

PRESS INFORMATION

Sithara Pathirana and Claudius Schulze to Lead the Climate Biennale Vienna

The collective starts its preparations in January 2023

The first biennale will take place in 2024.

A climate biennale must be as radical as the revolutionary changes that are affecting the Earth system. This is the message of Sithara Pathirana and Claudius Schulze, the leadership team of the first Climate Biennale Vienna, as they describe their courageous new approach to making highly complex artistic issues tangible and accessible. This approach is based on inclusion and collectivity, multiple perspectives and a fundamental breaking down of barriers. A Vienna-wide festival programme including exhibitions and partnerships with science and business is designed to establish the biennale as an international artistic platform.

Claudius Schulze and Sithara Pathirana have been appointed to lead the festival for four years starting on 1st January 2023. The first Climate Biennale Vienna is scheduled to take place between April and July 2024 and is organised by KUNST HAUS WIEN, a museum of the Wien Holding.

In making the appointment, Gerlinde Riedl, the Director of KUNST HAUS WIEN, followed the recommendation of the jury: *“Sithara Pathirana and Claudius Schulze combine outstanding artistic and technological expertise regarding the climate crisis and biodiversity and leadership experience in cultural production and communication with excellent contacts with the national and international art scenes. By selecting them to lead the Climate Biennale Vienna, we have ensured that a young team will shape a major festival, with which the generation that is most affected by climate change will also be able to identify. I’m looking forward to our cooperation on this exciting project!”*

According to the jury statement: *“The collective formed by Claudius Schulze and Sithara Pathirana has been working together for six years at the interface between art, communication and climate. It combines international experience with a relationship with Vienna and has credibly advocated such values as diversity, inclusion and fair pay alongside its commitment to climate neutrality. The team’s ideas for implementing the interdisciplinary festival across the city, powerful communication of its programme and proposals for its implementation successfully convinced the jury.”*

The jury consisted of **Ramesch Daha**, President of the Vienna Secession, **Katharina Egger**, Office of the Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science, **Bettina Leidl**, Managing Director of the MuseumQuartier Wien, **Matias Meissner**, Office of the Executive City Councillor for Climate and Environment, **Doris Rechberg-Missbichler**, Office of the Executive City Councillor for Finance and Business and **Christoph Thun-Hohenstein**, Head of the Section for International Cultural Affairs and Initiator of the Vienna Biennale for Change.

A total of 14 complete applications were received for the leadership of the Climate Biennale Vienna, including nine from women, two from men and three from collectives.

The new leadership team

Munich-born Claudius Schulze, a researcher and artist with a focus on the climate crisis, species extinction and artificial intelligence, and Graz-born Sithara Pathirana, a project manager specialising in cultural education, communication and festival production, have already jointly realised many major projects - including this October's ClimateArtFest in Hamburg. Their curatorial approach brings together local and international players to develop interdisciplinary and collaborative ways of addressing the urgent questions of the future. As an artist, Schulze has realised many international exhibitions and projects, including "Socotra. An Island." (2011, London), "State of Nature" (2018 Amsterdam, Berlin, Genoa, etc.), "FIDS Open Research Lab" (2022 Hamburg) and "Biosphere X" (2020 in KUNST HAUS WIEN). A trained cultural manager, Pathirana has contributed to a range of cultural events in Germany and Austria such as steirischer herbst and the Diagonale, Viennale, Triennial of Photography Hamburg and Hamburger Kulturgipfel.

In the words of Sithara Pathirana and Claudius Schulze: *"We are deeply committed to creating an international, interdisciplinary art festival. The aim of our fascinating, high-quality programme and our integration of civil society is to inspire creative and collective answers to the climate crisis. A balanced mix of acclaimed international positions and works with Viennese roots should position the city as a centre for collectively addressing the issues of tomorrow. These future questions are a design challenge for artists and for society as a whole - and we're delighted to have the opportunity to lead the first Climate Biennale Vienna."*

The Climate Biennale Vienna

The Climate Biennale Vienna is a project of KUNST HAUS WIEN together with the business, cultural affairs and environment groups of Vienna City Council. As an extension of the Vienna Biennale for Change, it will combine Vienna's strengths as a scientific and research location with the visual arts, design and architecture and develop visionary scenarios for a modern, climate-friendly future.

PRESS PHOTOS

Photos and further information on the press release are available in the press section at <https://www.kunsthawien.com/de/presse/leitung-wiener-klima-biennale> Reproduction free of charge in the course of reporting, provided the copyright is mentioned.

ENQUIRY NOTE

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