



Headless

Marianna Simnett
31.1.–5.7.2026

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Press release

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless

Exhibition from January 31 until July 5, 2026 at the Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR

Long version

The exhibition “Headless” by Marianna Simnett (b. 1986 in London, lives and works between Berlin and New York) presents, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of seven years of artistic practice. It brings together works from different periods and across a range of media, such as sculpture, video and AI-based works, which are interlinked by a new body of paintings.

The expansive exhibition reveals Marianna Simnett’s close connection to Surrealism through her dreamlike imagery, exploration of the unconscious mind, and rejection of rationality and logic. A world both strange and seductive emerges, inviting viewers into a maze of fractured realities and uncanny encounters.

The title of the exhibition “Headless” is borrowed from Max Ernst’s first collage novel, “La femme 100 têtes” (The hundred headless woman, 1929), whose influence resonates throughout the show. A new series of paintings, produced especially for the exhibition, takes direct inspiration from this book, in which Ernst composed a loose sequence of eerie images, often featuring his feathered alter ego, “Loplop”. Marianna Simnett uses this as a starting point to interweave past and present – bringing together current events, mythology, and her own alter egos to form new, hybrid narratives.

Marianna Simnett (* 1986) is a British-Croatian artist with a multidisciplinary approach who lives and works between Berlin and New York. Her immersive narratives centre around the overlapping and at times incongruous themes of vulnerability, autonomy, control, pain, metamorphosis, and care. Surrealism has long been a prominent influence in Simnett’s practice, recently highlighted by her participation in the 59th Venice Biennale, “The Milk of Dreams” (2022).

**Curated by
Madeleine Frey and Sarah Louisa Henn**

Further information on the exhibition and individual works can be found on our mediaguide:



Hashtags:
**#MaxErnstMuseum #LVRKultur #LVR
#MEM #MariannaSimnett**

Short version

The exhibition “Headless” presents Marianna Simnett’s comprehensive, multidisciplinary oeuvre across painting, sculpture, video, artificial intelligence and music, creating a disturbing yet seductive labyrinth of fractured realities and uncanny encounters.

The exhibition’s title “Headless” pays homage to Max Ernst and is borrowed from his first collage novel, “La femme 100 têtes (The hundred headless woman) from 1929. In her latest painting series, created especially for the exhibition and also titled “Headless”, Marianna Simnett connects past ideas of Surrealism with our contemporary moment, twisting and subverting Ernst’s collages into violent and sensual scenes.

Marianna Simnett (b. 1986, London, UK) is a British-Croatian multidisciplinary artist living and working between Berlin and New York. Her immersive narratives centre on the overlapping and at times incongruous themes of vulnerability, autonomy, control, pain, metamorphosis and care.

The exhibition will be on view at the Max Ernst Museum from January 31 to July 5, 2026.

Catalog

The accompanying catalog “Headless”, published by Hirmer Publishers, will feature contributions by Cecilia Alemani, Madeleine Frey, Sarah Louisa Henn, and Lisa Tuttle.

The museum edition is available for € 29 in the museum shop.



Statements

Statements of the artist | December 11, 2025



What I try to do is be as honest as possible, use my personal experience, use the peculiarities of life and the strange sense that I have of being in this mad world, and try to reflect it back to others so that they might feel it too.

I'm very interested in humour, and of course I'm also very interested in horror, and I feel very safe when I become a unicorn or a swan or turn myself into a princess or a monster. Sometimes with the worst horror comes a type of escapism and a permission to go beyond the horror into some other place and make light of the horrors out there, just even for a moment. Once it's there, it's really for you, the audience, to embrace and fill it with your own interpretations and meanings.

I was deeply inspired by Max Ernst's collage novels and by collage as a medium itself — a way of bringing together, fusing, and sticking disparate ideas. For me, collage is a fascinating artistic tool because it connects things that seemingly do not belong together. I wanted to translate this approach into a contemporary context and make the images my own by fusing them with colour. Instead of using a scalpel, I use the paintbrush — to fuse, to bleed, to melt categories, boundaries, and borders into one another. In this way, the work pays homage to Max Ernst in his birthplace, while at the same time being firmly rooted in my own visual language and ideas.

I was interested in the kaleidoscopic meanings of the term “headless,” ranging from violent decapitation to being lost in a forest, or even the stereotype of a “stupid woman”. When viewed through a misogynistic, gendered lens, the word often carries connotations of dizziness or silliness. These layered meanings were something I wanted to examine and explore.

My ongoing vision is to dismantle categorisations, from borders and walls to rigid definitions, and to introduce a sense of fluidity and boundlessness between materials and forms. This results in hybrid bodies: animals becoming humans, machines turning into animals, and so on. It also means moving freely between painting, sculpture, performance, music, installation, and other media.

This is the first time in my life that I have seen a large body of work spanning across seven years of my life, across different disciplines and mediums, all under one roof. It's pretty overwhelming and surprising how much things do actually connect together. They do come from the same brain, but they come from different modes of living and different times of my life.



Wall texts

Marianna Simnett's exhibition "Headless" presents, for the first time, a comprehensive overview that brings together seven years of her artistic practice. Working across media such as video, AI-based works, sculpture, and painting, she creates dreamlike visual worlds that oscillate between fascination and horror. Simnett delves into the subconscious and a departure from logic, linking her work to the ideas of Surrealism. The exhibition title "Headless" refers to Max Ernst's 1929 collage novel "La femme 100 têtes" (The hundred headless woman). Simnett chose this title deliberately, playing with the French homophony of cent (one hundred) and sans (nothing, without).

Like a red thread, the motif of headlessness – both literal and metaphorical – runs throughout the exhibition. Simnett draws on motifs from Greek mythology and fairy tales from different cultural traditions to explore change and transformation. Goddesses, demons, witches, and other female-coded figures from established narratives are transformed into hybrid bodies with fluid identities. Her narratives, shaped by feminist perspectives, emerge within a field of tension between violence and pleasure, dream and trauma, horror and play. She challenges social conventions, dissolving the boundaries between human and animal, machine and body, gender and identity, leading us into dizzying, surreal worlds.

The exhibition features bizarre and at times macabre works, as well as immersive installations in which the artist breaks social taboos. Theatrical stagings draw us into intense, often unsettling experiential spaces where we are pushed to our limits and invited to adopt new perspectives. Simnett envisions radically new worlds full of unrestrained imagery, strange

stories, and contradictory desires. What emerges is a seductive yet disquieting labyrinth which reveals the fractured and polarised condition of our world.

Marianna Simnett (*1986) is a multidisciplinary British-Croatian artist who lives and works between Berlin and New York. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London and at Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham.

Simnett's immersive narrative forms revolve around overlapping and at times contradictory themes such as vulnerability, autonomy, control, pain, metamorphosis, and care. In recent years, she has had major international solo exhibitions at venues including the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2024), the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2019), the Kunsthalle Zürich (2019), the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2018), as well as The New Museum, New York (2018). She has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including at the MGK Siegen (2025), Art Basel Parcours (2025), and Manifesta 15 in Barcelona (2024). Her participation in the 59th Venice Biennale, "The Milk of Dreams" (2022) manifested her close connection to Surrealism, which has long shaped her artistic practice.



Further information about the individual works can be found here.

Supporting Program

Accompanying the exhibition, various events and workshops for teenagers, and adults, as well as special programs, will be offered. Please also check the announcement of dates on the homepage <https://maxernstmuseum.lvr.de> as well as on Facebook and Instagram.

Opening of the exhibition

Friday, January 30, 2026 | 7 pm

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless

Reading by Svenja Wasser, from Lisa Tuttle's
"Blood of the Host"

Further evening program:

DJ-Set Alisa Berger

Free admission

Public Tours

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless

Every Saturday and Sunday | 3 – 4 pm

5 €, reduced fee 3 € (plus admission)

Curator's Tours:

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless

Friday, March 3, 2026 | 4.30 – 5.30 pm

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 | 4.30 – 5.30 pm

with Madeleine Frey,

director of Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR

5 €, reduced fee 3 € (plus admission)

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 | 4.30 – 5.30 pm

Friday, May 29, 2026 | 4.30 – 5.30 pm

with Sarah Louisa Henn,

Curator and Head of Collections

5 €, reduced fee 3 € (plus admission)

Workshops (selection)

Saturday, March 28, 2026 | 11 am – 5 pm

Nude drawing class: BODY IMAGE

with Katharina Bodenmüller

The workshop focuses on the human figure. In an intensive session with a live model, we will draw nudes. This will allow us to capture anatomy, proportions, and expression. The resulting drawings will then serve as a starting point for painting and drawing experiments.

For beginners and advanced students

60 €, reduced fee 48 € (including admission and materials)

Saturday, June 27, 2026 | 11 am – 5 pm

Performance-Workshop:

IN THE BALANCE OF THE UNKNOWN

with Gitta Roser

Based on Marianna Simnett's impressive works in the exhibition, in which bodies and identities are constantly changing, we explore movement as a living form of transformation: How does transformation feel? How does a gesture change when it becomes unfamiliar, breaks down, or is created anew?

The workshop is aimed at young people aged 16 and over and adults—with or without dance experience.

60 €, reduced fee 48 € (including admission)

Cooperation during the exhibition

The exhibition is accompanied by an outreach project in cooperation with Brühl Public Library. From "Weird Girl Fiction" to feminist non-fiction and horror, visitors to the public library can borrow books and films on related topics.

Free admission

Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR

In the former “Brühler Pavillon”, where Max Ernst once danced, the Max Ernst Museum opened in 2005. It is the world’s first and only museum dedicated to the life and work of Max Ernst (1891–1976), the internationally renowned artist born in Brühl. The collection spans 70 years of one of the 20th century’s most significant artists: his time in Brühl and Bonn, his Dadaist activities in the Rhineland after World War I, his contributions to the Surrealist movement in France, his exile in the USA, and finally, his return to Europe in 1953.

The collection includes almost the entire body of his graphic oeuvre as well as a unique ensemble of over 70 sculptures that showcase his sculptural work over decades; these pieces come from the artist’s personal collection. Another highlight and at the same time the centerpiece of the exhibition are the 36 „D-paintings“, birthday and love gifts from Max Ernst to his wife, the artist Dorothea Tanning, with whom he shared over three decades of his life. Additionally, a collection of over 900 photographic documents enriches the collection, tracing the artist’s life with contributions from prominent photographers such as Lee Miller and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

The Max Ernst Foundation was established on February 13, 2001. Foundation partners include the city of Brühl, the Kreissparkasse Köln, and the Rhineland Regional Council (Landschaftsverband Rheinland, LVR). The foundation’s purpose is to promote art and culture as well as science and research. Its mission is to collect works, memorabilia, and documents related to Max Ernst.

The museum regularly hosts exhibitions featuring international artists from Classical Modernism to contemporary art, offering new perspectives on the collection. With the format New Perspectives in the Leonora Carrington Hall, contemporary artists open up new perspectives on Surrealism in the context of the collection.

Press images

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless
Exhibition from January 31 until
July 5, 2026 at the Max Ernst Museum
Brühl of the LVR

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We would be pleased to receive a reference copy!

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<https://www.lvr.de/max-ernst-museum-bruehl/presse/presse-akkreditierung/>



Press photo 1: Marianna Simnett, *Headless #1*, 2025,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci t , Berlin,
photo: Thomas M ller



Press photo 2: Marianna Simnett, *The Producer*, 2025,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci t , Berlin, photo: Trevor Good



Pressebild 3: Marianna Simnett, *The Severed Tail*, 2022,
Three-channel video installation (video still)
© Courtesy the artist and Soci t , Berlin



Pressebild 5: Marianna Simnett, *Discordia*, 2023, © Courtesy
the artist and Soci t , Berlin, photo: Trevor Good



Pressebild 4: Marianna Simnett, *Prayers for Roadkill (Unicorn)*, 2022,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci t , Berlin, photo: Trevor Good



Pressebild 6: Marianna Simnett, *Headless #2*, 2025, detail,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci  t  , Berlin, photo: J  rgen Vogel for the Max Ernst Museum Br  hl of the LVR



Installation view 1: Marianna Simnett, installation view, *Prayers for Roadkill (Bird)*, 2022,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci  t  , Berlin, photo: Henning Krause



Installation view 2: Marianna Simnett, installation view, *Crowns*, 2022–2024; *Blue Moon*, 2022,
© Courtesy the artist and Soci  t  , Berlin, photo: Henning Krause



Installation view 3: Marianna Simnett, installation view, *The Producer*, 2025; *Headless #6*, 2025; *Crowns*, 2022–2024, © Courtesy the artist and Société, Berlin, photo: Henning Krause



Installation view 4: Marianna Simnett, installation view, *Prayers for Roadkill (Unicorn)*, 2022; *Leda Was a Swan*, 2025, © Courtesy the artist and Société, Berlin, photo: Henning Krause

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Contact

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Info service

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<https://maxernstmuseum.lvr.de>

Administration | Fantasie Labor *

Schlossstraße 21, 50321 Brühl (near Cologne)
*At the so called Fantasie Labor (Fantasy Lab) the
workshops of the educational department take place

Permanent Collection

Max Ernst – Live and works

Temporary Exhibitions

MARIANNA SIMNETT – Headless
January, 31, 2026 until July 5, 2026

FARAH OSSOULI – Remember the flight,
the bird will die
NEW PERSPECTIVES in the Leonora Carrington Hall
Until March 1, 2026

MARION VERBOOM – Loplop
CHRISTOPH WESTERMEIER – Sedona Vogel
FRAUKE DANNERT – Stone on stone
NEW PERSPECTIVES in the Max Ernst Collection
Display
Until July 5, 2026

Upcoming Exhibition

ALEX GREIN – Luise Straus Prize of the LVR
Exhibition in the Leonora Carrington Hall
May, 22, 2026 until July 5, 2026

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm
also on April 3, April 5, April 6, May 1, May 25,
and June 4, 2026
Closed on Monday,
also on February 12, February 15, and
February 16, 2026

Admission Fees

Adults 13 € (Combination Ticket Exhibition and
Collection) | reduced rate 8 € (Combination Ticket
Exhibition and Collection)

Children and teenagers up to 18 years: free admission

Last Thursday of each month: free admission
(except on public holidays) Further information:
<https://maxernstmuseum.lvr.de>

Tickets

available at the webshop or at the museum cashier
<https://www.shop.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de/#/start>

Info-Service | Booking

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Phone: 02234 9921-555
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<https://kulturinfo-rheinland.de>

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