

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD: AN AUDIOVISUAL POEM

FEBRUARY 6 – MARCH 20, 2026

VARIETY ARTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES

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Marina Abramović, *The Hero*, 2001, video, 14'21", b/w, sound. Video still.

“What a Wonderful World: An Audiovisual Poem”, edited by Udo Kittelmann, is a sweeping odyssey into the depths of human experience, unfolding through film and video. Marking the **first major presentation of works from the Julia Stoschek Foundation in the U.S.**, this audiovisual poem experiments with time-based media by placing **contemporary video works in dialogue with silent films and early cinema classics**. For the first time, a large-scale exhibition bridges these two universes, creating an unprecedented encounter across more than a century of visual storytelling.

Bringing one of the world’s leading collections of time-based art to a city defined by moving images sparks a rare conversation across disciplines. It dissolves the boundaries between visual art and cinema, museum

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and theater, white cube and black box. In doing so, it traces the evolution of visual storytelling over the past century, highlighting both the universality of human concerns and the shifting perspectives that shape their representation.

“What a Wonderful World” presents a wide range of groundbreaking works by artists such as **Marina Abramović**, **Cyprien Gaillard**, **Arthur Jafa**, or **Lu Yang**, alongside cinematic milestones by **Luis Buñuel**, **Walt Disney**, **Alice Guy-Blaché**, **Winsor McCay**, and **Georges Méliès**. Together, these works form a panoramic and layered portrait of humanity and history across 120 years: altogether ironic, sincere, critical and compassionate.

“What a Wonderful World” will unfold as an explorative journey, a cinematic mystery tour, a soul-stirring experience. It invites visitors to confront the secrets and fragilities of humanity while holding up a mirror to the state of the world today.



Walt Disney, *The Skeleton Dance*, 1929, b/w, sound, 5'35". Film still.

Artist list: Marina Abramović, Doug Aitken, Kader Attia, Dara Birnbaum, Monica Bonvicini, Robert Boyd, Chris Burden, Paul Chan, Thomas Demand, Maya Deren, Cyprien Gaillard, Douglas Gordon, Anne Imhof, Arthur Jafa, Ulysses Jenkins, Jesper Just, Sigalit Landau, Mark Leckey, Klara Lidén, Paul McCarthy, Alex McQuilkin, Ana Mendieta, Precious Okoyomon, Jon Rafman, Bunny Rogers, Jacolby Satterwhite, Christoph Schlingensiefel, Jeremy Shaw, P. Staff, Sturtevant, Wolfgang Tillmans, Wu Tsang, Ant Farm & T.R. Uthco, Jordan Wolfson, Lu Yang.



ABOUT THE LOCATION

“What a Wonderful World: An Audiovisual Poem” takes place in the iconic **Variety Arts Theater**, a six-story Venetian-style landmark deeply rooted in the cultural history of Downtown Los Angeles. The building was originally home to the Friday Morning Club—LA’s first women’s clubhouse, established in 1891 by suffragist and abolitionist Caroline Severance—which hosted poetry readings, philosophy circles, and political organizing, and became a center for social reform, spearheading the struggle for women’s voting rights in California.

In 1924, the club leased the space to the Figueroa Playhouse, a vaudeville theater where Laurel and Hardy, Clark Gable, Buster Keaton, and other luminaries performed regularly. Over the years, the theater transformed into a movie house, a vaudeville memorabilia museum (termed by its investor as “a Smithsonian of showbiz”), and an event space for everything from Mexican weddings to punk shows, before falling into neglect and decay in the last two decades. Though stripped of its former glory, its foundations still exude an air of old glamour, and its walls reverberate with cultural memory—soon to be revived for a six-week run, reframing its legacy of social engagement and slapstick performance through contemporary moving image practices.



ABOUT UDO KITTELMANN

As a museum director and curator, Udo Kittelmann shaped the Museum of Modern Art (MMK) in Frankfurt and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin into leading art institutions, showcasing innovative and thought-provoking works by historical, established, and emerging artists. Kittelmann organized exhibitions that covered a wide range of artistic disciplines. His approach as a curator emphasized conceptual rigor and critical engagement with contemporary issues.

He curated exhibitions that explored themes such as identity, globalization, political and social commentary, and the intersection of art and technology. Over the course of his career, he has initiated or curated landmark solo shows with Hilma af Klint, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Tomás Saraceno, Elaine Sturtevant, Adrian Piper, Jack Whitten, and Margaret and Christine Wertheim, amongst others. In 2001, he was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for Germany's national pavilion with Gregor Schneider.

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In a recent Curatorial Roundtable organized by the School of Visual Arts in New York, he was introduced as “one of the leading curators in the world—a true visionary in the field.”

Kittlmann served as a museum director at the most important German museums, most notably from 2008 to 2020 as the director of the Nationalgalerie, State Museums of Berlin, comprising six museums among them the Neue Nationalgalerie, Alte Nationalgalerie, and Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum for Contemporary Art, Museum Berggruen, Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection and Friedrichswerdersche Church. During his tenure, he also initiated the renovation of Mies van der Rohe’s architectural masterpiece, the Neue Nationalgalerie, by the British architect David Chipperfield, and petitioned the German government to construct the upcoming Berlin Modern designed by Herzog & de Meuron beside the Mies van der Rohe building.

Throughout his career, Kittlmann also staged several exhibitions for Fondazione Prada in Milan, Venice, and Shanghai; among them *The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied* (Biennale di Venezia, 2017) with Thomas Demand, Alexander Kluge and Anna Viebrock, and more recently, in collaboration with Taryn Simon the project titled *Human Brains: It Begins with an Idea* (Biennale di Venezia, 2022), an exhibition in the field of neuroscience. Both of these projects redefined the philosophy of an interdisciplinary exhibition. His projects also include a Rudolf Stingel solo exhibition (2019) at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel, Switzerland and *El Greco/Tino Sehgal* (2023) at the Centro Botín in Santander, Spain. Most recently, he curated *Walton Ford: Lion of God* (2024) at Venice’s Ateneo Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti.

ABOUT THE JULIA STOSCHEK FOUNDATION

The Julia Stoschek Foundation is a nonprofit arts and culture organization dedicated to the public presentation, advancement, conservation, and scholarship of time-based art. Across two publicly accessible exhibition spaces in Berlin and Düsseldorf, the Julia Stoschek Foundation presents pioneering media and performance art in large-scale exhibitions and discursive events. The foundation also manages the Julia Stoschek Collection (est. 2002), one of the world’s most comprehensive private collections of time-based art.

With over 1,000 artworks by 300 artists from the 1960s to today, the collection spans video, film, single- and multi-channel moving-image installation, multimedia environments, performance, sound, and virtual reality. Photography, sculpture, and painting supplement its time-based emphasis.

Artworks from the collection have been presented in solo and group exhibitions in Düsseldorf since 2007. In 2016, a second exhibition space opened in Berlin-Mitte. Both spaces feature a wide-ranging outreach program, including guided tours, screenings, lectures, artist talks, and workshops, providing diverse audiences with the opportunity to engage with time-based art on different levels and from different perspectives.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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