

NACKT (NAKED)

30 Years Galerie Deschler

Elvira Bach, Luciano Castelli, Rainer Fetting, Salomé & KEHL

21 November, 2025 – 14 February, 2026

On the occasion of its 30th anniversary, Galerie Deschler Berlin presents the exhibition "NACKT (NAKED)", featuring works by **Rainer Fetting**, **Elvira Bach**, **Luciano Castelli**, and **Salomé**. The show brings together paintings from the late 1970s and 1980s—the era in which the so-called "Junge Wilde" (the "Young Wild Ones") emerged in Berlin. These artists rebelled against the intellectual rigor of Minimalism and Conceptual Art with gestural, expressive painting. They championed color, emotion, and immediacy—an art that breathes life and embraces the body.

At the heart of the exhibition lies the nude—not as a classical motif, but as an expression of existential freedom, a symbol of desire, identity, and vulnerability. The works on view depict the human body as a site of longing and self-discovery—often erotic or explicit, always direct and unidealized. Particularly the male nudes, predominant in the works of Fetting, Castelli, and Salomé, articulate a new emancipatory self-image. They stand for an artistic and social movement that, in the 1980s, fought for sexual self-determination and viewed the body as a space of liberation. Fetting and Salomé, both closely connected to the gay movement of the time, turned their art into a statement against shame, repression, and invisibility. In NACKT, being naked becomes a symbol of attitude—of authenticity, pride, and the joy of life.

A special highlight of the exhibition is Rainer Fetting's sculpture "Die Drehung" (1987), shown alongside his painting "The Wall" from the same year and a red chalk drawing that served as a preliminary study for both. The expressionistically exaggerated, elongated torso of the life-size bronze, its body twisted in a spiral with bent arms and hands resting on the head, reappears in the painting rendered in blue tones before a yellow depiction of the Berlin Wall. This constellation illustrates the close connection between painting, drawing, and sculpture in Fetting's work. Together, the three pieces allow the body to be experienced across different dimensions—as color field, as line, as movement in space. They embody the essence of the "Junge Wilde" approach: immediacy, gesture, vitality. In portraying the male nude before the Wall, Fetting also symbolically evokes the link between art, corporeality, and history—West Berlin of the 1980s as a space of artistic expression and sexual self-determination in the shadow of both mental and physical walls.

Alongside Fetting, Elvira Bach, Luciano Castelli, and Salomé each offer distinctive yet related perspectives on the nude. Since the early 1980s, Elvira Bach has made a name for herself with her striking depictions of women that place female autonomy, desire, and self-presentation at the center. Her women are naked because they choose to be—strong, self-assured, sensual. Luciano Castelli, in turn, explores the play of genders, the dissolution of roles, and the corporeality of the self in his often androgynous nude self-portraits. His figures oscillate between seduction and distance, between pose and confession. Salomé brings the theatrical gesture and performative energy of his stage appearances into his painting. His nudes are ecstatic, vibrating—an intoxication of color and light. Together, these positions unfold a vision of the body that is as individual as it is universal: a body that speaks, desires, reveals, and transforms itself.

Parallel to the main exhibition, the gallery's basement presents a special homage to artist **Gerhard Kehl**, who passed away in 2024 and whose work and active involvement shaped the early years of the gallery. His "Blue Series," shown under his artist name -KEHL-, was the subject of Galerie Deschler's very first exhibition in 1995. Now, 30 eventful years later, it returns as a quiet counterpart to the expressive main show. Kehl's works, characterized by reduction and contemplative depth, by the interplay of lacquered surfaces and subtle humor, recall the spirit of experimentation with which Marcus Deschler founded his gallery three decades ago. This look back is not nostalgic but a living dialogue between origin and present—a conversation between the bold beginnings of the gallery and the enduring consistency of its vision.

In this sense, "NACKT" is more than a jubilee exhibition. It is a declaration of (artistic) freedom and self-determination, of openness and sensuality. The works on view reveal how closely painting and life, body and expression, sexuality and identity are intertwined. Thirty years after the founding of Galerie Deschler, "NACKT" stands for what has always defined it: the courage to embrace intensity, nonconformity, and radical presence. The naked body here becomes a symbol of the bared human itself—unprotected and unmasked, imperfect, vulnerable, alive, and all the more seductive for it.