

Kunsthhaus Graz

Press

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Poetics of Power

Opening: 14.11.2024, 6 pm

Duration: 15.11.2024–25.05.2025

Curated by Andreja Hribernik und Nini Palavandishvili

Location: Space01

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From mid-November 2024 to the end of May 2025, the Kunsthhaus Graz presents the group exhibition *Poetics of Power*. The show offers visitors a captivating journey through time and history, inviting them to question the complex dynamics of power, violence and resistance. It thus combines not only works from a range of media – from photography and film to sculpture and sound – but also blends existing works with new productions.

Poetics of Power aims to reveal manifestations of power that are concealed in symbols, gestures and – often unquestioned – in existing relationships or systems. The exhibition shows the complicated and ambiguous nature of power that is omnipresent and constantly reproducible in the shaping of interpersonal, cultural, national and economic dynamics. Moreover, it explores the poetic nature of power by recognising its pervasive influence and ambivalence.

The **group exhibition shows 17 works** that engage with both the seductive nature and destructive side of power. The various artistic approaches explore symbols and visions that occasionally disguise or conceal power relations, and at the same time reveal anomalies and cracks in which cultural inequalities become visible.

Manifestations of power

By examining various contexts, the exhibition sheds light on how power is revealed and consolidated within social, economic and political frameworks. It reveals itself most clearly in the imbalance of power, in economic relations between more powerful states and those lacking economic, or even military, power, or simply between individuals or social groups. Many of the works shown are concerned with authoritarian narratives, distorted stories or knowledge that has been wholly eliminated, with the destruction of cultures and the construction of identities. The exhibition examines asymmetries in power which lead to exploitative relations, mostly in the context of colonial or neo-colonial relations, which in turn result in conflict and migration flows. Subjects such as war, flight, crime, humanity, gender, mobility and borders are examined and demonstrated in multi-disciplinary works.

The contradictory nature of power becomes especially fascinating if we consider its crystallisation within certain systems that promote stability, yet also have an in-built mechanism that makes it possible to call into question these systems, and even to overturn them. Although power is often depicted as absolute and unwavering, its realisation is necessarily imperfect. This discrepancy between the idea of the absoluteness of power and the brittle realisation of power is also the location and void out of which opposing powers can emerge. For this reason, resistance is also an essential aspect of power and its intrinsic part. The latter, scattered and transformative, drives changes and facilitates the reconfiguration of systems.

From helplessness to hope

Poetics of Power establishes several main thematic areas that are not clearly separated from one another. The works exhibited cover different media, including photography, video, sculpture and installation. Works that address exhaustion and colonial exploitation postulate resistance and hope at the same time. Set against a backdrop of numerous wars and conflicts, the exhibition also involves works that engage with feelings of helplessness or even resignation. They also concern courage and solidarity, as well as the need for responsibility. Even though most of the works refer to specific social situations or conflicts, the exhibition is mainly about reminding and warning us of the fact that no power relation, no asymmetry in power, is definitive or should be accepted as such. *Poetics of Power* is thus a call to engage with the deciphering and unveiling of hidden or apparently indisputable socio-political contexts through the artistic positions on show.

With works by Yael Bartana, Vajiko Chachkhiani, Jošt Franko, Gabriela Golder, Cristian Inostroza, Grada Kilomba, Daria Koltsova, Goshka Macuga, Daniela Ortiz, Ahmet Ögüt, Erkan Özgen, Hannes Priesch, Monira al Qadiri, Zanny Begg and Oliver Ressler, Anna Zvyagnitseva, Lukas Marxt, Ala Savashevich.

Accompanying programme to the exhibition

The two-day symposium on November 15th and 16th titled ***Entanglements. The Politics of Aesthetics and Retelling of Modernisms and Modern Art***, held in collaboration with the University of Graz, examines fundamental concepts of modernity from the theoretical perspectives of post-colonial theory and decolonial thinking. With T. J. Demos, Sabine Flach, Kris Holland, Oliver Marchart, Katrin Nahidi, Tanja Petrović, among others.

In collaboration with the Department of Arts and Musicology, Section 'Center for Contemporary Art', University of Graz, and the Strange Tools Research Lab, University of Cincinnati

A comprehensive programme is on offer that students can participate in free of charge as part of the **UNIKUM! Student Day in the Kunsthaus Graz** on November 15th.

The writing workshop **MATERIALLAB** with **BLÄTTERN** (Lisa Höllebauer and Lisa Schantl) on November 20th addresses the shift in power through articulation; in addition, tours of the exhibition take place from November 16th onwards.

Images of the exhibition can be found at kunsthausgraz.at/presse