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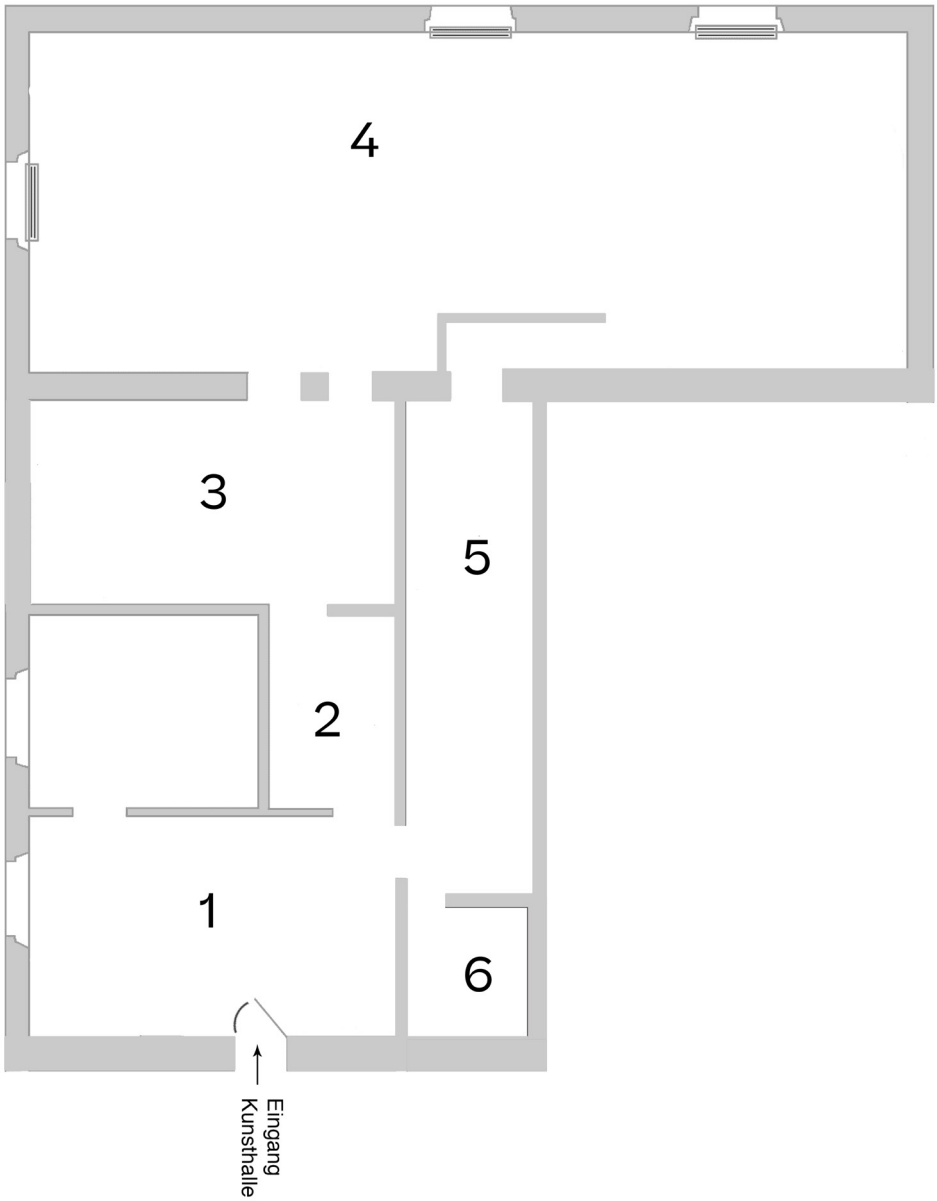
Martin Chramosta

Das Schloss

Kunsthalle Palazzo
6 Sept – 26 Oct 2025

The Kunsthalle Palazzo is dedicating a comprehensive solo exhibition to the artist Martin Chramosta titled “Das Schloss” (The Castle). Chramosta works at the intersection of sculpture, drawing, performance, and installation. His practice involves a multifaceted exploration of architectural set pieces and historical references. Using materials such as iron, glazed ceramics, and found objects, he creates fragmentary objects—including fictional gates and facades—that break with familiar architectural conventions.

The term “Das Schloss” (The Castle) weaves together multiple ideas. It serves as a projection surface for historical, architectural, social, and literary fantasies. A castle can be many things: magnificent, eerie, protective, forbidding, labyrinthine, mystical, decadent, and elegant. In German, the term also has an interesting double meaning. “Schloss” refers not only to a building, but also to the device used to lock or bolt it. Etymologically related to “schliessen” (to close), and perhaps also to “Schluss” (end), it always conveys the idea of enclosing and preserving—be it a secret, a treasure, a story, or a taboo.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Eingang
Kunsthalle

Porte, 2025
wood

Dark braces, diagonal herringbone patterns, vertical slats, or horizontal grids – in front of and within various passageways of the exhibition there are doors made of wood. They provide access to the different rooms of the castle and create portals between imaginary outside and inside spaces. Equipped with hinges, they can be moved. In this way, visitors can open, but also close, the access to the next exhibition hall. Set into each of the doors are rectangular openings in which delicate metal grilles are mounted. These lend the robust-looking doors a dance-like lightness.

GALLERY 1

Sorelle, 2024–2025
glazed ceramic, iron

Bačkory, 2024
found iron

In the first room we encounter three reliefs titled “Sorelle.” These are colorful ceramic elements set in metal, distinguished by their pointed forms. “Sorelle” is an Italian word meaning “sisters.” Here, the “Sorelle” are hung side by side in a prominent position, emphasizing their similarity. Yet they also assert themselves individually, each radiating a distinctive character. The title simultaneously alludes to “Sorela,” a colloquial abbreviation for Socialist Realism—a style of art widespread in the Eastern Bloc that celebrated the ideal of an egalitarian society. In the first room of the exhibition, the “Sorelle” appear like flags fluttering in the wind, like armored guardians, or knightly riders. They provide a representative introduction to the entry into the castle.

GALLERY 2

Malvinas, 2025
cast aluminum
sheet-metal profiles

Metal strips rise up the wall to the ceiling. Like clusters of grapes on a vine, small-format aluminum reliefs are mounted on them. Cast in raw form, they reveal the unpolished nature of their production. The tight spacing and grid-like arrangement may evoke associations with a cell in a tower. The outlines of the aluminum reliefs are derived from geographical areas—cantons, countries, or islands. The title “Malvinas” refers to the Spanish name for the Falkland Islands, a territory that remains potentially contested to this day.

GALLERY 2

Kýbl, 2025
terracotta

In one corner of the room stands a red terracotta pot. Its shape evokes memories of antiquity: of Etruscan jugs or Roman amphorae. Martin Chramosta took his inspiration from Czech municipal waste bins. Along the upper rim runs a relief band that resembles an architectural ornament. Interlocking rectangles grow outward in stepped layers, forming small stairways. The regular rhythm lends the pot an almost monumental aura—like a miniature architectural structure made of clay. On the vessel's wall appears the coat of arms of Prague, underscoring its representative effect. Thus, the vessel emerges not only as a utilitarian object but also as a sign of belonging and history.

GALLERY 3

Žlutý kopec ornament
(Ornament from the Yellow Mountain), 2025
sheet metal, CRT monitor, video loop

At the center of the room stands a monitor encased in a miniature sheet-metal hut. Made from found materials, it recalls the small shelters often found in gardens, used for storing tools. On the screen appear sequences showing a fence in Brno. This repeatedly photographed metal fence is distinguished by a motif of a stylized exotic plant in a flowerpot. Through the rapid succession of images, the static motifs of the fence are transformed into almost moving pictures. The pulsating, slightly staggered rhythm creates a hypnotic effect, making it difficult for the gaze to turn away.

GALLERY 3

Růže, 2025
glazed ceramic,
found iron

Netz, 2025
iron

On the wall hangs a bundle of roses. Four metal stems bear three red ceramic blossoms. Since antiquity, the rose has been regarded as a symbol of love and beauty, but also of transience. In Greek mythology it was consecrated to Aphrodite. In Christianity it became the “Rosa mystica,” a sign of the Virgin Mary—an image of purity, but also a reminder of blood and passion. In the court culture of the Middle Ages, the rose gained special significance. It stood for the ideals of courtly love and the unattainable beauty of the beloved. Here, in the “hortus conclusus,” the enclosed garden, it appears as a precious yet fragile blossom.

GALLERY 4

Case ispirate, 2022–2025
ceramic, partly glazed and pigmented

On the walls unfold reliefs in muted tones: grey, beige, interwoven with subtle nuances of color. Doors, balconies, and bushes animate the multi-storey façades, yet only the surface ever remains visible. Some works disrupt this order: no clear floors can be discerned, but rather fragmented, cubist-like glimpses in and out. Here, architecture becomes a collage that opens up multiple perspectives. The exhibition title “The Castle (Das Schloss)” recalls Franz Kafka’s novel of the same name: a mysterious building, inaccessible and full of unanswered questions. The reliefs take up this atmosphere. They do not show habitable spaces, but façades and suggestions. Thus, “The Castle (Das Schloss)” appears less as a structure than as a state of being: overgrown and entangled—a space of possibility.

GALLERY 4

Anténa 1, 2024 & Anténa 2, 2025
reinforcement bars, steel rods
metal pipes

In the large room, towers of layered stone rise upward like chimneys. They transform the interior into a roofscape. Between them, two imposing antennas of rusty reinforcement bars reach skyward, appearing as if drawn into the space with lines of iron. Within one of the antennas sits a crowned swan. With this, Martin Chramosta alludes to the “White Swan,” which has crowned the roof of the Prague department store of the same name since the 1930s—a symbol of modernity that endured war, communism, and political upheaval. The swan remained while systems disappeared, a silent witness to change and continuity.
The second antenna is adorned with a heraldic motif of a lion. In the Middle Ages, the image of the lion was widespread as a symbol of chivalry, bravery, and strength. Here, the point of departure is the logo of the Czech record label “Supraphon”, founded in 1932. At its center stands the Bohemian lion with two tails. Together with the harp, the musical emblem of the label, it becomes an image of sound and culture.

The two antennas are more than metal sculptures: they are resonating bodies that capture voices from the past and carry them into the present. Lines of iron stretch upward as if to catch and transmit stories.

GALLERY 5

Kuboschloss, 2025
glazed ceramic, mortar

In the connecting passage between the large hall and the corridor-like room hangs a geometric relief in light beige. It is composed of rectangular elements held together by smaller linking pieces. Like a modular construction set, this creates an interlocking of larger and smaller forms that merge into a unified whole. The strict order and formal reduction place the work within the tradition of Constructive Art. At the same time, the structure recalls the floor plan of a castle—or that of the exhibition building itself. Thus, the relief becomes an emblem of a system shaped by connections and transitions.

GALLERY 5

Gehäuse, 2023–2024
glazed ceramic, painted steel
concrete, found iron

Netz, 2025
iron

The narrow, corridor-like exhibition space opens up like a field of stelae. Massive pedestals of coarse aggregate concrete line the path. On some of them rise sarcophagus-like grid structures. The atmosphere recalls an old cemetery, weathered and marked by time. Some of the stelae are damaged: bent iron rods jut out of the concrete, and broken pieces of reinforcement lie on the ground like relics. Ceramic slabs are set into the grids, their shapes reminiscent of coats of arms and medallions. One slab resembles an open book, another takes the form of a heart, and two others resemble drops—becoming tears. Yet Martin Chramosta does not draw solely on cemetery architecture. He also takes inspiration from unexpected everyday objects: the timeworn chewing gum dispensers once common in Vienna.

GALLERY 6

ětre, 2025
plaster

In the small room lies a plaster slab bearing the inscription «ětre». Être means “to be” in French, but here it is written with an inverted circumflex— the Czech diacritical mark known as the háček. This work originates from a competition entry for a tomb of Milan Kundera in Brno. The word “Being” refers to the most famous work of the Czech-French writer, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being”, and through this altered spelling places “being” itself at the center of the room—while simultaneously questioning it.

“The castle, whose outlines were already beginning to dissolve, lay silent as ever, (...).”

Cited from:
Franz Kafka, The Castle (Das Schloss), 1922

PROGRAM

Opening
Das Schloss

Fri, 6 Sept 2025,
6 – 9 p.m.
with Martin Chramosta

Artist's Choice:
Tour, Apéro & Film

Thu, 18 Sept 2025,
7 – 10 p.m.
with Martin Chramosta

Mittwoch Matinee

Wed, 15 Oct 2025,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
with Martin Chramosta

Tours with the curators

Wed, 10 Sept / 8 Oct 2025
Fri, 26 Sept / 17 & 24 Oct 2025
Sun, 26 Oct 2025
3 p.m. each day

Finissage
Das Schloss

Sun, 26 Oct 2025, 1 – 5 p.m.
3 p.m.: Tour with Martin Chramosta and the curators

The exhibition was curated
by Michael Babics and Olivia Jenni.
Art Handling: Jonny Maurice
Reception: Robin Falter and Livia Töngi
Translation with the help of DeepL.

The exhibition is generously supported by the Cultural Promotion Office of the Canton of Basel-Landschaft, the Cultural Promotion Office of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, the City of Liestal, the Erna and Curt Burgauer Foundation, the BLKB Foundation for Culture & Education, and the Werner Hasenböhler Foundation.

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Opening Hours
Wed – Fri: 2 – 6 p.m. | Sat – Sun: 1 – 5 p.m.