

Genossin Sonne

16/5 – 1/9 2024

A joint exhibition of **kunsthalle wien** and **Wiener Festwochen | Freie Republik Wien**

In collaboration with **Klima Biennale Wien**

PRESS CONFERENCE Thu 16/5 2024 • 10 am

OPENING Thu 16/5 2024 • 7 am

ARTISTS Kobby Adi • Kerstin Brätsch • Colectivo Los Ingrávidos • Nicholas Grafia & Mikołaj Sobczak • Sonia Leimer • Maha Maamoun • Wolfgang Mattheuer • Marina Pinsky • Katharina Sieverding • The Atlas Group • The Otolith Group • Huda Takriti • Suzanne Treister • Anton Vidokle • Gwenola Wagon • Hajra Waheed

CURATORS Inke Arns and Andrea Popelka

ASSISTANT CURATOR Hannah Marynissen

EXHIBITION DESIGN Marlene Oeken & Martha Schwindling

EXHIBITION VENUE **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

On the exhibition

The essayistic group exhibition *Genossin Sonne* [Comrade Sun] brings together artistic and theoretical work in which cosmic connections and reconstructions of cosmology are imagined as an element of political struggle, drawing on sources from fiction, theory, poetics, and other writing. Is intensified solar activity (incidence of sunspots and solar winds) related to terrestrial revolution, as the Soviet cosmists claimed? What exciting speculative reflections on this matter might be found in contemporary art and poetry?

The moving image—film and video as media of light—is a particular focus in this exhibition, but hypnotic, febrile, fiery, and menacing affects also emanate from works in other media. The sun acts both as source of life and energy for political struggle and as admonishing figure whose sheer mass and duration lay bare the brevity of human life on planet Earth.

The curatorial concept

The exhibition title *Genossin Sonne* is perplexing. How can the sun, the star at the center of our solar system, be a comrade? In what struggle, in what revolutionary upheaval? Can the sun be a revolutionary subject? And what does revolution have to do with the cosmos?

The word "revolution" came to mean "violent overthrow of an existing social-political order" following the Haitian/Caribbean, French and North American revolutions of the late 18th century. Before that time, however, it was used in astronomy with reference to the rotation of celestial bodies. The connotation of social and political actions came later.

Capitalism and industrialization soon took charge of humans' radical "emancipation" from their environment, replacing a relationship of mutual co-operation with one of extraction. Nature now became an adversary, an other to be exploited for raw materials. Yet in the context of the present climate catastrophe, humanity is beginning to remember that it is a part of its environment. The exhibition *Genossin Sonne* goes a step further, playfully speculating that the sun itself may be our comrade, our ally.

The Soviet researcher **Alexander L. Chizhevsky** (U.S.S.R., 1897–1964) had long since seen it this way. **Chizhevsky** was an interdisciplinary scientist, Cosmist and biophysicist. He was among the founders of heliobiology as a research discipline, and also studied the effects of air ionization. The first refers to influence of the sun on the biosphere; the second to the effect of air ionization on biological entities. He discovered, for example, that geomagnetic storms caused by solar activity can affect the function of electrical systems, potentially causing airplane crashes or locust plagues. He also believed that increasing negative ionization of the Earth's atmosphere would stimulate "mass excitability". According to **Chizhevsky**, human history is heavily influenced by 11-year cycles of sunspot activity, bringing about rebellion in the forms of revolt, revolution, and civil war.

Chizhevsky built a stellar scientific career in the U.S.S.R. of the 1920s and 1930s. But in 1942 **Josef Stalin** discovered his research, including a seminal work of 1924 on "physical factors of the historical process". **Chizhevsky** was asked to repudiate his work on solar cycles, which contradicted official historical theories of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. He refused, was arrested, and spent eight years in a Gulag (labor camp) in the Urals. On his release in 1950 he settled in Karaganda (now Kazakhstan), where he was made to undergo a further eight years of state-mandated "rehabilitation".

The artistic positions

Some works in the show induce a hypnotic or trance-like state. Among these are the colorful video pieces (including *The Sun Quartet*) by Mexico's **Colectivo Los Ingrávidos**, which are distributed throughout the exhibition space; also the all-black and white science fiction video *2026* by Egyptian artist **Maha Maamoun**, and the video work *The Communist Revolution was Caused by the Sun* by Russian artist **Anton Vidokle**.

The video essay *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* by **The Otolith Group** returns us to November 1964—November 1965, when many countries issued stamps commemorating the first scientific mission to the sun. That glimpse of the heavens both coincided with and concealed from view the contemporaneous African independence movements.

Wolfgang Mattheuer's borderline surreal paintings *Der Nachbar, der will fliegen* and *Die Sonnenstraße* (respectively, The neighbor who wants to fly; Sun Street) bear witness to the power exerted by the sun on humans. That it is specifically the neighbor who rebels, growing something resembling wings, indicates that revolution is never made alone, but always collectively. The speculative poetic video piece *I only wish that I could weep* by The Atlas Group documents a singular event said to have happened in Beirut, in which an agent assigned to observe passers-by on the Corniche repeatedly drifts away with his VHS camera towards the spectacular sunset over the sea.

At three points in the show, the sun itself might be said to be painting. In Hajra Waheed's work on paper *How long does it take moonlight to reach us? Just over one second. And sunlight? Eight minutes.*, papers darkened to varying degrees by sunlight show highly abstracted images of the sun. In translucent glass works and other objects and in her *PARA PSYCHIC* series of drawings, Kerstin Brätsch makes use of traditional and sometimes forgotten artisanal methods to draw out metaphysical and animistic attributes of painting in a comical way. Kobby Adi's *witnesses*, meanwhile, store sunlight and re-emit it in darkness. And the emerging *Vienna Light Study* monitors light quality in the city day by day through the exhibition's running period.

Gwenola Wagon and Suzanne Treister tell fantastic stories. In Wagon's video *Chroniques du Soleil Noir* [Chronicles of the Dark Sun], the Earth is so overheated at some time in the future that humans must completely block out the sun to survive. With the help of AI, they try to recall images of the sun. In the speculative sequence *The Escapist BHST (Black Hole Spacetime)*, Treister contemplates imaginary scenarios of techno-human evolution across huge cosmological time-spans. And once again not without irony, in *ALCHEMY/The Sun* she discovers the revolutionary power of the sun in front pages from the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun*.

Then in Sonia Leimer's *Space Junk*, a wide trail of the eponymous material is strewn throughout the exhibition space. The sculpture *July 15th, 2015* by Marina Pinsky recalls that revolutions habitually establish new time measures and calendars (as in the title, one day after the French revolution of July 14). The large-format video *DIE SONNE UM MITTERNACHT SCHAUEN (RED)*, SDO/NASA [WATCHING THE SUN AT MIDNIGHT (RED), SDO/NASA] is the sole work in the show to be projected onto the outer wall of the exhibition space, ripping a hole into the walk-in sci-fi diorama implied by the exhibition architecture. The block-based aesthetic, reminiscent of the computer game *Minecraft*, insists that revolution is an open and collective process, constantly under construction. *Genossin Sonne* also extends into outdoor space beyond the **kunsthalle wien** itself: Huda Takriti presents a work at **Brunnenpassage**; Nicholas Grafia & Mikołaj Sobczak perform in public space.

Genossin Sonne is an exhibition that unites the political with the poetic to evoke pleasurable, speculative associations between the revolutionary, the celestial, contemporary art, and their effects on our daily lives. An immersive installation whose temporality unfolds

in allowing for moments of rest and reflection, manifested as both critique but also optimism, joy and hope for the future.

Public program

Curators' Tour with Inke Arns and Andrea Popelka

Sa 18/5 2024 • 5 pm

Guided Tours

The power of the setting sun

Thu 6/6 2024 • 7.51 pm | Thu 20/6 2024 • 7.58 pm |

Thu 4/7 2024 • 7.57 pm | Thu 18/7 2024 • 7.47 pm |

Thu 1/8 2024 • 7.30 pm

Every other Thursday night, starting 1 hour before sunset, you can discover the exhibition with our art educators and discuss the contexts and backgrounds of the exhibited works. The guided tours are free of charge and will be held in German. No registration required.

Brunnenpassage x kunsthalle wien

In the promise of the rising sun

16/5 – 1/9 2024 • Exhibition at Yppenplatz / Back entrance of Brunnenpassage 71, 1160 Vienna

In cooperation with **kunsthalle wien**, **Brunnenpassage** will present an installation by **Huda Takriti**. The newly commissioned work deepens the artist's critical reflection upon various political and social histories and shows how the official and personal narratives thereof both conflict and intertwine with one another.

Developing upon a previous work, *Clarity is the Closest Wound to the Sun* (2023), **Takriti** takes the writings of **Zohra Drif**, a freedom fighter of the National Liberation Front of Algeria, as a point of departure. In **Drif's** autobiography, the artist read a quotation taken from the poem *Hypnos* (1946) by a fighter of the French Resistance, **René Char**, which lent the work its title. Upon reading the full poem, **Takriti** came across the following paragraph that became the basis for the poster exhibited at **Brunnenpassage**: "We belong to no one except the golden point of light from that lamp unknown to us, inaccessible to us that keeps awake courage and silence."

Hypnos, the god of sleep, becomes a symbol of collective amnesia in the work of **Takriti**, whose original video and new poster for **Brunnenpassage** highlight the importance of women who fight against oppressive regimes in their struggle for freedom—both for themselves and society at large.

By situating the poster in the public space of Yppenplatz, **Takriti** aims to engage passers-by to reflect on our connection to marginalized narratives of the past and on how we can collectively relate to those narratives from today's point of view.

Artwork Introduction with Huda Takriti

Sat 8/6 2024 • 6 pm • Brunnenpassage

As part of StraßenKunstFest (starting 4 pm at Yppenplatz), **Huda Takriti** will give an insight into her new installation at **Brunnenpassage**—*In the promise of the rising sun* (2024)—produced in cooperation with **kunsthalle wien** and **Wiener Festwochen | Freie Republik Wien**.

Solar aliens and black holes

2/7, 3/7, 4/7 2024 • 10 am – 12 pm

The workshops are for children aged 8 – 12 and are free of charge.
Registration at: www.kinderunikunst.at

kunsthalle wien offers an extensive program for schools and universities. For further information and registration please contact vermittlung@kunsthallewien.at

Tune in and listen to the podcast to hear what the artists of the exhibition have to say about their work.

Details and regular updates as well as further dates for the accompanying program can be found on our website: www.kunsthallewien.at

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OPENING HOURS

Di-So 11-19 Uhr • Do 11-21 Uhr

PRESS MATERIALS

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/genossin-sonne/press/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

instagram.com/KunsthalleWien
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soundcloud.com/kunsthallewien
#GenossinSonne

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