

Julia Scher. Planet Greyhound

Descriptions of works

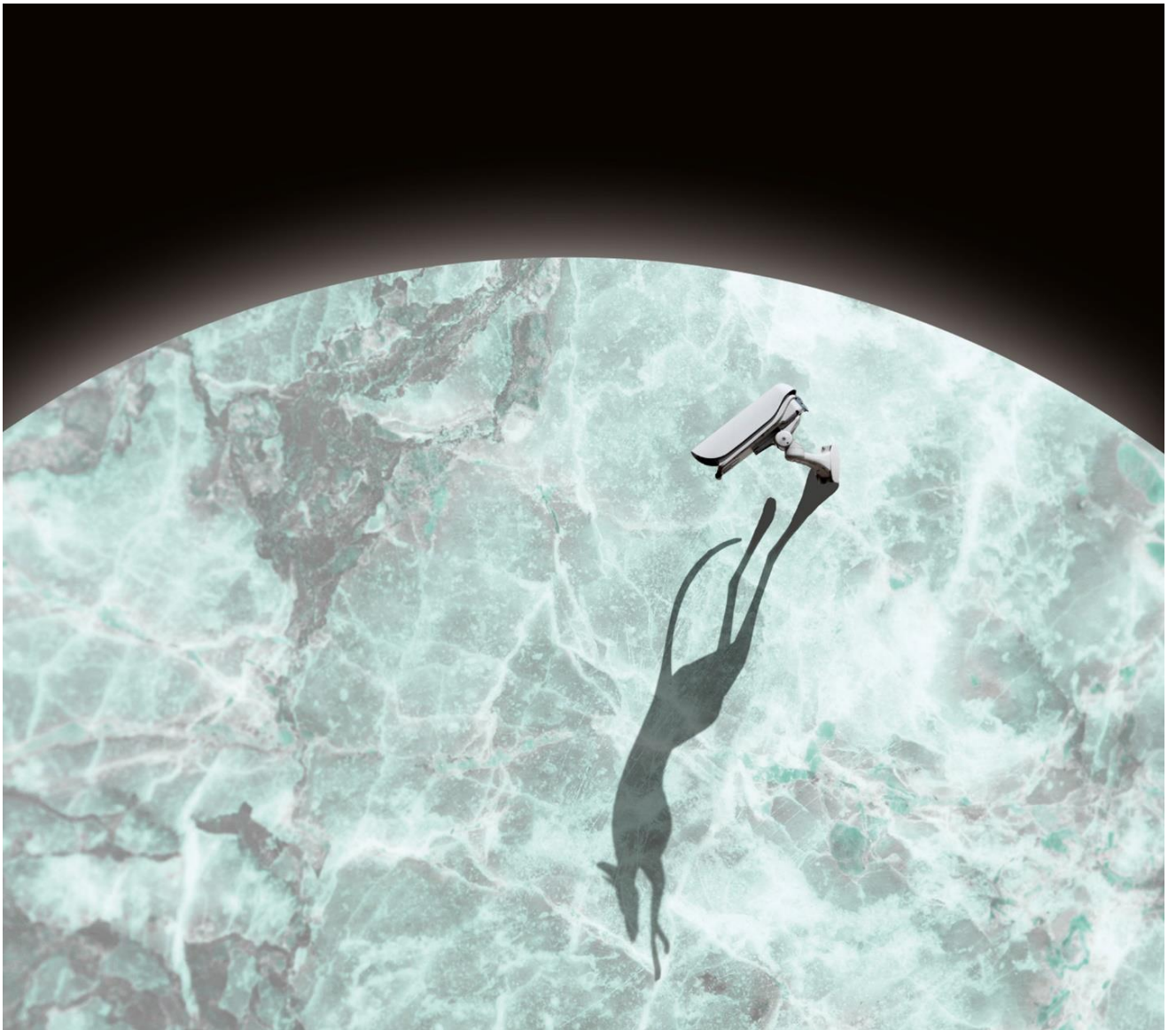


Fig.: Julia Scher, Planet Greyhound, 2022 © Julia Scher

“All dog languages have been translated into English for purposes of the exhibition in Kunsthalle Gießen.”

Julia Scher, 2022

The Kunsthalle Gießen presents the US artist Julia Scher's latest body of work in the exhibition *Planet Greyhound*.

Her cool, audiovisual installation transforms the exhibition space into an intergalactic transit area. The eponymous planet *Greyhound* – an exoplanet for which Julia Scher and the Kunsthalle have assumed sponsorship over a period of five years – becomes a place of cosmic longing. Hope for a new togetherness fuses with a critical questioning of territorial claims to power in her work that has been developed especially for Kunsthalle Gießen.

Gabriele, Gretel, Gretchen, Gert and Greta, Marble, 2022

are the first known inhabitants of planet *Greyhound*. They are dogs, specifically greyhounds. Made of fine marble, *Greta* gracefully welcomes visitors to the Kunsthalle. The majestic greyhound is considered to be one of the oldest dog breeds domesticated by humans. Their hunting abilities, based on their great speed, eyesight and intelligence made them highly valued and sought-after animals in early ancient societies. Over the centuries, depictions of greyhounds have often portrayed the slender figure with its elongated back and taut neck in motion and in service to humans. Since the 1980s, Scher has been working intensively on forms of human control, how it is exercised and its effects. The motif of dogs has already been addressed in earlier works within this context. At Kunsthalle Gießen, the artist grants greyhounds a break from their tireless movement and creates a deliberate counterpoint by exhibiting them in a relaxed posture on cosy blankets. Whether *Gabriele, Gretel, Gretchen* and *Gert* have just landed or are waiting next to the *Greyhound Chairs (dentist chair, racing belt, candle, spray paint, 2022)*, ready to take off on their forthcoming journey into space, remains open.

Rhine Race, acrylic, charcoal, collage on cardboard, 1981

Julia Scher's work *Rhine Race* (1981), which also draws on the motifs of travel and speed, has been deliberately positioned at the greyhound's eye level. The collage is a biographical reference to her first arrival in Cologne and can be understood as referring to a long trek that the artist herself undertook many years ago. The

sports car flying over a landscape is further defined by the title of the work as a view from the artist's studio window. At the same time, it is reminiscent of the DeLorean DMC-12, which facilitates a journey through space and time in the *Back to the Future* film series (1985–1990). The backpacks below the image symbolise travel itself and are part of the intergalactic journey that can be seen on the digital hyperwall.

Planet Greyhound (Flam 7 CMa C // Planet Greyhound, Certificate, 2022–2027)

As the certificates in the glass showcase attest, sponsorship of the planet has been awarded to Julia Scher and the Kunsthalle Gießen by the Planetarium Frankfurt (Oder) for a period of 5 years. The exoplanet originally named *Flam 7 CMa C* is situated in the *Canis Major* constellation and was christened Greyhound on the occasion of the exhibition. The gas planet, 64.4 light years away from Earth, has no solid surface and thus appears to be physically uninhabitable. In the context of the exhibition, however, it becomes a cosmic place of longing, shaped by a society in which all living beings coexist in harmony, free of hierarchy.

Rocks (n. T., Concrete, Stone, Cement, Paint, 2011)

Indications that the exoplanet *Greyhound* does indeed exhibit traces of an Earth-like composition can be found in the display case in the Kunsthalle's reception area. Two findings testify to the supposed birth of the planet. Two stones whose forms trace the shape of a dog's head and a coach, respectively. They are artificially constructed from concrete and volcanic rock, materials used in film sets to conjure up the illusion of a rock face. For Julia Scher, the artificial, in particular the cement, which is characterised by its adhesive, load-bearing and connecting properties and is located almost invisibly on the underside of the stones, symbolises the possibility of an existence that remains hidden, still undiscovered, beneath a planet.

Gürtel (n. T., Plastic, Metal, 1977)

As is the case in many of her exhibitions, specific details refer to biographical events in the artist's own life. Just like the two stones, which are also relics of an earlier exhibition by Julia Scher, the display case contains a further reference to the artist. She purchased the transparent glittery belt at the clothing chain Judy's in the San Francisco Valley in 1977 and wore it to a David Bowie concert. At the concert, the musician sang about Major Tom's famous space flight in the single *Space Oddity*, which was released 10 days before the first moon landing on 21 July 1969.

Glass showcase (Christening Certificate, 2022–2027, Greyhound Hologram, 2022)

The christening certificates presented in the showcase authenticate the symbolic sponsorship of *Flam 7 CMa C* alias *Greyhound*. The ambivalence of a temporary occupation of a territory that at first does not seem to belong to anyone is humorously called into question. The hologram depicts a greyhound soaring towards the sky and appearing to fly weightlessly. Has he been driven away, is he on his way to the planet *Greyhound*? The close observation and the attempt to classify what has been seen continues throughout the exhibition.

Greyhound Dog (Grey Sign) / Greyhound Dog (Pink Sign), Metal, Powder Coated, 2022

The greyhound motif is conceptually derived from the *Greyhound Lines*. It is the largest scheduled long-distance bus operator in the United States, which was recently acquired by Flixbus. Julia Scher's metal sculptures, which can be seen in the Kunsthalle's entrance and display window, refer in a defamiliarised way to the Greyhound Bus's internationally recognised logo. In grey and pink – and followed in the entrance by a surveillance camera – the sculptures show a running greyhound that seems to be about to leap into intergalactic space at high speed.

In terms of content, the reference to the US bus line is in part based on discarded Greyhound buses, which were often converted into mobile warming stations for marginalised groups of society last winter. This act of humanity in conjunction with scenes of journeys filled with longing, which, in 1950s US films, more often than not begin in a Greyhound bus, form the conceptual basis for the exhibition.

Sounds of intergalactic long-haul journeys (Infoscreen at bus station somewhere near Planet Greyhound, Video, Sound, 23 min)

Julia Sher's voice resounds through the Kunsthalle Gießen "all species welcome. All beings welcome". The sounds of space and of long-distance traffic announcements, weave through the cool aura of the space together with the ballad sung by the artist about the departure on the last Greyhound bus (*Ballad of the Last Greyhound*). Announcements to go to different boarding gates for travel destinations on Earth or in space ring out. The artist's alluring voice advertises commercial tours around the planetary universe, interspersed again and again with video sequences that tell of the mysterious origins of the universe. The installation's auditory framework identifies the exhibition space as a 'transit space' – a place of passage to alternative locations, societies, images and fantasies between space and time.

Destinations (Arrivals and Departures, (East Sector) / Arrivals and Departures, (West Sector), 3 Screens, Security Camera, Kabel, 2022)

Six digital boards urge you to hurry or show delays. Just like at an airport, the displays show arrival and departure times as well as locations whose mysterious-sounding names arouse curiosity.

Scher combines the romantic theme of journeys with the departure to distant galaxies. The humour that always resonates throughout the artist's work is clearly evident as she names the destination "Giessen, Greyhound". In her notes it says "City on planet Greyhound, named after a City on planet Earth".

Thus, each of the places listed has its own special story. P66 is the name of the command that conducted the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. But the familiar

name Vancouver is also marked by a story that is significant for the exhibition. Canada's last Greyhound bus left the city on 13 May 2021.

Hyperwall (Infoscreen at bus station somewhere near Planet Greyhound, Video, Sound, 23 min)

A hyperwall consisting of 16 monitors mounted at the end of the exhibition space plays with associations of larger-than-life advertising boards found at airports or bus stops. At the same time, the size and arrangement are reminiscent of the walls of monitors used by space organisations such as NASA. Composed of multiple screens, they are used to closely observe and monitor happenings in space. The hyperwall at the Kunsthalle Gießen relates the story of Gabriele, Gretel, Gretchen, Gert and Greta's intergalactic journey. At the same time, the video work reveals enticing glimpses of the place of longing, Greyhound. Combined with recently released Pentagon surveillance footage of UFO sightings in space, as well as images of transit sites structured and controlled by cameras, ground markings and abductions, the artist draws on her intensive/longstanding research into mechanisms of social control in public space.

Control and Surveillance

Visitors are confronted with mechanisms of control and surveillance inside the space of the Kunsthalle itself. Right at the outset of the exhibition, a surveillance camera tracks the metal sculpture of a greyhound as it tries to escape the camera lens. The surveillance cameras dotted throughout the entire space of the Kunsthalle reflect what is going on, sometimes visibly, sometimes not – particularly when a camera lens follows the movements of a visitor and appears to be registering their every move. The artist thus draws on her more than thirty years of intensive work with surveillance technologies. The atmosphere of departure conveyed by images and sounds and the temporary refuge in worlds of longing is subtly ruptured. Scher deliberately leaves the motivation for the observation open. A fragile atmosphere is created that constantly oscillates between longing, security, surveillance and voyeurism.

Closing credits of

Infoscreen at busstation somewhere near planet Greyhound, 2022

Persons involved and thanks

Kunsthalle Gießen presents	Actors	performed by Ana Konstrakta Duric
Planet Greyhound Julia Scher	Mala, Karl-Famous, Liliac, Filomena, Bella- Stella	"Wild Heart" Tim McMorris The Kings Crown
Production Director Nadia Ismail	Dog Coordinator Carina Lubich / Hundeschule Vivipet	Marble Unistone Inc.
Associate Producers Dennis Hochköppeler Nadia Ismail Jakob Purling	Bus Company e-weinzierl Omnibustouristik GmbH	Metal Thorsten Schreiter F- Punkt Maschinenbau
Live Graphics Holger Friese Max Kossatz	Audio Engineering David Brucklacher Riverside Studios Cologne	Audio Visual Electronics AEM Pro Sound and Light Christof Kupfers
Animation Agneta Politikaite	Prepared and Amplified Violin Matthias Kaiser	AVMS Rouven Barstiner Pascal Jonathan and
Video Production, Videography Direction and Editing Damian Weber Planet Earth, Station Greyhound America Jack Colton	"Info Screen At Bus Station Somewhere Near Planet Greyhound" Music	Print Graphics Harald Schätzlein ultraVIOLETT

KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN

Written and directed

by
Julia Scher

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