



Press Release / Pressemitteilung
September 2025

Acquisition and Cabinet Exhibition Celebrating 125 Years of Wilhelm Wagenfeld

Launch: September 28, 2025, 11.30 am, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum (KWM)

Press Conference: September 25, 2025, 11 am, KWM

Wilhelm Wagenfeld (1900, Bremen–1990, Stuttgart) was one of the most influential industrial designers of the twentieth century. His everyday objects—simple, functional, timeless—remain the epitome of modern design to this day. This year marks the 125th anniversary of the birth of this former Bauhaus student, and the Kunstmuseen Krefeld will honor the occasion with a special presentation in the *Collection in Motion* series at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, opening on September 28, 2025. Upon the initiative by Katia Baudin, director of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, the museum was able to acquire a major group of 120 objects spanning four decades of Wagenfeld's career, enriching the collection with a key chapter in German design history.

Wagenfeld's career exemplifies the transformation from craft-based design to modern industrial design. Trained as a technical draftsman and silversmith, he studied at the Weimar Bauhaus in the 1920s under László Moholy-Nagy and Christian Dell in the metal workshop. Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius wrote to him in a letter in 1960: "No one else has developed and put into practice the founding idea of the Bauhaus as effectively."

Wagenfeld, who later became a member of the Deutscher Werkbund, recognized early on the creative potential of mass production and began collaborating closely with industry in the 1930s. Yet he always remained faithful to his principles: truth to materials, functionality, and aesthetic clarity based not on fashionable trends but on everyday use by a general public—and hence also accessible to a wider audience.

The acquisition results from a close dialogue that Director Katia Baudin has pursued with a private collector since 2020. "This substantial group of works integrates seamlessly into the Kunstmuseen Krefeld's collection in terms of both content and history—not only through Wagenfeld's strong ties to the Bauhaus, whose last director in Dessau and later Berlin was Mies van der Rohe. His membership in the Deutscher Werkbund, whose ideals are deeply connected with our institutional history, also makes this acquisition a real stroke of luck. It stands at the very intersection of art, design, and everyday life that defines our program," says Katia Baudin.

Due in part to the popular Wagenfeld table lamp, today he is probably the most famous product designer to have emerged from the Bauhaus. Many of his objects have lost nothing of their aesthetic appeal and design relevance—on the contrary, they are omnipresent without ever becoming obtrusive.

Whether it's his stackable Kubus dishes for Vereinigte Lausitzer Glaswerke or the witty yet elegant *Max & Moritz* salt and pepper shakers for Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik (WMF), Wagenfeld's designs combine disciplined form with deep sensitivity to the daily lives of people. For WMF alone, he created around 150 designs.

Kunstmuseen Krefeld

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Organized by Assistant Curator Ann-Kathrin Hörlein, the exhibition at the KWM offers a focused and up-to-date look at Wagenfeld's design legacy. On view is a large selection of the 120 newly acquired objects, ranging from porcelain and glass tableware—pitchers, cups, plates, bowls, butter dishes from the 1930s—to vases, drinking glasses, and even a portable Braun record player from the 1950s. The show is further enriched by rarely seen archival materials, including design models, production series, photographs, and advertising materials.

Visit

KUNSTMUSEEN KREFELD

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum

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The Kunstmuseen are a cultural institution
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