

Press Release

JULIAN CHARRIÈRE'S SOLO SHOW *CONTROLLED BURN* AT THE LANGEN FOUNDATION OPENS 4 SEPTEMBER 2022

Berlin/Neuss, 1 September 2022 – Julian Charrière's solo exhibition *Controlled Burn* will occupy the entirety of the Tadao Ando–designed Langen Foundation in Neuss, Germany, from 4 September 2022 to 6 August 2023. Featuring a suite of significant new commissions set within a constellation of works from Charrière's oeuvre, *Controlled Burn* is the artist's most extensive exhibition to date.

Controlled Burn meditates upon the flame as a figure of excess, containment, and renewal for our warming planet. Curated by Charrière's long-time collaborators, philosopher Dehlia Hannah and art historian and curator Nadim Samman, the exhibition presents an ambitious essay on the politics and poetics of combustion. A site-specific installation enables the show to run on solar energy, engaging with the location's prior use as a NATO rocket storage facility and the current climate and energy crises.

Charrière's work addresses urgent ecological concerns, often stemming from fieldwork at signal locations, such as volcanoes, glaciers, oil palm plantations, and undersea and radioactive zones. Deepening Charrière's reflections upon ideas of nature and our place within it, *Controlled Burn* interrogates the dark vitality of materials used for fuel: coal, petroleum, palm oil, and sunshine. Taking us back in time and deep underground, Charrière's speculative visions range over fossilized life-worlds and future atmospheres saturated by the burnt residues of modernity's excess. Throughout, *Controlled Burn* questions humankind's fraught grip on fire, while foregrounding the agency of plants in shaping planetary futures.

Julian Charrière: *"The new works invite the viewer to confront and encounter the relationship between fossil fuels, imagination, and the natural landscape. From making sparks with flint to devastating explosions, and from oil rigs and open-pit mines to panchronic gardens, the artworks mediate our history with fire as an immersive dimension."*

Curators Dehlia Hannah and Nadim Samman: *"Europe today faces an unprecedented energy crisis, in which environmental goals collide with urgent political priorities. As European nations restart shuttered coal-fired power plants and nuclear reactors, Controlled Burn confronts our alienation from the materials, processes, and infrastructure that make the continuous flow of energy possible at the flip of a switch. In this exhibition, fires burning underground, outside the city limits, in distant pasts and futures, are brought to life for our imagination."*

Tensions between the mythos and infrastructure of fire form the exhibition's central axis of concern. The titular work, *Controlled Burn*, is a major new video that invites the viewer to soar through an endless display of imploding fireworks. Shot by drone in first-person perspective, this aerial voyage traverses rusting cooling towers, decommissioned oil rigs, and open-pit mines, amid which viewers glimpse flashes of unfurling ferns and fluttering moths. The newly commissioned *Panchronic Garden* invites visitors to enter a coal seam in the process of becoming. Growing under infrared lamps in a seemingly endless greenhouse, the dense thicket of foliage appears jet black before our eyes, evoking the history of coal mined in the region of North Rhine-Westphalia and the vast Carboniferous forests that grew there 300 million years ago. As visitors commune with the ghosts of beings whose fossilized remains power our present dreams and environmental nightmares, a pair of robotic arms rub together flints in a mechanical bid to reenact humanity's primeval theft of fire.

Karla Zerressen, Director of the Langen Foundation: *"Julian Charrière's work addresses the urgencies of our time by drawing our attention to often overlooked subjects. Through depictions of*

endangered nature that are equal parts beautiful and alarming, Julian's work initiates a dialogue that invites viewers to dig deeper. The Langen Foundation, designed by Tadao Ando, becomes an integral part of this conversation as Charrière uses the building's architecture to navigate tension and calm."

About the Artist

Julian Charrière is a French-Swiss artist based in Berlin. Charrière's work explores ideas of nature and its transformation over deep geological time. A former student of Olafur Eliasson and a participant in the Institute for Spatial Experiments, he graduated from the Berlin University of the Arts in 2013. Marshaling sculpture, video, and photography, Charrière investigates critical sites of ecological change and history, from nuclear exclusion zones to plantation agriculture and undersea habitats. An ongoing reflection upon the mythos and politics of the exploration in a globalized age is central to his practice. Working across media and conceptual paradigms, Charrière frequently collaborates with composers, scientists, historians, and philosophers. His work provokes critical reflection upon cultural traditions of perceiving, representing, and engaging with the natural world, articulating alternative planetary narratives for the twenty-first century.

Julian Charrière's work has been the subject of solo presentations at major international institutions, including SFMOMA (2022), the Dallas Museum of Art (2021); MAMbo, Bologna (2019); the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2018); Parasol Unit Foundation, London (2015); the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2014); and the Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2014). His work was featured prominently at the 57th Biennale di Venezia (2017); the Antarctic Biennale (2017); the Taipei Biennial (2018); the 12th Biennale de Lyon (2013); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2019); the Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2019); the ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum (2022 + 2019); SCHIRN Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2018); Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2017); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021); Parasol unit - foundation for contemporary art at La Biennale di Venezia, Collateral Events - 59th International Art Exhibition (2022); and the 16th Biennial de Lyon, opening in September 2022.

About the Curators

Dehlia Hannah is a philosopher of nature and postdoctoral research fellow of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts & ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, where she leads the project *Rewilding the Museum* (2021–2025). Her recent book *A Year Without a Winter* (Columbia University Press, 2019) examines cultural imaginaries of climate change through visual art, environmental history, and science fiction.

Nadim Samman is Curator for the Digital Sphere at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. Widely published, in 2019 he was First Prize recipient of the International Award for Art Criticism (IAAC). He is co-author with Julian Charrière of *As We Used to Float – In Bikini Atoll* (K-Verlag, 2018).

About the Langen Foundation

The Langen Foundation is a unique art space located in Neuss, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. It was founded by Marianne Langen and is dedicated to the Langen Collection, encompassing works of Eastern and Western art amassed by Viktor and Marianne Langen throughout their lifetimes. The building was designed by Tadao Ando and opened to the public in 2004. The venue consists of three exhibition spaces spread across 1,300 square metres. Ando intended for the building, which sits on a former NATO rocket base, to create continuity between inside and outside, using reinforced concrete, glass, and steel in a double-skinned design adapted to the surrounding landscape. In addition to displaying the collection, the Langen Foundation hosts exhibitions by acclaimed contemporary artists including Olafur Eliasson,

Richard Deacon, Minjung Kim, Park Seo-Bo, Alicja Kwade and, most recently, Sean Scully.

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