

QUEER IMMORTALITY.

Death must be a non-binary
Viennese person

EXHIBITION BOOKLET

Complex Language
English

INTRODUCTION

How do we remember lives that exist outside of traditional narratives that barely reflect them? What does the loss of spaces mean for queer communities? And what do vampires have to do with queer desire? *Queer Immortality - Death Must Be a Non-Binary Viennese Person* explores queer forms of remembrance as well as perspectives on life, death, and transience.

After death, queer identities are often erased, reinterpreted, or torn from their social context. Conventional rituals of dying and mourning disregard the diverse experiences and relationships of queer people and, in particular, exclude chosen families. Through the video series *An meinen Haaren möcht' ich sterben* (I Would Like to Die by My Hair) by Peter Kozek, Vanessa Mazanik, and Florian Ronc, the exhibition examines grief as a collective experience and distorted memory. Florian Aschka's design for a family crypt for outcasts offers perspectives on funerals and burial sites that seek to do justice to queer realities of life.

Spaces take on special significance when a community emerges and anchors itself within them. Their loss—through demolition, displacement, and dissolution—can feel akin to the death of a community and lead to collective grief. Queer activists from St. Marx, tonx, cay, rara, ola, and tomashi, draw on their current experience with the destruction of this free space in the collaborative art project *Anger, Grief and Embers*. In *Queering the Depot*, Julia Fuchs exposes mechanisms of exclusion in museum collections and brings to life a space where objects are meant to be preserved for eternity.

Josef, a portrait of a fictional stonemason by Heti Prack, raises questions about how and in which materiality we remember queer history, connect historical struggles, and link them to our own. The photograph *Der Zehennagel der toten Oma* (The Toenail of the Dead Grandmother) by LA GEORGETTA also draws a connection to what once was. It depicts objects as testimonies to transience, reminiscent of vanitas depictions. In her paintings, Danielle Pamp explores how the fleeting nature of time and

existence can be captured.

In this context, (im)mortality appears in all its ambivalence: as a dissolution of identity, as a liminal state between the desire for belonging and the need for visibility. At the same time, withdrawing from reality rather than confronting life forces us to grapple with our own mortality.

Some works explicitly emphasize the physicality of our decay: Siggi Sekira explores burial practices and internal bodily phenomena in their paintings and sculptures. Our hair is what defies the process of decay the longest. 19th-century memorial portraits use it as a medium to commemorate their subjects.

A provocative engagement with death and (im)mortality is an essential part of queer cultural history. With a fair dose of dark humor, the web series Just Gorgeous tells the story of two drag queens who transform their beauty salon into a funeral home. Thomas Hörl, on the other hand, has Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's head recreated in a silent vampire film. Murnau's real skull was stolen from his grave in 2015. In literature and art, vampires have long symbolized forbidden desire, hidden subcultures, fluid gender identities, and a rejection of social norms. Bloodsucking, menstruation, and other "horror" scenarios also feature in a series of performative installations by Heathers.

Sophie Ollmann und Marlo Pichler

1 PETER KOZEK, VANESSA MAZANIK, FLORIAN RONC, I WOULD LIKE TO DIE BY MY OWN HAIR, VIDEO (59:42 MIN), COMMISSIONED BY FESTIVAL DER REGIONEN 2023

An meinen Haaren möcht' ich sterben (I Would Like to Die by My Own Hair) tells of constant travel, of being in motion, of never arriving. Without words or music, gently capturing original sound, the video explores the processes and customs of mourning. The scenes combine artifacts of mourning rituals—such as black fabrics or the table for the funeral feast, which play with a Baroque aesthetic—with images of nature, including rock formations and forest clearings. From a church to inscriptions on a cave wall, or a shared meal, the artwork continually draws attention to the community; how people mourn collectively, confront their grief, and continue to live together.

The camera repeatedly seeks out moments of lingering: situations unfold as if in slow motion, resembling installation-like compositions. Rather than following a linear narrative, the theme of travel continues to unfold through the meandering, ever-shifting visual language. Various elements are constantly recombined, while the editing is guided by chains of association: the blaring of a train's horn is followed by a funeral procession slowly getting into motion, and the black cake for the funeral feast crumbles like the earth in which we lay the dead to rest. The narrative and aesthetics are surrealistically exaggerated or alienated. It is precisely this that points to their staginess and opens up new interpretations.

The title “An meinen Haaren möcht' ich sterben” is inspired by the opening line of a poem by Elisabeth of Austria. In this text, the empress expressed her longing for death, linking this feeling with her magnificent hair, which had become her trademark. However, Peter Kozek, Vanessa Mazanik, and Florian Ronc's exploration of grief not only refers to Empress Elisabeth—who herself frequently and notoriously defied social regulations—but also incorporates excerpts from *Apocalyptic Fragment* by the Romantic poet Karoline von Günderrode. The video quotes the poem in the form of spray-painted

banderoles, referencing Günderröde's description of the ebb and flow of emotions and search for orientation—moments that are frequently reflected in *An meinen Haaren möcht' ich sterben*.

The project was realized as part of the 2023 Festival of Regions as a path with 15 stations along the Summerau railway line. In addition to the video episodes that the audience viewed at the respective waypoints, a live performance took place at the final destination, Horní Dvořiště. The state of movement thus plays a role not only as a theme in the film—which repeatedly takes up railroad tracks as a motif—but also extends into the performance practice and the physical experience of the work. The Queer Museum Vienna is showing an excerpt from the video series.

Marlo Pichler

2 MEMORIAL PORTRAITS FROM THE AUSTRIAN MUSEUM OF FOLK LIFE AND FOLK ART IN VIENNA

Memorial portraits made from human hair are a form of bourgeois mourning culture, particularly from the 19th century. The hair serves as a pars pro toto for a loved one and can be passed on as a token of love or kept as a memento of the deceased. It symbolizes a lasting bond that extends beyond death.

Transforming hair into an imperishable work of art represents a special tribute to the deceased. These works were created in the 19th century by professional wigmakers, and hair artists continue this tradition to this day – for example, Alex Moser from Vienna.

The significance attributed to hair in the 19th century can also be understood through Empress Elisabeth's poem, which includes the famous line, "I would like to die by my hair." Some of Empress Elisabeth's locks of hair have also been preserved to this day.

The two memorial portraits on display are on loan from the Vienna Museum of Folk Life and Art and likely date to the 19th century.

Memorial Portrait Made of Hair ÖMV/42982 (Collage made of blonde to brown hair on a glass plate with a white background)

Here, a commemorative landscape was created using the hair of a deceased mother: The memorial portrait depicts a weeping willow, a memorial with a trophy, and a cross adorned with a wreath of leaves. The cemetery-like motif conveys feelings of grief. In the Christian tradition, the plants and the cross symbolize hope for eternal life.

Inscriptions on the back: "Made from the hair of our dear mother" and "Mrs. Pfeiffer † Au. a. d. Leitha (ca. 1850–1860) by Miss Leopoldine Pfeiffer, teacher † ca. 1920."

Memorial portrait: Hair collage ÖMV/68749 (Composition of glued brown hair and the finest hair fragments on a glass plate with a white backing)

The upper edge of the portrait features the monogram "T A" as well as a cross, a heart, and an anchor. These are symbols of the Christian virtues of faith, love, and hope. Below is the date of death, "January 24, 1872," of the person commemorated. This object, which originates from Vienna, bears no inscriptions.

Pandora Köhler

3 6 SIGGI SEKIRA, SCIENCE OF SLEEP PTT.3: HOWL', COLOURED PENCILS ON PAPER, 2024 | GRIEF WREATHS, GLAZED CERAMICS, 2022

Sekira's wreaths and drawing approach the present exhibition's themes through the body's interior negotiations with mortality, its sleep, grief and states of exaltation. The work remains close to the intimate and visceral, the private textures through which a body comes to inhabit its own finitude. The three ceramic wreaths reinterpret the conventional funerary wreath and allow it to be overtaken by growth. Glazed in dense blacks and dispersed blue regions, each ring appears inhabited by matter that a completed period of mourning would normally have caused to decompose: tangled foliage, insect-like forms and thorn-like protrusions pressing outward from the circumference, as though the object continued producing something after its occasion had concluded. A wreath, in the codified custom of western funerary traditions, marks closure, sealing a life into its finished narrative. Sekira's wreaths, disobediently, continue to generate after that point, holding mourning open as an ongoing, generative condition and postponing its resolution.

This continuation gains further depth alongside Georges Bataille's 1957 study *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, which proposes that human beings experience themselves as fundamentally discontinuous separate and bounded, and that eroticism names the means by which this discontinuity is momentarily breached toward a more expansive continuity with what lies beyond the self. For Bataille, death and sensual experience share a structure because both dissolve the boundaries on which a discontinuous being depends. Sekira's wreaths render that dissolution visible in terms whose separation proves impossible: insects, tendrils and swollen organic protrusions read simultaneously as signs of decay and arousal, gradually reframing mourning as a state closer to fertility. What hegemonic funerary culture tends to receive as an ending, these uncanny wreaths redirect toward inauguration, proposing continuation as a distinctly queer response to loss.

A further layer emerges if the wreaths, mounted on the wall, are considered integral to the architecture. Art historian George Hersey argues that garlands and related motifs in classical architecture were never merely decorative, but preserve, in stylised language, the memory of sacrificial practices from which classical temple ritual derived, so that garland and viscera share a submerged continuity obscured by centuries of formalist reading. Sekira's ceramics reactivate that connection by an inverse route. Rather than abstracting bodily matter into ornament, they render the organic and perishable permanent, firing it in clay and mounting it to the wall as an architectural element. In doing so, the wreaths return to ornament something of the bodily residue that classical architecture, in Hersey's account, once encoded and later let fade from view.

The drawing, *Science of Sleep Pt. 3: Howl*, turns to Sekira's recurring cartoonised self-portraiture to give visible form to deep slumber and explore it as a condition akin to the ephemeral dissolution of life in death.

The sleeping figure at its centre, rounded, softly coloured, eyes closed, sits alongside vectorial and tentacular forms, coiled worm-like shapes, arrows and a suspended, bleeding heart extending from her mouth and the surrounding orifices of the composition. The image moves between several pictorial registers: the figurative self-portrait, a semi-figurative vocabulary of part-organic, part-diagrammatic appendages, and passages approaching pure, aseptic gesture, mark-making without settled representational reference. Together, these heterogeneous modes render deep sleep as an experience in which the body escapes its limits and dissolves into its entourage, capturing a modicum of the ineffable experience of death itself.

Sekira's howl performs a comparable escape. The moment deep sleep is achieved signals the event at which the body forces its way outward through its own aperture, tentacular and involuntary, giving visible form to a sensation that no single pictorial logic could support on its own.

Anaïs Marketos

4 DANIELLE PAMP, THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY I NEXT TO THE IMAGE OF SELF I ANOTHER WINTER, ANOTHER YEAR, OIL ON CANVAS, 2026

Danielle's practice has always been surrounded by voice in the broader sense: a continuous search for its fluid nature, moving from Soviet romances about tragic love towards painting. In this new series, however, the voice becomes quieter, retreating into the surface of the paintings. Figures, landscapes and fragments of bodies appear as things caught somewhere between presence and disappearance, between what can be recognised and what can no longer be fully grasped.

The restrained palette of black, white and fading sepia gives the paintings the quality of images already touched by time. Danielle approaches these works through a strictly figurative language. Yet the recognisable image does not necessarily bring us closer to reality. On the contrary, it creates a strange distance. In "Through a Glass Darkly", a face and a body emerge from darkness, intimate but somehow inaccessible. Next to the "Image of Self" introduces a more elusive question: whether an image can ever coincide with the self it appears to preserve.

This becomes particularly clear in "Another Winter, Another Year". A solitary figure moves away along a snowy road, gradually becoming smaller against the surrounding landscape. The title suggests not a singular event but a cycle: another passage of time. What remains is both the figure and the trace of its disappearance.

Painting, for Danielle, becomes an act of preservation that is conscious of its own impossibility. To paint is to insist that something is here while acknowledging that no image can protect it from change, forgetting or reinterpretation. Danielle approaches a question through the unstable relationship between a person and their image. There is something quietly queer in this refusal of permanence. Gender, like memory, can remain fluid, unresolved and open to transformation. Danielle's practice does not attempt

to resolve the distance. Instead, they allow these states to coexist. The image becomes a space where identity can be recognised without being reduced to a definition.

Perhaps this is where another form of immortality begins. Not in remaining unchanged, but in remaining open to being seen and imagined differently. We may come closer to the paintings in an attempt to catch what is real, to store it somewhere in the corners of our memory. But the images resist this final act of possession. The figure on the winter road keeps moving away; the face remains beside its image; the body continues to emerge from the darkness. And perhaps we do not need to stop them. Instead of preserving ourselves intact, we can allow ourselves to be reimagined again and again – until we enter another kind of eternity.

Anna Leonova

**5 FLORIAN ASCHKA, GLORIAS IN IN FUTUTORIS
(NUSQUAM ALIO MIGRABIMUS; SEMPER HIC FUIMUS ET
INTER VOS OCCULTE ERIMUS), 2026
3D-PRINTED ARCHITECTURAL MODEL OF A TOMB,
SCALE 1:25, PLA IN MAGENTA COLOR.**

"This 3D model, presentation, artwork and idea came to life with the substantial help, inspiration and cocreation of and by Anais Marketos, Larissa Kopp and Martin Kallinger (there is no such thing as an artist genius, she always operates within a collective/community/network, whether she knows it or not)"

Encircling GLORIA's pediment, a Latin inscription announces its permanence: we will migrate nowhere else; we have always been here, and we will be among you, hidden. The phrase functions as vow, veiled threat and historical correction to a city whose memorial culture has seldom made room for such a claim. GLORIA proposes a speculative future grave for the queer artist, outsiders and misfits of any kind of the same name, within Vienna's Zentralfriedhof, a cemetery defined by dignified remembrance, from its Ehrengräber to the restrained formal elitism governing what is built there. Within this setting, the work introduces excess. A rotunda rises beneath a double dome, its peristyle hung with swagged fabric recalling a stage set more than a mausoleum. Oculi splayed open like fans or stylised bodily orifices punctuate the drum, while phalloid „figures“ flank the chamber, hybridizing classical statuary with paradigms such as a boudoir. The vocabulary might be described as deliberately perverted neoclassicism, derived from the unbuilt fantasias of Jean-Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826), whose excesses left his designs largely unrealizable. GLORIA repurposes these refused forms, granting them, belatedly, a real site.

This campy theatricality invokes John Waters or Federico Fellini, where transgression and glamour are coterminous rather than opposed. In Waters' universe, decay, criminality and obscenity become sources of stardom, while Divine's body is protagonist, muse and queer symbol of perennial failure to conform to societal exigences. Like Divine, this theatre/tomb accrues monumental status through excess of these delinquent attributes.

GLORIA extends this schema into funerary architecture, imagining a monument that rejects normative cultures around death and mourning, substituting quiet grieving and the erasure of death with performance, seductive, libidinal surpluses and ornament. It affirms queer lives as worthy of grief and creates space for queer grief that is collective, imaginative, humorous and deeply political.

A spiral stair descends to a subterranean level, where the artist's urn is held, alongside space for other queer deceased who might choose to rest in GLORIA. This inversion is central to the work's logic. The exuberance above exceeds the treatment of a private grave and constitutes public infrastructure, available for appropriation by communities, through which solitary grief becomes collective jouissance and political assembly.

What GLORIA holds open is the character of that use. Its infrastructure might accommodate performance, confession, cruising, exchange, reckoning with violence against queer bodies, collective feasts and symposia, or forms of gathering not yet named. None is fixed or forecloses the others, nor necessarily contained within the structure: they can overspill through the colonnades into the cemetery and expand its programmatic potential. The monument remains available to demands for gathering, pleasure, mourning or confrontation without precedent in the city. This programmatic indeterminacy is central to its proposition: a structure that declines to specify its use in advance also declines the logic by which urban space is allocated, licensed and rationalised in capitalist terms.

What can be seen in the exhibition is a modest object: a scaled model in magenta PLA (plastic used for 3D printing). Yet it stands as a metaphor and idea giver, where queer remembrance, mourning and gathering become inseparable from solidarity with all those dispossessed of equal claim to the city.

Anaïs Marketos

Big Thanks to Anaïs Marketos in general for everything and Freud Museum Vienna for the generous support with the exhibition display.

7 BERVAN SAYICI, JUST GORGEOUS - BEAUTY FOR DEAD PEOPLE, 2025-2026, VIDEO

The web-series *Just Gorgeous, Beauty for Dead People* follows two Drag Queens, make-up artist La 'Terre and hairdresser Baba Gnoushé, through the transition of their failing beauty salon into a funeral home, and their inevitably coinciding career change.

This dramatic transformation, motivated by the disappointment of an unsuccessful business venture and the financial pressures of recession, is simultaneously absurd, economically pragmatic and conceptually charged. The work draws on the traditions of drag, camp and dark comedy to destabilise the culturally prescribed contrasts between life and death, beauty and decay, glamour and mourning. The beauty parlour and the funeral parlour share the purpose of bodily alteration in anticipation of a social event. However, make-up, hair, clothing and cosmetics acquire an entirely different significance when the final spectator is no longer a party guest, but a grieving family. The central challenge of the protagonists' new profession thus lies not merely in their lack of expertise, but in the sensitive nature of their repeated encounters with grief. As opposed to simply asking to be made beautiful, their customers now require them to tiptoe around a glaring and painful absence. The grieving relatives they encounter introduce a fragile emotional dimension into the duo's entrepreneurial endeavour, exposing the inadequacy of professionalised rituals when confronted with the deeply personal experience of loss.

Death, however, is not treated with solemnity alone. The series approaches mortality through a distinctly Viennese sensibility, thereby drawing on the city's long-standing affinity for melancholy, morbidity, theatricality and the so-called Wiener Schmah: a specific form of ironic humour in which the absurd and the tragic are allowed to co-exist in a bizarre, yet amusing symbiosis. In Vienna, death and tragedy have often been approached with an irreverent mixture of cynicism, sentimentality and laughter, in which the joke does not necessarily diminish the sadness, but becomes a means of

living alongside it. Humour can be both a defence mechanism and social lubricant, allowing the unbearable to become momentarily tolerable. This attitude finds a particular resonance in queer culture. Throughout history, queer communities have repeatedly developed alternative rituals and forms of collective grieving in response to losses that have not always been adequately recognised by dominant social structures. Camp, exaggeration, theatrics and humour can transform vulnerability into a shared and survivable experience. Much like Viennese dark humour, queer humour often refuses the societal demand to behave “appropriately” in the face of tragedy. It makes space for laughter alongside pain.

Just Gorgeous brings these two traditions together. The Viennese and the queer approaches to mortality meet in an unconventional workplace comedy, where drag becomes a method of addressing loss through artistic expression, exaggeration allows vulnerability to become visible, and theatricality adds levity without eliminating compassion. The funeral home becomes a stage on which normative rituals of mourning are performed, disrupted and reimagined. By placing death inside the framework of precarious labour and entrepreneurial survival, the series also highlights a broader contemporary condition: the necessity of continually reinventing oneself in order to remain economically viable.

In the exhibition context, *Just Gorgeous* serves as a reflective speculative space where queer performance, Viennese humour, economic uncertainty and rituals of mourning converge.

Lin Riva

8 HETI PRACK, JOSEF (FROM THE SERIES FRIENDSHIP), 2023, STUCCO MARBLE, FIBERGLASS, ACRYLIC RESIN

From a collection of fine lines, indentations, and raised areas, a figure gazes back at us, holding a bouquet of flowers. The material and subject matter are reminiscent of a memorial plaque one might find in public spaces or cemeteries. This context – as well as the figure's clothing and hairstyle – suggests something from the past, yet something very concrete and real. In fact, however, we are encountering a man who never actually existed.

For this work, the artist Heti Prack invented the character of the stonemason Josef Ofner, who first experiences his queer identity and love with the blacksmith Anton Brandstätter.(1) The two fall in love during the “Red Vienna” era of the 1930s, a time when social welfare, municipal housing and infrastructure, as well as education and culture, were expanded for the people of Vienna. Alongside the labor movement, this era of new beginnings marked the start of a period in which the queer community could express itself more freely and openly within subcultures.(2)

One expression of this was the magazine *Die Freundschaft* (Friendship), which is now considered the most important gay magazine of the Weimar Republic. “Friendship” – which is also the title of the series – was frequently used as a metaphor for homosexuality in the 1920s. However, “Friendship” was also a commonly used greeting during the labor movement. In this artwork, Heti Prack thus connects the struggles of the working class with the fight for the rights of the queer community in Vienna – not only through the protagonists but also through the title of the series.

The series also recalls the practice of historians who refer to people who clearly lived in queer relationships as close friends. This is just one example of how queer identities were often erased, reinterpreted, or torn from their social context after death. Through his artwork, Heti Prack demonstrates how the visual language of stone monuments and memorial plaques can anchor a

person in the reality of the past, creating a personal remembrance of those who came before us.

Sophie Ollmann

References:

1) Christiane Erharter, Freundschaft, Website des Künstlers Heti Prack, URL: <https://www.hetiprack.com/freundschaft/> (27.08.2026).

2) Christiane Erharter, Freundschaft, Website des Künstlers Heti Prack, URL: <https://www.hetiprack.com/freundschaft/> (27.08.2026).

9 THOMAS HÖRL, F.W.M. SYMPHONIE, 2022, FILM (SHORT VERSION, 19 MIN) | FILM SET, VARIOUS MATERIALS | YOU HAVE TO BECOME CALIGARI, 2022, SET PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR JASCHKE, WALLPAPER, 6C PRINTING

F.W.M. Symphonie is a silent film in three acts, based on the real-life events surrounding the disappearance of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's head. The skull, stolen from the director's grave in Berlin in 2015, becomes the starting point for a narrative in which historical and fictional identities merge.

The theft prompts the vampire – a character created by Murnau himself – to mould a head out of clay in a Viennese artist's studio, which is later to be taken to the gravedigger in Stahnsdorf near Berlin. As he is unable to produce a realistic likeness of Murnau, Viennese sculptors are lured to the studio with the promise of a 'reward of 1,000 euros'. As a result, the clay model undergoes various artistic styles and is constantly changing. In the end, the head no longer resembles Murnau, but rather his new director, Thomas Hörl. It is finally transported to Stahnsdorf on a cargo bike and handed over to the cemetery caretaker at the entrance to Murnau's grave. In the final scene, the vampire reappears, this time at Max Schreck's grave. Aesthetic influences of Expressionism

The film draws on the visual language of the silent film era, making particular reference to **Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror** and **The Cabinet of Dr Caligari**. Black-and-white scenes with varying colour tints are reminiscent of the tinted films of that period. The soundtrack combines sampling, electroacoustic sounds, orchestral motifs and Foley techniques. The journey scenes are accompanied by the Icelandic dark wave band Kælan Mikla. A documentary aesthetic meets the sets and expressive gestures typical of silent film. The suspenseful studio scenes contrast with the meditative journey to Stahnsdorf. The scenes in the Vienna Prater Studios are designed in the style of **The Cabinet of Dr Caligari** and are created using materials available in Thomas Hörl's studio. For the exhibition, the film is integrated

into an installation that draws on this setting.

A life of resistance and artistic identity

The film pays tribute to Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, whose homosexual identity had a decisive influence on his life and artistic work. Constructing one's own identity beyond societal expectations, clichés and exclusion is a constant struggle, particularly for queer people. In the film, the new head – as a symbol of identity and personality – is created in collaboration with artist friends, thus becoming a collective act of identity formation.

Immortality, the cult of relics and vampires

The film links the desire for artistic immortality with the cult of relics surrounding Murnau's mortal remains. The stolen skull becomes a cult object, whilst its reconstruction simultaneously becomes the construction of a new artistic identity. The artist inscribes himself into Murnau's history and connects with his iconic immortality.

The vampire's appearance is modelled on Count Orlok from **Nosferatu**: pointed teeth, ears, claw-like fingers and a cadaverous appearance make him an animalistic, undead figure. As contradictory beings caught between life and death, vampires in art and literature embody outsiders whilst simultaneously providing a canvas for homoerotic fantasies. The act of drinking blood is often interpreted as sexual desire. Vampires' rejection of bourgeois moral values and conservative norms makes them role models for the queer community.

Larissa Kopp und Pandora Köhler

**10 LA GEORGETTA, THE TOENAIL OF THE DEAD GRANDMA,
04.11.2023 17:33, 2023, SUBLIMATION PRINTING ON
CANVAS | THE GRAVEYARD / SO FULL OF LIFE, 2020,
PERFORMANCE ON VIDEO (9 MIN)**

What does *The Toenail of the Dead Grandma* reveal to us about queer life, queer death, and queer grief? What does this mean for queer immortality?

For many people, family plays a major role in everyday life; it can offer a special sense of stability and security, but it can also mean exactly the opposite—especially when a person challenges intrafamilial and societal norms, such as heteronormativity. For queer people in particular, family can be a battleground for conflict, beginning with the negotiation of one’s own queer identity and the family’s acceptance of it. Different cultural, religious, and—above all—social influences from various generations collide here, offering insight into “foreign” value systems and leading to a dialogue about a topic that should, in theory, be off-limits. Now, an artifact—especially one as personal as the toenail of a deceased relative, as in this case—can evoke a range of emotions. It’s inevitable to reflect back on precisely these conflicts. Or perhaps a sense of gratitude for the acceptance and the bond between us?

A longing for more time spent together, for more conversations, or for more shared experiences. The wish that the other person might know the current version of oneself and, if it seems necessary, might drop by briefly once more. All these emotions and perspectives are embodied in the work. Grief serves as a reminder of one’s own mortality, but also of the fact that one is still alive. An interplay between the vitality of life and the looming knowledge of certain death. A photograph of an intimate artifact that conceals more than the “traditional” femininity of the supposedly classic red nail polish.

Furthermore, the exhibition features the video **the graveyard / so full of life**, in which LA GEORGETTA comes to terms with her father’s death. Grief, like life and death, is part of Queer Immortality and manifests itself in queer

lived experiences in ways that are both similar to and different from non-queer contexts. Consequently, coming to terms with it is a highly individual process.

Her works reveal that the multimedia performance artist LA GEORGETTA plays with gender roles and sociopolitical themes such as prejudice and convention; religion is also a focus of her work. The interplay of various themes—arising from a blend of personality, mementos, and longings—is clearly evident. In doing so, LA GEORGETTA typically navigates contradictions such as high culture and trash, cliché and kitsch, or elegance and vulgarity.

Kerry R. Dittmann

12 13 JULIA FUCHS, QUEERING THE DEPOT (SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS: NUMBER 1, 4 AND 5), 2024

The Museum Storage Facility as a Repository of Knowledge

As museums began opening their doors to the general public – rather than just to the privileged – during the 19th century, the need arose to group museum collections into public displays. Thus, the museum storage facility was born (1). The function of these facilities was and remains the preservation of cultural assets which are deemed worthy of this preservation. It serves the role of the counterpart to public collections, which make objects accessible to the general public. The museum as an institution ascribes meaning to these objects through this process. However, the objects which have been archived in storage facilities do gain meaning through the act of archiving themselves: whereas objects in public displays are present to the world and thereby acquire different meaning in different contexts, their meaning making typically ends where the objects are stored in these facilities. Dying and immortality are brought together in the act of archiving.

A storage facility always represents an act of selection: on the one hand, the selection is made based on various signifiers which determine whether an object is worthy of being immortalized. Yet on the other hand, the way in which objects are classified and sorted into categories is according to a distinct system of ordering. These systems have been developing over centuries: objects have been sorted in a manner that prioritizes the objects due to its usefulness for human beings, or in a way that prioritises the ease with which the collections can be expanded and added on to. Each collection or museum does face the problem of its physical limits, which ultimately can represent a challenge to the function of a museum or a collection: due to its spatial limitations, many collections tend to focus on the aim of choosing objects due to their “representative and monumental” factors (1, p. 52). Other aims and functions can get deprioritised. Even the mission of imparting knowledge can get lost in the mission of a museum storage facility dedicated to preservation for eternity.

“Queering the Depot” as an example of a “living storage facility”

The work of Julia Fuchs in “Queering the Depot” stands in stark contrast to the reality of “putting away” which objects face which are put into a depot. The artist not only asserts herself and her physical body as a living example in the frozen depots of Kulturhäuser Vorarlber and the glyptothèque of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, she puts the objects into a different context. Her own body mystifies and demystifies at the same time: (Picture 1) Julia Fuchs conserves her body by wrapping herself in a protective cover made of plastic, ultimately subverts expectations by being upright herself, gazing at the objects in front of her on a shelf. (Picture 4) In the second photograph the artist inserts her body with a moving motion into the rows of shelves in a contrasting move against the motionless, resting statue to her right, which appears to be strategically placed. (Picture 5) In the last photograph which shows a crowded part of a low-ceilinged room, writes herself into the collection of (seemingly male) busts by assuming the same position and posture as the statues next to her.

With these photographs, Julia Fuchs throws wide open the metaphorical doors of the depot and creates an atmosphere of the depot as being accessible; eternity achieves a lively character. At the same time, her work illustrates the juxtaposition of the vitality of living bodies with objects which are deemed worthy of being preserved for eternity. Which objects are preserved, and made eternal, and which bodies need to assert themselves to gain the same status?

Laura Still

Reference:

(1) Griesser-Stermscheg, M. (2013). Tabu Depot: Das Museumsdepot in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Böhlau Verlag.

14 TONX, CAY, RARA, OLA, TOMASHI, ANGER, GRIEF AND EMBERS, 2026

cay rauscher, Steel chain and flat fiber | Steel chain and cotton fiber | embossed steel sheet | forged steel | steel chain and steel sheet | embossed and welded steel sheet, cotton straps, steel buckles, 2026

tonx, to sit with the discomfort, 2026, Seating made of wood and metal | film (9 min), 2026

ola, metallgirls* or I want ourselves to be enough, film (9 min), 2026

tomash, matzi building blocks | fireworks stand facade, 2026

In April 2026, the violent eviction of the St. Marx open space destroyed a place that, over the past 10 years, had become important for many (among others) queer and Flinta* people as a space beyond the logic of consumerism and identity discourses.

The site is property of the city-owned Wien Holding. In 2014, it was made available for interim use. "Interim use means that initiatives are allowed to make the most of a space until it has become interesting enough for investors." (Augustin No. 612, p. 7). That happened in 2018. The City of Vienna announced plans for an event venue. In a place where people need neither a venue nor (commercialised) events to meet and spend time together.

This place, with its self-built skate park, gardens and basketball court, has now been destroyed. How can we come to terms with the loss of this place? In 2022, Tomash Schoiswohl and Lisa Bolyos, with Immo Grief, sought to spark a discussion on what collective mourning might look like in relation to lost (utopian) places, houses, etc. Against this backdrop, works by tonx, cay, rara, ola and tomashi come together in the collaborative project 'Anger, Grief and Embers'.

Tonx, cay, rara and ola began forging in St. Marx. Today, they continue this practice and, through their shared forging, have found a way to deal with their grief and anger at the loss of the site in St. Marx. Working with the embers and the steel. They experience working with embers and steel as a

transformative process capable of releasing a wide variety of emotions and tensions held within the body, whilst also reflecting a desire to master yet another craft shaped by patriarchal norms.

Places must be mourned because rituals are 'handholds' that 'allow grief to be de-individualised', because mourning together helps us 'somehow endure the unbearable silence following brutal destruction' (inscription on OSB Element).

Mourning places is different from mourning people and communities, because their end is not death. We cannot be angry at death, because it affects everyone. But we can be very angry about social inequalities and the circumstances under which death does not affect everyone in the same way. Herein lies a connection between mourning lost places and anger at the structures and political decisions that have led, and continue to lead, to the destruction of places like St. Marx. We must mourn places because they are being destroyed. And unlike death, this destruction is optional. A choice made for the sake of profit. St. Marx was a place for lived alternatives and experimental social infrastructures which, like many queer ways of life and relationships, resist the heteronormative logic of capital. These ideas and ways of life, too, were targeted by the destruction.

Charred OSB panels with excerpts from *Immo Grief*, two mobile forges, metal wearables by cay on a trolley from St. Marx converted by tomashi, two film works by cay, ola's film "Metallgirls* or I want ourselves to be enough", a video work and a seating object made from salvaged nails, wood scraps and a repurposed rebar from the site in St. Marx as part of tonx's work-in-progress project "To sit with the discomfort" – The queer museum is a temporary space where all these works can come together. Temporary not only because the exhibition will be over by the end of the year, but also because the queer museum itself is only in this space on an interim basis.

Leonie Orflaith Hennig

15 HEATHERS (VERONIKA HÖSCH, NORA JACOBS, UND NICOLE SABELLA), BEST OF THE BEST, 2022, TROPHIES, FAUX FUR, SOUND TRACK I NAKED AND OTHER TRUTHS, 2022, MILLED PLASTIC SIGNS I EVERYTHING MUST GO, 2024, TUFTED CARPET OBJECTS

From the sapphic foremother of gothic vampires Carmilla, to the eccentric glamour of Frank n Furter and Buffalo Bill, the horror genre has historically been as much about (queer) sex as it is about (queer) gender and (queer) death. The various elements of Hauntingly Heathers scattered throughout Queer Immortality call to mind relics of an abandoned horror film set.

Across its bloodied terrain of exploited femme and “sexually deviant” bodies, horror lays bare our biggest societal fears. Mortality is, of course, the most foundational one. And death itself is not half as scary as the lack of control we have over our lives. So the real horror often lies in the destruction of the social order, and its related threats of chaos and oblivion. Horror artists often seek to restore the social order by the end of the story. But their alluring, terrifying creations may inspire desire in consumers far more than their happy endings. The queer fan may even identify with the monster, the outsider, the evil, the killer, the gore itself – the abjection.

Abjection is a phenomenon precipitated by an awareness of one’s own body as a porous, vulnerable, soft, squishy, wet object: “as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live.”(1) Both misogynistic and feminist horror has explored the abject nature of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. Similarly, sexual penetration, insemination, and injection are alluring and uncanny as they dissolve borders between beings – or rather the illusion of borders. By that token, breaking the gender binary can feel – and be – deeply threatening and deeply exciting.

To celebrate this repulsion, visitors are encouraged to photograph themselves posing in front of the rugs, each representing an expulsion of fluids: period blood, vomit, shit. As you do so, remember the social order is as fragile as your small mortal body. If this hasn't unsettled you enough already, watch out for the signs posted around the exhibit with classic horror quotes that imbue a sense of the uncanny into the mundane. You may be able to avoid thinking about death most of the time to get through your daily routine, but here, you can't escape it!

If it's any comfort, the Heathers promise to remember you in all your beautiful insignificance after you're gone. We've all seen a horror movie which treats specific bodies as expendable: black/brown/slutty/ugly/fat characters who die first. The Final Girl must ultimately face the killer alone, her body the pinnacle of white teenage sexuality/virginity // victimhood/privilege. Her knife puts an end to both the killer's beating heart and to the threat of disorder.

But here, it's not about her. Hauntingly Heathers interrogates who deserves to be remembered and why, a question central to Queer Immortality. In a shiny vitrine, all the underrated, unloved side characters are commemorated with gorgeous furry trophies, which we may imagine them winning at a glitzy awards ceremony. Their marginalised lives and untimely ends are thereby immortalised...

That is, until Time claims Hauntingly Heathers and turns these artworks to dust, just as it will with all things. Hooray for the abject, and three cheers for the Heathers!

Amélia Hamerlynck

References:

- 1) Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection, Julia Kristeva, p. 3

EDITORIAL STAFF

Texts Team QUEER MUSEUM VIENNA

Marlo Pichler, Pandora Köhler, Panagis Marketos, Anna Leonova, Lin Riva, Sophie Ollmann, Larissa Kopp, Kerry R. Dittmann, Laura Still, Leonie Orflaith Hennig, Amélia Hamerlynck

Curator barbara stöhr

Artists Peter Kozek with Vanessa Mazanik and Florian Ronc, LA GEORGETTA, Heti Prack, Siggie Sekira, Florian Aschka, Danielle Pamp, Julia Fuchs, Berivan Sayici/Just Gorgeous – Verein für Dramatik und Performance Kunst, Thomas Hörll, tonx, cay, rara, ola & tomashi, HEATHERS (Veronika Hösch, Nora Jacobs & Nicole Sabella)

The curator would like to thank: all the artists, Sophie & Pandi, Michal & Larissa, for their trust; Aftab Maher for her advice on the exhibition; Kerry, Anastasia, Stefanie, Alex, Daria, Tommi, and the entire team for their active support—without all of you, this exhibition would not have been possible.

SUPPORTED BY



 Bundesministerium
Wohnen, Kunst, Kultur,
Medien und Sport