

Jimmy Robert &
Franz Erhard Walther

The Intensity of Softness

March 29 – September 6, 2026

The exhibition was curated
by François Piron



Press release, March 25, 2026

Conceiving an exhibition that intertwines the works of Franz Erhard Walther with those of Jimmy Robert is anything but obvious; the list of differences in their intentions, their identities, the forms they produce and the media they use, would be very long. And yet, the idea of linking Franz Erhard Walther's colossal and pioneering oeuvre, built over six decades in Fulda, Düsseldorf, New York and Hamburg, with that of Jimmy Robert, who was born on the island of Guadeloupe in 1975 and has lived successively in Paris, London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Bucharest and Berlin, is captivating. It is as an attempt to arrive at an unexpected interpretation of their respective bodies of work and a way to observe how two artists address each other, not in terms of filiation or influence, but rather in terms of correspondence.

The curatorial intention here is more poetic than analytical or demonstrative, and consists in finding the rhymes that allow two oeuvres to be brought together, by detecting convergences of interest and complementary ways of working. There is no objectivity here, but rather the pleasure of drawing connections between artistic practices without seeking to find symmetries. The title selected by Jimmy Robert for the exhibition, *The Intensity of Softness*, cites a shared materiality, the choice by both artists to work primarily with soft materials, such as fabric and paper. These are permeable, flexible and metamorphic materials that can hug the contours of the body yet allow movement, that seem solid but as textile materials are made up of a weave and are tied moreover to the textual.

This choice was by no means obvious for Franz Erhard Walther in the 1960s, and seemed like mere provocation in the artist's working surroundings. Yet he proved to be a pioneer of an art form that emphasised presence, relationship and the impermanence of forms. These terms can also be applied to the work of Jimmy Robert, whose oeuvre since the early 2000s has manifested the presence of the artist's body in performances, photographs and videos that interlace poetic references to literature, choreography and art through quotations and allusions that signal his relationship to beloved figures.

The Intensity of Softness points to a common strategy shared by both artists, one that requires determination and a sense of purpose — of entering the risk of uncertainty and openness to change, to the unknown. The exhibition describes a trajectory between both Walther's and Robert's works that has presented the opportunity for an exchange: Franz Erhard Walther has conceived a coat element for Jimmy Robert that has prompted a new performance by the artist. The piece will be performed in public on the day of the opening, and a film of it will be screened throughout the exhibition.

François Piron

Biography Jimmy Robert

Artist of the exhibition *The Intensity of Softness*

Jimmy Robert's multidisciplinary practice encompasses performance, photography, film and collage, frequently collapsing distinctions between these mediums. Robert's interest in how the body can be personified through materials and the reverse is a force that integrates his longtime work with performance with his larger practice. Robert has choreographed performances within exhibition spaces, in relation to existing architectural structures, as well as re-staging, reframing or sampling historical performances. The frequent citation of moments from art history, film and literature is characteristic of his deeply layered narratives.

Born in Guadeloupe (FR) in 1975, Jimmy Robert currently lives and works between Paris and Berlin. His institutional solo exhibitions include Moderna Museet, Malmö (2023); Centre National de la Danse, Paris-Pantin (2023); Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2022); Künstlerhaus Bremen (2022); The Hunterian, Glasgow (2021); Museion, Bolzano (2021); Nottingham Contemporary (2020); Leopold Hoesch Museum, Düren (2020); La Synagogue de Delme, France (2016); Museum M, Leuven (2015); The Power Plant, Toronto (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2012); and Jeu de Paume, Paris (2012), among others. His performances have also been presented at Tate Britain, London; MoMA, New York; Migros Museum, Zurich; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and Kunsthalle Basel.

Biography François Piron

Curator of the exhibition *The Intensity of Softness*

François Piron (born 1972 in Saint-Brieuc) is an exhibition curator, as well as an art critic, a teacher and a publisher based in Paris. He holds a position of senior curator at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. He founded several organizations in the field of contemporary art, among them the cooperative publishing house Paraguay. His curatorial work focuses particularly on the relationships between art and literature, as well as between art history and the social sciences, with a particular emphasis on making marginalized areas of culture visible and questioning the role of institutions. In 2018, he centered his exhibition Odradek at the Malmö Konsthall around works by Franz Erhard Walther, and in 2023, he organized a solo exhibition of Jimmy Robert at the CND, National Centre for Dance in Paris, as part of a larger project on the impact of the AIDS epidemic on the arts.

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