

Press Release

**JOHANNA PICHLBAUER**  
**There will be! People! On the Sun! Soon!**

Opening Tuesday, 14 December 2021, 10 a.m.  
Exhibition Venue MAK GALLERY  
MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna  
Exhibition Dates 15 December 2021 – 13 February 2022  
Opening Hours Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

In her solo exhibition in the MAK, the designer Johanna Pichlbauer completely dedicates a diverse, complete installation to the sun: the fixed star is not only proverbially central for the solar system of all the planets orbiting it. The sun is life-sustaining for the Earth and for all lifeforms and is at least just as relevant in its role as the most important source of energy in the age of renewable energy sources.

We humans have perfected the interaction with the sun with a great deal of design effort: we let its light into our homes, our food products ripen underneath it, our skin become brown from it, and photovoltaic systems shine on our roofs with abstract patterns. The fixed star is the central element of our visual culture and educes new forms of representation from every generation. With pop-cultural images and memes, as well as historical references from the MAK Collection, the *JOHANNA PICHLBAUER. There will be! People! On the Sun! Soon!* exhibition illustrates how sun and solar energy are manifested in our objects and rituals and traces their poetic qualities in the process.

In her central installation *Copa Solar* (2021), a solar park goes on vacation, Johanna Pichlbauer invites visitors to find a spot on her “sun deck” and enjoy the power of the sun. Instead of a semi-conductor coating, soft terrycloth towels provide the underlay for invigorating minutes of contemplation. The designer developed the towels, which adopt the aesthetic of solar panels, but with their rigid patterns softly deformed, in cooperation with Vossen. With a wink, a red sun shines from the vault of the MAK GALLERY onto the staged solar park: it originates from the logo of “Nuclear Power? No thanks,” the most well-known symbol of the anti-nuclear movement. The electromagnetic radiation of the sun’s surface ultimately also originates from atomic fusion processes inside the sun. The

towels are also present in a photographic interpretation from Marlene Mautner, which she shows in all possible and impossible constellations in the city, in nature, or in outer space.

While the solar park dreams of a timeout, Johanna Pichlbauer orbits the MAK Collection once with the sun: selected objects tell of the design work that is required to transform solar energy into a sense of time, dreams of living, and other stories. In the process, Pichlbauer develops her own narrative of objects, collages, quotes, and characters, which all refer to different associations with the sun.

The sun has been worshiped in many religions and shrines since the Bronze Age. The celestial body not only provides energy but has also served the keeping of time for ages. A series of portable sundials from the MAK Collection (originating from the 16th to 18th centuries), like a cylinder sundial, a ring sundial, an eternal solar calendar, or a precise “Erasmus sundial” bear witness to this innovative analog technology that has been used since Antiquity. The sun was also of crucial importance for astronomy: with the metal rings of the armillary sphere from the 16th century, which rotate in opposition to one another, one conducted measurements of celestial coordinates and represented the movements of celestial bodies. The earth and sun are not found within the armillary sphere—it is not known whether they were oriented to the geocentric or the heliocentric world view.

With the digital collage entitled *Can you please photoshop the sun between my hands?* (2021), a bronze figure designed by Carl Hagenauer becomes a familiar meme, and our obsession with the natural spectacle of the rising or setting sun as a beloved romantic photo motif is addressed. Orange papers refer to the power of the southern sun, and of course we should not forget architectural theory: in “La Maison Fille Du Soleil” [The House Daughter of the Sun], Le Corbusier represents the family relationships between house and sun and is convinced that this relationship profits from transom windows.

The designer cites “Our best machines are made of sunshine” from Donna Haraway’s epochal work *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985). Solar energy, as one of the most important sources of renewable energy of our time, makes a central contribution to the energy turnaround and to minimizing the impact of the climate crisis. In a video, a middle-aged man turns toward the solar collectors and begins to recite an ode to solar energy from his volume of poetry. This man is Matt Harvey, who dedicated a book to renewable energy with *The Element in the Room* (2014).

The circle of Johanna Pichlbauer’s complex and at the same time poetic way of looking at the sun closes in the title of the exhibition: *There will be! People! On the Sun! Soon!* refers to a quote of the Soviet Futurist Vladimir Mayakovsky in the new novel *No One Is Talking About This* of the American poet Patricia Lockwood.

Johanna Pichlbauer studied at the Vienna University of Technology (mechanical engineering), as well as at the University of Applied Arts Vienna (industrial design/design investigations) and works as a designer in Vienna. In her works, composed of objects, installations, videos, and a play, she sensitively examines robotics, data sovereignty, artificial intelligence, and the interaction between human beings and machines. Her works have been shown in group exhibitions, including in the Design Museum Holon (IL) or in the Vitra Design Museum (D), and she has been represented at numerous festivals, including the Triennale di Milano (IT), the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK (AT), or the Jerusalem Design Week (IL). Johanna Pichlbauer is a lecturer at the Vienna University of Technology (Institute for Human Computer Interaction) and one of the organizers of *Design in Gesellschaft*, a studio cooperative in the 20th District of Vienna.

Press photos are available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](https://www.mak.at/en/press).

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Press Data

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MAK Curator	Marlies Wirth, Curator for Digital Culture
MAK Admission	€ 15/reduced € 12 Tuesdays 6–9 p.m.: Admission € 7 Free admission for children and teens under 19
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