

Press release

September 5, 2016

The Special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Science
The Karachay-Cherkess Ministry of Culture
Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow
Gogova Foundation and Section A Wien, Vienna
with the Federal Chancellery of Austria

present the exhibition

The Observatory

An artistic intervention at the Special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Science
Nizhny Arkhyz, Karachay-Cherkess Republic, Russian Federation



photo by Yuri Palmin

In 2016 the world marks the 55th anniversary of the first human space flight, and the Special Astrophysical Observatory in Nizhny Arkhyz is celebrating its own 50th birthday. In honor of the jubilee, the observatory is opening its doors to an international art project for the first time in history. An invitation was extended to artists from Russia and Austria to embark on a creative relationship with the observatory. Artworks created especially for the project will be exhibited in an unusual space and will allow visitors to glimpse the vast expanses of the universe through artists' eyes.

Brief history of the observatory

As far back as the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union set itself an ambitious goal – to build the largest observatory in the world. It achieved this goal in the 1970s, when the Special Astrophysical Observatory became operational. Until about the 1990s, the observatory in Nizhny Arkhyz was the largest and one of the best-equipped observatories in the world.

It remains open to this day. There are on the order of 1,000 inhabitants in the scientific village, it plays host to conferences, and new technologies for studying the universe are developed and introduced there. Moreover the observatory is a careful guardian of the area's history and culture. The mountains of the North Caucasus were once home to settlements of the Alans, a Scythian people who converted to Christianity in the 9th century. Not far from the observatory are the ruins of Alan towns and three churches dating from the 10th century, which were preserved only thanks to the efforts of the Karachay-Cherkess Ministry of Culture and the administration of the Special Astrophysical Observatory.

In their own words:

Madina Gogova, Minister of Culture of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

"The Karachay-Cherkess Republic is a remarkably beautiful, singular and dynamically developing region. This project presents art without borders and is the result of a dialog of cultures. The exhibition of contemporary artists from Russia and Austria is part of a massive international art project that is set to become a major event in the cultural life of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic. Its unique natural setting, ancient monuments and the Caucasus Mountains make Karachay-Cherkessia one of the most intriguing and alluring places in the world, and it is a unique location for artistic inspiration and creativity."

Mariana Gogova, founder of the Gogova Foundation:

"One of Gogova Foundation objectives is to develop an interaction between the artists and Russian regions, and this project proves that young Russian art is ready to stretch itself beyond the major cities. The venue for the project itself is unique, it gives a powerful creative impulse to the invited artists, who work in a variety of techniques and a variety of mediums. "

Simon Mraz, director of the Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow:

"A striking location was chosen for the observatory, simultaneously clandestine and providing the clearest, best view of the stars. And even more remarkable is the juxtaposition that has resulted – the new observatory building alongside the ruins of an ancient city. I think this collision of ancient history and the endlessness of space is extremely philosophical and metaphorical, and is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for artists. I'm so glad that the observatory, this center of science, is opening its doors to allow artists from Austria and Russia to grasp the vastness of the universe, and also the life and history of the observatory itself. Artworks will be organically inserted into the space of the observatory and allow residents of the scientific village to see these places anew."

Exhibition participants:

Eva Engelbert (Austria), Irina Korina (Russia), Michail Michailov (Austria), Yury Palmin (Russia), Alexandra Paperno (Russia), Timofei Radya (Russia), Eva Seiler (Austria), Svetlana Shuvayeva (Russia), Svetlana Spirina (Russia), Anna Titova (Russia).

Curators:

Madina Gogova (Minister of Culture of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic)

Mariana Gogova (Founder of the Gogova Foundation)

Simon Mraz (Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow)

Andreas Krištof (Section A Wien, Vienna)

Exhibition opening:

October 15, 2016

Exhibition dates:

October 16 - November 5, 2016. Hours at www.sao.ru

Address:

Special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Science
Nizhny Arkhyz, Zelenchuksky district, Karachay-Cherkess Republic, Russia

Images for press are available here: <https://goo.gl/xk13GH>

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