matter might generally have to do with resistance, overcoming obstacles, appropriation, and perhaps even a process of creation.

The plot of the entire story is gripping, and it borders on a miracle that Judith managed to pull it off – and then brought about this salvation that affected an entire people. Of course, one's own artistic work does not come close to having this scale; but doesn't it, at its core, also contain such resistance and tension, doubt and hope, a seductive quality, and a foundation rooted in freedom? Is not a constitutionally 'old' element disempowered in every artistic act? And is not there a kind of self-empowerment hidden within the success of a truly new creation?

As I was thinking through my own interpretation of the scene against the backdrop of the story, it first struck me that I envisioned the actual act as a vertical event (a cut or blow from above) and the subsequent display of the already severed head in a horizontal composition (the perpetrator, the object, and the audience aligned in a straight line). These two events occur one after the other, separated by time, and are of entirely different natures: The action, the deed – against the backdrop of an urgency that compels one to act, so that one will not hesitate for long. Then there is the result of the deed: its visibility, legibility, and symbolic significance. Its reception is presumably a more protracted event, especially in the presence of a participating audience.

>>>



Study of Judith and Holofernes • 2026 •
Indigo ink on pieces of softwood • 102 x 30 x 10 cm

My relief study on this theme is constructed vertically from numerous individual pieces, with two centers one above the other, each depicting a face – the one at the top intended to be Judith's and the one at the bottom, Holofernes'. Between them, the structural framework appears to intersect, forming a fragile, narrow waist at the center and shifting direction in a contrapposto-like manner. In the process of constructing the sculpture, this crisscrossing of slats served as my initial point of reference. One of the wooden strips runs diagonally from the area around Judith's eyes to Holofernes's head, where it lies lower and appears as a notch. The other wooden strip in the crisscrossed structure runs from the area around Judith's ear to a triangular indentation roughly at the level of Holofernes's eyes.

In conjunction with the two cutouts, it creates a sculptural dynamic in relation to the interplay of relationships.

Judith's face appears enveloped by a rather flat, round shape with large cutouts. A sort of fragmented 'halo' with a sharp, aggressive tip, somewhat like a weapon.

Below Holofernes' head, another flat shape extends to the side; this was necessary to provide a counterbalance to the vertical line and to give the whole composition an additional dimension. Figuratively, it could be interpreted as part of the neck, a blade, or both.

Much of the figure is covered in indigo blue in a sort of fabric appliqué. The upper part of the face is completely enveloped by this, while the lower part is only partially covered.

Of course, in principle, every visual representation of a face is a masquerade, but it seems to me that there is a difference in this hierarchical-spatial context between perpetrator and victim, and therefore the two faces should not be depicted in exactly the same way. So where is there more of a mask, or which head should be more concealed and which less? A severed head becomes an object, lifeless just as a picture is lifeless; thus, the head of the victim should be the easiest to identify based on all the details, and so the expression in the lower half of the face takes on a distinctly individual character.

The figure of Judith, on the other hand, is 'charged'. She acts with cunning and seduction, which – while Holofernes is 'mentally absent' – ultimately culminates in the act of killing. The idea behind the story seems to me to be concealed within her form in a concentrated way; thus, it should be veiled by a surface that almost entirely conceals the figure's body!

>>>

Reinhard Voss

*1959 • lives and works in Wissen



Detail 'Study of
Judith-Holofernes'

One aspect of this sculptural work was unavoidable: to transfer the intentional, the pictorial, and the representational elements of the historical narrative into the sculpture's creative process in such a way that they do not tip the work into becoming a recognizable illustration with a primary purpose. Instead, the intentional elements should be subordinated to the inherent logic of the emerging form – not least to avoid betraying Judith's demeanor and the nature of her relationship with Holofernes.

Spiez, 2026

André Werner

*1961 • lives and works in Berlin

Body and Sound

André Werner's triptych 'Judith is singing' connects an icon of European art history with the freedom struggle of Iranian women. The centerpiece of the work is 'Judith is singing (after Doré) I', a direct visual response to Gustave Doré's famous woodcut Judith showing the head of Holofernes. Where the historical model couples the moment of triumph with a cruel act of violence, Werner's reinterpretation breaks with this logic, countering the tyrannicide with an image of living resistance.

The familiar composition is transposed to a dusty suburb of modern-day Tehran. Yet, instead of the severed head of a ruler, this Judith holds up her own face – unveiled, her loose hair blowing in the wind, as she sings from the back of her throat with passionate intensity. This scene is flanked by the works 'Judith is singing I' and 'Judith is singing II' which expand the motif into a broader context and detach themselves from the strict pictorial template. As Fine Art prints on Baryta paper, the portraits acquire an almost tangible, haptic depth.

The political dimension of these images unfolds through their pure sensuality. Under a theocratic order that brutally suppresses both uncovered hair and any public singing by women, the mere act of singing becomes subversive. Werner's Judith figures need no weapons to shake a patriarchal system. Their liberation takes place in the here and now: non-violent, unyielding, and carried by the sheer, untamed presence of their own voices.

Matou de Marsalle



جودیت آواز می‌خواند

Judith is singing I • 2026 • Fine-art print on Baryte paper •
26 x 21 cm (print) • 40 x 30 cm (framed) • Edition of 5 | 2AP

Judith is singing (after Doré) I • Fine-art print on Baryte paper •
36 x 31 cm (print), 50 x 40 cm (framed) • Edition of 5 | 2AP

Judith is singing II • 2026 • Fine-art print on Baryte paper •
26 x 21 cm (print) • 40 x 30 cm (framed) • Edition of 5 | 2AP



Recommended reading

A short selection for Edition II

- Tower of Babel – The Evidence against the New Creationism
Robert T. Pennock, Paperback, 2000 ISBN: 978-0262661652
- Tower of Babel: Ten Surprising Facts About the Tower of ...
Charlie K. Lambert,
44 pages, 2022, Kindle book ASIN: B0B6S738FY

Artist's Websites

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