

PETRIT HALILAJ

*Who does the earth belong to
while painting the wind?!*

ChertLüdde, Berlin
2 May – 25 July 2026

Chert
Lüdde

PRESS TEXT



ChertLüdde is pleased to present *Who does the earth belong to while painting the wind?!*, an exhibition by Petrit Halilaj, resulting from decades of collaboration between the artist and the gallery and unfolding in parallel with Halilaj's largest institutional presentation in Germany, *An Opera out of Time*, at Hamburger Bahnhof.

The exhibition at the museum centers on Halilaj's open-air opera, staged in June 2025 with the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra on the hill of Syrigana in Kosovo.

Shortly before the opera's premiere, two of the artist's storage containers were broken into, defaced with hate speech and Serbian nationalist symbols, and set ablaze. While in the Hamburger Bahnhof's presentation this story is only present in the accompanying catalogue, at ChertLüdde the focus shifts precisely on the vandalized containers, presented publicly for the first time.

Now transported to the gallery after being cut apart, the containers' charred surfaces continue to bear the visible traces of that attack.

The flames consumed much of the opera's scenography, from the sculptural flowers and pear trees to the ocarinas and other props like helicopters and Kosovar qilim carpets. With only days remaining before the premiere, the artist and his team painstakingly rebuilt what had been lost, producing the opera as it was originally conceived. Their determination to stage the opera unchanged became a deliberate affirmation of its central message of unity, refusing to let the hatred behind the attack overshadow its spirit.

Still, the emotional and symbolic weight of the attack remains. The exhibition thus reflects not only the vivid memories of Petrit Halilaj's childhood shaped by armed conflict, but also the unresolved tensions that continue to reverberate

OPENING

1 May 2026 / 6–9 pm

LIVE MUSIC CONCERT

on International Workers' Day
1 May 2026 / 7 pm

Petrit Halilaj in his Berlin studio preparing for his ChertLüdde Gallery show, 2026. Photo by Marjorie Brunet Plaza. Courtesy of ChertLüdde, Berlin and Petrit Halilaj, Berlin

across the Balkan region today. In *Who does the earth belong to while painting the wind?!*, Halilaj reflects on this, using the exhibition as a platform to confront violence and imagine how its destructive force might be transformed or overcome.

The exhibition brings together artworks spanning more than a decade of the artist's practice, from pieces originally shown in the 2012 exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle St. Gallen to newly created works.

"Who does the earth belong to while painting the wind?!" is a question originally posed by the artist in his poetry collection *of course blue affects my way of shitting* (Chert and Motto Books, 2014). Written shortly after his arrival in Italy in 2003 to study at the Brera Academy, the text reflects on land and belonging at a moment when he had become an immigrant, navigating an unfamiliar language and culture. At the same time, it carries a more profound and enduring meditation—one that underlies and continues to shape the core of Halilaj's artistic research.

Halilaj was just thirteen when, in 1999, he and his family were caught in the violent conflict between Serbian nationalism and Kosovo's struggle for independence. Rooted in a centuries-long dispute over land and sovereignty, this war left a lasting imprint—one that resurfaces in his practice through color, materials and symbols.

BIOGRAPHY

Petrit Halilaj (1986, Kostërrc, Kosovo) lives in Berlin.

Petrit Halilaj understands exhibitions as a way to alter the course of personal and collective histories, creating complex worlds that claim space for freedom, desire, intimacy, and identity. His work is deeply connected to the recent history of his native country Kosovo and the consequences of cultural and political tensions in the region, which he often takes as a starting point for igniting countercurrent poetics for the future. Rooted in his biography, the projects encompass a variety of media, including sculpture, drawing, painting, text, and performance. Often incorporating materials from Kosovo and manifesting as ambitious spatial installations, his work transposes personal relationships, places, and people into sculptural forms. Halilaj's practice can be seen as a playful and, at times, irreverent attempt to resist oppressive politics and social norms towards an untamed celebration of all forms of connectedness and freedom.

Currently, his work is on display at *Petrit Halilaj: An Opera out of Time*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (11 September – 31 May 2026) and *In Interludes and Transitions*, Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, JAX District (30 January – 2 May 2026).

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PRESS MATERIAL

IMAGES

[Download Selected Photos](#)

*Available for distribution

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Videos:

- [In Conversation: Petrit Halilaj / Hamburger Bahnhof](#)
- [Artist Petrit Halilaj's childhood drawings from the Kosovan War | Tate](#)

Interview:

[Amy Zion in Conversation with Petrit Halilaj, 2025](#)

Books:

- [of course blue affects my way of shitting - Petrit Halilaj \(Chert and Motto Books\)](#)
- [An Opera Out of Time - Petrit Halilaj \(Hamburger Bahnhof\)](#)
- [Syrigana: an Opera in five acts - Petrit Halilaj](#)

INFORMATION

"Who does the earth belong to while painting the wind?!"

Petrit Halilaj

2 May – 25 July 2026

Admission free

Opening hours:

Tuesday – Saturday
12 – 6 pm

PRESS CONTACT

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