

Press Release

## INVOCATION FOR HOPE A new commission by Superflux

A MAK Exhibition

Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall ground floor, Central Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	28 May – 3 October 2021
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m. Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

In this work, newly commissioned by the MAK, in the heart of the VIENNA BIENNALE, Superflux invites us to reflect on our relationship with the Earth and on alternative visions of how our planet may prosper. With the immersive installation *INVOCATION FOR HOPE*, the anglo-indian design and art studio reveals a resurgent forest born from the ashes of human hubris. A vast symmetrical grid of over 400 fire-blackened trees in the central hall of the MAK Exhibition Hall presents visitors with an allegory, as it were, of the destruction of our environment. Gracefully, the burnt tree skeletons restore fertility to the fallow land, nurturing a young, newly resurgent forest—a green oasis bursting with life.

In cooperation with the forest and fire departments of Austria's Neunkirchen region, the designers transport hundreds of trees recently burnt in a wildfire into the MAK. The monoculture of planting forests whose only goal is to maximize yield has resulted in an increase in wildfires and in widespread destruction. With its new project, Superflux opposes the human impulse to exert control over the natural world and to treat nature as a resource to be exploited.

"Climate change is not a problem we can 'solve' but rather a predicament we must navigate with responsibility and urgency," according to Superflux's Jon Ardern. "Our proposal for a way out of this dilemma is to completely change the way we view ourselves and our relationship with nature. Instead of seeing humans as separate from nature, we need to understand that we are a part of it. By radically changing our attitude toward natural systems and the ecology of our planet, we have a great opportunity to reverse the damage we've done. How might we—humans and non-humans—truly engage in collaborative living?" says Superflux's Anab Jain.

For Change

28.5.–3.10.2021

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Using living trees planted in the MAK Exhibition Hall in partnership with Vienna's Anton Starkl of Gärtner Starkl GmbH, this inspiring exhibition provides hope for an alternative future. The young trees—including oak, hornbeam, apple, and dogwood—are joined by an exuberance of biodiversity: mosses, grasses, lichens, and shrubs growing symbiotically together over the course of the Biennale. These living ecologies are nourished by regular watering, indoor grow lights from SANlight, and natural light from the skylight of the MAK exhibition hall.

A green glow at the heart of the installation symbolizes nature's resurgence. Spirited ferns push through the blackened soil, and wild grasses dance amid growing trees. The abundant organic ecosystem stands in sharp contrast to the rigid void created by life-threatening destruction through fire. The two worlds are acoustically awakened to new life through a specially commissioned soundscape by visionary musician Cosmo Sheldrake.

A surprise awaits visitors at the center of the resurgent green forest. In a glistening pond surrounded by mosses and ferns, they glimpse the reflections of other animal species, filmed in partnership with Austria's Alpenzoo. Visitors are offered a glimpse of a post-Anthropocene planet, on which humanity is just one part of a complex and dynamic ecosystem. *INVOCATION FOR HOPE* inspires us to imagine opportunities opened up by a more than human solicitude based on regeneration, redistribution, and rewilding. The center of the MAK thus offers an embodied experience of the world as a "life-support system" in which we humans are also just part of a much larger ecological whole.

To explore this symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment, Superflux has consciously chosen a mytho-poetic framework: instead of a direct representation of the dynamics of this relationship, the installation encourages hope through an abstract, symbolic approach. "We have been inspired by mythology and fantasy to explore possible worlds that are not direct representations of our current world. We want to tap poetic aspects of other worlds that may feel enigmatic, stimulating, or magical. With *INVOCATION FOR HOPE*, we enter an archetypal space with less firm ideas about the ways we might transform ourselves. In our exploration of the ways we relate to what we perceive as 'nature,' we tap into a deep history, a more primal space," according to Jon Arden.

"A more-than-human perspective allows us to see how we are ecologically, economically, and emotionally entangled with all other species on the planet. We want to foreground how we're a part of a larger ecology rather than the masters of nature. Within this complex ecosystem, we all play a part in mutual survival and evolution. Without it, we cease to exist," says Anab Jain.

The project is designed so that all components of the installation have an afterlife. The goal is to reduce or at least neutralize the carbon footprint created during development and implementation of the installation. After the installation, the living trees will be donated to schools, and the burnt trees will become valuable compost to rewild an area of Vienna, setting up a legacy of interdependence and solicitude in the city whilst also enriching the biodiversity of the urban area and creating for the city's inhabitants a space for ecological contemplation.

Artists: Superflux

Curator: Marlies Wirth  
Curatorial Assistance: Antje Prisker

Idea and Conception: Anab Jain and Jon Ardern, Co-Founders, Superflux,  
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Motion Design: Michele Vannoni and Dimitris Papadimitriou

Technical Coordination: Philipp Krummel

Cooperation Partners:  
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SANlight Research GmbH  
Doka Österreich GmbH  
Alpenzoo Innsbruck – Tirol  
Thomas Krenn, Saubersdorf Fire Department  
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Press images are available at [MAK.at/en/press](http://MAK.at/en/press) and [viennabiennale.org](http://viennabiennale.org)

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