

More than twenty-five new paintings presented in a major group exhibition:

House of Nisaba

New Stories of Painting

14 May–30 August 2026

Moderna Museet explores the return to figurative painting among a new generation of artists, asking: Which visual and symbolic vocabularies are artists developing in painting today? Mythology, religion and history have been the historical focus of painting, but in the 21st century, artists are equally inspired by mysticism, fashion, astrology, cinema, social media, or science fiction in developing their symbolic language. The audience will encounter nearly twenty-five newly commissioned paintings, as well as a number of existing works.

The group exhibition "House of Nisaba: New Stories of Painting" offers a deep dive into contemporary painting. The exhibition borrows its name from the Mesopotamian goddess Nisaba, initially the protector of grain and accounting, but, with the invention of writing, she also became the goddess of the scribe, of storytelling finding material form. Now, she is evoked once again – by the curator Hendrik Folkerts – as the divine patron of this house of painters.

Meanings in Contemporary Painting

Hendrik Folkerts began working on the exhibition by asking the following questions: What does painting look like and mean in the world today, as knowledge transforms, information accelerates and societies splinter? What new modes of storytelling are painters developing today?

He says:

- *The artists in "House of Nisaba", most of whom are born in the 1980s and 1990s, do not belong to any movement, but rather, they share a sensibility, towards figuration, towards symbolism, towards creating new stories in the information and technological age.*

New Allegories

In painting, allegory is a way of creating images or figures that signify something beyond their literal meaning – for example, a human skull that in historical still life painting symbolised the transience of life.

In previous centuries, painters often worked within a shared iconography: they created symbols whose meaning was agreed upon and generally known. Today, this has changed, as an artist creates a system of meaning within their own practice. That shared iconography has made way for a more individualised structure of references: citations and appropriations that reflect today's broad circulation and

fragmentation of information distribution. The feed matters, shaping the individualised perception of the world.

The Exhibition's Provisional Architecture

Devised by the design and architecture studio Formafantasma, the exhibition's architecture suggests this House as provisional and always in the making, reflecting the new life of painting in the 21st century. To fully shape Nisaba's house, the exhibition design plays with the architectural history of painting in temples, churches, cathedrals and mosques, by including aspects of sacred architecture.

Participating artists

Soufiane Ababri (Moroccan, b. 1985)
Michael Armitage (Kenyan-British, b. 1984)
Felipe Baeza (Mexican, b. 1987)
Kevin Beasley (American, b. 1985)
Cornel Brudăscu (Romanian, b. 1937)
Alex Červený (Brazilian, b. 1963)
Leidy Churchman (American, b. 1979)
Hamishi Farah (Australian, b. 1991)
Martin Gustavsson (Swedish, b. 1965)
Gordon Hookey (Waanyi, b. 1961)
Hortensia Mi Kafchin (Romanian, b. 1986)
Sanya Kantarovsky (Russian, b. 1982)
Melanie Kitti (Swedish, b. 1986)
Matthew Lutz-Kinoy (American, b. 1983)
Jill Mulleady (Uruguayan, b. 1980)
Wangechi Mutu (Kenyan, b. 1972)
Naudline Pierre (American, b. 1989)
Mohammed Sami (Iraqi-Swedish, b. 1984)
Cinga Samson (South African, b. 1986)
Agnes Scherer (German, b. 1985)
Selma Selman (Bosnian-Herzegovinian, b. 1991)
Agata Słowak (Polish, b. 1994)
Mikołaj Sobczak (Polish, b. 1989)
Mounira Al Solh (Lebanese, b. 1978)
Abdellah Taïa (Moroccan, b. 1973)
Salman Toor (Pakistani, b. 1983)
Kevin Quashie (American)
Evelyn T. Wang (Chinese-Dutch, b. 1981)

Curator and collaboration

The exhibition is curated by Hendrik Folkerts, former curator at Moderna Museet, now chief curator of program at Kunsthaus Zürich. The exhibition is co-organised with Kunsthaus Zürich, where it will be presented in 2027.

About the Exhibition Catalogue

A comprehensive catalogue is published for the exhibition "House of Nisaba: New Stories of Painting" with a presentation on each of the artists, images of all the artworks as well as new texts by art historian Claire Bishop, Hendrik Folkerts, artist Irena Haiduk, art historian Ricardo Montez and writer Abdellah Taïa. Design by Asso Stockholm. The exhibition catalogue is published by Moderna Museet.

Press Contact, Moderna Museet

Annika Hansson Wretman,
press@modernamuseet.se
+ 46 70 952 23 62