

SpaceMosque **Saks Afridi**

An exhibition in the context of *Science Fiction(s) – If There Were a Tomorrow*
Theseus Temple, Volksgarten Vienna
20 April to 8 October 2023

In connection with the exhibition *Science Fiction(s) – If There Were a Tomorrow*, Weltmuseum Wien presents the work *SpaceMosque* by Pakistani-American artist Saks Afridi in the Theseus Temple in the Volksgarten. As a spaceship minaret, *SpaceMosque* floats in the midst of the Theseus Temple and recounts the following narrative:

In the recent past, just before the Internet age, a spaceship appeared above the Earth that fulfilled one prayer per day for each person. The ship appeared in countless forms, depending on people's expectations and inclinations: as a church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or ray of light.

To the first people who saw it, the ship appeared as a mosque-like structure, which is why the media named it 'space mosque'. The fulfilled prayers competed with each other. This disrupted the world so much, that many people prayed for the spaceship to go away. Only some artefacts from it have been left behind.



Using these remaining artefacts, Saks Afridi has reconstructed events of which we now have no memory. An LED tape announces, 'Your prayers have been received and will be answered'. Prints show instruments that converted prayers into algorithms. The centrepiece of Afridi's installation is a spaceship minaret, created as a 3D print in collaboration with the Vienna-based company Object Fabrication GmbH.

Behind the fusion of Islamic art and spaceship design lies the question of where we direct our desires. In the clash between generosity and greed, in which prayers become a global currency, we are confronted by the question of whether the world really would be better if our prayers were fulfilled? Would morality or selfishness prevail?

Saks Afridi was born in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1975. He lives and works as an artist and designer in New York. Afridi makes art objects in various media, drawing inspiration from Sufi poetry, Afrofuturism, South Asian folklore, Islamic mythology, science fiction, architecture, and calligraphy. Afridi describes his work, in which he merges storytelling with Islamic mysticism, as "sci-fi Sufism".

Since 2017, Afridi has been working on the *SpaceMosque* project, which is now on view in Europe for the first time after installations in the United States and in Qatar.

<https://saks-afridi.squarespace.com/spacemosque>
https://www.instagram.com/saks_/

SpaceMosque is curated by Tobias Mörike and presented in connection with the exhibition *Science Fiction(s) – If There Were a Tomorrow* at the Weltmuseum Wien. It can be seen in the Volksgarten at the Theseus Temple from 20 April to 8 October 2023. Admission is free.

weltmuseumwien.at/en/exhibitions/science-fictions/#spacemosque-at-theseus-temple



History of the Theseus Temple

Pietro Nobile (1774–1854, Vienna's foremost neo-classical architect) designed the Theseus Temple in 1819 to 1823 for Emperor Francis I as part of the new layout of the Volksgarten. These major building works were necessary because the French army had razed the city's fortifications in front of the imperial palace when they withdrew from Vienna in 1809. Initially devised as a private park for members of the imperial family, it was later opened to the public, becoming the first imperial public park. Since 1825, it is known as "Volksgarten" (people's park).

The Theseus Temple, a neo-classical copy of the Theseion in Athens, was conceived to house a single contemporary artwork: Antonio Canova's celebrated *Theseus Slaying the Centaur*, a seminal neo-classical group. Antonio Canova (1757–1822, a leading representative of Italian neo-classical sculpture) is also credited with devising this unusual building. In 1890, *Theseus* was moved to the main staircase of the newly built Kunsthistorisches Museum, where it remains today.

The crypt beneath the Theseus Temple was accessed from a no longer extant sarcophagus-shaped side entrance; it initially housed part of the imperial Collection of Antiquities. From 1901, finds from Ephesus were shown in the temple's cella (i.e., the inner sanctum); today they are displayed in the Ephesus Museum in the Neue Burg. Later the cella served as a venue for art exhibitions staged by the Academy of Fine Arts and, from 1992, by the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The bronze statue *Young Athlete* (1921) in front of the Theseus Temple is by Josef Müller



Exhibition programme

SPECIAL EVENTS

Tue, 18 April, 7 p.m.

Artist Talk with Saks Afridi

Forum Weltmuseum Wien

Free admission, please [RSVP](#)

Wed, 19 April, 7 p.m.

SpaceMosque

Exhibition opening at the Theseus Temple

Free admission, no registration necessary

Fri, 21 April, 4.45 p.m.

Islam & Science Fiction

Talk by Jörg Matthias Determann

University of Vienna

Free admission, no registration necessary

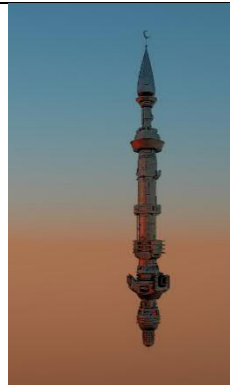
Subject to alteration! For current information please go to www.weltmuseumwien.at



Press photographs

In the press section on our website, you can download press texts and press photos for current reporting on special exhibitions and projects at the Weltmuseum Wien free of charge.
<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press/>

Saks Afridi
SpaceMosque / Sighting 1
2018
Collage
© Saks Afridi



Theseus Temple
© KHM-Museumsverband



Press material and press photos of the exhibition *Science Fiction(s)* are also available for free download on the press pages of the Weltmuseum Wien:
<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press/>



Social Media

Follow the Weltmuseum Wien on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

#SpaceMosque
#SaksAfridi

Opening hours Theseus Temple

Daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Free admission

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/exhibitions/science-fictions/#spacemosque-at-theseus-temple>

Press contact

Nina Auinger-Sutterlüty, MAS
Head of Communications
KHM-Museumsverband
T +43 1 525 24 -4021
presse@weltmuseumwien.at