

“I like you better without eyeshadow.”

Rut Brandt on Warhol's portrait of Willy Brandt

FORUM KUNST at the Bundestag
Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building
Luisenstraße 30
10117 Berlin

Published by: Art in the German Bundestag Division,
Secretariat of the Art Council, Platz der Republik 1,
11011 Berlin **Exhibition curator:** Kristina Volke, Head
of the German Bundestag's Art Collection **Translated
by:** Language Service of the German Bundestag, in
cooperation with Hillary Crowe and Emma Hardie
Design: redpear, Potsdam **Photos:** Oskar Kokoschka,
Konrad Adenauer IMAGO / Sven Simon, 1966
© Fondation Oskar Kokoschka - VG Bild-Kunst,
Bonn 2026; Andy Warhol, Willy Brandt IMAGO /
United Archives / Sven Simon; photographic
reproduction - A.Kermann

More information on art in the German Bundestag
can be found at: [https://www.bundestag.de/en/
visittheBundestag/art](https://www.bundestag.de/en/visittheBundestag/art)



WA
RH
OL

portrays

BR
AN
DT

KOK
OSC
HKA

paints

AD
ENA
UER

“Do I really look so youthful?”

Konrad Adenauer on his portrait by Oskar Kokoschka

Kokoschka’s Adenauer. Warhol’s Brandt. Unusual Encounters between Art and Politics

The Art Collection of the German Bundestag includes numerous portraits of writers, composers and other public figures, as well as likenesses of parliamentarians from the National Assembly in St. Paul’s Church to the present day. Like other artworks in the collection, they may be borrowed by Members for their offices or for meeting rooms.

As well as purchasing artworks, the German Bundestag’s Art Council commissions portraits for the gallery of Bundestag Presidents on the plenary level of the Reichstag Building. The portraits are commissioned once the term in office has ended and the artist is chosen by the outgoing President.

Among the highlights of the collection are two paintings of German chancellors: Oskar Kokoschka’s portrait of Konrad Adenauer from 1966 and Andy Warhol’s portrait of Willy Brandt from 1976.

Even while they were being painted, these two portraits caused a sensation. And yet these were not the official portraits destined for the gallery in the Federal Chancellery, but were the outcome of private initiatives by gallery owners to support charitable causes.

For both Adenauer and Brandt, this charitable purpose seems to have been more important than the encounters with the artists who, by then, were already superstars in the world of art. And yet both politicians had their own distinct, although very different, relationship with art.

Konrad Adenauer was an aficionado of 15th- and 16th-century painting and collected works from the Dutch, Flemish and Italian Schools. He was also reputed to be a great connoisseur of classical music. Adenauer’s few statements about art in general suggest that he understood art in terms of its connection to religion, as an aid to introspection and contemplation, transcendence and faith, and also as a counterpoint to the fast-moving world of politics. He had a somewhat sceptical attitude towards contemporary art and therefore, at first, towards Kokoschka as well.

Willy Brandt was the exact opposite. Although not a collector, he made it his personal mission, as part of his politics, to enable the making of art. “For me, it is about (...) integrating contemporary art and its content more consciously into political life.” Brandt therefore championed the idea of a federal art and exhibition hall to serve



Oskar Kokoschka
Konrad Adenauer, 1966
Oil on canvas
Art Collection of the German Bundestag
© Fondation Oskar Kokoschka / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Andy Warhol
Willy Brandt, 1976
Acrylic and screen print on canvas
Art Collection of the German Bundestag
© 2026 The Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts, Inc.

as an intellectual and cultural centre for the capital Bonn. He advocated for the founding of a federal collection of contemporary art and surrounded himself with artists, who – thanks to this commitment – were very well-disposed towards him. Willy Brandt’s circle included Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, Georg Meistermann, Marc Chagall, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Max Ernst, as well as Christo, whose “Wrapped Reichstag” project Brandt wholeheartedly supported back in the 1970s, when Christo’s idea still seemed hopelessly utopian.

In neither Adenauer’s nor Brandt’s case would the encounters with Kokoschka and Warhol significantly influence these fundamental approaches to art. And yet they are more than merely entertaining episodes, for they allow insights into a time in history when the spheres of art and politics were even more disconnected than they are today and intensive relationships rarely developed between their respective protagonists.

This exhibition reveals the two stories behind the portraits and thus casts light not only on the particular tension but also on the dialogue between art and politics, artists and politicians – a dialogue which, in the best case, fosters openness, mutual understanding and a closer connection between the two spheres.

We wish to thank all the lenders and project partners.

An exhibition in the
FORUM KUNST at the Bundestag
22 September 2026 – 10 January 2027

OPENING HOURS
Tuesday to Sunday, 11 to 18 hrs.
Admission is free of charge and does not require prior registration. Security checks will take place at the entrance.

EXHIBITION CLOSED
24–26 December 2026
31 December 2026 – 1 January 2027

EVENTS
21 September 2026, 18 hrs
(Registration required)
Exhibition opening by the President of the German Bundestag
Julia Klöckner

Panel discussion
“Democracy means more than a parliamentary form of government; for us, it is a world view.”
On Konrad Adenauer, democracy and politics.
President of the Bundestag Julia Klöckner in conversation with former Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel

Panel discussion
13 October 2026, 19 hrs
(Registration required)
“Freedom for the many, not merely for a few. Freedom of conscience and of opinion. And also freedom from poverty and fear.”
On Willy Brandt, freedom and democracy. President of the Bundestag Julia Klöckner in conversation with former President of the German Bundestag Dr h.c. Wolfgang Thierse

TOURS (without prior registration)
are generally given each Wednesday at 16 hrs.
Set dates: 30.9., 7.10., 14.10., 21.10., 4.11., 11.11., 18.11., 25.11., 2.12., 9.12., 16.12.2026 / 6.1.2027
Please note: We encourage you to check our website www.kunst-im-bundestag.de in advance for any changes and additional dates.

For **GROUP TOURS** please get in touch via e-mail to kunst@bundestag.de to arrange a date.

SPECIAL TOURS in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Forum and the Forum Willy Brandt Berlin will be held from 3 pm to 5 pm on 9.10., 23.10., 6.11., 4.12. and 18.12.2026. (Registration required at <https://adenauerhaus.de/besuch/berlin>)