



MUSEUM OSTWALL

Call for Papers

Waste: An Exhibition about the Global Routes of Rubbish

DORTMUNDER U

Conference

Museum Ostwall im Dortmunder U

Dortmund, Deutschland

June 11, 2026

Submission deadline: March 15, 2026

On June 6, 2026, the international conference *Waste: An Exhibition about the Global Routes of Rubbish* will be held parallel to the exhibition of the same name at Museum Ostwall im Dortmunder U (March 27–July 26, 2026).

Like the exhibition, this conference is dedicated to manifold approaches to rubbish in modern and contemporary art. As art historian Amanda Boetzkes points out, a trend can be observed since the late 1950s in particular: artists make rubbish visible and display it, on the one hand by depicting it in paintings, drawings, prints, and later in film and photography, but also by using trash as an artistic material. In contemporary art in particular, an aesthetics of rubbish has emerged that shows the following: the aesthetics and materiality of garbage inspire us to think about its apparent invisibility and the problem of global pollution, while at the same time emblemizing the problems that result from overconsumption in capitalism.

Since the 1950s, the ecological and social consequences of waste production in particular have been targeted by artists and have served as the point of departure for both this exhibition and this conference. A special emphasis is placed on the global linkages between garbage production and the trade in waste products. Although the so-called Global North generates immense amounts of individual and industrial waste, a large amount of this refuse ultimately winds up in the Global South. At the same time, waste is hidden from public view, both at the site of its generation and on its continuing journey. Colonial continuities play a central role in the routes taken by trash as well.

With this conference, Museum Ostwall presents current research on rubbish in modern and contemporary art and spotlights curatorial practice on the subject.

We are looking for scholarly contributions in the following areas and beyond:

The significance of rubbish in art history

Conceptual definitions and evaluations of rubbish in art

A shift in the significance of trash during the second half of the twentieth century: from garbage as a material to activist art

The global artistic engagement with garbage

Trash and the global economy in art

Trash, climate protection, and gender in art
Contemporary artistic approaches to rubbish

We are looking for brief lectures fifteen minutes in length. These lectures can be broad explorations as well as specific case studies. Following their presentation, speakers will be included in a round of discussion.

Please submit the following:

- A title in German and in English
- Five keywords summing up the contribution
- An abstract, max. 300 words in length, in both German and English
- A brief bio (max. 200 characters w/spaces)
- Contact info

Submission deadline: March 15, 2026.

Please send submissions (PDF file) to: anmeldungen_mo@stadtdo.de

Speakers will receive an honorarium. In addition, travel and hotel costs will be covered by Museum Ostwall.

If you have any questions, please contact Christina Danick (director of exhibitions) or Michael Griff (curator)