Press Release

GROSSE BUCHSTABEN, GRELLE FARBEN

(BIG LETTERS, BRIGHT COLORS)

Lettering as Art – Art as Lettering

27. Juli 2026

August 15, 2026 – February 28, 2027

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Letters, words, sentences: in contemporary painting, they carry not only literal meaning but can become an independent pictorial motif in their own right. The Kunsthalle Emden is dedicating a new exhibition to this interplay: "BIG LETTERS, BOLD COLORS" (August 15, 2026 – February 28, 2027) brings together works by contemporary artists and graffiti writers, exploring the impact of lettering within the image: What does it add to the work, how is it shaped artistically? Can script convey something that cannot be captured in words alone?

Script within the image has been an art-historical subject since at least classical modernism. The Dada movement provided pioneering impulses here; in later movements such as Neo-Expressionism and the Neue Wilde – both collection focal points of the Kunsthalle Emden – script also became an elemental component of the picture. In the works gathered here, it appears in manifold forms: as a quotation, as a complementary element, or as the actual main motif. The formal design is always in productive tension with the literal, linguistic, or symbolic content. The manipulation and alienation of script becomes an artistic decision.

The exhibition is complemented by works from graffiti writers selected by artist MadC as co-curator. These works make clear that script as a formal and artistic

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device unfolds its full effect not only in modern and contemporary painting, but equally in graffiti.

Since the 1970s, graffiti has developed from the world's major cities into a global subculture. Political, social, religious, and sociological themes find expression here, as does the artistic design of one's own name. Through the creative transformation of script, works emerge that shape urban space. Hardly any other art form has so lastingly influenced the appearance of modern cities.

Legibility, form, and the tension between sign and meaning are questions that arise in graffiti just as much as in contemporary art. At times, the works on show follow a pictorial logic close to graffiti; at times, they deliberately take an opposing position. The exhibition thus opens up a multi-layered dialogue between different artistic approaches and modes of expression.

The exhibition is co-curated by the artist MadC.

The occasion for the exhibition is the event “Hit the Trog” organized by the City of Emden from August 14 to 16: along the so-called Trogstrecke, a busy traffic artery in the heart of Emden, a contiguous wall surface of 2,300 m^2 will be made available to more than 70 international graffiti artists. The resulting works are intended to remain permanently visible and to establish the Trog as a cultural site within the city.

Artists
Norbert Bisky · Monica Bonvicini · Claudia Comte · Daim · Dare · Delta · Egs · Nadine Fecht · Shilpa Gupta · L’Atlas · Via Lewandowsky · L’Outsider · Stefan Marx · Olaf Metzel · Rero · Anselm Reyle · Thomas Scheibitz· Shoe · Fiete Stolte · Christian Thoelke · Erwin Wurm

Press Preview
Friday, August 14, 11 a.m. In the Atrium of the Kunsthalle Emden

Opening
The exhibition opens on Saturday, August 15, 2026, at 8 p.m. A panel talk will be followed from 9 p.m. by a get-together with music by DJ Mad (Beginner). Admission is free, the museum is open until midnight.

A week beforehand, the Emden Museum Night on August 8, 2026, from 5 to 11 p.m. will get visitors in the mood for the exhibition with its own programme, this year under the motto of the five elements of HipHop: DJing – the mixing and creative handling of music, MCing (rap) – rhythmic speaking and rhyming over beats, breaking/breakdance – the characteristic dance style, and graffiti writing – designed lettering and pictorial art in public space, and knowlege – sharing of information. Music by Deejay Irie (NL).

*The exhibition title “ GROSSE BUCHSTABEN, GRELLE FARBEN ” is a quotation from the song “Füchse” by Absolute Beginner feat. Samy Deluxe (on: Bambule, 1998).

Sponsors of the exhibition (as of 7/6/2026)
VR-Stiftung of the Volksbanken and Raiffeisenbanken
Ostfriesische Volksbank eG
Freunde der Kunsthalle e.V.

Cooperation partner
City of Emden HIT THE TROG

General Information

Opening Hours / Public Holidays
Sat, Sun, public holidays 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Tue to Fri 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Closed on Mondays and on Dec. 23, 24, 25, and 31

Additional opening hours with free admission courtesy of Volkswagen Group Art4All – Tide Tied (see website)

Admission Prices
Adults €12.50, concessions €9
Groups of 10 or more €10 per person
Children/young people under 18 free

Free admission on the first Tuesday of every month, 5–9 p.m. (Kunstabend), courtesy of the Aloys Wobben Stiftung

Online tickets for admission, regular guided tours (e.g. Kunstabend), and events are available in the ticket shop on the website.

Sponsors and Partners
The Kunsthalle is supported by:
State of Lower Saxony
City of Emden
Aurich District
Leer District
Wittmund District
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Cultural partners:
Volkswagen Group
Aloys Wobben Stiftung
NDR kultur

Free Admission
- Children and young people under 18 years
- On the first Tuesday of every month from 5 to 9 p.m. (Kunstabend)
- During Tide Tied times, see https://kunsthalle-emden.de/volkswagengroupart4alltidetied