

Exhibition: The Vienna Circle - Exact Thinking In Demented Times.

As part of the 650 year anniversary of the University of Vienna, the exhibition „The Vienna Circle“ will be displayed at the University’s main building from May 20th, 2015 until October 31st, 2015.

The Vienna Circle, a group of outstanding thinkers, played an important part in Philosophy and science in the 1920’s and 1930’s: The group’s discussions and philosophical approaches set the cornerstones for important developments in a multitude of fields of science.

On Tuesday, May 19th, at 5:00pm the exhibition will be opened by the rector of the University Vienna Heinz W. Engl. Other distinguished speakers include major Michael Häupl, the president of the Austrian Academy of Science Anton Zeilinger, Nobel Prize Winner Martin Karplus as well as Media Artist Peter Weibel. The exhibition was curated by Karl Sigmund and Friedrich Stadler. After leaving Vienna, the exhibition will be displayed in Karlsruhe.

„Today, the Vienna Circle would be considered an internationally influential science Think Tank. Its members stood for the free development of science, scientific and rational analysis in politics and culture as well as the modernization of the society they lived in. The achievements of the members of the Vienna Circle still have impact on today’s science and research areas: the discussions of the Vienna Circle eventually led to innovations like the basics of mathematical logic as well as theoretical computer science“, says Heinz W. Engl, rector of the University of Vienna.

The objects and documents mostly focus on the philosophical questions the Vienna Circle discussed: How can the efficiency of mathematics be explained? What is the role of logical propositions? What is the basis of scientific knowledge?

The greatest challenge for the curators was to „visualize philosophy“: making the abstract, philosophical work of the Vienna Circle accessible to and understandable for a broad audience. Karl Sigmund and Friedrich Stadler decided, that the project needed a new, innovative approach. Together with media artist Peter Weibel they realized PanoramaScreen: An unique installation about 20 square meters big with the ability to project on 360 degrees. This way, documents and pictures are presented on the big screen and the audience gets the possibility to interact with the exhibition.

An unique exhibition like this one attracts special guests: Martin Karplus, Nobel Prize Winner for Chemistry 2013 will be present for the opening ceremony on May, 19th, at 5:00pm. Like the great minds of the Vienna Circle, Karplus himself, who was born in Vienna, is part of an intellectual elite, who were driven out of their own country. Hence, a part of the exhibition deals with the obstacles and political issues the members of the Vienna Circle were confronted in their time.

The Vienna Circle: a group of exceptional minds

Founded in the 1920’s by philosopher Moritz Schlick, mathematician Hans Hahn and social reformer Otto Neurath, the Circle met on a weekly basis to discuss current issues and philosophical approaches to complex fields of science. The main idea of the circle was to create a system of empirical and rational thinking to oppose the irrationalism in politics and culture that was circulating in Austria during that time.

Famous scientists participated in the weekly meetings: philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein or logician Bertrand Russell as well as the mathematician Olga Hahn-Neurath joined the discussions. Others,

like philosopher Karl Popper or the co-founder of the game theory, Oskar Morgenstern, took away valuable insights from discussions with members of the Vienna Circle.

The exhibition not only displays the exceptional intellectual and cultural deliberations that took place in the discussion rounds, but also reflects on the political and cultural circumstances of the 1920's and 1930's that influenced the work of the Vienna Circle: issues within society, political issues as well as anti-Semitism. In the 1930's the Vienna Circle eventually fell apart because of the political sentiment that dominated Viennese society at that time. In 1934 founder Hans Hahn died. His fellow Vienna Circle founder Otto Neurath had to go into exile, due to the political situation in Austria. The meetings of the Vienna Circle stopped finally, when Moritz Schlick, the third remaining founder of the Circle, was shot by one of his former students.

In 1991 the „Institute Vienna Circle“ was founded – not only to acknowledge the work of the great thinkers, but also to start documenting and collecting their influence and philosophical work.

Exhibition Space, Opening Ceremony, Honorary Committee

The exhibition's showrooms are located in the University of Vienna's main building on Ringstrasse boulevard. For this purpose, the architect, Hermann Czech, constructed a special entrance on the ramp leading up to the university's main gate.

The curators of „The Vienna Circle - Exact Thinking In Demented Times“ are Karl Sigmund and Friedrich Stadler. The honorary committee consists of Nobel Prize Winner Martin Karplus, Vienna based Historian Walter Kohl, President emeritus of the European Research Council Helga Nowotny, British Historians Peter Pulzer and Edward Timms, as well as OAW President Anton Zeilinger. During their lifetime the late Carl Djerassi and Erika Weinzierl declared their support.

The exhibition will run from May 20, 2015 until October 31, 2015 from Monday until Saturday from 10:00am until 06:00pm. Admission: Regular 8 Euros, Students 4 Euros, Members of the University free. Tours for groups are available as well, please register at ivc@univie.ac.at

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue (LIT Verlag), the books of curators Karl Sigmund and Friedrich Stadler deal with the Work of the Vienna Circle in more detail.

Contact

Martin Karplus as well as the curators of the exhibition and architect Hermann Czech are available for interviews. For interview requests please contact:

Mag.^a Elisabeth Mattes | Head of Communication and PR University of Vienna
phone: +43-1-4277-175 00 | cell/mobile: +43-664-602-77-175 00 | presse@univie.ac.at