

Press Release

ANNA JERMOLAEWA
Chernobyl Safari

Opening Tuesday, 8 March 2022, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue MAK GALLERY
MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates 9 March – 5 June 2022
Opening Hours Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Ukraine was attacked by Russia on 24 February 2022, thus unleashing a war in Europe. On the same day, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the surrounding exclusion zone were placed under the control of the Russian military.

We stand for peace. Our solidarity is with Ukraine and its citizens.

Since the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl, the 30-kilometer exclusion zone around the reactor of the nuclear power plant has developed into a nature conservation area. Lynx, wolves, eagles, wild horses, and other rare animals live in the almost uninhabited, overgrown area. In her *Chernobyl Safari* exhibition in the MAK GALLERY, artist Anna Jermolaewa attempts to conceive the fauna of this area as a world without people. Although the local fauna was constantly exposed to an elevated level of contamination, animals were able to develop and multiply, because no further intervention into their habitat by human beings took place following the evacuation of the population. The area is in fact now a refuge for more than 400 animal species, including 50 that have been classified as endangered.

Chernobyl Safari shows the Anthropocene in which we live, but abandoned by humans. Because we cannot experience the world without our presence, the vision of an uninhabited world is based entirely on our power of imagination. Anna Jermolaewa's Safari ultimately suggests that animals could in fact do quite well in a habitat destroyed and abandoned by humans.

The project of the artist allows parallels with the concept of deep ecology in natural philosophy. This presumes that humanity is not to be seen as superior to or be favored over plants and animals when ecological decisions need to be made. As the nuclear disaster of

Chernobyl shows, humanity has the potential to willfully destroy this planet. Considered from an ecological standpoint, the planet would have a better future without people. Vienna-based artist Anna Jermolaewa visited the exclusion zone in 2014 and again in 2021, when she went on a safari in this unexpected wildlife refuge. She roamed through woods and fields and collected so-called “safari trophies” with her camera—sometimes involving the installation of camera traps.

However, Jermolaewa’s approach is not documentary: she sketched the animals she could not capture with the camera in watercolors. The inspiration for some of these studies came from widespread myths about mutated and radioactively contaminated “monsters” in this zone. The artist thus allows us to accompany her through a post-apocalyptic space and establishes links with a mythical world of the imagination. The result is a picture of an inconceivable landscape.

The project was first shown in 2015 at the Biennale in Kiev under the curatorship of Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer. Anna Jermolaewa further developed the exhibition project and travelled to the exclusion zone again in 2021.

As a sign of solidarity with Ukraine, Anna Jermolaewa has initiated an edition: *Untitled*, from the series *Chernobyl Safari*, 2014/2021, fine art pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta, edition 500 + 10 AP, EUR 150,- (plus VAT). The total proceeds of Anna Jermolaewa’s edition, supported by the MAK, will go to charitable causes for Ukrainians.

The Austrian-Russian artist Anna Jermolaewa (b. 1970) illuminates hypercultural scenarios of our time. Born in Leningrad, which was once again renamed as St. Petersburg following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Jermolaewa fled for political reasons to Austria in May 1989. She draws ambivalent pictures of the present using set pieces from various historical contexts and socio-political hot spots.

The exhibition is being presented in the context of FOTO WIEN 2022.

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

Press Data

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Curator	Bärbel Vischer, Curator, MAK Contemporary Art Collection
Supporting Program	Talk on Tuesday, 8 March 2022, 6 p.m., MAK FORUM: Artist Anna Jermolaewa in discussion with MAK General Director Lilli Hollein Registration at mak.at/annajermolaewa
MAK Admission	€ 15/reduced € 12 Every Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m.: admission € 7 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and PR	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Ulrike Sedlmayr T +43 1 711 36-233, -229, -212 presse@MAK.at www.MAK.at

Vienna, 8 March 2022