

Eva Ursprung

The Art of Surfacing

7. 2. 2025 – 19. 4. 2026

Press talk: 6. 2. 2025, 11am

Opening: 6. 2. 2025, 6pm

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Honorary Prize of the State of Styria
for the Fine Arts in 2024

Curated by Sandro Droschl and Caro Feistritzer

In the exhibition *The Art of Surfacing* HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark presents the diverse work of the Austrian artist, musician, and curator Eva Ursprung, who received the Honorary Prize of the State of Styria for the Fine Arts in 2024. This prize, awarded on the basis of a proposal by a jury of experts, stands for the recognition of a lifetime's work and is accompanied by an exhibition at HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark.

Eva Ursprung's work combines cross-media formats with feminist, socially critical, and collaborative strategies. She has been working for four decades in music, video, performance, installations, and socially committed art, and has gained international renown as a pioneer of cyberfeminism in Austria. Her work focuses on questions concerning ecological responsibility, transformation, and social solidarity. Of particular note is her ability not just to work in networks but to initiate them. The central theme of this exhibition is the element of water, a material that Ursprung has repeatedly addressed over the decades in different artistic and political contexts. This element forms the basis of all life, stands for change and transformation, and also has destructive force. Water flows, creates connections, divides, and shapes, and in Ursprung's work it becomes a metaphor for ecological, social, and geopolitical processes. As the exhibition title *The Art of Surfacing* suggests, water here becomes a metaphor for the surface, a surface that like many bodies of water often obstructs a view to the bottom—the riverbed, the seafloor, or the bottom of a lake. This surface thus does not permit us to see what it conceals, and this superficial awareness can be compared with our own conscious minds, beneath which—to follow the allegory of an iceberg—there is much more that is unseen, not conscious and that by far outweighs consciousness. The same is true of the crises of our time, whose real extent is only partially visible and can at best be guessed at.

At the same time Ursprung alludes to a further aspect, namely suppressed truths that we quite knowingly ignore and that she brings to the surface, thereby making social injustices visible. In her video *Indigo Haven* (2023), the artist symbolically emerges from the water, providing an allegory for truths brought to light. The film work *365 Tage im Erdbunker* (365 Days in the Earth Bunker) (2015) witnesses Ursprung's intensive investigation of resistance during National Socialism in Styria. Projects like *Survive* (2024) and *Mit der Post ans Meer* (With the Post to the Sea) (2015) explore communication, acceleration, flow, and exchange between spaces and regions, while *Garbage Patches* (2013–2017) draws attention to the fragility of the eco-system and its vulnerability to intruders such as plastics.

In several works, Ursprung addresses ecological issues, such as in *Rettungsring für bedrohte Arten* (Lifebuoy for Endangered Species) (2011), whereby these species stand as artistic markers for entire eco-systems under pressure. Here water becomes a symbol for the crisis of the Anthropocene, for climate change and its consequences, such as rising sea levels and natural disasters. The artist refers not only to ecological but also to political dimensions and draws parallels between climate change denial, authoritarian trends, and historical continuities.

Her video works based in India, Indonesia, Serbia, and Nigeria offer a global view of the element of water and its diversity. Of note here is the film *Gewurl* (Bustle) (2011), made at the Nigerian river

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Òşun, which documents Ursprung's meeting with the Austrian artist und Òrìşà priestess Susanne Wenger in her "Holy Grove"—a parallel exhibition at HALLE FÜR KUNST is devoted to Wenger.

Eva Ursprung is a critical feminist observer who creates accessible narratives in various artistic media for urgent issues of ecology, globalization, and fascism. The exhibition is accompanied by a program of events organized together with the artist and further exploring the themes of water, transformation, and resistance.

Eva Ursprung (*1959 Köflach, lives in Vienna)

Solo and Group exhibitions, Projects (Selection):

Steirische Kulturinitiative (2025, 2024), kunstGarten, Graz (2025, 2021, 2016, 2011), Kunsthaus Graz (2025, 2021, 2012, 2007), Gefängnismauer Justizanstalt Karlau, XENOS & Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Steiermark, Graz (2024), Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta (2023), BACC (Bangkok Art and Culture Center) (2023), La Terminal Zawp, MEM Festival, Bilbao (2023), IMA Institut für Medienarchäologie, St. Pölten (2022), Künstlerhaus München (2022), Schaumbad Freies Atelierhaus Graz (2021, 2018, 2008), Steirischer Herbst, Graz (2020, 2014, 2013, 2006, 1999), <rotor>, Graz (2019), Gakerija ALU, Sarajewo (2018), Künstlerhaus Klagenfurt (2017), POST, Los Angeles (2016), Flux Factory, New York (2016), Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania (2015), Les Kurbas National Theatre Arts Center, Kyiv (2014), APO33, La Plateforme Intermédia, La Fabrique, Nantes (2014), MAD Emerging Art Center, Eindhoven (2013), Literaturhaus Graz (2011), Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina / Institut für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum, Novi Sad (2011), Stadtmuseum Graz (2010), galerie wildwechsel, Frankfurt am Main (2008), Freiraum Transeuropa / PiroshkaREV, MuseumsQuartier, Wien (2004), Cornerhouse, Manchester (2002), Laznia Center for Contemporary Art, Gdansk (2002), The Substation, Singapore (2002), Ottis Gallery, Los Angeles (1998).

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