

24th Triennale Milano International Exhibition, *Inequalities: With Soft Image, Brittle Grounds*, artist and filmmaker Felix Lenz represents Austria

Commissioned by the MAK, Austria's contribution explores the social and ecological consequences of global technologies and their infrastructures

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MAK – Press and PR

Press Release

12.5.2025

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With the mixed-media installation *Soft Image, Brittle Grounds*, research-led artist and filmmaker Felix Lenz represents Austria at the 24th Triennale Milano International Exhibition, titled *Inequalities* (13 May – 9 November 2025). Commissioned by the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, and funded by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport of the Republic of Austria, Austria's contribution critically examines the hidden infrastructures of digital technologies and their ecological and social impacts. Lenz takes viewers on a visual and sonic journey through the intricate entanglements of technology, ecology, power, and inequality.

At the heart of the installation is his 30-minute essay film *Brute Force [Exhibition Cut]* (2025), displayed on a large LED wall with immersive sound. This film, along with the three-channel video installation *Valley of the Heart's Delight* (2025), investigates—through a queer lens—how our world's complexity collides with the simplified rationalities of the digital age. The shrinking shores of Utah's Great Salt Lake serve as a metaphor for how data extraction and knowledge production reshape the Earth's topographies, linking environmental destruction to neocolonial practices that continue to define access to resources, knowledge, and land.

Brute Force [Exhibition Cut] exposes the material and political implications of digital infrastructures with striking imagery of salt deserts, the interiors of data centers, drone footage, and macro close-ups. With a layered sound design and poetic voice-over, the film is structured into three chapters that trace the instruments capturing our data, the ecological costs of their infrastructures, and the geological imprints they leave behind. Shot in the salt lakes and deserts of Utah and California, *Brute Force [Exhibition Cut]* conceptualizes salt as an archive of water's absence—an index of resource depletion, climate change, and their unequal impact and distribution. *Brute Force* was supported by the funding program „Pixel, Bytes + Films“ of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport.

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Lenz's artistic practice blurs the boundaries between documentary and constructed narrative, challenging the illusion of technological neutrality. Information is encoded into spoken word, poetry, and metaphor: the voice-over, narrated by poet Day Eve Komet, interweaves insights from feminist physicist and theorist Karen Barad, media artist Vladan Joler, and geologist Diego P. Fernandez into a critical, interdisciplinary reflection on technology.

The newly developed three-channel video installation *Valley of the Heart's Delight*—named after Silicon Valley's original designation—further deepens these themes. Hidden behind a symbolic fragment of an architectural glass façade, the videos remain invisible until visitors look through the glass. A special coating on the façade reveals the images on the screens, highlighting themes of (in)transparency and control within the exhibition space.

In slow motion, an industrial robotic arm glides over layers of soil, sand, and crushed white shells, evoking the sacred shellmounds and midden sites of the Indigenous Ohlone people, now buried beneath the headquarters of tech giants. Through this interplay Lenz links displaced histories with the contemporary architectures of technological dominance.

The act of processing information inevitably distorts the world. While technological infrastructures promise seamless efficiency, they rely on the silent erosion of landscapes, histories, and communities. *Soft Image, Brittle Grounds* challenges the illusion of equality within technological progress, urging us to not only see what is shown but also recognize what is lost in the telling.

With striking imagery, sound, and a spatial experience of concealment and revelation, the installation conveys to visitors on all sensory levels how deeply technological progress, environmental destruction, historical erasure, and global power imbalances are intertwined.

The 24th Triennale Milano International Exhibition

The 24th Triennale Milano International Exhibition, titled *Inequalities* (May 13 – November 9, 2025), is dedicated to the issue of the growing inequalities that characterize cities and the contemporary world. Through a series of exhibitions, special projects and public program events, the International Exhibition questions the global challenges related to the differences present in various spheres of existence: from economic to ethnic, from geographic origin to gender. Personalities from the world of art, design, architecture, collectives, cultural institutions, museums and research institutes from around the world are called upon to reflect on the theme with the aim of mapping inequalities and identifying the most advanced political projects for a society in which differences are a resource and a value to be recomposed into new forms of community.

Felix Lenz

Vienna-based research-led artist and filmmaker Felix Lenz (felixlenz.at) explores geopolitical, ecological, and technological themes through interdisciplinary installations, films, and artistic strategies. He is a graduate of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Design Investigations, Prof. Anab Jain).



Besides his independent practice, he has worked at the design studios Formafantasma (Amsterdam) and Studio Folder (Milan). His work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Beijing Art and Technology Biennale, Ars Electronica Festival, Digital Art Festival Zurich, Istanbul Design Biennale, and London Design Biennale. In 2024, he received the Outstanding Artist Award of the then Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport of the Republic of Austria in the category “Experimental Design”.

The themes explored in *Soft Image, Brittle Grounds* are closely connected to the MAK exhibition *WATER PRESSURE: Designing for the Future* (21.5.–7.9. 2025).

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The MAK has already contributed to the Triennale Milano International Exhibition twice: in 2019 with EOOS and the contribution *CIRCULAR FLOWS: The Toilet Revolution!*, which won the Silver Black Bee Award, one of the prizes appointed by Triennale Milano to the most relevant projects presented by the International Participations, and in 2022 with Sonja Bäuml's multisensory installation *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES*.

Press images and detailed information on the artworks are available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](https://mak.at/en/press).



Soft Image, Brittle Grounds

A project by Felix Lenz, commissioned by the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

Exhibition Venue

Triennale Milano
Viale Emilio Alemagna 6, 20121 Milan, Italy
T +39 02 724341
www.triennale.org

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Exhibition Dates

13.5.–9.11.2025

International Exhibition Official Inaugural Ceremony

12.5.2025, 11 am
open to media under registration
Please register at press@triennale.org

Commissioner

Lilli Hollein, General Director and Artistic Director, MAK

Curator

Marlies Wirth, Curator, Digital Culture and Design Collection, MAK

Artistic Concept and Realization

Felix Lenz

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Cooperation

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