

Kunsthalle Wien

Press release

Sophie von Hellermann

Get Your Head Around It

8 October 2025–29 March 2026

Kunsthalle Wien announces the second in its series of annual public art commissions in the Museumsquartier. Sophie von Hellermann (b. 1975, Munich) has created an extensive new work on canvas for the 62-metre vitrine on the south-west wall of the Kunsthalle's building.

Von Hellermann's paintings quote fact and fiction, drawing diversely from history and culture to develop expansive, narrative compositions. Using broad-brushes to apply acrylic and raw pigment on unprimed canvas, her images are imbued with a luminosity and a sense of movement and weightlessness that contributes to their fleeting, dream-like or cinematic quality. *Get Your Head Around It* pays tribute to the writer, cybernetician, language theorist and musician Oswald Wiener (b. 1935, Vienna; d. 2021, Steiermark) with whom von Hellermann studied *Erkenntnistheorie* (epistemology) while at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1990s. The work is inspired by a conversation between the artist and her tutor, referring to Wiener's theory that the mind functions like a machine processing mental imagery in programmed sequences that guide the movement of 'signs' or information. According to von Hellermann, Wiener maintained that 'there is nothing in our heads', asking her if she could see something in her mind, to which she replied 'yes, I've painted it'.

Von Hellermann's commission combines subjects from natural sciences with references to the history of philosophy and culture informed in part by the work's proximity to institutions such as Vienna's Natural History Museum. Images of planets, the sun, moon and stars are accompanied by a proliferation of animals including deer, horses, birds and dolphins. A pair of black and white swans make a passing reference to the Viennese philosopher Karl Popper and his theory of *Kritischer Rationalismus* while other motifs include the *Baum der Erkenntnis* (Tree of Knowledge); the cave paintings at Lascaux and Plato's speleological allegory. The frieze ends with a string of telegraph poles, an explosion, darkness, blue sky and a red sunset – referencing Wiener's concept for a '*Bio-Adapter*' that would integrate humans within cybernetic apparatus. First described in his novel *die verbesserung von mitteleuropa* (The Improvement of Central Europe), it would facilitate the transfer of consciousness to electronic circuits while allowing the body to decompose, offering 'a complete solution of all world problems'.

The commission is von Hellermann's first solo exhibition in Austria.

Biography

Sophie von Hellermann (b. 1975, Munich) has held solo exhibitions at Space K, Seoul (2025); Turner Contemporary, Margate (2021); Kunstverein Hannover (2017); Firstsite, Colchester (2013); Le Consortium, Dijon (2009); Chisenhale Gallery, London; Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (both 2006) and Saatchi Gallery, London (2001). Her work has also been exhibited at Brücke Museum, Berlin; Langen Foundation, Neuss (both 2024); Milwaukee Art Museum (2023); Hayward Gallery, London (2021); Jerwood Visual Arts, London; Kunsthalle Bielefeld (both 2015); Gallery Met, Metropolitan Opera, New York (2014); Tate Britain, London (2011) and Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2002). She lives and works in London and Margate.

Notes to Editors

Sophie von Hellermann: *Get Your Head Around It*
8 October 2025–29 March 2026
Kunsthalle Wien Vitrine

Visible day and night and free of charge, the vitrine is located on the south west exterior of the Kunsthalle Wien. Visitors may access it via the Kunsthalle's Ziegelfoyer.

Press conference: 7 October 2025, 10 am
Opening: 7 October 2025, 7 pm

Press conference and exhibition opening in conjunction with Guan Xiao: *Teenager* (Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier).

Press images for download and further information:
<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/sophie-von-hellermann/press>

Artist Talk

During a special event on the occasion of Vienna Art Week in November, Sophie von Hellermann will be in conversation with Michelle Cotton, Artistic Director Kunsthalle Wien.
11 November 2025, 7 pm
Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

All dates for guided tours and the programme are available online at:
<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/programme>

Limited Edition

Sophie von Hellermann has supported Kunsthalle Wien with a new edition. *Diskutable Skizzen* is a series of 13 unique watercolours which are sketches for different parts of *Get Your Head Around It*.

Diskutable Skizzen, 2025
Unique
10 x 15 cm
Watercolour on handmade paper
Signed
€ 500

Kunsthalle Wien's editions are available from the shop at Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier and Karlsplatz as well as online: <https://kunsthallewien.at/shop>.

About Kunsthalle Wien

Kunsthalle Wien is the City of Vienna's primary institution for contemporary art. At its locations in the Museumsquartier and on Karlsplatz, it presents an annual programme of exhibitions alongside public and educational programming that seeks to engage diverse publics. We provide a platform for artists, commissioning new works and partnering with individuals and institutions, both local and international, to develop exhibitions and publications based on original research. Kunsthalle Wien is committed to providing an inclusive space for exchange and debate and furthering the discourse on contemporary art in all its forms.

Kunsthalle Wien Thanks

Kunsthalle Wien is financed by the Magistratsabteilung Kultur der Stadt Wien (MA 7). The artistic programme is also supported by the members and patrons of the Kunsthalle Wien Club.

Address and Information

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Opening Hours

Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–18:00
Thursday: 10:00–20:00

Press Contact

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