

Press release

Olaf Breuning: Humans

Special exhibition | 6 June – 27 September 2026

Media tour in German: Wednesday, 3 June 2026, 10:00 a.m.

Opening: Friday, 5 June 2026, 6:30 p.m.

Swiss artist Olaf Breuning on AI, the climate, and being human A new exhibition at the Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen

With *Humans*, the Swiss artist Olaf Breuning is returning to the Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen after 25 years. This is the first major presentation in Switzerland in more than ten years by this internationally successful, New York-based artist. The focus is on artificial intelligence, the climate crisis, and human contradictions. With humor and powerful imagery, Breuning asks what remains of humanity when technology, consumerism, and crises shape our lives.

Olaf Breuning (born 1970 in Schaffhausen) achieved his international breakthrough early on. His work moves playfully between drawing, photography, video, sculpture, and installations. Combining humor with precise observation through a deliberately reduced, immediately legible visual language, he makes contemporary social issues surprisingly accessible.

In the exhibition *Humans*, Breuning examines growing up, what it means to be a man today, and human behaviors in all their ambivalence—between curiosity and naivety, progress and irresponsibility, seriousness and absurdity.

At the same time, the exhibition tackles key societal challenges of our current era: the environmental crisis, the consumption of resources, and the increasing presence of artificial intelligence. Breuning asks to what extent this new technology is already shaping our thoughts and actions—and whether we are still capable of offering any resistance to it at all.

A large portion of the works on display was created specifically for this exhibition. These include 60 new drawings, two large-scale installations, and video artworks.

20 mm features a small bronze monkey on a marble pedestal holding a 300-meter-long rope. The rope represents the 4.5 billion years of Earth's history, while its gilded tip stands for the comparatively short period of human existence. At the same time, the installation references a constant in Olaf Breuning's oeuvre: monkeys have appeared repeatedly since the beginning of his artistic career, functioning as a mirror of human behavior or breaking with stereotypical expectations and attributions made by the "human species" regarding "nature."

Out of Balance consists of a chaotic mound of intertwined knights on roller skates. The installation becomes a symbol for the loss of power, failure, and a system that has been thrown out of balance. The knights represent the admission of defeat against which even the strongest armor offers insufficient protection.

Drawings have always been an integral part of Breuning's work. They often form the starting point for pieces that the artist later develops in other media. The new small-scale works in black and white depict bizarre scenes from the everyday lives of humans, animals, and the planet. In them, the large and small dramas of our time are pointedly condensed.

Olaf Breuning's earlier video works were created using elaborate sets full of props and people. By contrast, his most recent videos, shown here for the first time in an exhibition context, are generated using artificial intelligence. By using himself as the model for various characters, the artist not only questions the role AI plays in art, but also what kind of societal contribution art and artists can make in a politically, socially, and economically tense global landscape.

Breuning's latest works appear more serious and thoughtful than his earlier pieces. The era of loud, provocative irony has given way to a quieter, more ambiguous attitude. Although his humorous perspective remains intact, existential questions, disillusionment, and a certain melancholy have moved further to the foreground. He mercilessly exposes human weaknesses, contradictions, and stupidities—without losing his delight in the comical.

The result is a compelling cosmos that provokes laughter and reflection in equal measure. The exhibition invites the public to draw their own conclusions —somewhere between confidence and doubt, between a sense of doom and hope for change.

The exhibition is curated by Sarah Merten. An accompanying publication will be released by the renowned art book publisher Scheidegger & Spiess. All exhibition texts are available in German and English.

Olaf Breuning. Humans

6 June – 27 September 2026

Museum zu Allerheiligen

Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

www.allerheiligen.ch

Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen, Klosterstrasse 16, CH-8200 Schaffhausen

Biography Olaf Breuning

Born in 1970 in Schaffhausen, lives and works in Upstate New York, United States.

Olaf Breuning gained international acclaim through a multi-layered body of work that questions contemporary realities and subverts a superficial reading of the world around us.

Since the late 1990s, his works have been shown internationally in solo and group exhibitions in museums, galleries, and public spaces. Breuning has been featured in solo exhibitions at the NRW-Forum in Düsseldorf (2016), the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern (2013), and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2011). He participated in the 2008 Whitney Biennial and has exhibited in group shows at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Haus der Kunst in Munich, the Kunsthalle Zürich, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Jeu de Paume in Paris, the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, Whitechapel Gallery in London, and the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, among others.

His works are represented in numerous private and public collections, including the Kunsthaus Zürich, Sammlung Goetz in Munich, the Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen, the Centre Pompidou Collection in Paris, the Saatchi Collection in London, and the Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen. For his multifaceted output, Breuning was awarded prizes early on in his career: he received the Swiss Federal Art Scholarship (today the Swiss Art Award) three times in a row (1998, 1999, 2000), as well as the Manor Art Prize Schaffhausen in 2000.

Publication

To accompany the exhibition, the catalog *Olaf Breuning: Humans* will be published by Scheidegger & Spiess. Edited by Sarah Merten, Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen. With contributions by Katja Brunner, Heinz Helle, Sarah Merten, and Nadine Wietlisbach. Designed by Hammer. In German and English. Available in the museum shop from mid-July 2026.

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Press Images

www.allerheiligen.ch/press or upon request