

“Melting Point”: Julian Charrière, Art of Change 21 and Alserkal partner to raise climate awareness with an art exhibition at COP28

Paris, Dubai, Berlin - 23 November 2023

On the occasion of the COP28 Climate Conference, taking place in Dubai, UAE, Art of Change 21 and Alserkal Initiatives are excited to collaborate and present the climate-related exhibition “Melting Point” by the French-Swiss artist Julian Charrière. On view at Alserkal Avenue, the show brings to light rarely seen perspectives of our planet’s polar regions.

Though glaciers have never before had such a strong presence in our collective imagination or global media, Charrière presents them here anew, staging a kaleidoscopic vision of these environments at a critical point.

For this action at COP28, a tripartite collaboration unites Julian Charrière, a renowned and emblematic climate-engaged artist, Art of Change 21, a non-profit organisation on art & environment which has curated art shows and events in each Climate COP since 2015, and Alserkal Initiatives, a Dubai-based socially responsible cultural enterprise. The “Melting Point” exhibition is supported by R3, Maison Ruinart, Fondation L’Accolade and Epson, and is part of Art of Change 21’s “Art at COP28” programming.

COP28 is the 28th UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change), taking place in Dubai, UAE (30 November – December 12, 2023). This inter-governmental meeting is a crucial milestone for global climate action after an unprecedented year of record-breaking temperatures and its consequences, including wildfires and severe droughts and flooding. For the calendar year to date, January to October 2023, the global mean temperature for 2023 reached the highest on record, 1.43°C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average¹. Polar regions are key in stabilising climate and sea level on Earth and are especially affected. Last September, the polar ice sheets reached their lowest annual maximum level on record. Recent scientific studies estimate that global warming will exceed 1.5°C in the 2020s and 2°C before 2050². We are reaching the *tipping point* - a massive mobilisation and greater climate justice is now needed to tackle the climate crisis.

For COP28, Charrière presents “Melting Point” in Alserkal Avenue’s unique Project Space, transporting the viewer into a frozen world, where towering glaciers emerge from a polar darkness and the visitor soars over bright Arctic vistas. It brings together *Towards No Earthly Pole* (2019) and *Pure Waste* (2021), two films which showcase our limited sense of the cryosphere. Together they address the atmospheric

repercussions of our large-scale extraction of natural resources, questioning if we comprehend what is being lost as global warming accelerates. It is a cinematic journey which both enthralls and challenges our perception of reality, representing the importance of emotional engagement as a stepping stone for changing the future.

Towards No Earthly Pole was conceived when the artist was invited aboard a research ship as part of the first-ever Antarctic Biennial. For the project, a number of nocturnal glacial landscapes were filmed using custom equipment developed by the artist, including drones mounted with cameras and spotlights. In the film, Charrière foregrounds an uncanny and dark polar world, not frozen solid but alive with flowing water and crackling ice. The otherworldly scale of the landscape that emerges highlights our limited experience of such regions.

In turn, the intervention and video project *Pure Waste* was produced by the artist during a scientific expedition. Set in North Greenland, it documents a material reversal that effectively inverts the conventional geological mining process. As a result of a scientific collaboration with Prof. Dr. Aldo Steinfeld (ETH Zurich), the project mixed human exhalations (gathered by the artist, who invited 1000 people to blow into balloons), and carbon molecules from the ice cap collected using direct air capture technology, which together are transformed into lab grown diamonds. This interdisciplinary and experimental intervention then culminates in an act of reconciliation, with Charrière tossing the diamonds into a rushing glacier mill. By throwing these objects of desire into oblivion and back to their mineral home, we question their symbolic value and bring hope that one day our destructive industrial cycles may end.

"Melting Point" will open on the first day of the COP on November 30th 2023 and will welcome the general public until January 6th 2024. Additionally an educational service will be provided with a docent and a QR code to access information on the poles and the climate, as well as climate actions for visitors.

In order to be aligned with the message being conveyed by the exhibition and its production process, all three partners are working together to reduce its environmental impact and will produce a carbon assessment. Among the implemented actions: no transport of works (sent electronically only), minimised air travel (two round trips, the artist and his assistant), use of lent local equipment, choice of a vegetarian menu, extension of the duration of the exhibition beyond the COP, over more than one month to increase its influence.

"Melting Point" is supported by the French company R3, at the forefront of CSR, Decarbonation, and Energy Performance solutions, assisting companies in accelerating their transition, Maison Ruinart, the first established champagne house, deeply committed to sustainability and art, Fondation L'Accolade, an international programme of artistic residencies and exhibitions at the intersection of art, environment, fragility of the living and Epson, a market leader for projectors for the last 20 years, supporting with visual technology to bring the installation to life.

It is a great honor to exhibit “Melting Point” at COP28, together with Art for Change 21 and Alserkal Initiatives. This last year has been one of unprecedented climatic events, more than ever instilling us with a feeling of oncoming chaos. It is because of this ambiguity—of approaching a great unknown—that the reciprocity between art and politics is more urgent than ever. It is through their collaboration which new means of storytelling can emerge, unheard voices call out, and even the most abstract feelings to find form. It is with these kinds of collaborations that we can ward off the passivity which fear instills, and instead celebrate another opportunity to take stock and grow.

- **Julian Charrière, Artist**

The ecological transition is also a cultural transition. Art plays a crucial role in accompanying the change towards a lower-carbon society by giving sense and meaning to this new future. That is why we believe in bringing art to the table at the climate COP, with artist Hassan Hajjaj at COP22 in Morocco in 2018 or John Gerrard at COP26 in 2021 in Glasgow. This year, we are thrilled to work with Julian Charrière, a close partner since 2021, who is very concerned by climate change, as well as Alserkal Initiatives, whose expertise and commitment to promoting socially-responsible and forward-thinking art make them a perfect collaborator in this important and unique exhibition.

- **Alice Audouin, Founder-President of Art of Change 21**

Culture should not be an afterthought for policy makers; it should be the fourth pillar of sustainability, adjacent to economic, social, and environmental. As a cultural enterprise, it is our responsibility to rework dated definitions, and reimagine current paradigms in a world of Anthropocene. As we try to address the undeniable human impact on the environment, this is an attempt to reimagine, and reappraise our current conditions of production and consumption through art as important ideological steps towards change.

- **Vilma Jurkute, Executive Director, Alserkal Initiatives**

Julian Charrière (1987) is a French-Swiss artist based in Berlin. Marshalling performance, sculpture, film and photography, his projects often stem from remote fieldwork in liminal locations, from sites of industrial extraction to volcanic calderas; icefields to nuclear testing grounds. By encountering places where acute geophysical and cultural identities have formed, Charrière speculates on alternative histories and our changing ideas of "nature". Seeking to deconstruct the cultural traditions which govern how the natural world is perceived and represented, Charrière's multidimensional practice frequently leads him to cross-field collaborations with scientists, musicians, engineers, and philosophers. The core of his practice concerns itself with how the human being inhabits the world, and how it in turn inhabits us.

His work has been the subject of monographic exhibitions worldwide, most recently SFMOMA, San Francisco (2022), Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany (2022), Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas (2021), among others. Charrière's work has been featured in multiple international Biennales, such as the 16th Lyon Contemporary Art Biennale (2022); the Guangzhou Image Triennial (2021); and the 57th Biennale di Venezia (2017). He is represented by the galleries Dittrich & Schlechtriem, Galerie Tschudi, Sies + Höke, Sean Kelly Gallery and Perrotin.

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Art of Change 21 is a non-profit organization which connects contemporary art with climate change and major environmental issues. It engages in different modes of actions, including exhibitions, art prizes, debates, workshops, and its online media Impact Art News. Founded by Alice Audouin in 2014 just ahead of COP21 in Paris, the organization has played a key role in each COP, collaborating with leading contemporary artists (John Gerrard, Lucy Orta, Hassan Hajjaj, Wen Fang...). This year's programme "ART AT COP28" also includes a roundtable discussion at the French Pavilion (COP28 Blue Zone) on December 6th and a speech at the Louvre Abu Dhabi "Sustainability in Museums" on December 7th, both in collaboration with France Muséums. Art of Change 21 is supported by the French Ministry of Culture, ADEME (French Environmental Agency), Maison Ruinart, Maison Guerlain, Schneider Electric Foundation, Norsys Foundation.

<https://www.artofchange21.com>

ART AT COP28 Programme: <https://artofchange21.com/en/portfolio-items/actions-during-the-cop/>

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Alserkal Initiatives is a socially responsible and forward-thinking arts and culture enterprise based in Dubai dedicated to developing homegrown initiatives, cultural production and events, while supporting creative minds and contemporary non-profit research. Founded in 2007 by Emirati businessman and patron Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, Alserkal Initiatives is renowned for its ground-breaking artistic productions, experimental approach, and for the creation of culturally meaningful spaces that inspire and shape communities. Alserkal Initiatives has three primary areas of activity: cultivating a creative economy in Dubai and building a collaborative network of civic cultural institutions through its renowned cultural district, Alserkal Avenue; supporting public artist commissions, residencies, research grants, and educational programmes through the non-profit, Alserkal Arts Foundation; and, providing advisory services to public and private sector entities through the Alserkal Advisory.

www.alserkal.online

Press opening*: 30 November, 2pm GST

Opening (invitation only)*: 30 November, 6pm GST

Exhibition dates: 30 November 2023 - 6 January 2024

* In the presence of the artist Julian Charrière

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