





Commissaire Invité : Antoine Prum / Curatrice : Charlotte Masse

Autograph Card (valida 1990-92), 1990, photo © Studio Photo Mathesle

1. WOLFGANG MÜLLER

GALERIE REQUISITE

29.03 - 22.06.2025

Guest curator: Antoine Prum / Curator: Charlotte Masse

A retrospective between art, music and literature

The exhibition *Wolfgang Müller. Galerie Requisite* retraces the multifaceted oeuvre of the German artist, musician and author Wolfgang Müller (b. 1957 in Wolfsburg). It leads through the various stages of an extraordinary career – from his decisive role in the legendary post-punk band Die Tödliche Doris to his activities as a ‘scientist of misunderstanding’ (*Missverständniswissenschaftler*) who dissects existing hierarchies and conventions, bringing to light grotesques and contradictions

In the early 1980s, art students Wolfgang Müller and Nikolaus Utermöhlen met in West Berlin and founded Die Tödliche Doris. They teamed up with artists such as Dagmar Dimitroff, who had just been bought out of prison in the GDR, actress Tabea Blumenschein and many others to create a conspicuously absent pop star out of nothing: the disembodied, proto-queer ‘Doris’.

With their uncompromising experiments, the group pushed the boundaries of artistic genres and media. Inspired in equal measure by Marcel Duchamp and the Sex Pistols, they overaffirmed and deconstructed the mechanisms and stereotypes of the music industry and the art world, asking fundamental questions about authenticity and artistic identity. Although they were perceived as radical and disturbing, they effectively steered clear of classic punk stereotypes by cheerfully and cunningly subverting them. The form, line-up and music of the band constantly changed, until – as planned from the outset – it disbanded in 1987: Die Tödliche Doris became a white wine.

The first part of the exhibition attempts to capture the fleeting nature of Doris through a selection of videos, photographs and memorabilia related to the group’s performances and productions. In the two key film works *Tapete* and *Kulisse*, Doris craftily stages its presences and absences.

Similarly, Müller’s later solo work defies stylistic or conceptual categorisation by joyfully undermining expectations as regards art and artistic recognisability. At the same time, it revolves around recurring themes such as Iceland or ornithology, which are explored in a wide variety of formats, from music, photography and film to radio plays, performances and writings. This versatility gives rise to surprising connections between seemingly irreconcilable worlds.

The second part of the exhibition reveals an artistic practice understood as a radical expression of intellectual freedom. Müller’s works, in which misunderstanding acts as a quasi-scientific category, are populated by a diverse cast of protagonists including starlings from Norway who imitate Kurt Schwitters’s “Ursonate”, Goethe’s unsuccessful grandson Walther, and a dwarf bed filled with eiderdown.

The exhibition concludes with a room dedicated to Müller's musical oeuvre, which he has developed through numerous collaborations with professionals and amateurs alike. The layout of the room takes up the form of the film and fog installation conceived by Die Tödliche Doris for their participation in documenta 8 in 1987. Besides film projections, this 'music room' features record players and cassette decks that enable visitors to immerse themselves in the intricate sonic worlds of Wolfgang Müller/Die Tödliche Doris.

2. Biographies

Wolfgang Müller

1980 Wolfgang Müller enrolls with the film class at West Berlin's University of the Arts, where he befriends fellow student Nikolaus Utermöhlen. They form the punk band Die Tödliche Doris. Their classmate Chris Dreier becomes the third member of the band. The actress and fashion designer Tabea Blumenschein joins them.

1981 The band signs a three-record deal with the Hamburg-based label Zickzack Records. The first release is the EP o.T. (known as *7 Tödliche Unfälle im Haushalt* [7 Deadly Accidents In The Household]).

The artist Dagmar Dimitroff, who has just been bought out of prison in the GDR, takes on the role of drummer at the Festival der Genialen Dilletanten in West Berlin's Tempodrom.

1982 Wolfgang Müller compiles the booklet *Geniale Dilletanten* for the Merve publishing house. With the publication of the manifesto, he coins the term most commonly used to describe West Berlin's subcultural music and art scene of the time.

Squatter Elke Kruse takes on the role of the drummer.

Concert and film screening at the 12th Biennale de Paris.

1983 The group takes part with choirs and solos in Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* (The Tendency toward the Total Work of Art) at Delphi Filmpalast in Berlin.

1984 The talking puppet record box set *Chöre & Soli* is released in co-production with gelbe MUSIK (Berlin) and Pure Freude (Düsseldorf).

Die Tödliche Doris performs at The Kitchen, New York.

1985 Wolfgang Müller offers to release the Doris album *sechs* with the state-owned GDR record company Amiga and the Doris album *Unser Debut* with the West German label Ata Tak.

1986 *The Foto-Dokumentar-Archiv*, consisting of 118 annotated found photos, is exhibited at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin.

Announcement of the release of the invisible LP with a poster stating 'Chuck away the crutches!' The work requires the two vinyl discs *Unser Debut* and *sechs* to be played simultaneously on two record players.

1987 Performance of Die Tödliche Doris at MoMA, New York.

Die Tödliche Doris takes part in documenta 8 in Kassel.

Wolfgang Müller and Nikolaus Utermöhlen present the trash revue *Noch 14 Vorstellungen von Die Tödliche Doris* (14 More Shows by Die Tödliche Doris) as their thesis work in the class of Prof. Ramsbott.

Wolfgang Müller and Nikolaus Utermöhlen compose *Autofahrt in Deutschland* (Car Ride In Germany). The opera is performed on 5 December 1987 in the Galerie der Künstler of the State Museum of Ethnology in Munich. The performers are Tabea Blumenschein, Etsuko Okazaki and Hermoine Zittlau.

With an exhibition at Zwinger Gallery in West Berlin, Wolfgang Müller dissolves the band into an Italian table wine.

1988 At the invitation of the Japanese label Wave, a posthumous performance takes place in Tokyo. The theatre play is entitled *Das war die Tödliche Doris (1980–1987)* (This Was Die Tödliche Doris).

Wolfgang Müller plays the role of Fred in the film *Die Wiese der Sachen* (The Meadow of Things) by Heinz Emigholz.

1989 Two years after Michael Jackson's blockbuster album *Bad*, Wolfgang Müller releases his first solo record, *BAT*, which presents the sounds of six indigenous bat species made audible.

1990 Wolfgang Müller changes his focus from the former island of West Berlin to the island of Iceland and translates his name to Úlfur Hróðólfsson, meaning Wolf(gang), the son of Rudolf.

1991 Plays role in the horror film *Nekromantik 2* by Jörg Buttgereit of a bird expert who talks about the Icelandic Great Auk, a species that became extinct on the island of Eldey in 1844.

1995 In the wake of his satirical article 'Blaumeisen für Feinkostgeschäfte' (Blue Tits for Delicatessen Shops), published in the German daily *taz*, the exhibition *blue tit* with Nan Goldin is organised at Martin Schmitz Galerie, Kassel.

Curates *Die Hormone des Mannes* (Man's Hormones) at Schwules Museum Berlin, with contributions by 47 international artists who are selected regardless of their gender and sexual preferences.

1996 Nikolaus Utermöhlen dies.

1997 *Blue Tit – Das deutsch-isländische Blaumeisenbuch/býsk-íslenska blámeisubókin* (The German-Icelandic Blue Tit Book) is published by Martin Schmitz Verlag.

1998 A few months after the closure of the Icelandic Goethe-Institut, Wolfgang Müller opens his private Goethe-Institut at the Living Art Museum (Nýlistasafnið) in Reykjavík. For legal reasons, he transforms it into the Walther von Goethe Foundation in 2001 (named after Goethe's last grandson, a hapless opera composer) and appoints himself its president.

Sign language interpreters Andrea Schulz and Dina Tabbert perform the 1982 album by Die Tödliche Doris in sign language on the stage of the Prater of the Berlin Volksbühne.

2000 Researching Kurt Schwitters' exile in Norway, Wolfgang Müller discovers that the starlings on Hjertøya still imitate his 'Ursonate' today. Starling song expert Dr Böhner presents the sound recordings in the exhibition *Hausmusik – Stare aus Hjertøya singen Kurt Schwitters* at Galerie Katze 5 in Berlin.

2001 Opening of a branch of the Walther von Goethe Foundation at the hairdressing salon Beige in Berlin-Mitte by the Icelandic ambassador Ingimundur Sigfússon.

Wolfgang Müller becomes professor of experimental sculpture at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts. He travels to Iceland with his students and investigates the handicap of beautiful landscapes.

2002 The video *Huldamanna Saga* in German and Icelandic sign language is shown as part of the exhibition *The (Im)Perfect Human Being* at Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden and Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin.

2007 The Super 8 films of Die Tödliche Doris are shown as part of the exhibition *Works from the Collection of the Nationalgalerie* at Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin.

2009 Wolfgang Müller receives the Karl Sczuka Prize for his BR 2 radio play *Séance Vocibus Avium*.

Together with Dr An Paenhuysen curates the exhibition *PAUSE. Valeska Gert: Bewegte Fragmente* at Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin.

2010 Plays the role of a German tourist to Iceland in Grímur Hákonarson's feature film *Sumarlandið*.

2012 *Subkultur Westberlin 1979–1989. Freizeit*, his review of the 1980s, is published in the Fundus series by the Hamburg-based publisher Philo Fine Arts (in its 5th edition in 2025).

2017 Meets Ahmad Hamad, a Palestinian who fled the civil war in Syria, at the Engelbecken in Kreuzberg and hires him as his personal assistant.

2018 Start of shooting for the film portrait *Der Schrei des Riesenalken* (The Cry of the Great Auk) by Antoine Prum.

2019 The vinyl album *Das typische Ding – Reenactment* (I) features the sounds of 31 different vibrator models. With 31 drawings by Tabea Blumenschein and sex toy reviews by Katrin Kämpf.

2020 Tabea Blumenschein dies in Berlin.

2022 Introduction to the science of misunderstanding at Nordic House (Norræna Húsið) in Reykjavík. Research trip to Iceland with the director of the Haus der Tödlichen Doris, Dr An Paenhuysen, and her colleagues Ahmad Hamad and Richard Radzinski.

Performance *Die Tödliche Doris bewirbt sich um einen Sitz im Berliner Senat* (Die Tödliche Doris Runs for a Seat in the German Senate) with Claudia Urbschat-Mingues and Jörg Buttgereit at Volksbühne Berlin.

2023 Opens Galerie Requisite: Closed Mon–Sun.

2024 Inauguration of the Walther von Goethe Foundation's presence library with 867 German-language books on Iceland from 1613 to the present.

2025 Monographic exhibition *Galerie Requisite* at Kenschthal Esch, Luxembourg.

Survey exhibition *Die Tödliche Doris* at Weserburg, Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen.

Antoine Prum

Antoine Prum (b. 1963 in Luxembourg) is a filmmaker and music producer based in Berlin. A trained visual artist, he represented Luxembourg at the 51st Venice Biennale. Since 2005, he has been working primarily in documentary filmmaking and music production. In 2011, he founded the independent film company and record label Ni-Vu-Ni-Connu, which specialises in experimental musics. With *Sunny's time now* (2008), *Taking the Dog for a Walk* (2014) and *Blue for a Moment* (2017), he directed a trilogy of films exploring the legacy of free improvised music. He is currently working on the documentary *Lái Huí* (Back and Forth), *Recording the Field along the New Silk Road* and a film portrait of Wolfgang Müller aka Die Tödliche Doris.

ni-vu-ni-connu.net

3. **Galerie Requisite: Exceptionally Open** Text by Antoine Prum, taken from the exhibition catalog

‘I set myself rules in order to restructure the world for my own purposes, says Georges Perec. I set myself rules in order to undermine existing rules with their help, Wolfgang Müller informs us.’

—Marcel Beyer, laudatory speech on the awarding of the Karl Sczuka Prize, Donaueschingen, 2009

Today, there are an estimated seven thousand people in Germany who go by the name Wolfgang Müller. I met ‘my’ Wolfgang Müller quite by chance in the late 1980s. On a dark and cold winter’s night in West Berlin, in some pub in Oranienstraße that smelled of coal heating. Was it Bierhimmel? O-Bar? Or even Rote Rose? I can’t remember the exact location. Incidentally, Wolfgang himself has no recollection of our first meeting. What I do remember vividly, however, was the crash course he gave me that evening into the world of Die Tödliche Doris – the legendary post-punk band he had dissolved in an Italian white wine shortly before. From then on, Wolfgang, Doris and the so-called ‘Geniale Dilletanten’ became permanent fixtures in my artistic cosmos and greatly contributed to the attraction that Berlin already held for me at the time.

Later, our paths crossed again and again. In 2001, Wolfgang attended the launch of my festival *Oh Pardon, sind Sie der Graf von Luxemburg?* at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, where I introduced him to the Luxembourgish writer Roger Manderscheid. He promptly dedicated an article to his work in his *taz* section ‘Bücher für Randgruppen’ (Books for fringe groups). Such connections between seemingly disparate worlds are typical of Wolfgang: he is not only an artist, but also a chronicler, mediator and cartographer of the fringes.

In 2018, we began filming the Wolfgang Müller portrait *Der Schrei des Riesenalks* (The Cry of the Great Auk), a long-term study that took us from Berlin via Wolfsburg, Albania and Japan to Iceland. This project earned me a reputation as an expert on all things Wolfgang Müller, and so, lo and behold, I was invited by Christian Mosar to curate a Wolfgang Müller exhibition at Kenschthal Esch, the contemporary art centre he has been heading since its opening in 2021.

Die Tödliche Doris was a radical band. It manifested itself in every conceivable medium, disregarding common rules with utmost consistency and great pleasure. This is also true of Wolfgang’s work. It is conceptual, scientific and deeply human – an ‘anti-system’, according to Dirk Schünemann, full of coincidences, irritations and idiosyncratic associations. At first glance, its themes seem to have been chosen at random: Iceland, extinct birds, the absurdities of pop culture. But beneath the surface, a complex universe unfolds in which nothing is incidental and the seemingly insignificant often yields the sharpest insights.

Marcel Beyer calls Wolfgang Müller a ‘misunderstanding scientist’. This term aptly sums up what characterises his work: the exploration of the marginal and absurd, which unexpectedly lead us to consider fundamental questions of existence. In *Séance Vocibus Avium*, for example, Wolfgang reconstructs the voices of extinct bird species such as the great auk – a project that questions our idea of scientific accuracy, while shedding a poetic light on our fragile relationship with nature. Similarly, according to Wolfgang’s research, the song of the starlings on the Norwegian island of Hjertøya replicates fragments of Kurt Schwitters’s ‘Ursonate’, which would make these birds the living archivists of the avant-garde – copy cats who don’t give a monkey’s about author’s rights. The spirit of Dada is alive!

The rebranding of his private Icelandic Goethe-Institut into the ‘Walther von Goethe Foundation’ – named after the unsuccessful nephew of the great Goethe – also fits into this picture, as it is both

a humorous and pragmatic reaction to legal threats from the original Goethe-Institut. Coincidences and banalities combine to form a surprisingly realistic image of the world, which tells us that there is no such thing as nonsense properly speaking. For even the most absurd of propositions eventually throws us back on that which produces sense: curiosity, criticism and humour.

Wolfgang's work questions power structures by merging fiction and reality. It does so with an impressive economy of means. This approach, which he and his fellow artists developed in the 1980s under the influence of the punk movement, still characterises his work today and stands in stark contrast to the expectations of the traditional art world. In this, I personally see a certain like-mindedness with the spirit of the so-called 'real-time music' (*Echtzeitmusik*) scene, which was able to develop in the free spaces that opened up in Berlin after the Fall of the Wall. Its protagonists, with whom I regularly work as a music producer and filmmaker, are artists who, like Wolfgang, put material success second to creative self-determination and whose work bears witness to the freedom thus gained.

The exhibition at Kenschthal Esch is not only a tribute to the multifaceted work of a unique artist, but also a dialogue with a friend whose perspectives and thoughts have inspired me for many years. It is not a retrospective in the classical sense, but rather a journey through Wolfgang Müller's artistic obsessions, a guided tour through a simultaneously personal and collective assortment of props (*Requisite*). It is also an invitation to see misunderstanding not as a mistake, but as a path to something new. And perhaps this entire endeavour – the exhibition, the film, even this foreword – is one big misunderstanding that warrants further academic analysis. Dear colleague Müller, I leave the floor to you!

4. Catalog and framework program

Wolfgang Müller. Galerie Requisite

2025

English / German / French

24 x 162 cm

152 pages + cover (4 pages) + 12 postcards

Published 1,000 copies

ISBN: 978-3-7533-0842-5

Edited by Christan Mosar & Antoine Prum

With texts by Frank Castenholz, Philipp Meinert, Antoine Prum

Published by Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König

Design: Laurent Daubach, Designbureau

€38

Published as part of the exhibition Wolfgang Müller. Galerie Requisite at the Kunschthal Esch, 29.03.-22.06.2025.

Available at Kunschthal Esch and from the publishers : Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König

This publication is the first to trace the work of German artist, musician and author Wolfgang Müller (born 1957 in Wolfsburg).

In West Berlin in the 1980s, Müller and Nikolaus Utermöhlen founded Die Tödliche Doris, a legendary post-punk band that pushed back the boundaries of artistic genres and media to question notions of authenticity and artistic identity.

Wolfgang Müller's subsequent work as a solo artist also defies categorisation, systematically thwarting expectations about art and the artist's "trademark". At the same time, it revolves around recurring themes such as Iceland and ornithology, explored through a wide variety of formats: music, photography, film, radio, performance and writing.

This book presents a selection of texts, images and documents, supplemented by a bibliography, discography and detachable autographed photos corresponding to different stages in Wolfgang Müller's career.

Framework program

30.03.2025 | 16:00 – 17:00

Künstlergespräch – Wolfgang Müller im Gespräch avec Antoine Prum und Radek Krolczyk

Adults | DE (FR)

05.06.2025 | 18:00 – 23:00

Takeover Thursday

with Wolfgang Müller, Pascal Steinwachs and Gudrund Gut | Adults | DE

To be confirmed

PERFORMANCE

Around Valeska Gert | by Wolfgang Müller and Sayoko Onishi (ILL) | Adults | DE

5.

Press visuals & credits

Please note that photographs of the exhibition will be available from 04.04.



Die Tödliche Doris
Festival Geniale Dilletanten, 1981



Die Tödliche Doris Sesselgruppe Kleid, 1991



Die Tödliche Doris
Eine Frau zur selben Zeit an
einem anderen Ort, 1987
Super 8 (Still) 10' min



Sieg durch Schweben, 1987

All press kits can be downloaded at:
konschthal.lu/presse

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Free admission

WED 11:00 - 18:00

THU 11:00 - 20:00

FRI/SAT/SUN 11:00 - 18:00

MON/TUES closed