

Press release

Marc Brandenburg

All Hail the Berlinian

3 October—23 December 2026
Opening 3 October, 6—9 pm

Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Ebay 02-07503-21202 (Inverted), 2025
Graphite on paper. 97 × 48 cm (38.19 × 18.9 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg presents an exhibition by German artist Marc Brandenburg, bringing together several series, including new works created in 2025 for the Berlinische Galerie. The Berlin-based artist is known for his highly detailed pencil drawings, in which he documents everyday urban life whilst subtly alluding to the crises of our time. The silvery, reflective quality of the graphite lends an otherworldly quality to the everyday motifs – like negatives of snapshots from a strange parallel world. His creative process always begins with photographs, which he takes himself during nocturnal city walks or sources from magazines and other media. The inversion of light and dark – a signature technique Brandenburg introduced in the 1990s – continues to

characterise his work today. This visual idiom, reminiscent of analogue photographic negatives, lends the depicted motifs a ghostly, anonymised quality.

The exhibition's title refers to the controversial high-rise project on Berlin's Alexanderplatz. The 146-metre-high tower has become a symbol of architectural grandeur in a city in transition. The word 'Hail' evokes the ominous German 'Heil', alluding to current political tensions in Germany and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. In his works, Brandenburg addresses social injustices, but rarely conveys narratives, instead focusing on motifs and figures he encounters in his own surroundings.



Untitled (Tiergarten Panel), 2024–25. Graphite on paper (detail)
Overall: 25 × 425 cm (9.84 × 167.32 in)

Many of the drawings have always dealt with scenes that indicate a loss of control, extremely physical scenes: sexuality, football fans, ravers, masses of people, but also movement and excess. Still, the structure and composition of the pictures do not flirt with disorder as an allegory of ecstasy or with the grandeur of chaos. Even in the works themselves, excess is always positioned against extreme definition and contours.

— Diedrich Diederichsen

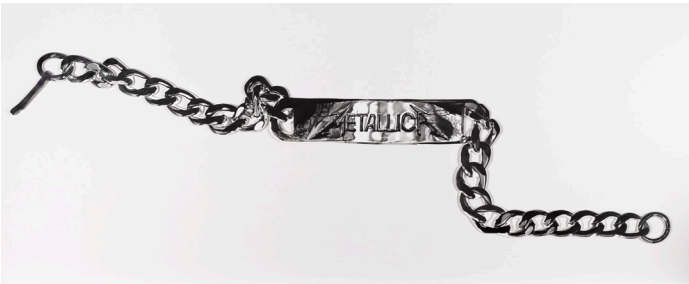
Brandenburg views his portrayal of the urban environment as strictly documentary. The drawings adopt the aesthetic of snapshots – imperfect compositions, partially cropped bodies, blurred focus. Brandenburg often encounters his subjects in everyday situations, revealing his remarkable capacity for observation. In his works, there is no hierarchy of subjects; rather, everything is equally worthy of depiction. This reflects a connection to the 19th-century Prussian history and genre portraitist Adolph von Menzel, whom the artist greatly admires.

In two works, Brandenburg depicts a seemingly endless expanse of trees set against a calm, reflective body of water. The artist renders the lush foliage with extraordinary attention to detail, yet the reflections and distortions create an almost psychedelic effect. The scenes are set in Berlin's Tiergarten, a recurring motif for Brandenburg, and a place where contrasts visibly intersect: the city's emblematic green space is simultaneously a recreational area and a site of homelessness, poverty, drug use, prostitution and social exclusion. The panoramic

motif also reappears in the exhibition in two sculptural lamps, which backlight park scenes in graphite on their lampshades.

Two drawings in the exhibition each depict a distinctive table lamp against a neutral grey background. The title of the works, *Ebay 02-07503-21202*, is derived from the order number of the lamp, which Brandenburg purchased on eBay. The lamp's base features characters from the Hollywood classic *The Wizard of Oz* (1939): Dorothy, her dog Toto, and the Tin Man gather around the ghostly trunk of the talking apple tree. Brandenburg has added the figure of a grinning clown to the group, who fits organically into the fantasy setting and the camp-coded subtext. He is a miniature version of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, who murdered at least 33 young men between 1972 and 1978. Gacy was also known as the 'Killer Clown' because he appeared at children's parties in Chicago wearing homemade costumes. By seamlessly juxtaposing the film's psychologically complex characters with the figure of Gacy, Brandenburg fuses this visual myth of depression era America with a symbol of repression and annihilation.

One unifying thread in Brandenburg's work is masking or disguise as a means of concealing one's true identity and assuming a desired one. In his works, the artist frequently explores costumes, role models and rituals that lie beyond social norms. His *Metallica* works feature a chunky chain bracelet embossed with the logo of the eponymous heavy metal band – a signifier of belonging within the



Above: *Metallica III*, 2020. Graphite on paper. 78.8 × 138.8 cm (31.02 × 54.65 in)
 Below: *Metallica IV*, 2020. Graphite on paper. 103 × 200 cm (40.55 × 78.74 in)

subculture. Draped in various ways, the bracelets float against empty, white backgrounds and appear as though they have been torn from a wider context. Brandenburg follows the same principle in an ongoing series of works dedicated to depicting people wrapped in sleeping bags or blankets: a familiar sight on the streets of Berlin, London or New York. Brandenburg's drawings lack any context relating to their precarious existences. Instead, the wrapped-up figures are isolated as abstract forms on the white paper, without explanation or commentary – and yet the depictions raise questions about social exclusion, housing policies and human dignity.

One room in the exhibition features drawings displayed under black light, a presentation method the artist has used since 2000. Stripped of their original, peaceful character, the white areas of the drawings fluoresce under the light, creating an unreal spatial experience.

Six video works complement the singular moments depicted in the drawings in a juxtaposition that Brandenburg first presented at the Berlinische Galerie earlier this year. The videos show short scenes in slow motion on a loop. The altered playback speed lends the sound an experimental quality, imbuing the exhibition space with an enigmatic, almost mysterious atmosphere. Like all the works in the exhibition, they bear witness to the unique way in which Brandenburg views the world – a fundamental component of his practice. 'I see myself as part of a gigantic image-generating machine, and I get on with my work. I process, in the truest sense of the word, the images that flood towards me, the things I see or am compelled to see,' explains the artist.

In 2027, Marc Brandenburg's works will be on view in two major group exhibitions: in *Deutschland und das Ich* at the Gropius Bau, Berlin, and in an exhibition at the Städel Museum, Frankfurt, dedicated to the art of the 1990s – from the fall of the Berlin Wall to 9/11.



Untitled, 2022
 Graphite on paper. 44 × 64 cm (17.32 × 25.20 in)

About the artist



Portrait of Marc Brandenburg, 2026
© Berlinische Galerie, 2026. Photo: Justus Lemm

Marc Brandenburg was born in Berlin in 1965 and grew up in the USA and Germany. Today, lives and works in Berlin and Barcelona. His work spans drawing, collage, video, installation, sculpture and performance, and is represented in collections such as those of the MoMA in New York, Deutsche Bank, the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge and the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt. He has been exhibited in museums worldwide. Most recently, the Berlinische Galerie (2026); the PalaisPopulaire, Berlin (2021); the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (2022); the Kunstraum Potsdam (2018); the Kunsthau Stade (2015); the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg (2012); the Hamburger Kunsthalle (2011); and the Denver Art Museum (2010) have all held major solo exhibitions of Marc Brandenburg's work.

He has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions, including the Special Exhibitions Gallery, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge (2025); Die Möglichkeit einer Insel, Berlin (2025); at the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge (2024); at the City Art Centre, Edinburgh (2024); at the Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2023); at the PalaisPopulaire, Berlin (2018); at the Rudolfinum, Prague (2016); the Kunsthalle Bremen (2015); the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2014); the ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe (2013); the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2011); and the Gropius Bau, Berlin (2011).

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