

# KunstHausWien Museum Hundertwasser

## PRESS RELEASE

**Julius von Bismarck. Normale Katastrophe (Normality Bias)**

**10.09.2025 – 08.03.2026**

**KunstHausWien**



Julius von Bismarck. *Punishment*, 2011

Courtesy Julius von Bismarck; alexander levy, Berlin; Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

© Julius von Bismarck, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

**He lashes the sea with a whip, captures lightning bolts or paints over whole landscapes: in spectacular actions Julius von Bismarck explores the relationship between we humans and what we call “nature”. How do we deal with a situation in which disasters are the new normal? In his first large institutional solo exhibition in Austria, to be held in the KunstHausWien, a museum of the Wien Holding, the artist considers human power and powerlessness in the face of climate change.**

Responding to the “Normale Katastrophe (Normality Bias)”: with works created in the middle of natural forces, the exhibition addresses human hubris, responsibility and agency. We are challenged to change our perspective and critically reassess the possibilities and consequences our actions have on the environment. By inviting the renowned artist Julius von Bismarck, the KunstHausWien is once again drawing on the power of art to meet the enormous challenge of sharpening awareness for complex relationships and counter the looming threat of ecological collapse.



## **The leitmotif of the exhibition: engaging with the forces of nature**

Whether wildfires, lightning strikes or huge storm waves and swells – the leitmotif of the exhibition is the engagement with the natural forces of fire and water in a living environment we humans are increasingly changing. The title *Normale Katastrophe (Normality Bias)* describes the state of a society continuously stricken by multiple crises, with far-reaching and unprecedented ecological and social changes becoming the new normality. In powerful images facilitated by technological inventions and radical experimental settings, the artist scrutinises human perception. The resulting photographs, video works, sculptures and installations are visually stunning and do not shy away from grand gestures. Along with a selection of cross-media works from the last fifteen years, a series of new photographic works will be on show. For the KunstHausWien's greened inner courtyard Julius von Bismarck has also created a site-specific intervention.

## **Artistic approach and works**

Julius von Bismarck's artistic research is oriented on action, with his works often emerging out of direct, physical engagement with the forces of nature. For *Talking to Thunder* (2016–2017) – one of the two central work complexes featured in the exhibition – the artist followed lightning storms to investigate the phenomenon in minute detail. This pursuit led him to research labs in the US, a remote part of Venezuela renowned for its frequent severe electrical storms and shamans in Colombia. He even developed a special device to capture lightning bolts and channel them to the ground – powerful photographs and an installation tell of these encounters and experiments.

The second central work complex, *Fire with Fire* (2018–2020), and a series of new photographic works (*The Day the Ocean Turned Black*), created in early 2025 in the aftermath of the devastating Los Angeles fires, revolve around the element of fire as both a destructive and a regenerative force. The works contradict the familiar aesthetics of disasters as they are represented in media reports: through slow motion, image mirroring and thoughtful composition, hypnotic images emerge capturing and conveying the duality of fire – on the one hand a destructive elementary power, on the other a tool to dominate nature and the engine driving human ecological power. Julius von Bismarck's site-specific intervention in the courtyard takes up this theme. Rotating LED lights convey the impression that single trees are engulfed in flames – a spellbinding and equally irritating game with our perception.

For *Punishment* (2011–2012) the artist lashes symbolically-charged landscapes in acts at once brutal and meditative. In the work exhibited in the



KunstHausWien he futilely fights the roaring sea until exhaustion. Here Julius von Bismarck is referring to the anecdote about the Persian king Xerxes, who sought to punish the sea by whipping it, and reflects the notion that nature can be influenced or indeed controlled.

The natural force of the sea is also the theme of the video work *Den Himmel muss man sich wegdenken* (2014). Presented in a large projection, a giant wave swells and rises during a storm, resembling a monochrome massif. At first barely perceptible, it rolls towards the viewer in extreme slow-motion, generating a feeling that is equally meditative and threatening. Filmed with a highspeed camera in the middle of a storm off the coast of Ireland, the work starkly evokes the sense of human powerlessness when faced with the forces of nature.

For the photographs of *Landscape Painting (Bismarck Sea, Volcano)* (2023) Julius von Bismarck let a large cloth imprinted with a rippling wave structure drift across the Bismarck Sea. The resulting photographic work shows the landscape overlaid with an image of itself, reflecting how (colonial) pictorial traditions continue to determine our perception of the world and landscapes.

The works assembled in the exhibition deal with traditional images and narratives about nature: nature as a romanticised idyll, as an economic resource or as a vengeful, almost divine authority. Julius von Bismarck counters these ideas with new images, disconcertingly beautiful and contemplative in character – with the result that they almost make us forget the enormous power of nature and the immense physical commitment required to produce them. They enable us to sense and discern the extent to which our perception of nature is culturally moulded. As the artist has put it: “In my view, what we think about nature or how we understand nature is strongly informed by images – when nature is represented in an image it’s called a landscape. I try to destroy the old, conventionalised images and create new ones.”

Julius von Bismarck’s artistic research is not looking for explanations but rather experiences. With experimental openness he creates visual spaces which reveal the limits of our inherited traditional ways of seeing and initiate new perspectives on the relationship between humans and the environment.

An Exhibition as part of **FOTO WIEN 2025**.



## Statements on the Exhibition



Julius von Bismarck. *The Day the Ocean Turned Black*, 2025

Courtesy Julius von Bismarck; alexander levy, Berlin; Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

© Julius von Bismarck, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

“The aesthetics, the power and the vehemence of Julius von Bismarck’s images raises questions about our relationship to and ideas about nature. Against the background of manmade climate change, experiencing art harbours a motivating power capable of stirring us into action and embrace the necessary changes, instead of – as when we succumb to angst or cynicism– paralyzing us.”

**Veronica Kaup-Hasler, Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science**

“For a company that understands itself to be Vienna’s dynamo, at first glance it seems unusual to be delving into a topic entitled *Normale Katastrophe* (*Normality Bias*). But once again the KunstHausWien, a museum of the Wien Holding, is addressing current concerns about the climate and sustainability in this exhibition, using the power of art to transform bleak scenarios into thought-provoking impulses for the future.”

**Kurt Gollowitzer, CEO Wien Holding**

“While our planet is engulfed in flames year after year, ecological collapse is increasingly losing its shock effect. Julius von Bismarck positions his art against this sense of powerlessness. He ushers us into the very midst of the forces of nature and translates their power, their destruction but also their beauty into monumental images. He compels us to take another look rather than just turn away, sharpening our perception so that disaster does not become the new normality.”

**Gerlinde Riedl, Director KunstHausWien**



“Driven by a boundless spirit of experimentation, Julius von Bismarck combines scientific curiosity with artistic vision. His visually stunning works create spaces of experience which confound our inherited ways of seeing and initiate new perspectives on the relationship between humans and the environment.”

**Sophie Haslinger, exhibition curator**

“The way we look at nature has a direct influence on nature. The aim of my work is to examine and influence how we as humans view the (surrounding) world, for instance, the forces of nature.”

**Julius von Bismarck, exhibition artist**



## Julius von Bismarck: an Artist Biography



Julius von Bismarck © Katja Stempel

Julius von Bismarck was born in 1983 in Breisach am Rhein (Germany) and grew up in Riad (Saudi Arabia) and Berlin. He lives and works in Berlin and Switzerland. He studied at the University of the Arts, Berlin, the Hunter College New York (USA) and the Institute for Spatial Experiments founded by Ólafur Eliasson in Berlin. The artist has already developed numerous solo exhibitions, for example at the Berlinische Galerie (2023), the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn (2020) and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2019).

He has also taken part in diverse international group exhibitions and biennales, including *Abenteuer Abstraktion* in the Sprengel Museum Hannover (2023), the Mercosul Biennale in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2022), STUDIO BERLIN in the Berghain, Berlin (2020), *Power to the People* in the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2018), the first Antarctica Biennale (2017) and the Architecture Biennale Venice (2012). In 2008 he was awarded the Prix Ars Electronica, while in 2012 he was the first artist-in-residence at CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, in Geneva.



## Accompanying Programme

### **Public Tours: Normale Katastrophe (Normality Bias)**

Every 2nd Sunday, 11:00-12:00

Sun 14.09.2025

Sun 12.10.2025

Son 09.11.2025

Sun 14.12.2025, mit ÖGS-Dolmetsch

Sun 11.01.2026

Sun 08.02.2026

Sun 08.03.2026

in German

### **Artist Talk**

Julius von Bismarck and Curator Sophie Haslinger

Tue 09.09.2025, 18:00 – 19:00

### **Curators' Tours**

with Sophie Haslinger

Mon 13.10.2025, 17:00 – 18:00

Thu 05.03.2026, 17:00 – 18:00

in German

### **Future Talk: Climate x Change**

Wer macht das Wetter?

Wed 05.11.2025, 18:00 – 19:30

in German

### **Exkursion: Wetterstation Hohe Warte**

Fri 21.11.2025, 14:00 – 16:00

In Cooperation with GeoSphere Austria

### **Tour: Im Dialog**

With Cultural Anthropologist Greca Meloni

Wed 14.01.2026, 18:00 – 19:30

### **Workshop: Science Lab – Feuer und Blitz**

WithScience Pool

Sat 21.02.2026, 14:00 – 16:00

### **DIY-Station: Feurige Geister**

Sat 28.02.2026, 13:00 – 16:00

From 6 years



## General Information

**Title of the exhibition:** *Julius von Bismarck. Normale Katastrophe (Normality Bias)*

**Curator of the exhibition:** Sophie Haslinger

**Opening:** 09.09.2025, 19:00

**Artist Talk:** 09.09.2025, 18:00

**Duration:** 10.09.2025 – 08.03.2026

**Opening hours:** daily from 10:00–18:00

**Website:** [www.kunsthausewien.com](http://www.kunsthausewien.com)

## Facts & Figures

KunstHausWien. Museum Hundertwasser

Untere Weißgerberstraße 13, 1030 Wien

Instagram: @kunsthausewien\_hundertwasser

Facebook @Kunst Haus Wien. Museum Hundertwasser

### Tickets and opening hours

Daily from 10 to 18

Standard full price ticket: 16 €

Annual ticket: 29 €

Further information on prices is available at: [KunstHausWien Ticketshop](#)

Press information and photos are available at: [Presse – KunstHausWien. Museum Hundertwasser](#)

### Press Contact

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The KunstHausWien has been awarded the Austrian EcoLabel.



Events held at the KunstHausWien meet the criteria for Green Events



The KunstHausWien is a Wien Holding company and is supported by the Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna.



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