

BUNDESKUNSTHALLE



JULIUS VON BISMARCK

Fire with Fire

4 September 2020 to 24 January 2021

Media Talk: Thursday, 3 September 2020, 11 a. m.

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General Information

Exhibition	4 September 2020 to 24 January 2021
Director	Eva Kraus
Managing Director	Patrick Schmeing
Curator	Susanne Kleine
Press Officer	Sven Bergmann
Opening Hours	Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday to Sunday: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Public Holidays: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Closed on Mondays
Admission	3.90 €/2.90 € reduced, until 31 Dec. 2020 4 €/3 € reduced, from 1 January 2021
Guided Group Tours information and registration	T +49 228 9171–243 F +49 228 9171–244 kunstvermittlung@bundeskunsthalle.de
Public Transport	Underground lines 16, 63, 66 and bus lines 610, 611 and 630 to Heussallee / Museumsmeile Deutsche Bahn / UN-Campus: Lines RE 5, RB 26, RB 30 and RB 48
Parking	There is a car and coach park on Emil-Nolde-Straße behind the Bundeskunsthalle. Navigation: Emil-Nolde-Straße 11, 53113 Bonn
Press Information (German / English)	www.bundeskunsthalle.de For press files follow 'press'.
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Media Information

What do we perceive today as nature? Has the view of nature changed through confrontations with natural disasters, via the media or in real life? Do we still entertain a romantic image of nature?

Humankind has always had to fight against the forces of nature, but when these become rampant or turn into catastrophes, real events influence our notion of nature and are reflected in pictorial representations of our visual cultures.

Julius von Bismarck delves into questions regarding a contemporary conception of nature within the context of recent climate changes. In his performances, installations, sculptures, videos and photographs, he oscillates experimentally between scientific and artistic perspectives and, in doing so, creates powerful aesthetic imagery. 'I draw my inspiration from science and work artistically,' von Bismarck explains his working strategy. Always on the lookout for alternative forms of perception, he translates nature and technology into fresh, hitherto unseen images.

For an exhibition in 2015, von Bismarck spun around on a large, fast-rotating dish, his *Egocentric System*, thus confronting himself with centrifugal forces for an entire week. For his work *Punishment*, the thirty-six-year-old artist gave the ocean in Rio de Janeiro and the mountains in the Swiss Alps a whipping, ironizing the human ambivalence between megalomania and pettiness. In Venezuela, he used rockets to trigger lightning, forming it and manipulating the forces of nature through his intervention. The artist has exposed himself to extreme weather events often understood to be consequences of climate change: the hurricanes Irma in Florida and Ophelia in Ireland. The results are slow-motion video works: The camera stretches seconds to minutes, presenting wind and floods not as apocalyptic scenes but rather as moments of great calm and poesy. "Suddenly, you look into the aesthetics of this storm [...] and see plants being caressed by the storm. The result is something very delicate, something very beautiful – trees dancing with the wind," von Bismarck explains.

His visual processing of natural events seems to want to convey that, as devastating and powerful as the forces of nature appear to be, there is a boundless beauty hidden in the catastrophe which needs to be depicted.

This contrast becomes particularly clear in the exhibition *Fire with Fire*, which is based on von Bismarck's expeditions to various forest fire sites.

The central work in the exhibition space is a large LED screen, on which a video is presented depicting decelerated images of forest fires in a vertical symmetry. This mirroring explicitly refers to the aesthetics of the so-called 'inkblot images' developed by the Swiss psychoanalyst Herman Rorschach for his test of 'psychological diagnostics and personality psychology'.

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard ascribes such a hypnotic effect to fire that he concludes that 'nowhere else does one dream as one does in front of the flame of a candle'. It captivates us, and we can neither turn our gaze away from



the burning of a campfire nor from the roar of a forest fire. If we follow Bachelard and Rorschach, this 'psychoanalysis with fire' creates a space for reflection. With the publicity associated with forest fires – the collective staring into the flame – a complex psychograph of our contemporary society reveals itself. While viewing the work, moments of irritation arise, since the illusions created by the vertical mirroring of the image differ greatly from the brutal reality filmed.

A promenade lined by eight sculptures leads to this present-day campfire, created with the help of modern media technology. 'Eternal flames' in monuments and memorials – constructed sites of collective memory worldwide – are the models for these sculptures. The originals made of bronze or stone are duplicated here in fired ceramics, the blazing fire transformed into flickering LEDs.

The production of fire is one of the great cultural techniques; its use and mastery has been a central factor for all civilisations. As a force that creates everything and destroys everything, fire dominates both the profane and the intellectual realms of human thought more than any other element – the narratives about purgatory, the funeral pyre, the Easter fire, the Biikebrennen, the liturgical formula 'ashes to ashes' and the myth of Prometheus, who robs the gods of fire in order to bring it to the people, are but a few examples of the thematic variations of the dynamics of fire.

All these thoughts lead back to the exhibition title, *Fire with Fire*, which Julius von Bismarck uses as an image to refer to the ambiguity, reflection and interaction of the element – its purifying and destructive, civilising and barbaric power.

Publication



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16 pages
for free, available in the exhibition



Biography

Julius von Bismarck was born in 1983 in Breisach am Rhein (Germany) and grew up in Riad (Saudi Arabia) and Berlin.

He currently lives in Berlin.

After studying computer science, visual communication and fine arts in Berlin and New York, Julius von Bismarck became a student at the Institute for Spatial Experiments at the University of Fine Arts (UdK), Berlin, funded by Ólafur Elíasson, who was his teacher until his Master's degree in 2013.

Associating visual arts to other fields of research and experimentation, such as physical and social sciences, Julius von Bismarck's artistic practice can take on various forms – from installations to happenings, from sculpture to Land Art. It is defined by an in-depth and complex exploration of the phenomena of perception, or the representation and construction of reality.

The artist has had numerous solo exhibitions, including the Palais de Tokyo Paris (2019), Kunstpalais Erlangen (2018), the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg (2017) and Marlborough Contemporary in New York (2017).

He has also taken part in international group exhibitions, among which *7th Thessaloniki Biennale* (2019), *Entfesselte Natur – Das Bild der Katastrophe seit 1600* at Hamburger Kunsthalle (2018), *Power to the People* at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt/Main (2018), *1st Antarctic Biennale* (2017), *Festival of Future Nows* at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (2017), *+ultra. Gestaltung schafft wissen* at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2016), *8th Momentum Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art* in Norway (2015) and the *13th International Architecture Exhibition, Biennial* in Venice (2012).

He was the winner of the *Ars Electronica Award* in 2008 for his project *Image Fulgurator*, while in 2012 he was the first 'Artist in Residency' at the CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, Geneva.



Works

Alley of Eternal Flames, 2020
Installation of 8 sculptures

Flame of Democracy
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

Shahidlar
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

Eternitate
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

Torch of Friendship
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

Partisan Glade
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

*Glory * Glory * Glory*
Polystyrene, acrylic, epoxy resin, rotating LED display

Freiheit Recht Friede
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

National Monument of the Solidarity
Glazed ceramic, rotating LED display

Fire with Fire (Video Test), 2020 LED screen, video,
stereo sound, 67 min



Current and upcoming Exhibitions

DOUBLE LIVES

Visual Artists Making Music

Until 18 October 2020

Taking its starting point in the sizable number of important artists who are as dedicated to musicmaking as they are to their visual practice, the exhibition focuses on the presentation of music. Large-screen projections of videos of concert and studio performances conjure a sense of being present at the live event and showcase different approaches to staging performance situations. The exhibition spans the period from the early twentieth century to the present. Beginning with Duchamp and the Futurists, Yves Klein and the Fluxus artists Nam June Paik and Yoko Ono, it moves on to the key figures of the 1960s and 70s such as A. R. Penck, Gerhard Rühm or Hermann Nitsch. The protagonists of Proto-Punk like Captain Beefheart and Alan Vega usher in the numerous artists' bands of the 1980s that numbered artists like Albert Oehlen or Pipilotti Rist among their members. The stylistically more heterogenous scene since the 1990s is represented by Carsten Nicolai, Emily Sundblad et al.

MAX KLINGER

and the Artwork of the Future

16 October 2020 to 31 January 2021

Max Klinger (1857–1920) is one of the most controversial artists of the Symbolist movement. In his paintings and sculptures, he turned away from the stale academicism and idealisation that governed figuration at the time and embraced a naturalism that shocked his contemporaries. His novel approach played an important role in the modern conceptualisation of the human figure. Inspired by Wagner's idea of the gesamtkunstwerk, Klinger sought to overcome the division of the creative disciplines and to fuse painting, sculpture, architecture and even music into a single harmonious whole. His monumental Beethoven statue of 1902, widely regarded as the epitome of late romantic veneration of the composer, will go on display in Bonn at the end of the Beethoven anniversary year of 2020.

The retrospective marking the 100th anniversary of Klinger's death in 2020 sets out to open the way for the long overdue reassessment of the artist's work.

In cooperation with the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig