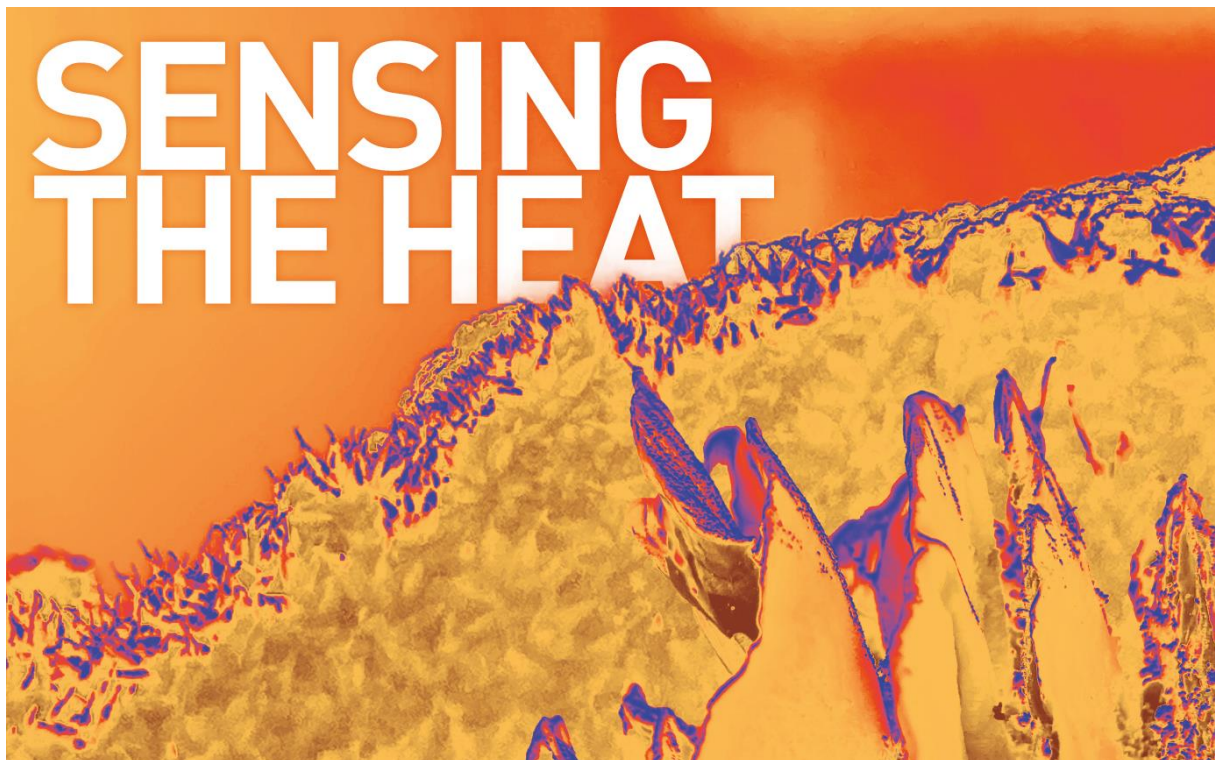


Media info



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Sensing the Heat

Sensing the Heat is the theme of the Kunstraum's 2023 annual program. While 2022 was dedicated to the traumas and crises of the recent past with Stages of Grief, this year we look ahead, to what is to come. Because: it's getting hotter, tangibly hotter. Departing from decolonial and intersectional perspectives on the climate and environmental crisis, we go in search of phenomena that point beyond the catastrophic ecological status quo. Where can we already spot the seeds of new terrestrial modes of coexistence – not against but together with the planet? Sensing the Heat is the first annual program under the curatorial aegis of the new artistic director of Kunstraum Niederoesterreich Frederike Sperling.

Let's stop kidding ourselves: Melting glaciers, collapsing ecosystems, migration driven by drought and floods – the times when "climate change" was a distant and abstract threat are over. It's getting hotter, tangibly hotter. The parameters of our ecological – and political – agency have shifted. The question by which we will negotiate our future coexistence is no longer: "How do we want to live?" but: "How can we survive?"

Sure enough, this feeling of insecurity is anything but new for a considerable segment of humanity. For millions of people outside the global prosperity zones, the experience of an ecological state of emergency has long since been an everyday part of life – in some cases for centuries. "The ecological crisis is a crisis of justice," emphasizes the political scientist Malcolm Ferdinand. For Ferdinand, one thing is clear: Whoever talks about the crisis – and possible ways out of it – cannot remain silent about the criminal history of capitalism. An economic system whose "success" is based on the continued exploitation of people and the environment always carries the risk of global catastrophe. It is questionable whether a new beginning will be possible after its collapse. As we all know, there is no Planet B.

So are all signs pointing to resignation, paralysis, catastrophism? Perhaps. But perhaps the threat of catastrophe also bears a transformative potential. Perhaps it also holds the chance for an epochal change of direction, toward a way of life whose calculations factor in the climate and biosphere, truly taking into account, protecting, and involving all – not only all human but also all non-human inhabitants of this planet.

With *Sensing the Heat*, we search for the seeds of such a genuinely terrestrial way of life. Where can we already find forms of social coexistence that point beyond the threat of ecological collapse? What other avenues of social reproduction, of care for our material and spiritual livelihoods, of solidary and provident relationships between human and non-human beings are emerging? And what role can art play in these investigative trajectories?

These and other questions are explored this year at Kunstraum Niederoesterreich. The program starts off in March with the group exhibition **Matrix Bodies**. In *Matrix Bodies*, we dive into the various entanglements between body and environment, into the secret realm of the virosphere. The summer is dedicated to the worldmaking potential of the digital: in their immersive installation **T(())mb**, the collective Omsk Social Club take a critical look at the phenomenon of gamification and poses – with Ludwig Wittgenstein – questions about the future of digital communication. Our third exhibition is an intersectional meditation on pleasure and sensuality as strategies of healing: In their first solo show in Austria **Quiet Storm Blowin'**, Soñ Gweha presents a lively, multisensory environment that is at once a stage, resting zone, and meeting and learning place.

The **H13 Lower Austria Prize for Performance** – presented annually by Kunstraum Niederoesterreich since 2007 and to date the only prize for performance art in Austria – will be awarded for the first time in an international partnership with **Bergen Kunsthall in Norway**.

Furthermore, a multi-part performance program is in the works, which will include the performance workshop series by Daliah Touré. The Kunstraum's annual program is rounded out with a diverse and low-threshold art education agenda that includes guided tours, workshops, and cooperations with local social initiatives.

Quote

“The ecological crisis is increasingly unfolding in its complexity as the nerve center of wars, pandemics, and inequality. It is eroding the very foundations upon which the majority of us in the Global North have based our lives and calls for a completely new approach toward community and solidarity – with human and more-than-human beings. What role can art play in this context? Which responsibilities can cultural institutions assume?”

Under the motto “Sensing the Heat,” our 2023 annual program tackles questions like these with an array of artistic modes of research. The exhibitions probe possible forms of togetherness, building upon care and sensibility, while formulating various – collective as well as individual – strategies for action.”

Frederike Sperling,
Artistic Director of Kunstraum Niederoesterreich

Exhibition program

Matrix Bodies

Opening: Thu, 23/03/2023, 7 pm
Duration: 24/03 – 13/05/2023
Artists: Eglé Budvytė, Seba Calfuqueo, Caterina Gobbi, Nona Inescu, Josèfa Ntjam, Sophie Utikal
Curator: Frederike Sperling

Viruses generally do not have a sterling reputation. As parasites, pathogens, and – not least – potential triggers of global pandemics, they have historically meant one thing above all: perdition. What this entails has become painfully clear to us in recent years. And yet, this image of the bringer of doom falls short of the mark. Viruses are an integral part of the biosphere. They regulate the metabolic processes of bacteria, fungi, and insects, etc., and thereby represent an indispensable link in diverse ecosystems. Without viruses, life on this planet would be unthinkable.

The group exhibition *Matrix Bodies* takes the virosphere as its departure point for an exploration of the manifold visible and invisible interdependencies between humans and nature. Together with the artists Eglé Budvytė, Seba Calfuqueo, Caterina Gobbi, Nona Inescu, Josèfa Ntjam, and Sophie Utikal, we embark on a journey to where the threshold between body and environment is unstable. Here, *Matrix Bodies* speculates on potential transcorporeal modes of existence that can emerge between humans and more-than-human beings.

T(())mb

Opening: Tue, 06/06/2023, 7 pm
Duration: 07/06 – 29/07/2023
Artists: Omsk Social Club
Curatorial support: Frederike Sperling

“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world,” goes a famous bon mot by Ludwig Wittgenstein. When humans communicate, play “language-games,” says the philosopher, they are staking out the limits and possibilities of their relation to the world. Worlds emerge by being put into words.

That language not only represents the world(s) but rather creates it can be observed every day in the arenas of social media. Wittgenstein’s “language-game” is common practice here: cancelling, platforming, in-feed censorship, high scores, etc. – all these techniques follow the principles of gaming. But the game can quickly take a serious turn. Once out in the world, fake news can become reality, alternative facts turn into truths, and hate speech culminates in manifest violence. What are the rules, mechanisms, and underlying logics of the language-games on Facebook, Twitter, and co.?

In their installation *T(())mb*, the artists’ collective Omsk Social Club sets out in search of answers. *T(())mb* is a participatory immersive installation inspired by adventure and live escape games. Omsk provide a set of techniques and tools (a “linguistic crash-course survival kit,” in their words) that enables visitors to experimentally unravel the connections between worldmaking, gamification, and language. *T(())mb* invites you to explore what lies beyond the “limits of our language and world,” to the domain of a critically speculative as-if.

Exhibition accompanying the H13 Lower Austria Prize for Performance

Award ceremony: Thu, 01/09/2023, 7 pm
Exhibition: 02/09 – 16/09/2023
Curator: Frederike Sperling

The H13 Lower Austria Prize for Performance – presented annually by Kunstraum Niederoesterreich since 2007 and to date the only prize for performance art in Austria – will be awarded in partnership with an international art institution for the first time: the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway.

The ambition of the H13 Prize, which is awarded every autumn and endowed with 5.000 Euro, is to showcase the diversity and relevance of contemporary performance art and to make it accessible to a broader audience – in Austria and beyond. Furthermore, it should encourage reflection on the conditions for the presentation of performance art within the exhibition context. Previous winners of the H13 Prize include Christian Falsnaes (2008), Jakob Lena Knebl (2010), Barbis Ruder (2014), and Julischka Stengele (2020).

The presentation of the award-winning performance project takes place in the framework of the H13 award ceremony. An accompanying exhibition offers our audience an opportunity to engage with the content of the award-winning work outside of the award ceremony itself.

Quiet Storm Blowin'

Opening: Thu, 05/10/2023, 7 pm
Duration: 06/10 – 02/12/2023
Artist: Soñ Gweha
Curator: Frederike Sperling

Whoever protests against the destruction of the environment must not remain silent about colonialism and racism. Both phenomena, the ruthless plundering of the earth and the racialization, exploitation, and disenfranchisement of people, have gone hand in hand throughout history. Both are aberrations of capitalism's greed for profit and resources. How can we imagine a lifestyle, by contrast, whose ultimate purpose is not to maximize profits – without any regard for nature and human beings – but to intensify the basis of relationships: care, tenderness, pleasure?

Questions like these have been on the mind of DJ, poet, and activist Soñ Gweha for quite a while now. *Quiet Storm Blowin'* – Gweha's first solo show in Austria – provides insights into their artistic research. It manifests as a lively multisensory environment that will undergo a multitude of transformations over the duration of the exhibition, be it a stage, a resting zone, or a site of action and encounter, and then again all of these at once. In *Quiet Storm Blowin'*, Gweha presents the model of a "decolonial ecology" (Malcolm Ferdinand) whose objective is not to normalize, discipline, or exploit bodies, but to heal them.

An extensive public program for *Quiet Storm Blowin'* with workshops, DJ sessions, and performances in collaboration with local and international artists is currently in the planning.

Performance program

H13 Lower Austria Prize for Performance

Since 2007, the H13 Niederoesterreich Prize for Performance has been a fixed date in the calendar of Kunstraum Niederoesterreich. This year, we are once again happy to give the stage to the winner(s) of the H13 Prize and offer resources for the ongoing cultivation of their artistic practice.

A premiere this year: The H13 Prize will be awarded for the first time in partnership with an art institution outside of Austria. With the stated goal to increase the visibility of the local performance art scene internationally and to make a lasting contribution to its advancement, this year Kunstraum Niederoesterreich awards the H13 Prize in partnership with Bergen Kunsthall in Norway. In addition to the prize, the winners are invited to a residency at the Live Studio of Bergen Kunsthall.

The Live Studio is a research and development laboratory dedicated to live works and hybrid practices in the context of visual arts. The professional technical equipment, the intensive exchange with Nora-Swantje Almes, curator of the Live Program at Bergen Kunsthall, as well as various networking opportunities on site offer optimal conditions for the further development of the participants' performative artistic practice.

The open call for proposals for the H13 Lower Austria Prize for Performance has no thematic imperatives. Information about the members of the H13 jury will be provided in due course. The open call starts on 15.02.2023. The deadline for submissions is 14.04.2023, and the winners will be announced two weeks later. The presentation of the winning performance project will take place in the context of the H13 award ceremony on 01.09.2023.

Performance-Workshop Series with Daliah Touré

Drawing on her practice as a dancer and art mediator, Daliah Touré develops a three-part workshop series over the course of 2023, which explores different corporeal approaches to art and the experience of art. The workshops – each responding to the content of the planned Kunstraum exhibitions and led by Touré – allow participants to personally engage with art with their bodies, through movement, touch, and dance. Conventional practices of art mediation privileging intellectual modes of understanding are consciously countered with methods informed by and employing “embodied knowledge.”

Further performances are in planning. The dates will be announced during the year.

Art mediation program

In 2023, Kunstraum Niederoesterreich once again offers a multifaceted yet low-threshold, free of charge art education program. Surefire dates are the guided tours and workshops in the framework of the running exhibitions as well as cooperations with social initiatives such as "Bildung bewegt" and "Kunst wollen." A new addition this year is the performance workshop series with Daliah Touré.

Audio program

The podcast Im Kunstraum continues in 2023 with the aim to make the contents of the Kunstraum accessible with or without a visit to our exhibitions. As a mobile audio guide, the podcast provides deeper insights into the topics of our exhibitions on site, at home, or on the go. The formats include interviews with the curators and artists or audio documentation from discussion rounds.

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Image material: www.kunstraum.net/de/presse