

Come as You Are. Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023

15/4–1/9 2024

PRESS TOUR	Mon 15/4 2024 • 6 pm
OPENING	Mon 15/4 2024 • 7 pm
ARTISTS	Željka Aleksić • Mila Balzhieva • Luisa Berghammer • Daniel Fonatti • Valentin Hämmerle • Jusun Lee • Michael Reindel • Anne Schmidt • Marielena Stark • Marc Truckenbrodt
CURATOR	Astrid Peterle
ASSISTANT CURATOR	Hannah Marynissen
EXHIBITION VENUE	kunsthalle wien Karlsplatz

In cooperation with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the University of Applied Arts Vienna

On the exhibition

Come as You Are—this exhibition title is simultaneously an invitation and instruction, an opportunity and restriction, a promise and challenge. The exhibition is conceived as an institutional megaphone for the artists and their individual objectives, which find expression in their works. The title of the exhibition also reflects the polyphony of artistic voices and formats. Artists and audience are invited to contemplate the ambivalence of our present together, for example between the chronic urgency and simultaneous desire for deceleration—or as Nirvana sang it back in 1991: "Take your time, hurry up."

Curating is a form of care, a practice of respectful, appreciative exchange with artists, but also care for the audience and the themes being conveyed. Entering into a curatorial dialogue with artists at a public institution means to support and enable them to develop their practice within a framework that adheres to specific rules that can sometimes be perceived as constraints. "Come as you are" is our invitation, a warm welcome. It might just as well be "Come almost as you are"—because institutional "welcome culture" is not always seamlessly compatible with the freedom and inviolable integrity of artistic creativity. Not everything is feasible in an institutional context, not everything can be enabled in a public space that functions according to specific regulations and procedures, a necessary bureaucracy, and official requirements. Hence, the task of curatorial care is also to balance wanting to enable and being able to enable.

The ten artists are in a transition phase, between art university and independent activities in the professional art field. For most of them, *Come as You Are* is their first experience exhibiting in a larger institutional environment outside of their educational setting. They were invited to adapt their prize-winning thesis projects or, in turn, encouraged them to consider their works as completed and to develop new ones. We approached them with a curatorial curiosity to learn how the artists desired to express their respective practices in this specific framework and context, to try out new things or continue thinking about existing interests. In many of the exhibited positions, there is a high degree of self-reflexivity, being an artist in a turbulent present, under precarious working conditions generally associated with the decision to become a professional artist. This is where ambivalence resurfaces, between desire and realization, between a consciously chosen lack of alternatives and pragmatism in light of existential necessities. Not accepting this ambivalence but making it the focus of artistic exploration, reflecting on social circumstances and limitations experienced—these intentions can be identified in the work of the artists in this phase of transition.

The Kunsthalle Wien Prize

The *Kunsthalle Wien Prize* is a joint project of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Applied Arts Vienna and **kunsthalle wien** and has been awarded annually since 2014.

The prize includes the participation in a dedicated group exhibition and an accompanying publication, which will be presented during the exhibition period.

Moreover, one artist from each school wins the first prize, which comes with a cash award of €3,000. The main prize winners of this iteration are **Jusun Lee** (graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in the class Sculpture and Installation with **Nora Schultz**) and **Marielena Stark** (graduate of the University of Applied Arts Vienna in the Painting Departement with **Henning Bohl**).

The *Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023* is realized with the kind and generous support of **Steirer Mika & Comp.**

Željka Aleksić

B. 1989 in Knjaževac, Serbia; lives and works in Vienna.

Das Kapital, 2023, publication

Numinous Toy, 2024, various materials

Coming from a working-class background in a non-EU country, **Željka Aleksić** assembled receipts from the precarious side jobs she undertook while making her diploma work *Das Kapital*—including working in a bakery, as a hairdresser, and as a cleaner. Wryly presenting this extensive record as a book alongside acryl paintings made from her personal archive of photographs, the artist exposes the (often unacknowledged) effort required to financially sustain one's study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. In her new work *Numinous Toy*, **Aleksić** introduces this confrontational reality to the privileged space of an art institution by drawing on bathroom tiles using her own hair that had fallen out due to stress. Traditionally, hair and the bathroom evoke ideas of women's health, beauty, cleanliness, and care, which **Aleksić** twists by uncannily presenting them as a visceral installation within the exhibition. Visitors may not want to spend an entire working day in the uninviting space created by **Aleksić**, even though this is precisely what she had to endure for the privilege of presenting her work to them.

Mila Balzhieva

B. 1991 in Buryatia/Eastern Siberia; lives and works in Vienna.

Roots and Spirits, 2023, hologram

Roots and Spirits – Portal, 2024, text on LED façade display

Roots and Spirits – Shield, 2024, textile

Mila Balzhieva's multidisciplinary artistic practice combines scientific inquiry with her curiosity for the otherworldly. Her installation, *Roots and Spirits*, encourages viewers to reconsider their perspectives on the Anthropocene (and the ways in which humans interact with nature and vice versa). Taking her houseplant as a point of departure, **Balzhieva** was interested in finding a visual language that translated the possibilities and limitations of interspecies communication. Through her research, she was surprised at the complexity of the houseplant's existence; for example, such as it's sometimes erratic behavior despite its inherent desire to thrive. Allowing herself to succumb to the perplexing nature of the organism, **Balzhieva** used the experience to broaden her way of thinking, choosing to seek inspiration in the inexplicable rather than answers. **Balzhieva** poetically encapsulates this process in a hologram of the house plant that floats midair: a magical apparition of a solid object that one is incapable of grasping.

Luisa Berghammer

B. 1997 in Klosterneuburg; lives and works in Vienna.

with Quirin Babl, Zorah Berghammer and Luīze Nežberte: *people would call you a faker and it hurt your feelings*, 2024, video: 7'50" (loop)
non-permanent valorization struggle, 2024, text on LED façade display

Luisa Berghammer uses the institutional platform to address collective working processes; in this case, the complex collaborations involved in making the exhibited film—*people would call you a faker and it hurt your feelings*—and how an artist can best recognize them. The video confronts the viewer with a dizzying list of names as a broader observation by Berghammer, Babl, Berghammer, and Nežberte on hypervisibility versus a lack of recognition, and the position of the artist (and their ego) in this context. Different kinds of labor, such as the intellectual and emotional, are credited equally alongside the physical and technical to question established modes of image production and how a group can best address their positions in this process. This idea becomes particularly provocative when considered within the context of *Come as You Are*, as a prize exhibition founded on the idea that certain graduating artists should be rewarded over others.

Daniel Fonatti

B. 1994 in Vienna; lives and works in Vienna.

Anchored in common ground, 2024, wood panel, aluminum cast

The ground was there to meet the feet (read)(red), 2024, text on LED façade display

Remnants and ruins fascinate Daniel Fonatti. Scattered like ghosts within the cityscape, these structures remain in limbo; their states of abandon evoke promises from the past that can no longer be remembered. While his diploma installation poetically explored the skeleton of a disused slide in Sicily, the artist turns his attention toward a local waterslide for his new work, *Anchored in common ground*. Casting the slides in polished aluminum, Fonatti considers these constructions with a newfound romanticism. Combined with a recycled wooden panel bearing traces of its previous use, the artist sensitively draws our attention to the temporality of capitalism and how it shapes the city as a site of constant negotiation. Exhibited in the second structure to be built on Karlsplatz, Vienna—replacing an initial building of **kunsthalle wien** that opened in 1992 and was demolished ten years later—Fonatti's installation blocks the outside cityscape, a haunting reminder of the ways in which cities previously have and will continue to change, perpetually oscillating between states of no longer and not yet.

Valentin Hämmerle

B. 1995 in Bregenz; lives and works in Paris.

to iron a curtain, 2024, various materials

Valentin Hämmerle's site-specific diploma installation *LIGHTYELLOW GAZE 9201-104 **** demonstrated his acute awareness of the principles of stage design and evident pleasure in their transgression, while opening his practice toward multiple artistic media. Critically reflecting on the basic tenets of his discipline, he turns to other formats and languages, such as those of sculpture and painting, but without losing his sense of space in relation to bodies in motion. In his installation *to iron a curtain*, Hämmerle cites the materiality of his graduation project: pressed polylactic acid panels create a surface that simultaneously conceals and reveals. The foundations of stage design intertwine with the principles of painting and allude to the ambivalences that also underpin the curatorial framework of the exhibition.

Jusun Lee

B. 1992 in South Korea; lives in Berlin and Seoul.

Dreamtime, 2024, various materials

Born in South Korea and raised in a conservative family, Jusun Lee felt stifled in the exploration of his own identity. Feeling socially alienated and desiring comfort, he would seek refuge under the blanket of his bed—safe but hidden. For his diploma, Lee created a work that embodies his transition from a shy individual to someone empowered by his own artistic expression. His immersive diploma installation *Safe Zone*, which won him one of the two main prizes in the *Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023*, offered visitors a comforting space to reflect upon the uncomfortable topics of social isolation and rejection. In *Come as You Are*, the artist nostalgically revisits the site of his bed with a newfound confidence. Physically inaccessible, the bed floats like a faint memory, something Lee can no longer grasp but which nevertheless encapsulates his past anxieties and his salvation from them. Color and texture emanate vibrantly from the frame, expressing an individuality that can no longer be contained in the safe (but suffocating) environment of his childhood bed.

Michael Reindel

B. 1993 in Hof, Germany; lives and works in Vienna.

*inventory performance index**, 2024, various materials and fragments of sculptures

Ohne Titel, 2024, various fragments of sculptures

In Germany, Amazon recently advertised for new employees under the slogan "Komm wie Du bist" [Come as you are]. Connected by an autobahn axis, the global organizational logic of the company with its NUE1 Fulfillment Center in Bavaria bears a direct relation to the biography of Michael Reindel and his sculptures. His installation in the exhibition echoes the original temporary architecture of **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz, which the public ironically referred to as the "IKEA box"

in its time. To this end, **Reindel** dismantled some of his sculptures from recent years. A stuffed toy animal occupies a green arm, which in another work connected a model of his parents' house to a pedestal. His seemingly arbitrary arrangement of artworks and goods prompts questions about value and worth as well as possible reuse. Is the clamp biting into the steel girder of the exhibition space an antenna or the symbolic distance between his family home and the NUE1 Fulfillment Center?

Anne Schmidt

B. 1990 in Brandenburg, Germany; lives and works in Vienna.

Strahlte, Geschöpf, Champagner, zottig, Klumpen [Radiated, creature, champagne, shaggy, lump], 2023, various materials, publication

Anne Schmidt's multifaceted oeuvre culminates in her diploma exhibition *Strahlte, Geschöpf, Champagner, zottig, Klumpen* [Radiated, creature, champagne, shaggy, lump]: giant ice cream cone sculptures, a chain-sawed "procrastination pig," the autofictional novel *Me after two anal orgasms*, and tennis balls are among the protagonists, along with the artist herself. **Schmidt's** activist and cultural studies background resonates in her precise, energetic analysis of normative images of desire in capitalist consumer society and her artistic explorations of institutional logic. For *Come As You Are*, she transfers elements of her diploma into the Karlsplatz exhibition space with all its regularities and regulations. The questions posed about the precarity and ostrichism of artistic work, about escapism and the unstable identity of artistic existence, attain a profound urgency and a due sense of inevitability.

Marielena Stark

B. 1986 in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany; lives and works in Vienna.

Afterlifestyle, 2023, various materials

In **Marielena Stark's** installation, painting, pop-cultural elements, and ethereal silk formations are set in a constellation: basketball hoops with a choreography of ghosts. The spectral quality refers to the solidarity of a community as a positive aspect but also to revenge as a motif that ghosts are often associated with. The installation is a variation of the diploma project *Afterlifestyle*, which won **Stark** one of the two main prizes in the *Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023*, and is inspired by her ambivalent fascination with transcendent painting—a kind of "aesthetic visitation"—and her longstanding interest in fashion. The dyeing technique with indigo, urine, and walnuts used on the fabrics echoes in the text sections on the posters. As meditations and manifestations, the poster texts generate a connection to the basketballs and spiritual sides of sport. Incidentally, Chat GPT falters with the meaning of the non-existent term "afterlifestyle," but human viewers have the emotional knack to access the artistic experience of it.

Marc Truckenbrodt

B. 1998 in Jena, Germany; lives and works in Hamburg and Hangzhou (China).

Der Fürst [The Prince], 2024, acrylic on canvas

Prometheus, 2024, acrylic on paper

"There must be some way out of here", 2024, acrylic on paper

Marc Truckenbrodt's graphic works stem from his personal perceptions of the present and the interrelationships that shape them. Consisting of five large-format figurative paintings, his diploma work *Behauptung* [Assertion] focussed on the ideas of power, heroism, masculinity, and their underlying contradictions. In his new works for *Come as You Are*, the artist deepens this exploration by turning his attention to the idea of 'mythos'—broadly defined as a widely held belief or idea. Truckenbrodt sees his paintings as a visual mythos: poetic expressions that transcend logic in order to help us better process our complicated existence. From his perspective, the complexities of our daily lives are often caused by systems of power that rely on ideologies to sustain themselves, leading the artist to ask: Is it possible for any person to remain independent in this kind of society, or are we all trapped in our own constructed realities?

Public program and Exhibition opening

Come as You Are. Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023 is accompanied by an extensive program that the exhibiting artists have developed in dialogue with the curators and the art education team of **kunsthalle wien**. For details and regular updates on the public program please have a look at our website: www.kunsthallewien.at

Exhibition opening

Come as You Are. Kunsthalle Wien Prize 2023

Mon 15/4 2024 • 7 pm

kunsthalle wien Karlsplatz

With performances by Željka Aleksić—*GLEDAJ MAJKU, BIRAJ ČERKU-KO-RENJE* [Look at the mother, choose the daughter – roots]—and Jusun Lee *Unshackling*, ceremony and speeches—and a DJ set by Dj Ebhardy.

Reading

Anne Schmidt: *Me after two anal orgasms* (2023)

Tue 28/5 • 6 pm, **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz

Short but Sweet. Artist's Talks with ...

Valentin Hämmerle, Tue 23/4 (in German)

Marc Truckenbrodt, Tue 14/5 (in German)

Luisa Berghammer, Tue 21/5 (in German)

Marielena Stark, Tue 25/6 (in German)

Mila Balzhieva, Tue 2/7 (in English)

Michael Reindel, Tue 9/7 (in German)

6 pm, **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz

Indigo Dyeing Workshop. Indigo Cappies

Artist's Workshop for Kids from 6–14 years

Sat 18/5 • 10 am – 12 pm, **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

The exhibition at a glance

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Željka Aleksić • Mila Balzhieva • Luisa Berghammer • Daniel Fonatti
• Valentin Hämmerle • Jusun Lee • Michael Reindel • Anne Schmidt
• Marielena Stark • Marc Truckenbrodt

CURATOR

Astrid Peterle

ASSISTANT CURATOR

Hannah Marynissen

EXHIBITION VENUE

kunsthalle wien karlsplatz • Treitlstraße 2 • 1040 Wien

EXHIBITION DATES

15/4 – 1/9 2024

OPENING HOURS

Tue – Sun 11 am – 7 pm • Thu 11 am – 9 pm

Free admission

PRESS MATERIALS

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/come-as-you-are-kunsthalle-wien-prize-2023/press/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

[instagram.com/KunsthalleWien](https://www.instagram.com/KunsthalleWien)

[facebook.com/KunsthalleWien](https://www.facebook.com/KunsthalleWien)

twitter.com/KunsthalleWien

soundcloud.com/kunsthallewien

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