

Rolf von Bergmann, Untitled (Klaus Nomi), New York 1979
© Berlinische Galerie / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Drag, Desire and the City

**Rolf von Bergmann
Photographs**

26.2.27 – 9.8.27

Klaus Nomi before a performance, Nina Hagen in Studio 54, backstage at a drag show – from West Berlin to New York, Rolf von Bergmann (1953–1988) recorded queer subculture and the vibrant art, fashion and club scene of the 1970s and 1980s. The artist's little-known oeuvre, created in the few years before his untimely death from AIDS-related illness, will be exhibited for the first time at the Berlinische Galerie.

Rolf von Bergmann was deeply influenced by artists working with the Galerie am Moritzplatz and in particular by Salomé. He took photographs of his peers and frequently of himself in drag or flamboyant costumes. His self-enactments challenge binary gender roles. Overpainted photos in lurid colours express the strident aesthetic of the period.

His vision broadened with a move to New York in 1978, where he took lessons from photographer Lisette Model. He trained his camera on those around him with subjective intuition. The results were society snaps, portraits and fashion shots. High-contrast black-and-white imagery, often boldly angled, captures the spirit of the times. Rolf von Bergmann witnessed the Gay Pride Parade of 1979 and glimpsed behind the scenes at the legendary Studio 54 and the night club Max's Kansas City. Divine, John Waters and Lil Picard were among those who posed for portraits.

The exhibition features about 190 works by Bergmann, including vintage prints, overpainted photo canvases, slide projections and Super 8 films. Alongside these, works by Colette, Rainer Fetting, Anne Jud, Jürgen Klauke, Helmut Middendorf, Lisette Model and Salomé honour the artist's links with the Galerie am Moritzplatz and the independent scene in West Berlin and New York. Harry Hachmeister chose 80 slides from the artist's estate to compose a personal, contemporary take on Rolf von Bergmann's oeuvre. The exhibition and catalogue will enhance the visibility of queer contributions to art history.



Contact

Sascha Perkins
Head of Communications and Education
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 829
perkins@berlinischegalerie.de

Janet Riedel
Communications
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 831
riedel@berlinischegalerie.de

Press images
[berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/
rolf-von-bergmann](http://berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/rolf-von-bergmann)

Tickets
bg.berlin/en/tickets

Social media
#RolfvonBergmannBG
#BerlinischeGalerie

Berlinische Galerie
Berlin's Museum of Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture
Alte Jakobstraße 124–128
10969 Berlin
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 600
berlinischegalerie.de

Admission 12€, concessions 7 €
Every 1st Wed of the month:
7 € for everyone
Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm
Tue closed