

K & L MUSEUM

Press Release

Claudia Comte's Solo Exhibition

Ascending the Ashes: A Tale of Renewal

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2 September – 28 December 2024

Press Conference: August 28, 2024, 4:30pm

Opening reception for General Public: Monday 2 September, 2-5 pm



K&L Museum is pleased to announce the Swiss contemporary artist Claudia Comte's first institutional exhibition in Korea, *Ascending the Ashes: A Tale of Renewal*. Opening on September 2, 2024, the upcoming exhibition will feature an immersive environmental installation including a series of new sculptures and a large wall painting, cohesively situated within the museum's expansive multi-level galleries. Comte's enduring fascination with the convergence of art and ecology resonates throughout the exhibition, demonstrating her multidisciplinary approach to artmaking and commitment to creating imaginative landscapes that address pressing global issues such as climate change and the preservation of ecosystems.

Exploring the magnificence and complexity of volcanic phenomena, *Ascending the Ashes: A Tale of Renewal* takes inspiration from Werner Herzog's film, *Into the Inferno* (2016). In Herzog's cinematic exploration, the allure and formidable intensity of active volcanoes are examined alongside the insights of volcanologist Clive Oppenheimer. Through breathtaking cinematography, Herzog underscores the impact of volcanic activity on the cultures and communities residing in the shadows of these fiery giants. Similarly drawing attention to the cyclical nature of creation and destruction in the

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natural world, the artist's presentation underscores the delicate balance between geological forces and ecological resilience. Reflecting on the ramifications of volcanic activity for global biodiversity and environmental sustainability, the exhibition examines the enduring impact of volcanoes in shaping not only landscapes but also cultural and environmental discourse.



Casa Wabi wall, 2024, Puerto Escondido (MX)

Central to Comte's installation is a large floor graphic depicting the relentless flow of molten lava cascading through the museum's three floors. The artist highlights the physical dynamics of the flowing lava that traverses every corner of the exhibition space by utilizing sophisticated 3D simulation software that digitally imprints the spectacle onto a sustainable carpet made from recycled fishing nets. In tandem with this immersive graphic saturated with vivid red and orange hues, a monumental wall painting created with soil envelops the exhibition space in undulating waves, evoking the rugged contours of a mountainscape or the gentle ripple of water. Its geometric quality is evident of Comte's ongoing visual vocabulary and scientific exploration of patterns found in nature.

Nestled within this entropic tableau lies a series of meticulously rendered sculptures of tree trunks and creatures indigenous to volcanic regions, sculpted from black Marquinia marble. Their solemn presence echoes the resilience of life amidst the chaos of environmental upheaval. Comte depicts five fauna specimens, each 3D-scanned from taxidermized relics housed in Basel's Natural History Museum: an iguana atop a charred tree stump; a hummingbird perched on a partially singed bough; a lifeless fish upon a stone; a pair of extinct golden toads on weathered driftwood, now poignant symbols of biodiversity's decline; and the colossal forms of woolly mammoth tusks emerging from the earth. The extinction of mammoths, particularly woolly mammals, remains a subject of scholarly discourse, emblematic of a species extinguished due to a complex interplay of factors including climate change, early human predation, habitat loss from migration and expansion, and exposure to disease.

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Owl, Birds and Trees, 2024, white Carrara



Storck, Birds and Trees, 2024, white Carrara

The collective presence of different elements in the exhibition—lava, soil, creature, and forest—delineates a symbiotic relationship in the context of volcanic activity's impact on terrestrial ecosystems. Following volcanic eruptions, the remnants of trees, including charred stumps or petrified wood encased in solidified lava flows, stand as enduring witnesses to the sheer force unleashed by nature. While lava may precipitate immediate destruction during such events, it concurrently assumes a crucial role in the transformation of landscapes, the enhancement of soil fertility, and the facilitation of the gradual emergence of distinctive ecosystems over time.

Drawing parallels with Dante's descriptions of his descent through the physical and psychological infernal territories in his book, *Inferno*, Comte's version of the "inferno" could also be interpreted as a contemplation of this vertiginous search for redemption or renewal, a quest for light. By echoing Dante's journey, Comte's exhibition emerges as an allegory for the human experience, prompting the question: what does it mean to confront the complexities and paradoxes of our existence in the era of the Anthropocene? Upon encountering Comte's portrayal of the "inferno," visitors may find themselves immersed in perpetual oscillation between the fiery realms of geological wonder and devastation.

This exhibition has been organized by K&L MUSEUM and developed thanks to the generous collaboration of Albarrán Bourdais.

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About the artist



Claudia Comte



Claudia Comte's Studio

Claudia Comte (b. 1983, Grancy) is a Swiss artist based in Basel, Switzerland. Working across site-specific installation, painting and sculpture, her practice is guided by a longstanding interest in teasing out the history and memory of biomorphic forms through traditional hand processes, industrial and machine technologies. At the heart of Comte's installations are monumental wall paintings and serial sculptures inspired by organic patterns and morphology such as waves, sonar, cacti and rock strata, that are playfully recomposed within fluid and immersive environments.

Drawing on the powers of communication, knowledge and symbiosis between animal and plant life, Comte's dynamic and shape-shifting objects pay testament to the intelligence and transformative capacities of the ecological world.

Her work has been widely presented in solo and group exhibitions, including, *The Bright Side of the Desert Moon*, Noor Riyadh (2023), *Waves, Cacti and Sunsets*, Globus Public Art Project in collaboration with Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2023), *Marine Wildfire & Underwater Forests*, Gladstone Gallery, Seoul (2023), *The Liberation of Form. Barbara Hepworth - A Master of Abstraction in the Mirror of Modernism*, Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2023), *Desert Flood*, Lago/Algo, Mexico City (2023), *From Where We Rise*, Casa Wabi, Puerto Escondido, Mexico, *Geometric Opulence*, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2022), *An Impending Disaster (HAHAHA)*, Galerie König im Kleines Haus der Kunst, Vienna (2022), *Desert X AIUla*, Saudi Arabia (2022), *Tree Line Curve*, Rolex Learning Center, EPFL Lausanne (2021), *The Dreamers*, 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale (2021), *After Nature*, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (2021), *Jungle and Corals*, König Galerie, Berlin (2021), *The Sea of Darkness*, Kunstraum Dornbirn (2020), *How to Grow and Still Stay the Same Shape*, Castello di Rivoli (2019), *I have Grown Taller from Standing with Trees*, Copenhagen Contemporary (2019), *Zigzags and Diagonals*, MOCA Cleveland (2018), *New Swiss Performance Now*, Kunsthalle Basel (2018), *KölnSkulptur #9*, SkulpturenPark Köln (2017), *NOW I WON*, Messeplatz, Art Basel (2017), *10 Rooms, 40 Walls, 1059 m2*, Kunstmuseum Luzern (2017), *The Language of Things*, with the Public Art Fund, New York (2016) and *Heavy III*, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2014). Passionate about using art as a tool for connecting marine conservation, policy change, and climate education, she has collaborated with several organizations on projects, including a residency and underwater commission developed with TBA21-Academy in 2019 to raise awareness of coral health around the Alligator Head Foundation in Jamaica.

An underwater photograph of a desert-themed art installation. In the foreground, a large, weathered sculpture of a saguaro cactus stands on a rectangular base. The cactus has two arms and a textured, aged surface. In the background, another smaller cactus sculpture is visible on a similar base. The scene is set on a sandy ocean floor, flanked by rocky, coral-covered cliffs. The water is clear and blue, with sunlight filtering down from the surface, creating a serene and surreal atmosphere.

An Impending Disaster, 2023, LagoAlgo, Mexico City (MX)

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About K&L Museum:

K&L MUSEUM is a private art museum located in Gwacheon, South Korea, that was founded in September 2023 as a part of SMK International's cultural initiative. Its parent company, SMK International, was established in 1994. Enfolded by Gwacheon's beautiful Umyeonsan Mountain, K&L MUSEUM aims to discover contemporary artists who are active internationally across Korea, Europe, the United States, and Southeast Asia, as well as introduce seminal modern and contemporary art that hold importance in an art-historical context.



Since 2023, K&L MUSEUM has held a series of exhibitions, including the solo exhibition of the Austrian avant-garde artist Hermann Nitsch, who dramatically realized artistic experiments through ritualistic performances, followed by the solo exhibition of the pioneer of Korean postmodernism, Kwon Young-hyun, who explored human desires and existential issues based on free thought and profound philosophy. In collaboration with PUBLIC ART, Korea's leading monthly art magazine, the museum also recently hosted *PUBLIC ART, New Hero*, a competition and exhibition striving to discover and support innovative next-generation Korean contemporary artists.

K&L MUSEUM's comprehensive program examines international contemporary art while addressing urgent global issues including climate change and ecosystem preservation. Highlights include Claudia Comte's upcoming solo exhibition, which organically and morphologically represents nature's cycle of creation and destruction, as well as the curation of the Myanmar Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennale (2024). Through these diverse initiatives, K&L MUSEUM has solidified its reputation as a leading private museum in Korea, serving as a pivotal platform for contemporary art discourse.

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Information

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Opening Hours | 10 AM - 7 PM

Closed on Monday

Admission fee: ₩10,000