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Press release

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22nd International Comic Salon Erlangen – 4 to 7 June, 2026 The 2026 Max und Moritz Award is given in eight categories

- Best German-Speaking Comic-Artist: Franz Suess
- Best German-Language Comic: "Der verkehrte Himmel" by Mikael Ross
- Best International Comic in German: "In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls" by Özge Samancı
- Best Non-Fiction Comic: "Die Frau als Mensch" by Ulli Lust
- Best Comic for Children: "Der Zahn" by Ayşe Klinge
- Best German-Language Comic Debut: "Fleischeslust" by Martin Oesch
- Special Jury Award: Andreas C. Knigge
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Posy Simmonds

On the evening of 5 June, the 2026 Max und Moritz Awards were presented at the Markgrafentheater in Erlangen. The Max und Moritz Award, presented by the City of Erlangen as part of the biennial International Comics Salon, is regarded as the most prestigious award for comic art and graphic literature in the German-speaking world. In the run-up to the awards ceremony, a list of 25 titles nominated by the jury had been announced.

The award for Best Non-Fiction Comic goes to "Die Frau als Mensch" by Ulli Lust (Reprodukt), "Der verkehrte Himmel" by Mikael Ross (avant-verlag) is honoured as Best German-Language Comic, and the Best International Comic is "In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls" by Özge Samancı (translation: Silv Bannenberg, Helvetiq). There was particular anticipation surrounding the winner of the Best German-Language Comic Artist award (worth 10,000 Euro). In this category, Franz Suess (currently: "Jakob Neyder", avant-verlag) was honoured. This year's Max und Moritz Award for Best Comic for Children goes to "Der Zahn" by Ayşe Klinge (Kibitz), whilst the Award for Best German-Language Comic Debut goes to "Fleischeslust" by Martin Oesch (Edition Moderne). In addition, "Abgang" by Lina Brazerol was recognised as an outstanding academic publication with an invitation to the prestigious International Comic Seminar in Erlangen. The Paul Derouet Award is therefore named in honour of the founder of the Comics Seminar, who passed away at the end of May.

As announced in the run-up to the awards ceremony, the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to the British artist Posy Simmonds, whilst the Special Jury Award went to the journalist Andreas C. Knigge for his outstanding contributions to the art of comics in Germany. The Max und Moritz Gala was moderated by the Swiss journalist and comics expert Christian Gasser. Eva Linhart, Mayor of the City of Erlangen, presented the awards in the various categories.

This year's jury for the Max und Moritz Award includes: Catherine Bazabas (owner of Comicbuchhandlung Petit Kami, Hamburg), Christian Gasser (Cultural studies scholar and author, Lucerne), Andrea Heinze (journalist, Berlin), Katinka Kornacker (Managing Director of COMIX – Comicbuchhandlung Hannover), Isabel Kreitz (comic artist, Hamburg), Christine Vogt (Director of Ludwiggalerie Schloss Oberhausen) and Bodo Birk (Director of the Erlangen International Comic Salon).

In 2026, DATEV eG will be the title sponsor of the Erlangen International Comic Salon for the sixth time. As an IT service provider for tax advisers, auditors and solicitors, as well as their clients – such as small and medium-sized enterprises and local authorities – the cooperative is one of the largest private employers in the Nuremberg metropolitan region and, at the same time, one of Europe's leading software companies.

Below you will find the laudatory speeches for the 2026 Max und Moritz Award winners, as well as the list of the 25 nominated titles.

Max und Moritz Award 2026 Laudatory Speeches

Best German-Language Comic Artist Franz Suess

The people in his comics make the wrong decisions, fail to seize opportunities, or are simply unlucky. Individually, everyone has probably experienced this at some point. But Franz Suess intensifies the failures of his protagonists and depicts their environment as one full of gloom and devoid of opportunities for development. He looks where people usually look away.

Franz Suess was born in Linz in 1961 and studied painting and illustration there. His artistic output is diverse: photography and sculpture are just as much a part of it as satirical collages for the internet platform "Raketa". He only turned to comics at the age of 50 and named his first book after the Viennese district where he now lives: "1160 Ottakring". There, an art scene meets working-class and affluent neighbourhoods. Ottakring is the place that repeatedly serves as the setting for Franz Suess's comics.

The people in Franz Suess's comics are under pressure. Because they turn violent in a fit of rage, as in "Jakob Neyder". Because the mother goes into debt to enable her son to take an entrance exam at the musical theatre school, as in "Muttermal". Or because they are lonely and seeking love, as in so many of Franz Suess's stories. The fact that the protagonists fail time and again is also down to there being too many challenges: financial hardship is just as much a part of it as selfish mothers, indifferent fellow human beings or sexual identities that are not mainstream.

Franz Suess dissects the lives of his protagonists with delicate, razor-sharp pencil strokes. At times, it seems as though the subjects are being wounded or distorted by the sharp lines. At other times, they are drawn so diffusely that they are barely discernible. It seems as though Franz Suess wishes to highlight the complexity of his protagonists. This is also evident in the finely balanced composition, in which, for example, the faces of mother and son merge into one. Franz Suess explores the question of identity not only in the story but also in the drawings.

Franz Suess's comics are rarely colourful. The summer house scenes from "Jakob Neyder" are an exception – so colourful that they offer hope. A hope that quickly turns into its opposite. For "Jakob Neyder" is also a piece of the mosaic. One of the many failed persons in Franz Suess's complete works, that form a portrait of a class that has hardly any chance of social advancement due to constant overburdening.

Andrea Heinze

Special Jury Award Andreas C. Knigge

With the Special Jury Award, we are honouring a figure this evening who has shaped the history of German comics like no other – in the truest sense of the word. Back in the 1960s, when comics were still looked down upon as trashy in Germany, a boy in Hanover discovered Donald Duck and Carl Barks, Hergé and Tintin. And he realised that there were better and worse stories, which is why he published his first comic reviews in the school newspaper.

In 1974, at the age of 17, he founded the legendary magazine Comixene with René Lehner and Thilo Rex, thereby establishing German comic criticism. In 1983, he joined Carlsen Verlag as an editor; two years later, he became chief editor. Under his leadership, Carlsen Comics developed into the most successful division of the publishing house, which had previously focused on children's books. Andreas cultivated Franco-Belgian bande dessinée, launched the superhero renaissance and published the first manga. German artists whom he supported also played an important role, including Matthias Schultheiss, Ralf König and Isabel Kreitz, to name but a few.

After leaving Carlsen in 1998, Andreas C. Knigge became the foremost expert and writer on graphic literature. Numerous works of secondary literature bear his name; hardly any encyclopaedia has been or is complete without his contributions. Knigge curated major exhibitions and managed outstanding artists. The comic industry owes it to Andreas C. Knigge, more than to almost any other figure, that comics are taken seriously as an art form in Germany. All of this represents an incredible historical legacy.

However, the award is being presented to a very special person who, to this day, remains curious and open to everything happening in the comics scene. Someone who never speaks of the 'good old days', who does not put his own achievements in the spotlight, and who takes an interest in young artists. As a member of the Jury for the Max und Moritz Award from 2008 to 2024, his fellow jurors were able to gain a vivid impression of this. Today, we thank Andreas C. Knigge with a Special Jury Award for his lifetime achievement in the Ninth Art!

Bodo Birk

Lifetime Achievement Award: Posy Simmonds

Posy Simmonds (born 1945) is the grande dame of the British comics scene – and yet she is anything but a typical comic book writer. She did not publish her first graphic novel, "Gemma Boverly", until 1999. By then, she already had a long and highly successful career as a children's book author, cartoonist and comic strip artist behind her.

From 1968 onwards, she initially worked as a cartoonist and illustrator for publications such as The Sun, The Times and Cosmopolitan, before joining the daily newspaper The Guardian in the mid-1970s, with which she remains associated to this day. There, from 1977, she published the daily comic strip "The Silent Three of St Botolph's", in which Simmonds observed the everyday lives of three middle-aged female friends and poked fun at the British middle class.

Posy Simmonds achieved her international breakthrough with three literary graphic novels centred on strong-willed women: "Gemma Boverly" (1999, published in German in 2011) is a modern adaptation of Flaubert's "Madame Bovary", "Tamara Drewe" (2007, published in German in 2010) draws on Thomas Hardy's "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "Cassandra Darke" (2018, published in German in 2019) plays with references to Charles Dickens.

Simmonds' very British humour – subtle yet biting – also runs through her graphic novels: she unerringly mocks the shortcomings, dreams and pitifulness of the middle class, the art world's elite and social media celebrities; she exposes mediocrity, hypocrisy, greed and self-deception; and she caricatures current social trends. The psychological sophistication of her characterisation is striking. With elegant and expressive pen strokes, she subtly exaggerates her characters, capturing their facial expressions and body language so precisely that we learn more about them than they would care to reveal.

It is also impressive how skilfully Posy Simmonds interweaves large ensembles of characters, multiple narrative perspectives and, in certain cases, different time frames. To do justice to the complexity of the story and its characters, Simmonds combines text and image in a way that differs from the classic comic: she inserts narrative text passages between sequences of images; alongside dialogues and monologues, she also works with emails and text messages and incorporates newspaper articles and websites. With her graphic novels, Posy Simmonds has expanded the scope and subtlety of the graphic novel and established herself as one of the most modern and sophisticated contemporary comic book authors.

Christian Gasser

Comics in German (selection):

- Tamara Drewe (translation: Uli Pröfrock). Reprodukt, Berlin 2010
- Gemma Boverly (translation: Annette von der Weppen). Reprodukt, Berlin 2011
- Cassandra Darke (translation: Sven Scheer). Reprodukt, Berlin 2019
- Fred (new edition; translation: Annette von der Weppen). Reprodukt. Berlin, July 2026

Children's books in German (selection):

- Lulu und die fliegenden Babys (translation: Erica Ruetz). Diogenes, Zurich 1990
- Schokoladenhochzeit (translation: Erica Ruetz). Diogenes, Zurich 1991
- Fred (translation: Christina Diaz). Diogenes, Zurich 1994
- Polly, Jack und der Büffel (translation: Erica Ruetz). Diogenes, Zurich 1996
- Das Bibber-ABC (translation: Erica Ruetz und Winfried Stephan). Diogenes, Zurich 1997
- Die Katze des Bäckers (translation: Erica Ruetz). Diogenes, Zurich 2004

Prices and awards (selection):

- 1980 – Cartoonist of the Year
- 1982 – Cartoonist of the Year
- 1998 – National Art Library Illustration Award
- 2002 – Appointment as a Member of the British Empire
- 2009 – Prix de la critique du festival d'Angoulême for "Tamara Drewe"
- 2024 – Grand Prix de la Ville d'Angoulême for her lifetime achievement
- 2026 – Max und Moritz Lifetime Achievement Award

Best German-Language Comic

Der verkehrte Himmel

by Mikael Ross (avant-verlag)

It's about a severed finger – about a Vietnamese woman who has fallen victim to human traffickers. And it's about three teenagers from Berlin's Lichtenberg district who get drawn into these crimes. Mikael Ross is known for his well-researched studies of social milieus. "Der verkehrte Himmel" is different, yet still typical. For whilst the comic is pure fiction, the elements of this crime story are real. Ross is familiar, for example, with the lives of the Lichtenberg teenagers – whose parents often immigrated from Vietnam – through school projects. This is Ross's first comic inspired by manga. Accordingly, he breaks down roller-skating scenes and car chases into individual panels with remarkable speed. And he uses colour masterfully: just once, Ross adds such a delicate touch of red to the faces in his black-and-white drawings that, as you read, it feels as though you yourself are blushing. The result is a multi-layered comic in which the characters are drawn with immense respect, and which is both funny and gripping.

Best International Comic in German

In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls

by Özge Samancı (translation: Silv Bannenberg) (Helvetiq)

"In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls" is never quite what it seems. Ece and Meltem are two students and amateur divers who, in 1995 Istanbul, share their poverty and a stuffy dormitory, and discover a red Cadillac containing a woman's body deep in the Bosphorus. Then everything happens in quick succession: the pair are courted and threatened by gangsters and politicians; they sense an opportunity for quick money; the elections in Istanbul draw nearer, and with them corruption, religious manipulation and misogyny; Ece uncovers the lie of her childhood – and eventually both find themselves facing a major ethical dilemma ... Just when you think you've figured out the story, Özge Samancı, a Turkish artist living in the USA, throws in another twist: Comedy, crime thriller, political thriller, critique of religion, satire, social commentary, family drama – "In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls" is all this and much more, always fast-paced and captivating, deadly serious and utterly absurd, with depth and substance.

Best Non-Fiction Comic

Die Frau als Mensch

by Ulli Lust (Reprodukt)

In the first volume of "Die Frau als Mensch", Ulli Lust dispels the common gender stereotypes of early human history and depicts an egalitarian early society. This is in line with current scientific understanding. In the second volume, "Schamaninnen", she shows how closely physical life on Earth and the spirit world were intertwined in the minds of people back then. Ulli Lust tells the story and depicts a group of people

as they might have lived in early society: facing the challenges of finding food, passing on knowledge, and treating life-threatening wounds as they were understood at the time. Once again, she is praised by experts for her precise depictions. This is also because she consistently makes it clear that the depictions are an interpretation of the limited available data. Rarely has the state of scientific knowledge been conveyed as accessibly as in “Die Frau als Mensch” – because Ulli Lust creates a narrative that is easy to follow – and because the nature illustrations are simply beautiful.

Best Comic for Children

Der Zahn

by Ayşe Klinge (Kibitz)

Ayşe Klinge’s unusual vampire story tackles several themes at once: the exclusion of those who are different, overcoming fear, the loss of one’s first teeth, and friendships that survive these changes and grow stronger as a result. Mila is afraid of vampires, and it is precisely Karla, with whom she befriends, who turns out to be one. The loss of her first tooth reveals the truth: a new fang has – much to her parents’ delight – caused her first milk tooth to fall out. Now the task is to hide this development, which fails. The fact that her vampire grandfather, who flies through the night, now comes into play as well is also of little help, but ultimately saves the day. Karla’s fear of the vampire academy eventually dissipates, and despite the physical distance, their friendship endures. Through humorous, sometimes whimsical and lively illustrations, Ayşe Klinge vividly depicts the worlds colliding.

Best German-Language Comic Debut

Fleischeslust

by Martin Oesch (Edition Moderne)

Erwin is actually old enough to retire, but he cannot bring himself to give up his local butcher’s shop – not least because he cannot find a successor. Times are changing; people are eating less meat, with tofu and oat milk now in vogue, and Erwin’s pride in his craft seems increasingly out of step with the times – Erwin is plunged into an identity crisis. Comics about butchers are rare. Yet it is only logical that Martin Oesch should choose a butcher’s shop as the setting for his first graphic novel: before studying illustration, he completed a butcher’s apprenticeship. He therefore knows Erwin’s world and his worries inside out. “Fleischeslust” is not a reckoning with the world of butchers and meat-eaters, but a melancholic ballad about the end of an era, about upheavals that Erwin can no longer navigate. Oesch tells the story gently, with empathy, without moralising, in colourful felt-tip pen drawings in which the intense, fleshy shades of pink are particularly striking.

Max und Moritz Award 2026

The 25 nominated titles

in alphabetical order

Ahmadjan und der Wiedehopf by Maren Amini. Carlsen

Bauchlandung. Geschichte einer Teenager-Schwangerschaft by Wanda Dufner. Edition Moderne

Blutsauger by André Breinbauer. Carlsen

Das Lied der Arktis by Jean-Paul Krassinsky and Bérengère Cournut (translation: Resel Rebiersch). Schreiber & Leser

Der süßeste Bruder der Welt ... und andere Irrtümer by Elin Lindell (translation: Katharina Erben). Klett Kinderbuch

Der verkehrte Himmel by Mikael Ross. avant-verlag

Der Weltraumpostbote. Panik im Postamt! by Guillaume Perreault (translation: Ulrich Pröfrock). Roto-pol

Der Zahn by Ayşe Klinge. Kibitz

Die Frau als Mensch by Ulli Lust. Reprodukt

Die große Verdrängung by Roberto Grossi (translation: Myriam Alfano). avant-verlag

Fleischeslust by Martin Oesch. Edition Moderne

Hackenporsche by Melanie Lüdtké. Schwarzer Turm

In den trüben Gewässern Istanbuls by Özge Samancı (translation: Silv Bannenberg). Helvetiq

Jakob Neyder by Franz Suess. avant-verlag

Kaputt by Alison Bechdel (translation: Katharina Erben). Reprodukt

Meine Geschichten von Mutter und Tochter by Katharina Greve. avant-verlag

Peri Meno by Rinah Lang. Carlsen

Red by Josephine Mark. Kibitz

Saloon. Das ist Familiensache by Mia Oberländer. Edition Moderne

Schweigen by Birgit Weyhe. avant-verlag

Shrimpie und ich by Moni Port and Claudia Weikert. Kibitz

Sonntag by Olivier Schrauwen (translation: Christoph Schuler). Edition Moderne / Colorama

The Strange House by Uketsu und Kyo Ayano (translation: Claudia Peter). Panini Manga

Unruhe by Sarah Hübner. Jaja Verlag

Zwei weibliche Halbakte by Luz (translation: Lilian Pithan). Reprodukt

Reading samples of the nominated titles as well as videos of the individual nominations are available at www.comic-salon.de/en/nominations.

Travelling exhibition “Ausgezeichnet”

Since 2014, there has been a specially designed travelling exhibition for award winners from German-speaking countries, which goes on tour in the two years following the Comic-Salon. The aim of the exhibition is to present the creation of the award-winning works in a way that is intuitively accessible, whilst highlighting the connection to an important figure in this medium, Wilhelm Busch. To this end, alongside large-format reading samples, the exhibition also features original pages, sketches and artefacts from the comic artists' studios, offering an insight into their very different working methods.

On Friday, 9 October 2026, at 7:00 p.m., the seventh edition of the travelling exhibition will open at the Erika-Fuchs-Haus under the new title “Ausgezeichnet”. The exhibition is curated by Darjush Davar and organised in cooperation with the Cultural Office of the City of Erlangen, the Erika-Fuchs-Foundation and the Schmitz-Lippert-Foundation.

Further information

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