

Press Announcement

JULIAN CHARRIÈRE PRESENTS HIS MOST AMBITIOUS SOLO EXHIBITION TO DATE AT LANGEN FOUNDATION

Berlin/Neuss, July 5, 2022 – Julian Charrière’s solo exhibition *Controlled Burn* will occupy the whole of the Tadao Ando designed Langen Foundation in Neuss, North Rhine-Westphalia, from 4 September 2022 to 6 August 2023. Featuring 8 new commissions set within a constellation of major works from Charrière’s oeuvre, *Controlled Burn* represents the artist’s most extensive exhibition to date.

Controlled Burn meditates upon 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 mounts an ambitious essay on the politics and poetics of combustion.

Charrière’s work addresses urgent ecological concerns, often stemming from fieldwork at signal locations such as volcanoes, glaciers, oil palm plantations, undersea and radioactive sites. Amid today’s entwined climate and energy crises, *Controlled Burn* interrogates the dark vitality of materials used for fuel: coal, petroleum, palm oil, sunshine. Taking us back in time, deep underground and into future atmospheres and oceans saturated by the burnt residues of modernity’s excess, Charrière’s speculative visions range over the fossilized life-worlds of past geological ages, the agency of plants in shaping planetary futures, and humankind’s fraught grip on fire.

Curatorial Concept

As an opening gesture, the show welcomes visitors to wander through a panchronic garden—a seemingly endless greenhouse full of plants bathed in infrared light, under which they glow jet-black. The newly commissioned installation evokes the history of coal mined in North Rhine-Westphalia, and the vast Carboniferous forests that grew there 300 million years ago. Deep within the museum’s modernist edifice, a classical fountain spills liquid flames (*And Beneath it All Flows Liquid Fire*, 2019) as a handful of synthetic diamonds are dumped down a hole in the melting Greenlandic icecap (*Pure Waste*, 2021). Hidden beneath a ramp, a pair of robotic arms rub together flints in a mechanical bid to reenact humanity’s primeval theft of fire (*Untitled*, 2022). The namesake of the exhibition is a major new video work, which invites the viewer to soar through an aerial landscape of imploding fireworks. Shot with a first-person drone, this spectacular temporal voyage journeys from unfurling ferns and fluttering moths to rusting cooling towers, decommissioned oil rigs and open pit mines. Spanning a vast cavern of deep time, *Controlled Burn* (2022) arrives in the present as a dazzling celebration of biological adaption and technological obsolescence. Partly powered with solar energy harvested by a site-specific sculpture, the exhibition features installations that allude to the location’s prior use as a rocket storage facility.

Deepening Charrière’s reflections upon evolving ideas of nature and our place therein, *Controlled Burn* dreams with fire.

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.

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Julian Charrière's work has been the subject of solo presentations at major international institutions, including 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), with an upcoming presentation at SFMOMA in 2022. 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 Aarhus Kunstmuseum (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); ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum (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* (2021-25). Her recent book *A Year Without a Winter* (Columbia University Press, 2019) examined 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 meters. 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, and, most recently, Alicja Kwade.

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