

press information

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architekturforum oberösterreich

Energy and Politics: POWER Exhibition at afo

The POWER exhibition, produced by CIVA Brussels, connects the fields of energy and politics. It offers insight into the interaction between geopolitics, political institutions and movements with planning work in architecture, engineering and landscape design in the creation of infrastructure.

From oil and gas pipelines to microchips, from wind turbines to recycling centres – infrastructure shapes our reality in many ways. It is often the subject of intense debate and requires an understanding of POWER in both senses of the word: energy and political power.

The exhibition topics includes the beginnings of the European project (as European Coal and Steel Community), the optimism of the early nuclear era, the pioneers of the ecological transition, and the energy transformation towards renewable energies and circularity as reflected in built infrastructure.

The exhibition is complemented by a local section on voestalpine in Linz: its origins in National Socialism, its post-war development into a conglomerate with lively planning and construction activity even outside the company complex, and its special connection to the development of the city of Linz.

The bilingual autumn exhibition (German/English) opens on **Thursday, 18 September 2025, at 7 p.m.** at the afo architekturforum oberösterreich.

Nikolaus Hirsch, Director of CIVA Brussels, and Clemens Quirin, the new Director of the afo, will give the welcome speeches.

ENERGETIC TRANSFORMATION Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the energy transformation – and with it systemic change – has only accelerated. Rising electricity prices, new legislative initiatives and building regulations are also calling into question and redefining the role of architects, engineers and landscape planners.

BUILDING CARBON EUROPE The exhibition takes Brussels and the genesis of the European project as a starting point. The very idea of a European union after the catastrophe of WWII started with energy and building materials: the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Encouraging the massive use of steel, large housing projects involved protagonists of the architectural avantgarde of the 1950's which are here shown alongside the ECSC's founding document drafted by Robert Schuman.

ATOM Expo 58 in Brussels marked the initial optimism of the nuclear era: in its center energy-related pavilions such as the Congolese Pavilion on Uranium and an unrealized nuclear power plant on the grounds of the fair. Long before the nuclear disasters of Chernobyl and Fukushima gave birth to a dark aesthetics of catastrophe, the atom was embedded in an optimistic aesthetic program, spearheaded by Claude Parent in his designs for the French nuclear program in their reaction to the oil crisis in the early 1970's.

RENEWABLES The turn to renewable energy coincides with the beginnings of the Green movement. In the early 2000's it was translated to XL-scale by Rem Koolhaas and his scenarios for the North Sea, a precursor to the April 2023 Ostend Declaration, which aims at transforming the North Sea in the largest powerhouse on earth. Yet, the green revolution comes at new environmental costs, as the recent race for lithium continues the history of extraction.

CIRCULARITY Since buildings are responsible for around 40% of the global CO2 emissions, grey energy and circularity are becoming key areas of debate. Pioneered by early ecologists such as Paul Duvigneaud and his *écosystème urbain*, as well as thinkers such as Bruno Latour and his plea to Reset Modernity, architects today are confronting a paradigmatic shift: from the fascination of the new to the logics of the pre-existing.

Architects, landscape designers, engineers, artists and urban practitioners, toiling daily at the coalface of economic expansion, have been complicit in the perpetuation of the fossil era. But they are also in a unique position to contribute to shift discourse and practice toward large-scale energetic transformation.

An exhibition by CIVA, Brussels

C I.II.III.IV. A

Chairwoman

Rabab Khairy

Artistic Director

Nikolaus Hirsch

Secretary General

Pieter Van Damme

Curators

Silvia Franceschini, Eric Hennaut, Nikolaus Hirsch, Yaron Pesztat, Ursula Wieser Benedetti

Research Fellow

Dennis Pohl

Exhibition architecture

Pauline Clarot

Communication

Valérie Roucou, Anne-Gaëlle Solé

Production

Anne Alessandi, Marion Cambier, Stéphanie De Blieck, Téman Dubo, Camila Fallon, Elena Gadd, Hannah Keirsse, Pierre Labergue, Salomé Moraux, Benjamin Sauviac

Local exhibition section

Lisa Ackerl, Franz Koppelstätter, Clemens Quirin, Gero Wöss

Production at afo

Leonie Reese, Uschi Reiter, Clemens Quirin

With works by

Jochen Brandi, Constantin Brodzki, Pierre Coulon / André Noterman, Eugène Delatte / Robert Maquestieau, Emile Devreux, Paul Duvigneaud, Feddes Olthof, Buckminster Fuller, Fritz Haller, Bruno Latour, Armin Linke, OMA / AMO / Rem Koolhaas / Reinier de Graaf, Claude Parent, André & Jean Polak, René Pechère, Cedric Price, Philippe Rahm, Georges Ricquier, François & Luc Schuiten, Karl Schwanzer, Willy Van Der Meeren / Léon Palm, Hugo Van Kuyck, Liam Young

Credits and Sources

Archives of the City of Brussels | Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles | Archief van de Stad Brussel
Canadian Centre for Architecture | Centre Canadien d'Architecture

Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Lausanne
gta Archiv, ETH Zürich

Le Féru des Sciences, Jarville-la-Malgrange, France

Royal Library of Belgium | Bibliothèque royale de

Belgique | Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België

Service interministériel des Archives de France, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Archives d'architecture contemporaine, Paris

Stanford Libraries

University of Antwerp, Library & Archives | Universiteit Antwerpen, Bibliotheek & Archief

Key visual

Thermography by Philippe Rahm: »Climatic Apparel - About A Worker«

Title: POWER
Opening: Thursday 18.09.2025, 19 Uhr
Duration: 19.09.2025 bis 31. Januar 2026
Opening-Times: Thur-Fri, 15-19 Uhr
Where: Herbert-Bayer-Platz 1, 4020 Linz

Pressematerial & Bilder: www.afo.at/presse

DATEN UND FAKTEN

Contact

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Herbert-Bayer-Platz 1 | 4020 Linz | Mo–Fr 9–12 Uhr

www.afo.at/presse

As a platform for architecture and building culture, the afo architekturforum oberösterreich is committed to interdisciplinary discourse on urban and rural developments, including the associated changes that affect our everyday lives. An important goal is to connect architects, planners and builders with stakeholders from the fields of craftsmanship, business, science, art, culture and politics. In addition, the afo aims to actively contribute to a lively and critical reflection on architecture as a social and cultural process.