

KUNSTFORUM
International

2. Februar–März 2026

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Zeichne!

VON DER LINIE ZUR KUNST

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NADINE

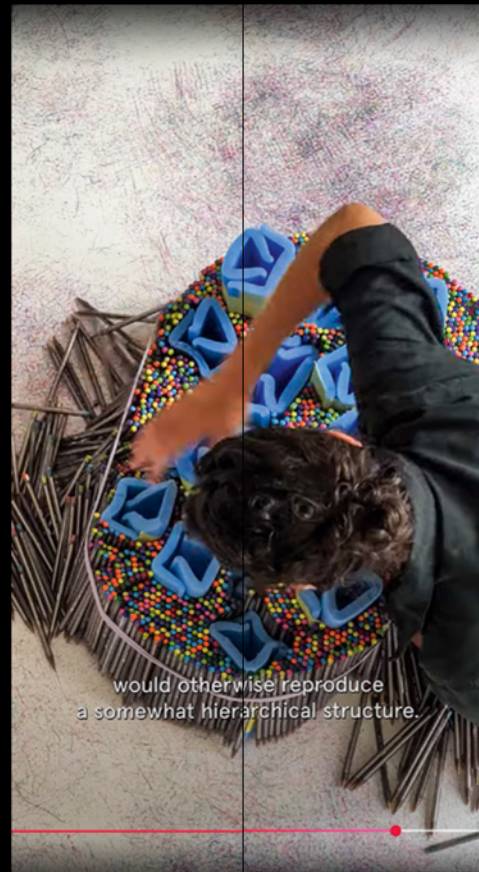
FECHT



nature of creating these
works is a key



it always has to be decided
upon in relation to the content



would otherwise reproduce
a somewhat hierarchical structure



to convey these
ephemeral processes

Nadine Fecht, Videostill from
MULTITUDE – The Many as Many
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFGRi6sgTaM>

With 9.000 Ballpens -

Model of an open Society

An Interview by
Larissa KIKOL

Nadine Fecht, an artist working in the media of drawing and installation, has held the Chair of Drawing at the Offenbach University of Art and Design since the summer semester of 2025. The works of



Nadine Fecht
Foto: Albrecht Fuchs

the Berlin-based artist have been exhibited internationally and in major institutions, including the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Kunsthalle Bratislava, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Kupferstichkabinett—Staatliche Museen Berlin, the ZKM, and the Museu da UFPA Belém. When viewing her videos documenting the creative process, such as Nadine Fecht's **MULTITUDE – The Many as Many**, the various layers of her

work become apparent. For me, three key aspects stood out: 1. The thematic content, which here perhaps addresses the question of the multitude, society, and the individual. 3. Abstraction as the result. And in between, as a completely new insight for me: 2. The sensory, tactile satisfaction, the playful joy of the drawing process when handling so many pens at once. I speak with the artist about this, as well as about her approach to teaching drawing.



Nadine Fecht, 2020, *PROPERTY and SECURITY*, pyrography on paper, Diaslides in a laptop and police barriers, Kunstverein Wolfenbüttel (solo exhibition), VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2025/2026, Photo: Stefan Stark

LK What is important in the drawing process? What do you still have control over, and what happens spontaneously? What is your state of mind?

NF This is a state of tension that focuses primarily on what I want to do, while losing sight of where the result will lead. The images are never conceived with the result in mind. They are clearly prepared settings established in advance—based on parameters clarified in previous experiments—such as the number of ballpoint pens, the selection and weighting of the individual colors, or the sheet size and paper texture. These are set and provided. And the theme, of course—that is, what I am concerned with in the respective work

I myself speak of phenomena. Since these are often structural, societal observations—which are mostly intangible—and require new artistic interpretations when translated into a medium that appears two-dimensional at first glance, in order to render them within it. This is the idea behind the *Multitudes*: to depict a complex model of an open society or its discursive practices—open, free speech and public expression—as something that takes place and also has an effect. And in such a way that, on the one hand, the fascinating beauty of such a dense, even contradictory jumble becomes comprehensible, while on the other hand, the moment of overwhelm and ambiguity also makes it-



Nadine Fecht, 2024, *MULTITUDE – The Many as Many*,
~3500 Ballpens on Paper, each 255 x 155cm,
Exhibition view Gallery Russi Klenner, copyright VG Bild-Kunst
Bonn 2025/2026, Foto: Raphaël Fischer-Dieskau

self present. The question of agency, the power or influence of the individual and the many, and the conflict between that and diversity.

This is what drives me when I draw and guides me as I respond to the emerging structures and traces on the page. I'm always looking over my own shoulder to see where this is leading, where I'm steering it now, what else I can do to arrive at something unplanned yet harmonious. Until the moment comes when I interrupt this performative process and leave what I've achieved so far as a state of being.

Always with the intention of not concluding it in a way that makes it static. All my works are open-ended, drawing viewers in so that they themselves emotionally enter this openness and participate in an interaction that constructively turns forward, toward the future.

LK Isn't it also a childlike joy to leave marks with such a multitude of pens? Even though your individual, handwritten gesture is negated by this, on the other hand, the individual marks are multiplied. "I have been here and created something" becomes "I have been here a thousand times and my marks are everywhere." Something that triggers a sense of satisfaction in all of us, child or adult.

NF There's certainly always a certain enthusiasm involved, but what might seem to you in the video like a joy in the act of drawing is, in fact, precisely this puzzle—using this overwhelming mass of ballpoint pens (I now work with up to 9,000 at a time)—to negate the authorship of the individual stroke and the multiplication of the strokes. Nothing that rubs off onto the paper as a detail, as an individual element, has been done intentionally. Extracting the personal, biographical, and emotional elements from the drawings and, in doing so, arriving at the representation of transpersonal, abstract, and above all relevant issues and questions is what has fundamentally defined my approach to drawing from the very



Nadine Fecht, 2024, *MULTITUDE – The Many as Many*, ~3500 Ballpens on Paper, each 255 x 155cm, (Detail), copyright VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2025/2026, Foto: Raphaël Fischer-Dieskau

All of my works are open at the back, inviting viewers to step into that open space, where they can emotionally engage with it and participate in an interaction that constructively looks forward, toward the future.

beginning. It is about opening up drawing to concepts and questions that lie beyond the classical author-statement conception and that connect drawing to current contemporary developments.

LK Does the final image seem abstract to you?

NF Abstract only insofar as the purpose of the images is not merely to depict something concrete. They are states that capture a fleeting moment in a dynamic process. Like a single frame from a Muybridge film.

And the result is both a concrete trace of movement and an abstract one, because I conceive of it as a representation of the multiple, multifaceted gestures, utterances, and actions that I view as a social model of discourse.

LK In the postwar period of the 20th century, particularly within American Abstract Expressionism, great importance was attached to the “self” in the abstract gesture. The brushstroke served almost as a means of psychological depth analysis, but it also served the myth of the (male) genius. Today, this is no longer the case for many artists; they are letting go of their own selves. Your paintings, which I perceive as abstract, almost remind me of a Buddhist letting go of the self. An almost spatial expansion of the mind as it releases self-references, whims, and concrete identities. How do you see it?

NF You’ve hit the nail on the head! This letting go is central to me, though not so much in a Buddhist, contemplative

sense. I perceive the self—as we place it at the center of our perception of the world—as something that has become very static, something I want to set in motion again. So I always experience working on the drawings as a sometimes painful process of letting go, of forgetting myself, in order to arrive at other points of reference. However, always in relation to a reality that wants to be changed. Through art as well.

And it is indeed the case that, through repeatedly subversive parameters within the medium of drawing, I attempt to undermine, question, and even negate the individual gesture’s inherent quality. And yes, in terms of content, in works like “unfinished business” or “A Body of Work,” I also very specifically raise questions about individual impact, or about joining a collective or becoming part of a movement. Because today, as an individual, one can only make a difference to a limited extent....

Nadine Fecht

is a visual artist based in Berlin who earned her degree in Fine Arts from the Berlin University of the Arts. Her works have been exhibited internationally (Kunstmuseum Basel, Kunsthalle Bratislava, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kupferstichkabinett-Staatliche Museen Berlin, ZKM, Museu da UFPA Belém) and in major thematic exhibitions such as ZERO WASTE* at the Md BK Leipzig, “Vertrautes Terrain” at the ZKM Karlsruhe, “Broken Music Vol. 2 – 70 Years of Records and Sound Works by Artists” at the Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, and most recently at the Drawing Biennial at the Neues Museum in Nuremberg. In addition to various fellowships, such as those from Villa Aurora Los Angeles, the Stiftung Kunstfonds, and the Berlin Fellowship of the Academy of Arts Berlin, she was awarded the Will Grohmann Prize in 2014. Her works are part of public collections such as the Hamburger Bahnhof—Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart in Berlin, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, the Staatliche Museen Berlin, the Berlinische Galerie, the Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. After teaching at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg and serving as a visiting professor at the Braunschweig University of Art, she took on a temporary professorship in Experimental Painting and Drawing at the Bauhaus University Weimar in 2023 and taught at the Berlin University of the Arts. Since 2025, she has held the Chair of Drawing at the Offenbach University of Art and Design.

LK What did you draw as a child, and what was your childhood like?

NF Oh, pretty normal, actually.

LK You also create graphic lines and marks using burnt paper. Is fire a play on the greatest power of all, is it another way of erasing your own handwriting, does it even have a painterly aspect, or is it about something entirely different?

NF The methods and materials I use are never an end in themselves, but are always employed in relation to specific issues and realities. With the titles of my works, I very consciously and reflectively establish a frame of reference that is absolutely essential. The burn marks refer to social conditions that are vulnerable: those of property and class. These are not static, self-perpetuating conditions. And the sometimes blatant inequality that prevails here means that these conditions must be actively protected: by state

institutions and private security firms. The burn marks on the sheets in the EIGENTUM series represent the moment of violence and transgression: an attack and an injury. This is also how I perceive my work with these materials, which are certainly dangerous and not so easy to control: I attack and damage the paper in order to express precisely what I am trying to convey through drawing. And here, too, the tension between control and loss of control is present—when I attempt to draw a hatching on a 5-meter-wide sheet using a hissing, burning fuse....

LK How does it feel to have to write down countless words one after another? What do you see in that exhaustion?

NF For me, these written works are acts of self-reflection. By repeating phrases like “I AM NOT HYSTERICAL,” “I’m feeling blue,” or “BEING WHITE” endlessly, the semantic content becomes blurred or shifts into contradiction. The exhaustion resulting from being overwhelmed also serves here as a means of letting go and overcoming, just as we discussed earlier. In these works, I am always concerned with looking beyond self-perceptions and constructs of identity that have been attributed to us from the outside: for example, the identity as a woman and what is supposedly associated with it—even from a historical perspective—in terms of hysteria. By contradicting the semantic-linguistic content through their graphic form—via colors, textures, and the aspect of drawing as performance—the works set the entire field of such attributions in motion. Exhaustion through redundant repetition, here again, to break through the familiar and lead into the open. And quite concretely, the typography of “I am not hysterical”—which, through density and visual restlessness, intensified from page to page and then grew calmer again at the end—felt, during the act of writing,



Nadine Fecht, 2023, *we all are*, poster paper on billboard, 260 x 360 cm, LittleKriminals Berlin, © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2025/2026, Photo: Eric Wunder

It is about opening up drawing to concepts and questions that lie beyond the classical author-statement conception and that connect drawing to current contemporary developments.

as if I were going through something and actually “writing myself free” from transgenerational attributions. Whereas initially there was still a certain amount of shame associated with bringing up such a topic, I now feel truly liberated.

LK You’re a professor of drawing at the Offenbach University of Art and Design. Do students still want to draw these days?

NF You bet! There’s actually a very interesting and revealing debate going on right now, especially at universities, about the nature of drawing: there’s this traditional understanding of drawing as a sketch, as a preparatory medium, or even as an ultra-personal, “emotional” means of expression. None of that is particularly interesting, of course. However, there is a growing number of young artists

who—like me—view drawing as an art form in its own right, one that still holds enormous untapped potential in the wake of contemporary art trends. This young drawing community senses this and is eager to put it into practice. Being part of this as professor brings me immense joy!

By repeating phrases like “I AM NOT HYSTERICAL,” “I’m feeling blue,” or “BEING WHITE” over and over again, the semantic content becomes blurred or shifts into contradiction

LK What is important to you in your teaching? And why does drawing play such an important role in it?

NF It is important to me that the professor’s persona does not overshadow the students’ individuality. I myself, for example, studied under Stan Douglas, Lothar Baumgarten, and Hito Steyerl. On the one hand, the media- and society-critical conceptual artist who was also interested in new technologies; on the other, a “Beuys student” more attuned to immaterial cultural phenomena—they are actually at odds with one another, but for me they were very inspiring counterparts from whom I could learn, take my cue, and question my worldview. Precisely because they were not draftsmen, yet I learned artistic concepts and approaches from them that, when applied to drawing, yield new drawing techniques and results. Students should learn to understand and develop their very own artistic drive. They should use me as a professor to find themselves, but also to push themselves away. In a way, teaching—and studying at the university—is like swimming freely in open water for me.

LK Drawing is not only an artistic medium but also a cultural practice. It greatly supports children’s development, but drawing has also been important for scientists and doctors in conducting research and communicating their findings. What benefits can drawing offer people?

NF This question hits the nail on the head regarding what art means to me. And where I would like to situate drawing. Because—just as you say—precisely because drawing has this multifaceted, even historical character, and because it has its place and its justification in—why, actually? Supposedly independent spheres of society—the private, the scientific, and the artistic—that it has its place and its justification, is precisely what makes it so interesting for a way of thinking and feeling in which these spheres find their way back to one another. Science is also creative and creates images and models. Here I always think of the incredibly beautiful and powerful “image” of the double helix, which represents our genome and was conceived by scientists. And art also plays a part in research and science, in that artistic work looks for new intellectual horizons and introduces openings and visions into the collective discourse that can spill over into everything else. This artistic exploration of new forms of expression and content provides ideas and perspectives that, even if utopian and ahead of the future at present, contribute to that future and help bring it about. Art—and in my case, drawing—aims to do this, and it can do it. And in the end, that’s what makes it worthwhile!

right side

Nadine Fecht, 2013, *Any Collective Needs a Direction*, 600 ballpoint pens on paper, 100 x 70 cm, VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2025/2026, Photo: Eric Wunder

