

COMICS brut

OPENING: Tuesday, June 2, 2026, 7:00 PM

Exhibition duration: June 3 to September 13, 2026

Comics have long since established themselves as an independent artistic language—far beyond their origins as entertainment. In its summer exhibition, *galerie gugging* demonstrates how closely this visual world is connected to Art Brut: immediate, individual, and of great formal strength. *COMICS brut* brings together works by Basel Al-Bazzaz, Manuel Griebler, Hannes Lehner, and Central African artist Didier Kassaï, whose works are being shown in Austria for the first time.

At a time when **comics** are increasingly entering the realm of contemporary art, *galerie gugging* dedicates **COMICS brut** to an interface that could hardly be more relevant: the dialogue between **comics** and **Art Brut**. What may at first appear to be different visual worlds reveals itself, upon closer inspection, to be surprisingly related—in its immediacy of expression, its serial mode of narration, and its distinctive formal language.

Art Brut and Comics – Two Related Worlds

comics brut presents two art forms that both originally emerged as counter-movements to established art. All four artists share an autodidactic approach as well as a practice of working in series, in which motifs are repeated, condensed, and further developed. Often, a central figure stands at the core, functioning—similar to **comics**—as a carrier of narrative and meaning. At the same time, the works demonstrate how differently these principles can manifest: between condensation and reduction, between memory and invention, between personal imagery and pop-cultural reference.

“Comics are far more than entertainment—they open us up to new perspectives and reveal things,” says **Nina Katschnig**, director of *galerie gugging*. *“What particularly interests me is how these visual worlds connect with Art Brut—where expression emerges directly and unfiltered.”* The current repositioning of comics within contemporary art is also evident in the exhibition “KAWS. ART & COMIX” at the **Albertina Modern** in Vienna.

Four Positions – Four Distinct Visual Languages

The exhibition **COMICS brut** brings together works by **Didier Kassaï**, **Basel Al-Bazzaz**, **Manuel Griebler**, and **Hannes Lehner**—all artists whose approaches could hardly be more different, yet whose visual languages reveal surprising similarities.

A central presence in **COMICS brut** is the richly detailed work of *Gugging* artist **Manuel Griebler**, who has lived and worked at the *House of Artists* since 2016. In his works, characters from well-known series such as **The Simpsons** or **Futurama** appear in a dense, almost obsessive “sea of heads.” Pop-cultural references are not merely adopted but transformed into **Griebler’s** distinctive, unmistakable, and complex visual world, moving between memory, appropriation, and transformation.

Hannes Lehner, currently working at the Werkstätten Im Werd, approaches pop culture from a different perspective. His works, inspired by **Star Trek**, are created freely from memory—without templates or direct references. Familiar visual worlds are reimagined, fragmented, and translated into his own personal visual language.

The artistic quartet is completed by **Didier Kassaï** and **Basel Al-Bazzaz**. Here, two artistic positions enter into dialogue which, despite differing cultural contexts, develop a striking closeness. **Kassaï**, born in 1974 in Sibut in the Central African Republic, lives and works in Bangui. His works, which reflect social realities, have brought him recognition far beyond national borders. This exhibition marks his first presentation in Austria. **Al-Bazzaz**, born in Baghdad in 1973, has lived in Austria since 1990. Both artists work with clothed animal figures that take on human traits and function as carriers of history, social structures, and collective identity. While **Kassaï** uses this visual language to make social realities in Central Africa visible, **Al-Bazzaz** develops his own formally reduced yet elegant interpretation of the motif. In juxtaposition, it becomes clear how similar visual structures can emerge—across continents and beyond cultural boundaries. The result is a dynamic interplay of different artistic positions that vividly conveys this remarkable proximity.

We cordially invite you to the opening on **June 2, 2026, at 7:00 PM** at *galerie gugging*, in the presence of **Basel Al-Bazzaz, Hannes Lehner, Gugging artist Manuel Griebler**, and the *Gugging artists*. The ceremonial opening will be conducted by **Angela Stief**, director of the **Albertina Modern**.

Nina Katschnig and the *galerie gugging* team

Artists (short bios):

Manuel Griebler (1991, Kirchdorf, Austria)

Gugging artist, lives and works at the *House of Artists*, Maria Gugging.

Hannes Lehner (1986, Vienna, Austria)

Lives and works in Vienna, active at the *Werkstätten Im Werd*.

Didier Kassai (1974, Sibut, Central African Republic)

Lives and works in Bangui.

Basel Al-Bazzaz (1973, Baghdad, Iraq)

Lives and works in a socio-therapeutic print workshop in Vienna-Mauer.