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## The Ephemeral Lake – A digital installation by Jakob Kudsk Steensen

Inspired by Caspar David Friedrich

12 April to 27 October 2024

As part of the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) in 2024, the Hamburger Kunsthalle is presenting *The Ephemeral Lake*, an immersive installation that highlights the unique expressive power of the works of the major Romantic painter by setting them in dialogue with digital landscapes created in the twenty-first century. This most recent project by Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen (b. 1987) combines landscape art with the latest digital media technologies such as 3D animation, interactive design, virtual world building and Ambisonic sound in an innovative site-specific installation. In his visually powerful work inspired by Caspar David Friedrich, Steensen examines the impressive natural phenomenon of the »Ephemeral Lakes«, a geological term that describes periodic accumulations of water in arid, barren, often desert landscapes in artistic expression.

Steensen combines in his work thousands of photographs and scans of the landscape and flora and fauna of Death Valley and the Mojave Desert in California (USA) collected on his latest research trips with 3D animation, sound and light effects to create a multi-sensory environment. The constantly changing virtual world of *The Ephemeral Lake* generates ever-new variations in real time while interacting with glass sculptures as well as ambient sound produced in collaboration with sound artist Okkyung Lee and composer Lugh O’Neill. The audio installation reacts to atmospheric changes in the virtual world, linking audio recordings from Death Valley with instrumental sounds that reflect the seismic shifts happening deep under the ground of the desert lake.

The digital installation transforms two museum halls situated atop one another – the stately Kuppelsaal (domed hall) and the rotunda of the Hamburger Kunsthalle – into an immersive Gesamtkunstwerk. As the virtual spaces meld with visitors’ own inner worlds, they experience a very personal encounter that – in the spirit of Romantic painting – evokes both the human preoccupation with nature and the relationship between figure and landscape.



**Jakob Kudsk Steensen** (b. 1987)  
*The Ephemeral Lake*, 2024  
Live simulation (still image)  
Commissioned by Hamburger  
Kunsthalle  
© Courtesy the artist

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**Prof. Dr. Alexander Klar:** »The exhibition takes up the motif of the 'immersive quality' of Caspar David Friedrich's landscapes as well as the memory of a series of exhibitions entitled 'Circa 1800' that took place fifty years ago in the Kuppelsaal of the Hamburger Kunsthalle and propagated for the first time the idea of the modern outlook inherent to Romanticism.«

As part of the accompanying educational and event programme, a **catalogue** (published by DISTANZ Verlag) will be available for 36 euros at the museum shop and [www.freunde-der-kunsthalle.de](http://www.freunde-der-kunsthalle.de). The Hamburger Kunsthalle app (free download or 8 euros with a rental device) offers more detailed insights into the artistic and technical production process behind the poetic installation. The **programme** also includes curator-led tours and panel discussions as well as **offers for schools**.

**Jakob Kudsk Steensen** uses 3D animation, sound and digital technologies to produce immersive installations that bring often overlooked or threatened natural phenomena to life through virtual simulations. Most recently, his work *Liminal Lands* was exhibited at Luma Arles and his installation *Berl-Berl* was featured at the Halle am Berghain in Berlin and the ARoS Museum of Art in Aarhus.

Curator: Ulrich Schrauth

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