

HOLY SPRING



FREE
REPUBLIC OF
VIENNA
FESTIVAL

21 May – 18 June
House of the Republic
Badeschiff

How do old and new faiths shape our present day? From revolutionary mythologies of the left wing and post-religious visions of the right wing to nature-bound and Indigenous cosmologies: talks, a film and a workshop open up a discourse to explore and discuss new models of thinking and faith in the series *Holy Spring*. At its heart is the question how religious, spiritual and mythological narratives are transforming in a time of global crises – and which political, aesthetic and social forces emerge from that.

Dates
Every Thursday

Venue
House of the Republic
Badeschiff

Curated by
Haiko Pfof

The events address religion not as a closed structure of institutionalised belief systems but as a cultural practice that brings forth new promises of salvation. It transpires that the effect of religious themes nowadays goes far beyond traditional religions: in ecological movements, technological visions of the future, artistic practice and apocalyptic forecasts for society.

The first night thus tackles the proximity of political activism and religious language. The writings of the The Invisible Committee as well as the practice of the Tarnac group work with messianic motifs as well as themes of community and deliverance from a system that is perceived as destructive. A debate with Last Generation activists raises the question whether radical climate activism brings forth new forms of resistance among hope, a willingness for sacrifice and the threat of collective resignation.

The film *The Falling Sky* puts the spotlight on an Indigenous cosmology that understands nature not as a resource but as an animate structure of relationships. The film reveals the close connection of spiritual practice, ecological accountability and political resistance among the Yanomami. The Reahu ritual appears not as a folklore or esoteric tradition, but as a concrete act to maintain a world order that is in danger.

The artist collective MAKHU also combines art, ritual and collective knowledge. Their works translate the Huni Meka chants of the Huni Kuin into visual spaces and create forms of cultural recollection that assert themselves against

colonial obliteration. The workshop and talk present art as a simultaneously spiritual and political practice.

In contrast, another evening casts a light on the quasi-religious ideologies of Silicon Valley. Transhumanist notions of immortality, technological optimisation and human endurance make an appearance as the secular promises of salvation made by a technology elite. Their juxtaposition with feminist perspectives launches a critique of this new techno-religion's notions of power and body images.

Finally, the series concludes with asking about the pull of the apocalypse. Apocalyptic narratives shape religious movements and current debates about climate collapse, capitalism and social crises alike. They reveal a reading of the apocalypse as not just an endpoint, but indeed a moment of radical transformation: as a possibility of questioning existing orders and conceiving new forms of living together. Holy Spring!

Haiko Pfost was born in Germany's Black Forest region in 1972; he was trained in industrial management and studied theatre, religious studies and psychology in Berlin. He worked as a festival dramaturge at the Theaterformen festival in Braunschweig and Hannover, at steirischer herbst in Graz and at the Internationale Schillertage in Mannheim. From 2004 to 2005, he was the head of the opening, curator and dramaturge of the Volkspalast, the temporary use of Berlin's Palast der Republik for cultural events. Together with Thomas Frank, he established brut – Koproduktionshaus Vienna in 2007 and was its director until 2013. Haiko Pfost was the artistic director of the Impulse Theatre Festival for its editions in 2018 to 2024. He is a member of the advisory board of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna.

TIMETABLE

21 May, 8 pm

Debate

THE LAST INSURRECTION

With Representatives of the Tarnac group & the Last Generation

Moderation Servane Dècle

28 May, 8.15 pm

Debate/Film

FALLING SKIES

With Gabriela Carneiro da Cunha & Edson Krenak

Moderation Susana Ojeda

Venue Urania

4 June, 8 pm

Debate

DOWN TO EARTH

With MAKHU – Ibã Sales Huni Kuin & Kassia Borges Karaja

Moderation Ines Mitterer

4 June, 1 pm – 5 pm, 5 June, 11 am – 3 pm

Workshop

DOWN TO EARTH

With MAKHU – Ibã Sales Huni Kuin & Kássia Borges Karaja

11 June, 8 pm

Debate

DARK ENLIGHTENMENT

With Wolfgang Palaver & Christina von Braun

Moderation Johannes Kaup

18 June, 8 pm

Debate

THE END OF THE WORLD

With Fabian Scheidler, Tadzio Müller & Veronika Zak

Moderation Judith Belfkih

21 May, 8pm

Debate

THE LAST INSURRECTION

With Representatives of the Tarnac group & the Last Generation

Moderation Servane Dècle

To what extent is it possible to read a left-wing manifesto as a religious text? Members of the French Tarnac group, an eco-radical commune shaped by writings by the Invisible Committee, meet activists of the Last Generation from Vienna. An evening about Messianic motifs, political action, revolutionary belief and the temptation of resignation in the face of the climate crisis.

Language English



Servane Dècle is a French dramaturge, performer, and theatre-maker who addresses urgent contemporary issues through a multidisciplinary approach. She used to work as a civil engineer and has collaborated with theatre artists such as Milo Rau, Simon Roth and Clara Hédouin for several years. In addition, she brings her own works to the stage.

28 May, 8.15 pm | Urania
Debate/Film

FALLING SKIES

With Gabriela Carneiro da Cunha & Edson Krenak

Moderation Susana Ojeda

How does spiritual resistance work? The film *The Falling Sky* accompanies the Yanomami in the Amazon as they perform their reahu ritual to keep the sky from falling, and shows the consequences of gold mining and environmental destruction from the point of view of shaman Davi Kopenawa. The screening is followed by a conversation with the Brazilian director of the film, Gabriela Carneiro da Cunha, and activist and scholar Edson Krenak.

Language

Movie: Portuguese (original version with subtitles), Debate: English



Gabriela Carneiro da Cunha is a Brazilian actress, director and researcher. She leads the Margins Project: About Rivers, Fireflies and Settlement Communities, an artistic investigation that listens to and amplifies the testimonies of Brazilian rivers marked by environmental catastrophe. Through dramaturgy, performance, film and exhibition projects, she reflects on the Anthropocene as the moment in which human-kind becomes catastrophe itself. Her works

include *Women Guerrillas* or *For the Earth There Are No Disappeared*, *Altamira 2042*, *Tapajós*, and the feature film *The Falling Sky*, inspired by the book by Davi Kopenawa Yanomami.

Edson Krenak is an Indigenous activist, scholar and writer. He is currently completing a doctoral degree on Indigenous Imagination in the field of legal anthropology at the University of Vienna, Austria. He also holds a degree in Linguistics and Literary Theory from Brazil's Federal University of São Carlos. Since 2013, Edson has been affiliated with the Brazilian Uk'a Arts and Culture Institute, where he contributes his experience as a speaker and coach. In 2016, Edson became the 10th recipient of Brazil's prestigious National

Tamoios Award for Indigenous Writers for his book *The Borum's Dream*. His short story, 'Kren and Pockrane: Why the Krenak People Lack Twins' was featured in the 2018 UNICEF-recommended anthology *Nos: Anthology of Indigenous Stories*. In 2019, Edson Krenak began working on Indigenous Rights and Climate Advocacy at Cultural Survival (CS), managing the Brazil program and global engagement of Indigenous peoples. He is also a member-at-large of the SALSA Board (The Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America) for the 2024–2027 period.



4 June, 8 pm

Debate

DOWN TO EARTH

With MAKHU – Ibã Sales Huni Kuin & Kássia Borges Karaja

Moderation Ines Mitterer

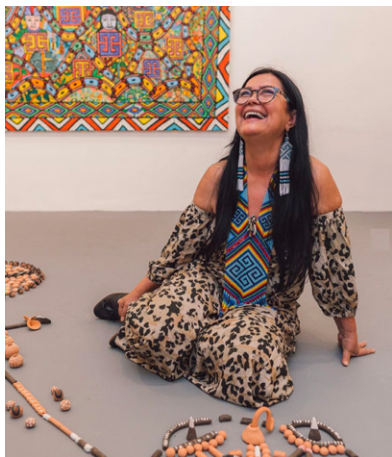
Art makes things visible: MAHKU brings the mythology and knowledge of Amazonian communities into the international art scene through large-scale works. Their worldview highlights the interconnectedness of all beings and makes urgent issues like the climate crisis and rainforest destruction emotionally tangible.

In this discussion, Ibã Sales Huni Kuin and Kássia Borges Karaja explore how the capitalist system affects rainforest communities. Art becomes a form of resistance and collective thinking is set against patriarchal and extractivist structures.

Language Portuguese with consecutive interpreting



Ibã Sales Huni Kuin is an Indigenous researcher, cultural anthropologist, teacher and spiritual leader of the Huni Kuin people. As a master of traditional chant (*Txana*), his work focuses on preserving and transmitting Huni Kuin musical and ritual knowledge, particularly through the spiritual practice of *Nixi Pae*. He is a lecturer and researcher at the Federal University of Acre and has been teaching in his community since 1983. By bringing together anthropology, poetry, music and visual art, Ibã translates ancestral knowledge into contemporary forms, especially so through large-scale paintings developed in collaboration with his students and the MAHKU Collective.



Kássia Borges Mytara is a Karajá artist, curator, professor and activist whose work engages with Indigeneity, resistance, genealogy and healing. Clay is her primary material, but she is also a member of the MAHKU Collective, which translates traditional Huni Kuin chants into painting. She holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts, a PhD in Environmental Sciences and Sustainable Development and a degree in Political Philosophy.

Since the 1980s, she has been active in challenging structural inequalities tied to her identity as an Indigenous woman and artist. Her work transforms traditional body

painting into sculptural forms and reclaims Indigenous presence and territory through art.

Dr. **Ines Mitterer de Guitart**, is a journalist and a trained interpreter and translator for Italian and Spanish (with additional non-university training in Portuguese), specialising in architecture and art. She has been working as a culture editor at ORF (first as a freelance and later as staff) since 1993. As a radio and television journalist, she focuses on art, architecture, urban life and literature, often reporting from the Global South (from South America through Southern Europe to Africa). Her regular editorial bases are Ö1's *Diagonal* and ORF 2's *Kulturmontag*. Her documentary filmmaking includes, among others, films on Anna Jermolaewa, Ólafur Elíasson, Herbert Brandl, Velázquez as well as on beauty and art.



4 June, 1pm – 5pm

5 June, 11am – 3pm

Workshop

DOWN TO EARTH

With MAKHU – Ibã Sales Huni Kuin & Kássia Borges Karaja

MAKHU achieved international fame with their large-format wall paintings – among others at the Venice Biennale.

Their works question colonial, patriarchal and neo-liberal power structures. Humans are considered particles within a continuous whole in time and space.

Reforestation, the forestation of the spirit is an Indigenous demand for the Western world – it is about rediscovering dreams, relationships, past and future. The holistic understanding of being, the perpetual revival of origin myths, the dissolution of the time axis, the connection between all stirring and non-stirring creatures here and yonder, in everyday life and in spirituality is communicated through the art of MAKHU.

Language Portuguese with consecutive interpreting

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11 June, 8 pm

Debate

DARK ENLIGHTENMENT

With Wolfgang Palaver & Christina von Braun

Moderation Johannes Kaup

Religious currents shape Silicon Valley. Wolfgang Palaver uses the example of Peter Thiel to spotlight how technological power adopts a theological position. Christina von Braun contrasts the transhumanism of tech billionaires with a feminist viewpoint.



Christina von Braun, Prof. Dr. phil., cultural theorist, author and filmmaker as well as professor emerita of Cultural Studies at Humboldt University of Berlin And the co-founder and long-serving director of the Gender Studies program at Humboldt University of Berlin. She is the founding director of the Selma Stern Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg, established in 2012 and currently a Senior Research Fellow there. She is the author of more than fifty documentary films, approximately twenty books and numerous essays on media history, cultural history and the history of mentalities.

Honours: Sigmund Freud Cultural Prize (2013); Federal Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2025); Caroline von Humboldt Honorary Professorship (2025). Her publications include *The Struggle for the Unconscious* (with Tilo Held), 2025; *Blood Ties: Kinship as Cultural History*, 2018; *Essay on Vertigo: Religion, Writing, Image, Gender*, 2016; *The Price of Money: A Cultural History*, Berlin 2012.



Wolfgang Palaver, Prof. Dr., studied theology, German studies and political science after having completed technical training. In 1991/1992, he undertook a research stay at the *Center for International Security and Arms Control* at Stanford University, where he encountered René Girard and, in 1996, Peter Thiel. From 2002 to 2023, Wolfgang Palaver was a Professor of Christian Social Ethics at the University of Innsbruck; from 2013 to 2017, he served as the Dean of the Catholic-Theological Faculty. From 2004 to 2023, he also taught Ethics for Computer Scientists. Palaver is the President of Pax Christi Austria. In 2025, he was appointed *Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance, Racism, and Discrimination*.

Mag. **Johannes Kaup**, born in 1965 in Magdeburg, is a philosopher, theologian, psychotherapist and journalist. He studied philosophy and Catholic theology at the University of Vienna and completed his psychotherapy training as a Daseinsanalytic therapist in Zurich and Vienna. He is a member of the board and a lecturer at the Austrian Umbrella Organization for Daseinsanalysis (ÖDAI). Since 1990, he has been working for ORF Radio Ö1, focusing on religion, ethics, science and education. He also hosts the monthly ORF Radio Kulturhaus discussion series *Im Zeit-Raum*. Johannes Kaup gives lectures, moderates and chairs discussions at numerous symposia and conferences. For his journalistic work, he has received multiple awards, among them the Dr. Karl Renner Prize for Journalism, the Adult Education Radio Award (1999 and 2023) and the Climate Protection Award.



18 June, 8 pm
Debate

THE END OF THE WORLD

With Fabian Scheidler, Tazio Müller & Veronika Zak

Moderation Judith Belfkih

Is humanity approaching its end? Religious sects are awaiting the apocalypse, while critics of capitalism and collapsologists are analysing potential breakdowns. An evening about the fascination with the end of the world and the opportunities of upheaval.



Fabian Scheidler studied philosophy, history, and theatre directing. His book *The End of the Megamachine: A History of a Failing Civilization* (2015) has been translated into numerous languages. This was followed by, among others, *The Substance We Are Made Of: Why We Must Rethink Nature and Society* (2021), *The Mental Field: Essentials of Theater* (2021) and *Fit for Peace: How We Can Stop Creating Our Own Enemies* (2025). As a journalist, he publishes in *Le*

Monde Diplomatique and many other international media outlets. In 2009, he was awarded the Otto Brenner Media Prize for Critical Journalism.

As a dramaturge and theatre author, Fabian Scheidler worked at Berlin's GRIPS Theater for many years. In 2013, his opera *Death of a Banker* (music: Andreas Kersting) premiered at the Gerhart Hauptmann Theatre in Görlitz.

Judith Belfkih is an Austrian journalist and philosopher. She studied philosophy and German studies at the University of Vienna. She then worked for various Austrian media outlets, focusing on cultural journalism and science. Most recently, she held positions including the editorial management of the *Wiener Zeitung*, worked at the news magazine *profil* as Head of Digital and was a member of the culture section at the *Kronen Zeitung*. She regularly moderates the *Vienna Lectures* and also hosts the philosophy podcast *futurum exactum*.



Veronika Zak, born in Vienna in 1972, has been working in the psychosocial field for over 30 years, including as a psychotherapist, counsellor, trainer, social worker and sex educator. A particular focus of her work lies in the areas of cults, dependency structures and psychological manipulation, shaped by her work at the Federal Centre for Sect Issues. Her further professional experience includes positions at the Vienna Psychotherapeutic Outpatient Clinic, the Family Counselling Service of the Vienna Children's Friends organisation, AIDS Help Vienna, as well as various educational and counselling institutions.

She studied social work, sociology and gender studies, alongside many years of engagement with contemporary dance and movement practices. She is also trained as a sexological bodyworker. In 2002, she discovered Concentrative Movement Therapy (KBT) as a form of body-oriented psychotherapy that connects perception, movement and embodiment with thinking and language. She has been working as a psychotherapist in private practice since 2008.



Tadzio Müller is a political scientist, expert on social movements and has been a climate justice activist 'from the outset' (*taʒ*). In 2009, he played a leading role in mobilising for the COP15 climate summit in Copenhagen; from 2011 onwards, he served as Germany's first climate justice officer at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; he is a co-founder of *Ende Gelände*. On his blog *friedlicheSabotage.net*, he advances strategic debates within the climate movement and has been pushing for the organisation of a 'solidarity-based collapse movement' for years.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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