BERNHARD KNAUS | FINE ART

Katja Davar

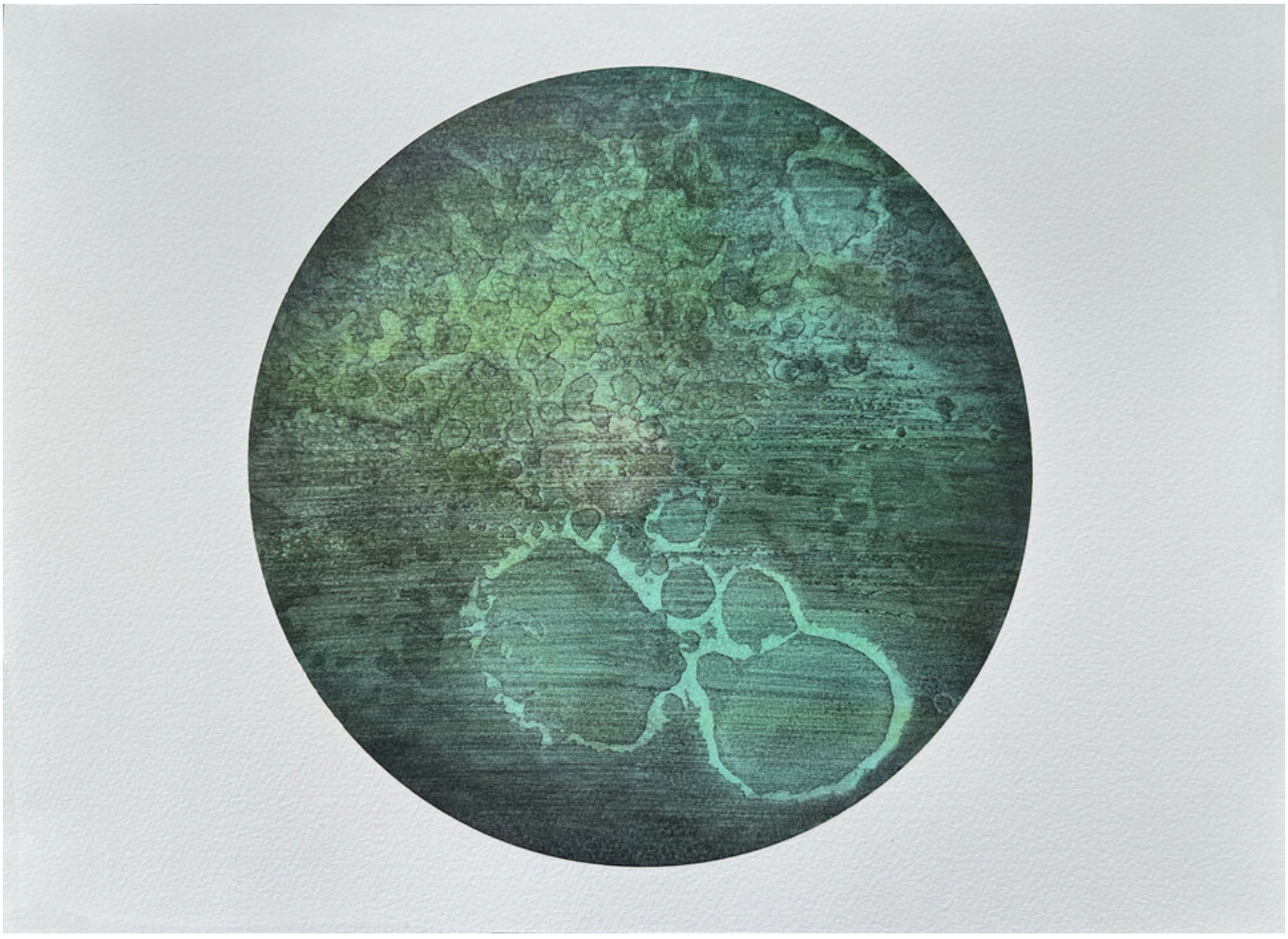
Schön & streng. Die Macht des Ornaments
11.10.2026 - 14.02.2027
Von der Heydt-Museum Turmhof 8 42103 Wuppertal

Here's your British English translation, keeping the tone refined and authentic while preserving all original cultural references and artist names:

With the exhibition "Schön & streng. Die Macht des Ornaments", the Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal explores the function and significance of ornament in art from Classical Modernism to the present day. The museum thus turns its attention to a subject of particular relevance, as in the face of the vast flood of images produced at rapid speed by electronic media, many are seeking formal strategies that promise clarity and stability through geometric and ornamental order.

The internationally renowned painting collection of the Von der Heydt-Museum provides an ideal foundation for an exhibition on the "Power of Ornament". Through numerous masterpieces, it illustrates how painters such as Henri Matisse and August Macke, since the beginnings of Modernism, have made colour, form, and surface the central themes of their work. In contemporary art too, repetition, patterns, and designs fulfil no merely decorative role; they serve – as seen in works by artists like Philip Taaffe, Katja Davar, and Thomas Bayrle – as expressions of the desire to reconcile the simple with the complex. At the same time, supposedly purely decorative forms also raise questions that reflect cultural and social criticism, for every ornament carries its own history and, with it, its meaning. When artists such as Nevin Aladağ, Azra Akšamija, or Susan Hefuna draw today on traditional ornaments of specific cultures, their patterns can also be read as critical messages about society.

The exhibition begins with the sensual pleasure and joy of pure visual experience. It focuses both on traditional ornaments and on individually designed visual patterns that correspond to contemporary perceptions of colour and form. On the one hand, attention is directed towards the formal precision inherent in ornament – its rules, seriality, and structural rigour – while also embracing its playful aspect. In this way, the selected works reflect artistic approaches that, in the first half of the 20th century, led to abstract or concrete art, later to Op Art, and that are today experiencing a revival. Yet, in our contemporary global culture, the migration of forms – as well as the representational and communicative functions of patterns and ornaments in the context of intermingling cultural spheres – has become a particularly fascinating theme.



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