

## Compositions

**CHECKIT!, TATJANA DANNEBERG, INES DOUJAK, LUKAS GANSTERER, KIKI KOGELNIK,  
AMELIE LAGRANGE, UDO PROKSCH, ASHLEY HANS SCHEIRL, BERNHARD WILLHELM, REECE YORK**

curated\_by **Thomas Jeppe and Rebecca Lamarche Vadel**

**Amelie Lagrange** is the name painted on a human skull discovered in Vienna in 2016. The skull was found inside a cooking pot in a field, and following its analysis by the city archaeologist it was determined to be male and not female, younger than its stated age (having been “hanged in 1612”), composed of parts from two different humans and the vertebra of a cow.

Thirteen online news articles about Amelie Lagrange, its entire online presence published at the time of her discovery, are presented here in chronological order. As more information became available, the articles progress and the story migrates into other languages.

These texts map the skull’s continued life as a research object, a crux point of cultural practices, a gender hybrid and post-human being existing across multiple temporalities at once. Amelie Lagrange renders categories porous, and is most operative in her moments of uncertainty.

Ultimately, the skull was determined to be “an artistic construction of no historical value”, and following the legal requirements for human remains, it was buried in the *Zentralfriedhof*, Vienna’s central cemetery.

She is referenced here as both a physical composition and a mediated manifestation; an entity for framing the city’s mutating, paradoxical and fabulous aspects.

Over two decades of production, fashion label **Bernhard Willhelm**’s highly personal and idiosyncratic style has been identified by craftsmanship and unexpected body forms, where the fabulous is a guiding principle for transgression.

Below, a selected edit of Bernhard Willhelm press release texts correspond to the looks of AW16/17 and AW17/18 that populate the exhibition, while the text accompanying the look of SS13 has been included at the end of this document as a palate cleanser.

*As warden of the Department of Corrections Hollywood California, Bernhard Willhelm commands you to check yourself.*

*Willhelm challenges us to (re)discover a post-capitalist, anarchistic and self-activated punk state of ZEN, and brings to light teachings that prompt corrective tools for a heightened sense of CONSCIOUSNESS, PRESENCE and IDENTITY, furthering the designer’s commentary on the present and future state of humanity and cross-disciplinary approach to Post Modernism.*

*We see the appearance of the pinecone – representing human enlightenment and the Third Eye – manifested through unique headpieces, and also get a much welcome revisit from the Cockatoo bird. Handbags made of concrete serve as a brutalist present-day symbol of make-belief.*  
*THERE'S EVERYTHING IN THERE, AND IT'S ALREADY QUITE HEAVY*

~

*Bernhard Willhelm presents a visual manifestation that brings us back to the roots of Western Civilization as a commentary on present day humanity and projection on one's existence while going rafting inside an inner tube.*

*With the dichotomies of Apollonian and Dionysian as starting point, Wilhelm brings to light how the opposing impulses of reason and logic vs. chaos and the irrational, once interlaced, present matters of how humankind's quest for utopia, currently threatened by technological anarchy, trans-humanist and corporately driven evolution. Specifically referencing Plato's CRITO, he touches on matters of justice vs. injustice in relation to accountability and responsibility. By means of a methodology of controversy, this collection developed from a personal and self-referential place, to a generally relevant level of critical reflection that allows the powerful force of it's content to unfold one's inner tubes.*

**Tatjana Danneberg's** paintings for *Compositions* reproduce botanical illustrations from the archives of the National Library in Vienna. The works represent *Ferdinandusa*, a plant species from the American tropics, and *Zamia pumila*, native to the West Indies and Florida.

These plants lived in the Palace of Schönbrunn botanical gardens, part of an ensemble built by royal expeditions sent to expand the Austrian natural history collections. The story of the botanical garden is closely linked with colonization, and beyond the supposedly innocent appeal of such plant collections lie the historical phenomenon of nationalist expansion and the occupation of foreign lands.

These illustrations equally stand in for the ordering of knowledge. The process of scientific classification accompanies the birth of modern science, and thus the rise of a common European language based on taxonomy and informative data, the organising of the living world. Since the Renaissance, botanical images produced in European culture have shaped our image of the non-human, becoming tools for constructing the divide between nature and culture. The possession and classification of such plants is a statement of economical wealth and geopolitical power; an assurance of control over the foreign and the natural.

These botanical illustrations attempt to capture the generic structure of the species, ignoring outlier mutations and general decay. The decay not depicted in the botanical image is embodied in the painting's texture, where fragility and the uncontrollable come to the fore. The accompanying wall painting pushes elements from the botanical illustrations to form a "total environment", a surface setting for encountering the works. The canvas and wall paintings are both made on a foil then fixed to the wall, reversing the image and ripping its surface open. In this process, the foreground becomes the background, and an unpredictable image results.

**Reece York** presents two works for *Compositions*, the first an intervention into the workings of the gallery itself. The electric circuit of the gallery's lighting system has been extended, with cables running from the ceiling to the floor, to include a number of sensors, each modified to become hyper-sensitive to movement, thermodynamics, and dust. When the sensors detect a change in any of these conditions, they trigger one of the gallery's lighting sets - either neutral daylight, warm light, or cold light. These changes occur for the duration of the exhibition, giving visual form to normally imperceptible shifts in atmosphere.

His second work, a kinetic sculpture video piece, uses found objects from the Vienna metro, animated and mediated in real time. A squashed hat takes centre screen, while a dynamic selection of pages from the free daily OE24 (which is handed to commuters at train stations) and the human interest monthly VOR magazine (which can be found hung on hooks in subway carriages) rotate in the background. The two counter-rotating elements are configured so that the hat will flip pages at irregular intervals.

This entire operation is suspended above head height, counterbalanced by Nespresso bags weighted with gallery install hardware, while a projection of its image passes under to reach the back wall.

The Vienna Metro is renowned as one of the best performing public transport systems in the world, and its classic silver carriages are widely considered a masterpiece of urban train design. Reece York's stiff pirouette brings the system's quotidian items to life. From disposable media to abandoned accessories, this is the composite detritus of the city's veins.

Created in 1997, **CheckIt!** is a Vienna-based center for information and advice on recreational drugs, their effects, side effects, and risks. Alongside their fixed location at Gumpendorferstraße 8, CheckIt! tents appear regularly at Vienna's music events where concert-goers are encouraged to submit a sample amount of their drugs for free and anonymous testing. Each person receives a number, and soon after, a numbered page with their result is pinned on a notice board visible to them and the public. A white page indicates that the drug is what it was expected to be; a yellow page indicates that the drug contains unexpected substances; and a red page indicates that the drug contains both unexpected and dangerous substances. Stickers are sometimes added - "Hohe Dosierung!" for a high-dose substance, and "Research Chemical" for substances that can be identified, but not enough is known about their characteristics to give reliable advice (including Mephedrone for example).

For *Compositions*, CheckIt! present a series of drug test results from five specific festival events in Vienna. The results are presented in order from 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. For the 2011 event, results show just over 10% of tested drugs contained the expected ingredients, compared to over 60% in the 2017 event. Equally, some cocaine tested in 2011 was found to be just 12% pure, while in 2017, its purity was measured as high as 98.3%.

As we observe these drug fluctuations, the test results create a picture of the Viennese body's chemical composition over the last six years. They offer an objective subtext to the city's nightlife, consolidating the breadth of altered mental states, tracing the manoeuvres of the black market, and unveiling a biological narrative within cultural manifestations that would otherwise be invisible.

“Clara”, **Ines Doujak**’s theatre costume sculpture, renders the human figure into an amorphous blob of biological material. The mutations of form, peppered with hair tufts, suggest a physical entity transitioning into the realm of the geological. The figure frames potential evolution in its teenage moment - one of awkwardness and uncontrolled growth.

This work was first conceived in the frame of the “Ape Culture” exhibition at HKW Berlin, where a performer wore the costume while being taught the necessary qualities of a generic “work-ready” employee. The teaching becomes an evidently futile endeavour, illustrating the incompatibility of traditional labour models when faced with the human body in flux.

**Kiki Kogelnik**’s “Robots” series are based around the repeated motifs of medical illustration stamps. These stamps work as objective depictions of a generic body, to be modified by doctors with assessment notes. The medical stamp is repurposed here to picture the post-human; a phalanx of androgynous figures in various states of bodily completeness. The figures intersect with “planetary” diagrams on a cosmic scale, where their flatness takes on a universal quality.

The image of a two-dimensional, fragmentary body, sometimes composed of mechanical as well as organic parts, is a pervasive motif in Kiki Kogelnik’s work. These drawings, made in 1966, form part of her futuristic sociocultural speculation. As she said herself, “I’m involved in the technical beauty of rockets, people flying in space, and people becoming robots... I would like to have a robot who would say good morning, how beautiful you are, I love you.”

Appearing from afar as blown-up collages, the paintings of **Ashley Hans Scheirl** float a range of objects, texts and body parts over abstract fields and splatter.

A golden egg hovers over plastic sheeting while a disembodied mouth spits fluid into space, joined by a trail of ellipses; a line of car silhouettes progresses off a precipice where liquid shoots from between twin hemispheres, Fluid Membership Trend Levels apparently Peaking; eyes upon eyes send golden gaze through telescopes and into the shadow of a Meltdown; a solitary finger points amidst the clouds into the void... Loaded with libidinal currency, classical and pop references, these compositions of symbols and text amount to a deconstructed essay, where politics and the perverse disintegrate in unison around the body.

**Udo Proksch** was a Viennese industrial designer and businessman, and the principal creator of the “Viennaline” eyewear company (for which this edition of *curated\_by* is named). A notorious social figure in Vienna, Proksch’s prodigious output was overshadowed by his orchestration of an insurance scam resulting in the death of six people.

The pieces presented here come from the immense archive of works, sketches and notes that Proksch paid his brother to keep, starting at age 23.

The Goldfinger was one of Proksch’s most iconic pieces. With Goldfinger, Proksch pushed jewellery beyond embellishment to propose an extension of the body by metal. This ennobling gesture

channelled both the tragic vanity of the Midas Touch as much as the then-nascent ideas of human/cyborg evolution. The sketches presented here follow the Goldfinger's development from rough plans to more detailed paintings, including notes for promotional images drawn directly onto existing advertisements and a proposition for an in-store display cabinet with Goldfingers mounted onto tree branches under glass - removing the body entirely in favour of a natural platform for presentation.

Merchandising was a central aspect of Proksch's business ventures, and he was recognised for outstanding achievement by the European Packaging Federation in 1964. For his Serge Kirchhofer brand, Proksch worked with Walter Pichler in his capacity as a graphic designer. The "Herz + Augen" piece (Heart and Eyes) was devised as a shop display to accompany Serge Kirchhofer eyewear. While the SK text logo is likely attributable to Pichler, the heart and eye drawings were made by Proksch himself. The vitrine contains four lithograph plates in CMYK, and an enlarged version of the finished print. The piece presents a fabulous composition in the frame of commercial promotion; the "seeing heart" linking luxury product to biological fantasy.

The third vitrine presents a project made by correspondence during Proksch's imprisonment. Pages of detailed sketches depict a fantasy castle loosely based on Moscow's St Basil Cathedral, accompanied by extensive annotated diagrams and material samples, with instructions to produce a three dimensional sculpture from plastic bottles. Following these instructions closely, the model was built by Proksch's brother, painted following the specified colours and patterns, and photographed in detail. The photographs were then delivered to Proksch in jail.

For *Compositions*, **Lukas Gansterer** was commissioned to shoot a photo essay at Vienna's central cemetery, the site of Amelie Lagrange's burial. The living population of the city of Vienna is under 1.8 million, while the cemetery hosts well over three million interments.

Select images from this series - collectively titled "Transgressive Space" - punctuate the exhibition; small scenes of hybridity, transformation, and coexisting contradiction.

## *COMPOSITIONS*

*curated\_ by Thomas Jeppe and Rebecca Lamarche Vadel*

*September 14 - October 13 2018*

*Charim Galerie*

*Dorotheergasse 12*

*Vienna*

BERNHARD WILLHELM SS13

SURVIVAL

YOU ARE TRAPPED ON THE EARTH SO YOU WILL EXPLODE  
WHAT URGE WILL SAVE US NOW THAT SEX WON'T?  
PUT FOOD OUT IN THE SAME PLACE EVERY DAY AND TALK TO THE PEOPLE WHO COME TO EAT AND ORGANIZE THEM  
SAVOR KINDNESS BECAUSE CRUELTY IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE LATER  
DANCE ON DOWN TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TELL THEM YOU'RE EAGER TO RULE  
BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU  
THE BREAKDOWN COMES WHEN YOU STOP CONTROLLING YOURSELF AND WANT THE RELEASE OF A BLOODBATH  
SPIT ALL OVER SOMEONE WITH A MOUTHFUL OF MILK IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIS  
PERSONALITY FAST  
OUTER SPACE IS WHERE YOU DISCOVER WONDER AND WHERE YOU FIGHT AND NEVER HURT EARTH IF YOU STOP  
BELIEVING THIS YOUR MOOD TURNS UGLY  
DIE FAST AND QUIET WHEN THEY INTERROGATE YOU OR LIVE SO LONG THAT THEY ARE ASHAMED TO HURT YOU  
ANYMORE  
TRUST VISIONS THAT DON'T FEATURE BUCKETS OF BLOOD  
IN A DREAM YOU SAW A WAY TO SURVIVE AND YOU WERE FULL OF JOY  
IF YOU'RE CONSIDERED USELESS NO ONE WILL FEED YOU ANYMORE  
WHEN YOU EXPECT FAIR PLAY YOU CREATE AN INFECTIOUS BUBBLE OF MADNESS AROUND YOU  
YOU ARE SO COMPLEX THAT YOU DON'T ALWAYS RESPOND TO DANGER  
MEN DON'T PROTECT YOU ANYMORE  
WITH ALL THE HOLES IN YOU ALREADY THERE'S NO REASON TO DEFINE THE OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT AS ALIEN  
WHEN SOMEONE BEATS YOU WITH A FLASHLIGHT YOU MAKE LIGHT SHINE IN ALL DIRECTIONS  
FINDING EXTREME PLEASURE WILL MAKE YOU A BETTER PERSON IF YOU'RE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT THRILLS YOU  
IT IS IN YOUR SELF-INTEREST TO FIND A WAY TO BE VERY TENDER  
THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR WILL BE SECRET  
THE CONVERSATION ALWAYS TURNS TO LIVING LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE FUN  
USE WHAT IS DOMINANT IN A CULTURE TO CHANGE IT QUICKLY  
PROTECT ME FROM WHAT I WANT  
IT'S HARD TO KNOW IF YOU'RE CRAZY IF YOU FEEL YOU'RE IN DANGER ALL THE TIME NOW  
YOU CAN'T REACH THE PEOPLE WHO CAN KILL YOU ANY TIME SO YOU HAVE TO GO HOME AND THINK ABOUT WHAT TO  
DO  
THE FUTURE IS STUPID  
HIDE UNDER WATER OR ANYWHERE SO UNDISTURBED YOU FEEL THE JERK OF PLEASURE WHEN AN IDEA COMES  
SOMEONE ELSE'S BODY IS A PLACE FOR YOUR MIND TO GO  
WHEN THERE'S NO SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP YOU'RE TIRED FROM WALKING ALL DAY AND EXHAUSTED FROM THE NIGHT  
BECAUSE IT'S TWICE AS DANGEROUS THEN  
IT'S EASY TO GET MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON EVERY CONTINENT TO PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO EATING AND EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY  
GO WHERE PEOPLE SLEEP AND SEE IF THEY'RE SAFE  
HANDS ON YOUR BREAST CAN KEEP YOUR HEART BEATING  
TURN SOFT AND LOVELY ANY TIME YOU HAVE A CHANCE  
IT IS FUN TO WALK CARELESSLY IN A DEATH ZONE  
YOU LIVE THE SURPRISE RESULTS OF OLD PLANS  
LET YOUR HAND WANDER ON THE FLESH TO MAKE POSSIBILITY MULTIPLY  
IT IS EMBARRASSING TO BE CAUGHT AND KILLED FOR STUPID REASONS  
SHOOT INTO INFINITE SPACE TO HIT A TARGET IN TIME AND CALL IT INEVITABLE  
YOU HOVER NEAR LOVELY UNCONSCIOUS LIFE-FORMS THAT OFFER NO IMMEDIATE RESISTANCE  
PEOPLE LOOK LIKE THEY ARE DANCING BEFORE THEY LOVE  
BODIES LIE IN THE BRIGHT GRASS AND SOME ARE MURDERED AND SOME ARE PICNICKING  
SILLY HOLES IN PEOPLE ARE FOR BREEDING OR ARE FROM SHOOTING  
YOUR MODERN FACE SCANS THE SURPRISE ENDING