

author
ANNA TISCHE

photographer
PETER HAUSER

The photos were created by Peter Hauser, a Swiss photographer and artist based in Zurich, known for his work with analog and camera-less photographic techniques. He continues to operate his own darkroom, where he devotes his time to handmade printing and experimenting with alternative photographic processes.

Peter was nominated twice for the Swiss Federal Design Awards (2012 and 2016). His first monograph "Hello, I am not from here" was awarded The Most Beautiful Swiss Books in 2016.

His work will be showcased as part of the 8th edition of the Swiss photo festival Alt+1000, from September 13 to October 5 at La Vue des Alpes.

KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH – the iconic European art institution – turns 40 this September, and its newly appointed director, Fanny Hauser, steps in with a vision that honors its avant-garde legacy while remaining attuned to the complexities of the present moment. With a background spanning both institutional frameworks and self-organized initiatives, Hauser now shapes a new chapter for Kunsthalle as it enters its fifth decade. As Fanny guides us through her inaugural exhibition, we discuss the role of Kunsthalle Zürich in today's global art landscape, the path that led her here, and the future she envisions for this ever-evolving space.

Architecture of Ideas – Fanny Hauser's Kunsthalle



ANNA TISCHE

You've recently taken on a role that carries both legacy and expectation. What has your journey to this point been like – and what drew you to Kunsthalle Zurich specifically?

FANNY HAUSER

Before I was appointed the new director of Kunsthalle Zürich, I had the opportunity to work in a variety of different frameworks, from a contemporary art museum such as the Ludwig Forum in Aachen to grassroots initiatives as Kunstverein Kevin Space, a Vienna-based exhibition space I co-founded in 2016. You might think these two models could not be further apart from one another – and I would agree. A highly institutionalized context with a collection in which long-researched exhibitions and surveys of contemporary or historical artists take place, and a flexible format which gives space to experiment and the development of new works in close dialogue with invited artists. Presently, Kunsthalle Zürich allows me to continue to think of its program along those two trajectories, which I find particularly intriguing.

AT

Please sketch the contours of your own story for us: where do you come from—and was art already a defining presence in your formative years?

FH

I was born and raised in Vienna, a place in which art and culture are deeply woven into the fabric of the city. From a young age, I was able to visit exhibitions, the theater or the opera. Austria has a particular place in Europe with its complex history, and it became a different kind of hub after the Second World War. It still works hard to take stock of its past to translate it into a present of many influences, and arts are also defined by this thinking. My enthusiasm for it grew through music and literature in particular, when I started my studies in comparative literature and art history. But I think that deep down it came from my curiosity to learn, and my appreciation for differences, which, if we acknowledge them, allow us to cherish what we have. And this is what I find precious about culture, what cannot be found anywhere else.

I very much hope to continue and further strengthen the idea of Kunsthalle as a hub for encounters with its great location for the future.

AT

Before taking on this position, how did you personally relate to Kunsthalle Zürich—as a curator, cultural observer, or even as a visitor?

FH

For me personally, Kunsthalle Zürich was not only an important institution the program of which I have been following throughout the years, but also a social space. During the pandemic, I was a curatorial fellow of the Gebert Stiftung für Kultur in Rapperswil. I was partly based in Zurich at that time, but it was challenging to connect with the local scene as openings and other events were limited. With the group exhibition “Sommer des Zögerns” and its intimate, weekly “openings”, Kunsthalle Zürich became a place to meet people and engage with local artists. I very much hope to continue and further strengthen the idea of Kunsthalle as a hub for encounters, especially given its great location for the future.

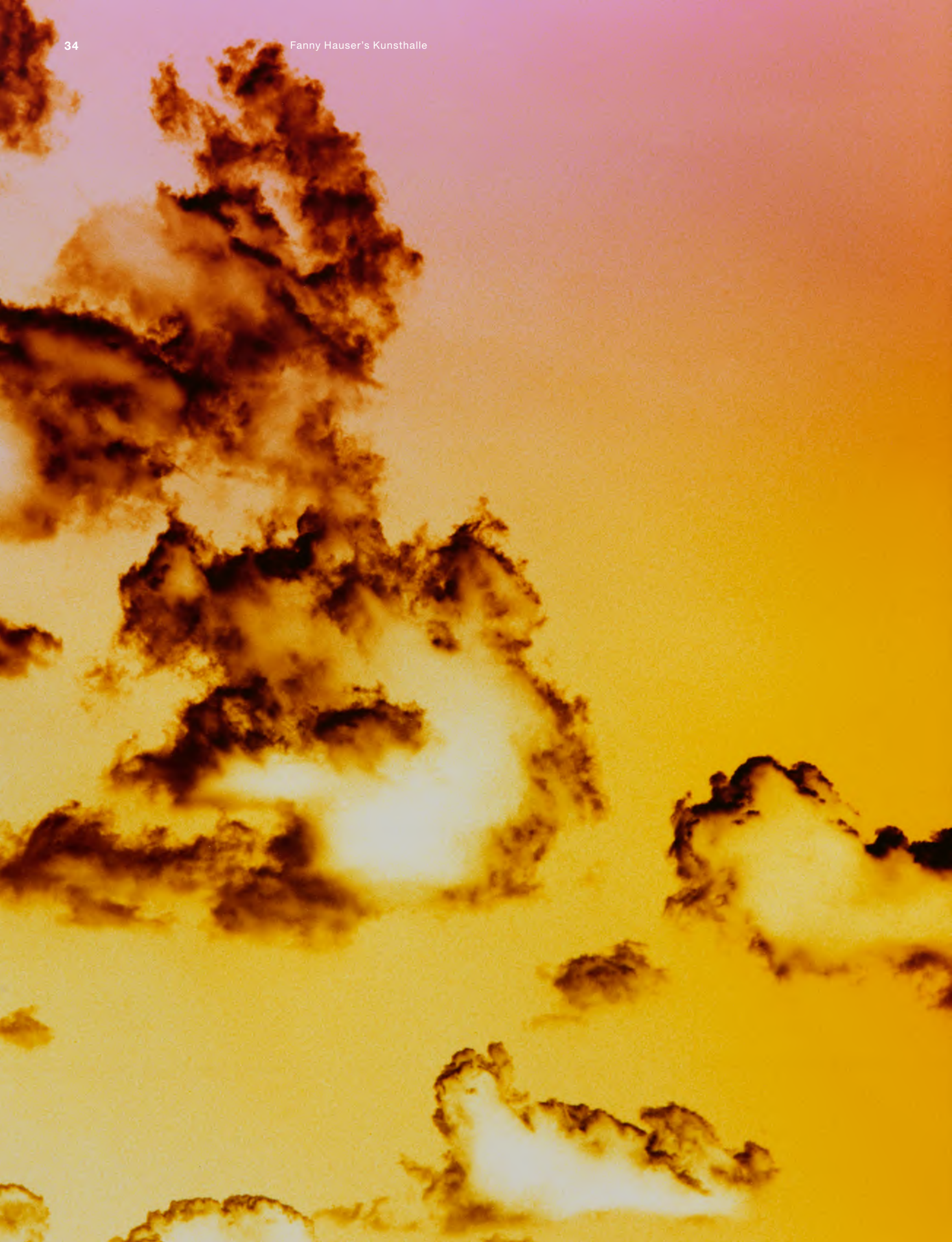
AT

What have been some pivotal moments or mentors that have shaped your curatorial philosophy?

FH

Rather than a specific, singular moment or person, I think that my decade-long activity of co-running a self-organized exhibition space has been crucial in shaping my general approach to working with artists. Given our limited resources at Kevin Space, it was often necessary to be involved in every step of an exhibition's production. I love to support artists in their work, but also to develop ideas in close dialogue with them.





AT

As Kunsthalle Zurich marks its 40th anniversary, how would you describe its evolution over the decades — from radical experimentation to international recognition?

FH

Over the past 40 years, Kunsthalle Zurich has established itself as a cutting-edge institution for international contemporary art, which has served as a launchpad for some of today's most influential artists, from Wolfgang Tillmans to Pipilotti Rist. It has played a crucial role in identifying and supporting artists early in their careers but has also continued to be a space for experimentation – something that became particularly evident in the program of my predecessor Daniel Baumann. It has been a place that has continuously been reinvented or redefined – by its respective directors, the different locations it has inhabited, or, most importantly, the invited artists and their transformative exhibitions.

AT

You're taking the helm at a time when contemporary art is both expanding and fragmenting. How do you define what's urgent or relevant to show today? What themes or questions are guiding your early vision for the institution under your leadership?

FH

I believe that this idea of fragmentation is generally something we should welcome and embrace, as it often complicates matters and allows for a range of perspectives to become part of a broader discourse. I am excited to live in a city like Zurich, where so many fantastic institutions and organizations can formulate their own agendas and address the urgencies of the day. I don't follow any thematic questions or principles but am rather interested in thinking along and across different temporalities and generations. While I am excited to continue to enable first institutional solo exhibitions for emerging artists, I am also interested in offering artists their first institutional show, who might have well been making work for decades, but remained unseen in the field of visual arts, such as Rose Lowder, an experimental filmmaker now in her 80s.

AT

Do you see Kunsthalle Zürich becoming more interdisciplinary — blending art with science, design, performance, or social discourse?

FH

Absolutely! It's difficult for me to imagine a program that does not follow a transdisciplinary approach. Besides my studies in art history, I have also studied comparative literature – a discipline where transcultural dialogues and questions of translation, also between the different mediums, are foregrounded. I very much enjoy working with artists who also think beyond the field of visual art, be it poetry, film, choreography, or sound.

AT

Zurich is becoming increasingly diverse and culturally layered. How do you see Kunsthalle engaging with new communities and younger audiences, while maintaining its intellectual depth?

FH

I don't believe that these two things oppose each other – quite the contrary! Bringing younger audiences and different communities to participate in artistic practices should be the goal of any cultural institution. Transdisciplinary approaches and diverse programming can be useful tools to engage different audiences and foster dialogue among different types of knowledge.

AT

Is there space for the museum to play a more active role in larger conversations — around climate, identity, or digital transformation? Or should it remain an autonomous space for reflection?

FH

While I do believe that it is the role of public institutions to engage in these conversations, I don't believe that they necessarily need to unfold in public or as part of an agenda. Instead, they should inform the thinking that structurally shapes our institutions; it's not a matter of declarations but of a certain sensitivity.

AT

Fast forward to the 50th anniversary of Kunsthalle Zurich — what would you hope people say about your tenure? What kind of legacy would you like to create?

FH

It might be a bit too soon to think of a legacy already. Like my predecessors, I think it's crucial to be able to think back and acknowledge that the institution has showcased some of the greatest artists of their time and allowed audiences to engage with their work. It is important to me to honor this tradition as a groundbreaking institution, while also guiding it through the complex times we live in.

It is important
to me to honor
this tradition
as a groundbreaking
institution, while
also guiding it
through the complex
times we live in.



jacket and trousers CECILIE BAHNSEN
all clothing and accessories provided by TASONI

make-up artist ELIZAVETA KOROTKIKH photographer assistant MPHO MOKGADI producer ANNA TISCHE
special thanks to SANDRA NEDVETSKAIA