

Andrey Klassen
Nobody Ran
7.6.–20.9.2026

As part of the programme *From the Cosmos to the Commons*, curated by Joanna Warsza with the Kunsthau s Hamburg as the backing institution, a series of artistic projects explore the elements of fire, water, earth and air in view of their cultural, political and ecological implications. This year's focus is on the element of fire – as an ambivalent force oscillating between life-giving elixir and threat, between insight and destruction, between origin and transformation. The use of fire ranks among humanity's earliest interventions in its environment. While it brings visibility into darkness, creates a sense of community, advances progress and civilization, it is, at the same time, capable of unleashing irreversible processes and uncontrolled devastation. This inherent ambiguity serves as the starting point for the exhibition *Nobody Ran* in the new project space at Admiralitatsstrae 75, which Kunsthau s Hamburg is temporarily hosting.

In this exhibition, Andrey Klassen's artistic practice – based primarily on black-and-white drawings – is translated into the spatial realm. A scene unfolds in semi-darkness, with three burnt parasols slowly rotating on their own axes. Figurative elements are suspended from their ribs; light sources illuminate them, casting silhouettes onto the walls. The material structure thus recedes into the background, while the action shifts into the immaterial space. The work picks up on Plato's allegory of the cave, translating it into a spatial arrangement that explores the difference between illusion and reality as an immediate experience. Visibility and deception intertwine: the light creates silhouettes that promise insight while, at the same time, concealing their own origin. Perception shifts between appearance and reality, itself becoming a subject of the work.

The element of fire appears here in its simultaneously productive and destructive power – as a source of insight and, likewise, a sign of an escalating ecological crisis. The charred parasols – actually symbols of protection, leisure and a seemingly controllable relationship with nature – signify a world thrown out of balance. Despite decades of scientific evidence, the urgency posed by climate change has been disregarded and its effects are still being relativized – a situation reflected in Plato's metaphor of the cave, in which people mistake a play of shadows for reality. It can also be seen as an allegory of an errant collective perception: clinging to the familiar, trusting in images that suggest stability, even though reality has long since shifted.

The exhibition title is taken from the song *Hamburg brennt* (*Hamburg is Burning*, 2008) by the band 1000 Robota, known for responding to socio-political crises with provocative lyrics. In Andrey Klassen's work, motifs from Hamburg's city history – such as the Great Fire of 1842 during which an alleged fire tamer promised to quell the flames for 60,000 marks – overlap with art-historical references such as *Christ in Limbo* (ca. 1520) by the Follower of Hieronymus Bosch, from the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Both points of reference appear as sombre foreshadowings of a present in which disaster, faith in control and collective denial overlap. Andrey Klassen's installation opens up a space of experience in which these layers overlap, challenging visitors to question their own perceptions: Which images do we accept as reality? And which insights have we ignored for too long?

Curated by Anna Nowak

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