Exhibition MICHAEL JACKSON—THIS IS IT

Press Release

Barlach Kunstmuseum Wedel: 11.10.2025 bis 29.3.2026

Michael Jackson is more than a musician, more than a dancer, more than a global superstar. He is a phenomenon of the modern age – a mirror of its desires and its depths, its utopias and its contradictions. His character embodies themes that continue to move us today: childhood and loss, colour and identity, body and transformation, as well as the tireless hope for a socially just, peaceful and sustainable future.

The exhibition *This Is It* invites visitors to see Michael Jackson anew. Not just as the 'King of Pop' or the creator of *Thriller* or *Billie Jean*, but as a figure who shaped the cultural imagination for half a century. He was both an icon and a projection surface: a dancer who defied gravity, a singer who united millions, a person whose face changed within the world's view.

But contemporary icons rarely exist without controversy. Jackson's life was overshadowed by court cases, allegations of abuse and media scandal. The question of how genius and abyss, fascination and repulsion, work and person are intertwined remains open – and this is precisely what makes his legacy so relevant today.

At a time when social media produces new heroes and scandals every second, Michael Jackson seems like a precursor to our present day. His story tells of the power of images, the allure of fame, and the fragility of the person behind the mask.

The exhibition does not seek to pass judgement, but rather to open up a panorama: from spectacular concerts around the world to quiet moments of doubt, from global adoration to relentless criticism. It understands Michael Jackson as a cultural prism in which the questions of our time come together.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is the 2009 film *This Is It*, which documents the rehearsals at the Staples Centre in Los Angeles for the announced comeback at London's O2 Arena, which was to premiere on

13 July 2009. The film shows the preparations for this major event, which Michael Jackson did not live to see. He died on 25 June 2009, eighteen days earlier.

At the same time, the exhibition highlights the ambivalence that characterises the life of this megastar and his lasting impact. The exhibition is not intended as a tribute, but rather as a critical examination of globalised pop culture and its cult of celebrity. It shows how Michael Jackson's artistic innovations continue to resonate today, while also asking how society deals with the dark side of its idols.

The Barlach Kunstmuseum Wedel is thus continuing the exhibition series started in 2015, documenting by portraits of John Lennon, The Beatles, Karl Lagerfeld, Freddie Mercury and now Michael Jackson reflections of social developments and their influence on trend and identity formation.

Curator: Dr. Jürgen Doppelstein

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11.10.2025 bis 29.3.2026
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Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Admission: €12, concessions €10

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