

PRESS RELEASE

ASTA GRÖTING A WOLF, PRIMATES AND A BREATHING CURVE

5 SEPTEMBER 2025 to 12 APRIL 2026

Collection of Contemporary Art

Press Preview: Friday, 5 September 2025, 9.30 am

Frankfurt am Main, 8 August 2025. Intimate moments and closeness characterize the multifaceted work of the German artist Asta Gröting (b. 1961). Originally and still working as a sculptor, she has expanded her artistic practice to include film and video. She has been one of the most influential figures in contemporary German art since the 1990s. In her work, she renders the invisible visible by focusing on processes that often go unnoticed in everyday life, as well as on interpersonal relationships. From 5 September 2025 to 12 April 2026, the Städel Museum will present a solo exhibition of the artist's work in its Collection of Contemporary Art, featuring eight works created between 2015 and 2025, including seven video works and one laser projection specially developed for the exhibition. This selection enables visitors to experience the fluid transitions between nature and culture, intimacy and distance, the familiar and the foreign. The videos capture or stage moments from Gröting's own environment and human existence. Her deliberate manipulation of time lends the works a particular intensity. The films are more than visual representations of our environment: they open up contemplative spaces that encourage reflection on the intricacies of hidden relationships and their dynamics.

Through her work, Gröting shows how art can act as a medium for interpersonal connections by capturing intimate and intense encounters. Her sensitive translation of captivating moments into moving images invites viewers to explore the subtle, often hidden liminal states of existence, and experience the poetry of the moment anew. Highlights of the exhibition include the work *Breathing Curve*, 2025, created especially for the exhibition, and the premiere of her latest video work, *Matthias, Helge and Asta* (2025), featuring Matthias Brandt, Helge Schneider and Asta Gröting herself as protagonists.

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Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum: “Asta Gröting’s films reveal the visual poetry of our everyday lives through precise observation and give space to the hidden. The Städel has owned the sculptural work *We, We, We, You, You, I*, 1994 by the artist since 2019. With this exhibition, we are deliberately placing an emphasis on the artist’s video art. Gröting’s work represents an artistic practice that addresses social and existential issues in a multilayered way. Her video art explores the boundaries between staging and everyday life by developing traditional narrative forms further. It thus ideally complements the profile of the Collection of Contemporary Art at the Städel Museum.”

“In her work, Asta Gröting focuses on things that often escape our attention, such as subtle gestures of everyday life, empty spaces and the relationships between humans and animals. The works on display are based on precise observations, in which the artist shifts meanings and condenses sensations. Gröting’s intense video works focus on the seemingly invisible, as well as on psychological processes, rendering them tangible for viewers. Her concentrated reflections question our communication, our environment, and our perception. Without providing clear answers, she creates an open space for personal feelings,” adds **Svenja Grosser, Head of Contemporary Art at the Städel Museum and curator of the exhibition.**

A WOLF, PRIMATES AND A BREATHING CURVE

The exhibition at the Städel Museum offers a concentrated insight into Asta Gröting’s recent work, focusing on her video art from the past ten years. The works demonstrate how the artist slows down perceptions, breaks down meanings and condenses sensations. Her works often arise from everyday observations of people, animals and objects that come together in precisely composed scenes. Gröting’s work focuses on the invisible and the unspoken—not as a void, but as a space for insight. In slow or accelerated sequences and with reduced language, filmic scenes unfold that oscillate between the familiar and the foreign. Rather than providing clarity, spaces of experience open up, in which perception and meaning are constantly renegotiated. Her filmic work can be understood as a tentative approach to the conditions of human existence. In conjunction with the Collection of Contemporary Art, Gröting’s work contributes to a broader narrative about the human condition. The exhibition deliberately focuses on deceleration, creating space for pause and reorientation. Asta Gröting’s works broaden our perspective, offering profound reflections on what it means to be human in an increasingly rationalized and distant present.

BREATHING CURVE (2025)

Created especially for the Städel Museum exhibition, the work *Breathing Curve*, 2025 translates a medical measurement of breath flow into an abstract, poetic laser projection. The inhalation and exhalation of a human being is reproduced in a bright white line that appears as a fleeting drawing in space. Gröting expands her filmic exploration of humanity, giving form to the invisible by visualizing the most essential aspect of life: breathing. The work is projected in a spacious gesture on John M. Armleder's site-specific work, *Mosaic Mirror Wall Piece* (1991–2012), in the Metzler Foyer of the Städel Museum.

MATTHIAS, HELGE AND ASTA (2025)

In Gröting's latest video work, *Matthias, Helge and Asta* (2025), which is being shown publicly for the first time at the Städel Museum, Matthias Brandt poses the question: "Have you failed?" Helge Schneider and Asta Gröting respond non-verbally with glances and small gestures, taking deep breaths, but ultimately remaining silent. Failure can be seen as an essential, not necessarily negative, part of the human experience. The writer Samuel Beckett described failure as a creative principle: "Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (1983). With this premiere, Gröting expands her filmic exploration of the relationship between humans, language and mutual perception.

PRIMATE AND HUMAN (2023)

Intense close-ups of two orangutans briefly overlap with the face of a human infant. In *Primate and Human*, 2023, Gröting takes a sensitive look at the relationship between humans and animals. At the same time, it also addresses fundamental ethical questions about how we treat our closest biological relatives.

CHERRY BLOSSOM – DAWN AND DUSK (2022)

In *Cherry Blossom – Dawn and Dusk* (2022), Asta Gröting films a cherry tree in bloom over the course of a day, capturing one frame per second. In the accelerated time-lapse sequence, the tree's blossom-laden branches tremble in the wind and insects can be seen as fleeting shadows. The film begins at night in near-complete darkness, with the tree initially appearing as a black silhouette, before its leaves and blossom gradually gain depth and colour. In daylight, bumblebees and bees can be seen, their movements appearing surprisingly frantic in the accelerated rhythm. Gröting's work sharpens the viewer's perception of time, light and change. It renders both the ephemerality of the moment and the cyclical nature of the natural world tangible.

WOLF AND DOG (2021)

The video shows an encounter between a dog and a wolf, two animals that share a common origin but whose behaviour could hardly be more different. An intense confrontation unfolds, accompanied by the deep sounds of a bass clarinet. Filmed in slow motion, the dog appears playful and trusting as it eats from a human's hand. In contrast, the wolf remains alert and confident, even when the dog approaches it playfully in competition for a piece of meat. Gröting explores the social behaviour of animals, as well as the contrast between wildness and domestication. The human hand becomes a symbolic dividing line representing the intervention that diverged the paths of the two animals.

FIRST DRINK (2018)

In the tradition of still life painting, the arrangement of objects and food plays a central role in this work. The focus is not only on the objects' superficial appearance, but also on the invisible levels of meaning, personal rituals and cultural influences they represent. In Asta Gröting's video work *First Drink* (2019), eight people prepare their first drink of the day. Each person is shown only partially within the same image frame, in front of a different still life arrangement. This intimate yet everyday moment becomes a symbolic act: cups, mugs, teapots and coffee machines reveal habits, origins and identity. The interplay of familiar details and rear views of the individuals creates moments of identification.

THINGS (2018)

Against a blue sky, fruit, flowers, milk, an octopus and other curious objects fly through the air and glide back down in slow motion. This surreal choreography in *Things* (2018) encourages us to reflect on our relationship with everyday objects and living beings, which lies somewhere between fascination and consumption. The slow motion allows us to closely examine the objects, giving them an aura that goes unnoticed in everyday use and consumption.

TOUCH (2015)

In her video work *Touch* (2015), Gröting looks deeply into the eyes of eleven people close to her while feeling their faces with her hands. Against a dark background and in complete silence, a touching, wordless communication emerges. Gröting herself is only seen from behind. This physically intimate moment reveals an intense, deeply personal access to the human being. Gröting "models" the facial features with her hands, a process that refers to sculptural movements. The oldest piece in the Frankfurt exhibition highlights Gröting's sculptural approach and her physically oriented artistic practice of sculpture.

Asta Gröting (b. 1961 in Herford, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Having grown up in the Ruhr region, she was influenced early on by the industrial context and her mother's technical work. Prior to studying art, she completed an apprenticeship at Hoesch AG in Dortmund, working in the carpentry and metalworking workshops, the steel foundry and the photo workshop, among other places. These experiences continue to influence her artistic self-image to this day. From 1981 to 1986, Gröting studied sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art in the class of Klaus Rinke. Her formative influences include Marina Abramović and Ulay, Joseph Beuys, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Bruce Nauman. Since moving to Berlin in 1993, she has staged performances and increasingly worked with the medium of video. She continues to work in this medium in a variety of ways to this day.

Gröting taught sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich from 1997 to 2003 and held a professorship at the Braunschweig University of Art from 2009 to 2025. She has received numerous awards, most recently the Gerhard Altenbourg Prize in 2023. Her works are represented in important international collections, including the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Museum Ludwig (Cologne), the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (Ghent), the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Goetz Collection (Munich) and the Städel Museum (Frankfurt am Main). Important solo exhibitions have taken place at the Kunsthau Biel Centre d'art Bienne in Biel, the KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art in Berlin, the Kunstraum Dornbirn, the ZKM | Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe, the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein – n.b.k. in Berlin, the Lentos Kunstmuseum in Linz, the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, Marta Herford and the Lindenau Museum in Altenburg. Her work has also been featured regularly in international group exhibitions at venues including the Kunsthalle Bremen, the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden, the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the James Simon Gallery – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, as well as at the 22nd Bienal de São Paulo, the 8th and 14th Biennale of Sydney and the 44th Biennale di Venezia.

STÄDEL INVITES ASTA GRÖTING

Live event with the artist, with music & drinks

On Friday, 5 September 2025, the curator Svenja Grosser will talk to the artist Asta Gröting about her exhibition *A Wolf, Primates and a Breathing Curve*. Short guided tours in German and English will invite visitors to explore the Collection of Contemporary Art and discover exciting connections to Gröting's work. The evening will be rounded off with drinks and music by DJ Alicia Carrera.

Tickets cost €10 (€5 reduced) and can be purchased at staedelmuseum.de/tickets. Any remaining tickets will be available at the box office. Doors open at 6.30 pm, with the event beginning at 7 pm.

The STÄDEL INVITES event series takes place in partnership with BMW on the occasion of exhibitions by selected contemporary artists.

ASTA GRÖTING. A WOLF, PRIMATES AND A BREATHING CURVE

Exhibition Dates: 5 September 2025 to 12 April 2026

Curator: Svenja Grosser (Head of Contemporary Art, Städel Museum)

Project Manager: Gioia Mattner (Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Städel Museum)

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

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Opening Hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + holidays 10 am–6 pm, Thu 10 am–9 pm

Special Opening Hours: For up-to-date information on special opening hours, please visit staedelmuseum.de/en/visit.

Tickets and Admission: €18, reduced €16; Tuesday Special: every Tuesday 3–6 pm €9, admission free for children under 12. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: €16 per person. Registration is generally required for all groups, by telephone +49 (0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de.

Städel Invites Asta Gröting: 5 September 2025, live event with the artist, with music and drinks in partnership with BMW. Tickets cost €10 (€5 reduced) and are available at staedelmuseum.de/tickets. Remaining tickets will be available at the box office, doors open at 6.30 pm, start at 7 pm.

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STÄDEL STORIES: For more stories and background information on the collection and the special exhibitions, read, watch and listen to stories.staedelmuseum.de (in German).