



Installation view: Maria Hahnenkamp, Belvedere 21
Photo: Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Vienna

Vienna, March 19, 2025

Belvedere 21

Arsenalstraße 1
1030 Vienna

Opening hours:
Tuesday to Sunday
11 am–6 pm
Late opening:
Thursday 11 am–9 pm
Open Mondays on public
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MARIA HAHNENKAMP

March 21–August 31, 2025

Belvedere 21 presents Maria Hahnenkamp's first major institutional solo exhibition: a remarkable Austrian artist who, with radical consistency and subtle subversion, confronts the mechanisms of accelerated and superficial image production and opens up new perspectives on seeing and thinking.

Stella Rollig, general director of the Belvedere: Maria Hahnenkamp's oeuvre is among the most interesting and most headstrong in recent Austrian art history. For decades, this artist has systematically interrogated social and media structures and analyzed images of femininity with subversive radicalism, and the time has come to introduce her to a wider audience.

For over thirty years, Hahnenkamp has been working with, through, on, and even against the medium of photography and its specific dispositives. In her critical, feminist practice, she deliberately undermines the voyeurism of the media, rejects the passive consumability of images, and offers alternative perspectives on bodies, space, and social norms.

As an artist's artist, Hahnenkamp is well known for her media-critical and feminist practice and is a key figure in contemporary Austrian art. In the 1980s, she taught herself the craft of photography through commercial art and gained experience in print shops and advertising agencies; at the same time, she began to interrogate and disrupt the image strategies she encountered. At the beginning of the 1990s, Hahnenkamp attended Friedl Kubelka-Bondy's School for Artistic Photography, where she took part in workshops on experimental and artistic photography. It was around this time that she began to date

her first artistic works. Hahnenkamp describes this period as follows: "Graphic design by day and art by night."

Hahnenkamp's oeuvre includes photographs, works with photographic paper, slide projections, video works, installations, and site-specific interventions. She deliberately describes herself as an artist who works with photography—not a photographer. Her works emerge from the interplay between appropriation, deconstruction, and critical reflection on photographic materials. By withdrawing from the camera herself, instead only directing her subjects and compositions and reflecting on them as an artist, she distances herself from the supposedly objective gaze of photography.

Her interest lies in the staging of the female body in the context of consumer-driven image production. To resist this form of appropriation, she develops artistic strategies of withdrawal: women's bodies are fragmented, veiled, or erased—a deliberate counterapproach to conventional mechanisms of representation. At the same time, she draws on forms of excess: by using found image material, which is cast onto the wall in rapid succession as a slide projection, she illustrates the continuously increasing flood of images.

As a result of her daily confrontation with advertising images, Hahnenkamp soon identified photography as a medium of appropriation and commercial superficiality. In her art, she challenges the photographic image, undermining its conventions and unveiling what is hidden behind the visible.

While her works contain references to the feminist avant-garde of the 1970s, she has developed a unique artistic approach that has forged new paths for a younger generation of artists. She uses the intersections between commercial and artistic photography as a productive and critical filter—both for her works and her exhibition concepts.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

With more than one hundred works from around thirty-five work groups, the exhibition at Belvedere 21 offers a comprehensive insight into Maria Hahnenkamp's multifaceted oeuvre. Central themes are emptiness, space, craft, and ornament. Developed together with the artist in the exhibition architecture designed by Walter Kräutler, the presentation includes photographs, works on photographic paper, slide projections, video works, installations, site-specific interventions, and a sound work.

Curator Stefanie Reisinger: *This exhibition was created in close collaboration with Maria Hahnenkamp. It was important to us to make her work visible and tangible by focusing on her main interests and artistic strategies. The principle of reduction, the minimal targeted architectural interventions, and the deliberate empty spaces create room for attentive contemplation that goes beyond mere looking. Her theoretical and conceptual approach thus establishes itself in a surprisingly perceptive and tactile way. Visitors can expect an enthralling array of stimulating contrasts.*

An essential element of Hahnenkamp's art is ornament, which she borrows from Christian iconography and recognizes the ways it is used there as a supposedly meaningless surrogate for women, sensuality, and eroticism. Ornamental tendrils and rocailles also cover the (female) body in her works and symbolize her critique of the historical repression of women in Catholic, patriarchal societies. At the same time, Hahnenkamp productively deploys the strategy of withdrawal to open up new levels of perception: her site-specific drilled works, consisting of hundreds of holes, penetrate the exhibition wall and defy

passive consumability. This large-scale, radically invasive intervention teeters on the brink of invisibility and requires a high degree of concentration and attention from the viewer. In this way, Hahnenkamp not only engages with the space, but also removes the boundaries between picture frames and institutional frameworks with her interventions.

The exhibition does not follow a chronological or thematic arrangement, instead showcasing the complex interweaving of interests, critiques, and artistic strategies within Maria Hahnenkamp's oeuvre. For example, her earliest group of four photo albums (from 1989) is presented near a slide projection work (*Vogue*, 2005) that has been translated into a video format (*V 12/19*, 2019), as well as a large-format work (*O. T.*, 1993), for which Hahnenkamp sanded 195 analog photographs of women in beauty salons down to the image supports and then sewed them together. The proximity of works from different creative periods highlights the continuity, revisitation, and constant evolution of a systematically developed artistic practice and demonstrates both the scope of Hahnenkamp's media and her thematic focal points—this ranges formally from the most private format of collecting images to the erasure of socially normative representations and the large-scale projection of found and appropriated image material, and thematically from the iconographic analysis of domestic helping hands in the private sphere to liturgical ceremonies in the church and commercialized depictions of women in fashion, pornography, and art history.

The artist's most recent work, which was developed especially for Belvedere 21, explores emptiness, or rather the unrepresentable and unspeakable: the exhibition is complemented by a sound space created in collaboration with soprano Ursula Langmayr and based on an adaptation of John Cage's "Lecture on Nothing" by Hahnenkamp. The sound work can be experienced as a live performance on six dates over the duration of the exhibition, and visitors can also encounter it as a sound recording in the exhibition space (played at random times).

BIOGRAPHY

Maria Hahnenkamp was born in 1959 in Eisenstadt, Burgenland, where she spent her childhood and youth. She moved to Vienna at the age of seventeen, where she still lives today. As an autodidact, she gained her first professional experience in print shops and as a commercial artist. It was here that she learned the craft of graphic design from scratch and discovered her interest in media and photography. She began producing her first dated artworks from 1988/1989. In 1990, Hahnenkamp attended Friedl Kubelka-Bondy's School for Artistic Photography, where she participated in workshops on experimental and artistic photography. By the early 1990s, Hahnenkamp was represented by Galerie Praz-Delavallade in Paris, where she exhibited regularly until 2005. In addition to solo presentations at various galleries in Austria, she has also participated in numerous international solo and group shows in Germany, France, and the USA, including Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York (1995, 1996); Austrian Cultural Forum New York (1993, 2018/19); Kunstverein in Hamburg (1994); Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh (1995); Musée du Luxembourg, Paris (1998); ZKM, Karlsruhe (2000); Covivant Gallery & Studios, Tampa, FL (2001); Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken (2001); and Fotomuseum Winterthur (2006). Her works are represented in major collections in Austria and beyond. Hahnenkamp received early recognition for her photographic work and her extensive engagement with the medium and was awarded the Promotion Prize for Artistic Photography by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and the Arts in 1994 and the Msgr. Otto Mauer Prize in 1995. This was followed by an award at the Römerquelle Art Competition for Artistic Photography (1998) and the City of Vienna Promotion Prize for Fine Arts (1999). In the same year, Hahnenkamp also received the Landes-Hypothekenbank Tirol Award at the 26th Austrian Graphic Design Competition in Innsbruck. Other awards include the frauen.kunst.preis (2006), the Honorary Prize for Artistic Photography from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (2007), the City of Vienna Prize for Fine Arts (2008), and the Honorary Prize for Fine Arts from the Burgenland-Stiftung Theodor Kery (2013). In the course of her career, Hahnenkamp has also held a guest professorship at the University of Art and Design Linz, given lectures, and led workshops, for example at the Salzburg Summer Academy on the subject of artistic photography.

CATALOGUE

Maria Hahnenkamp

Editors: Stella Rollig, Stefanie Reisinger

Authors: Texts by Clara Bouveresse, Rainer Fuchs, Ruth Horak, Christin Müller, and Stefanie Reisinger examine Maria Hahnenkamp's work from art-historical, feminist, and media-theoretical perspectives.

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PRESS IMAGES

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title	<i>Maria Hahnenkamp</i>
Curator	Stefanie Reisinger
Assistant Curator	Ana Petrović
Duration	March 21–August 31, 2025
Venue	Belvedere 21 Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna
Opening hours	Tuesday to Sunday 11 am–6 pm Late opening: Thursday 11 am–9 pm Open Mondays on public holidays
Tickets	Regular €9.30 online; €11 at the museum Concessions €6.90 online; €8 at the museum Belvedere annual pass €44 Children and young people under 18 free
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Further information and press images of the exhibition are available for download at belvedere.at/press.