

**GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN
ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER**

curated by Anya Harrison

11 SEP – 31 OCT 2026

Requiem

ADAM CHRISTENSEN, PENNY GORING, BARBARA HAMMER, MEL ODOM

Opening:

Friday, 11 September, 12 a.m.–9 p.m.

Saturday, 12 September & Sunday, 13 September, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

Vienna 1, Domgasse 6

As part of this year's *curated by* gallery festival in Vienna, Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder presents at Domgasse 6 an exhibition curated by Anya Harrison with works by Adam Christensen, Penny Goring, Barbara Hammer, and Mel Odom.

Heartbreak. *Crèvecoeur*. An amalgamation of two words becoming one, a compound stuck together, forever for all times. I've always been struck by this image of a heart, shattered into smithereens, the body's compass no longer able (or unwilling?) to offer it its life-sustaining blood. The sensation of a neural pathway, an energy field deep inside exploding and rendered physical. Overwhelming, unbearable, intense, it is a pain that keeps on giving, a phantom limb irrevocably reminding of its absence.

No wonder that there are those who are scared shitless of loving.

Seventeen months I've pleaded

for you to come home.

Flung myself at the hangman's feet.

Written in 1940 but not published until 1987 due to the controversy of the topics addressed, Russian poet Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* is an elegy about love, loss and suffering. Interweaving the micro and the macro, politics and current affairs with tales of personal, lived experience (in other words, forced disappearances and exile, those of her husband and son, but also that experienced by millions of others, strangers united by the same tragedy), Akhmatova unleashes a vortex of feelings, veering from grief, disbelief, mourning and resolve. Yet read anew, this series of poems could be a testament to love and its double. For love, if not Janus-faced, is inherently double-edged, indissociable from loss, fear, anxiety and pain. It is a risk that requires nerves of steel. To love is to give oneself over to the premise, the unavoidable potentiality of death. How far are you willing to go?

Consider the multimedia works of Penny Goring, saturated with a constellation of emotions and affects that society deems 'negative' – anger, sadness, shame, trauma, addiction, despair, terror – and which often stem from the artist's own lived experiences. In the ongoing *Amelia* series, begun in 2017, the paintings wear their heart on their (paper) sleeve. They are fairytale compositions featuring the artist and her ex-lover Amelia, who died from a heroin overdose, as fragile-looking twin avatars – interchangeable, dead and alive,

capable of equal parts self-destruction, violence and loving. Rendered with a knowingly feigned naivety and an undercurrent of dark humour, Goring plunges us into an ambiguous universe of severed limbs, cartoon-shaped

hearts, thorns and fangs, shit-stained tears, and that ubiquitous *red*. The same bloody crimson that appears, for example, on *Cherry Red Double Forever Doll* (2023), the figure almost cutesy were it not for the fact that it is decapitated. No head, no thought, just feeling and body, *for ever murder in my heart, love in my hands*, incised with hand stitches along its torso and comically elongated, dangling legs.

Mel Odom's otherworldly, highly stylised illustrations were initially created to grace the covers and pages of adult magazines, appearing from the second half of the 1970s onwards in *Viva*, *Playboy*, *Blueboy*, and the like. What is instantly palpable in these tender drawings of queer love and desire, emanating a certain cinematographic quality, a pre-Raphaelite and *fin-de-siècle* aura, is the tenderness with which the lines, curves, shading and colour washes have been applied to paper. It is easy to forget that many of Odom's earlier pieces were produced at the height of the AIDS crisis. Viewed through this lens, they are an ode, homage, love letter to loved ones, many of them since gone, a secret sign language veiled beneath the relative safety of a commercial order for all to see, but only for a select few to understand. A passionate embrace, the kiss of life, a becoming-one nearly imperceptible from a final *adieu*. An extreme form of beauty to return dignity to and counter the demonisation of those lost to something much greater. Fast forward to the present and the drawings created by Odom during another, more recent global epidemic – Covid – attest to a similar feeling of *bonjour tristesse*, youthful faces tinged with hazard signs, assemblages of mechanical body parts ready to be torn apart in a crash test.

Adam Christensen stages intimate scenes in which the most banal occurrences become an enticing narrative – an often-dramatic language with explicit, tragicomic content drawn from memories of late-night parties or cruising – that mingles autobiography with fantasy. Handstitched memories floating weightlessly on textile curtains, anonymous faces and silhouettes, their mouths gaping wide open; or painted with nail varnish on to mirrors, windows and other transparent or reflective grounds. Christensen's testimony of fleeting encounters, unrequited love and broken hearts often bleeds into his performances, moments of pure grace during which the artist proffers spoken-word texts and love songs while accompanying himself on an accordion. However, in addition to this youthful angst, there is now an added weight, the loss in recent years of Christensen's mothers, the physical scars, and what remains, from that wrenching separation. *Oh well, hey* (2025), is just that, a personal altar, a memory palace composed of objects and trinkets that once belonged to Lise, and that the artist has lovingly arranged on Lise's mirror: a used lipstick, a watch, a pair of sunglasses, perfume, hand-rolled cigarettes... Sealed with a lipsticked kiss.

Perhaps a less agonising requiem, although one not necessarily less difficult to enact, can be located in the early videos of Barbara Hammer (1939-2019). In *Death of a Marriage* (1969), Hammer captures on film just that, the collapse – or, to be more accurate, the symbolic death – of her marriage, and with it everything that a stable partnership (with a man) ought to offer: a home in the woods, a horse corral built together, even an art studio. Yet, an alternative lifestyle, even a supposedly Edenic, idyllic one, is not enough to do away with the feelings of entrapment caused by playing proscribed roles in the theatre of heteronormativity. What we witness is a shedding of skins, a sacrificial performance necessary to kill off an old, imposed way of life, before arriving at a new threshold, the celebration of lesbian love, sexuality and identity that Hammer became celebrated for. Her off-screen chant in *X* (1975) seems to say it all. *This is my anger. This is my pain. These are the children I'm happy not to have.*

Requiem is not about death, per se, but it is about the risks one is willing to take for love, a radical love, one that is often situated outside of traditional socially validated institutions. It speaks to how painful and solitary the feeling and experience of loving can be. And how it's so worth it, despite, even maybe because of, the pain.

– Anya Harrison

Adam Christensen (born 1979 in Vejen, Denmark) lives and works in London. He creates works at the intersection of textiles, music, performance, and installation, combining autobiographical experience with theatrical stagings of everyday life, memory, desire, and identity. His performances, often incorporating singing, accordion, and spoken narratives, explore the relationship between space, storytelling, and audience. Selected solo exhibitions include Huset for Kunst og Design, Holstebro (2025); Horsens Art Museum, Horsens (2024); Tønder Art Museum, Tønder (2023); and Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2021).

Penny Goring (born 1962 in London, UK) lives and works in London. She creates drawings, sculptures, digital collages, videos, and texts that combine personal experiences of trauma, loss, and vulnerability with invented visual worlds and poetic language. Made using modest materials such as fabric, ballpoint pen, and textile dye, her work reflects the effects of social and financial precarity while asserting the power of artistic self-determination. Selected solo exhibitions include AMMA Foundation at Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City (2026); Arcadia Missa, London (2025); Treize, Paris (2024); Galerie Molitor, Berlin (2023); and ICA London (2022).

Barbara Hammer (1939, Hollywood, California, USA – 2019, New York, USA) was a filmmaker, artist, and one of the most influential figures of queer feminism. Through her documentary and experimental films, she created one of the earliest and most comprehensive bodies of work addressing lesbian identity, love, and sexuality over the course of more than five decades. Alongside film, her practice encompassed performance, installation, and works on paper. Hammer taught for many years and was Professor at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. Major retrospectives were held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010), Tate Modern, London (2012), alongside solo exhibitions at KOW, Berlin (from 2011). Since her passing, her work has continued to be presented internationally, including at Skulpturenmuseum Marl (2023), Ratio 3, San Francisco (2022), Frans Josefs Kai 3, Vienna (2021), Company Gallery, New York (2021), and La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona (2020).

Mel Odom (born 1950 in Richmond, Virginia, USA) lives and works in New York City. He creates drawings and illustrations with a dreamlike atmosphere, bringing together influences from Broadway theatre, Greek mythology, Hollywood noir, disco culture, and the visual language of the 1980s. He studied Fashion Illustration at Virginia Commonwealth University and at Leeds Polytechnic Institute in England before moving to New York in 1975. His work has appeared in numerous international publications, including *TIME*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Blue Boy*, and *Playboy*. He has also illustrated books by authors such as Roald Dahl, Joyce Carol Oates, Patrick White, Tom Robbins, and Edmund White for whom he made the cover illustration for *Nocturnes for the King of Naples* (1980). His work has received multiple awards and has been featured in several monographs. Selected solo exhibitions include Sea View, Los Angeles (2026); Sans titre, Paris (2026); David Lewis, New York (2023); and Daniel Cooney Fine Art, New York (2019).

Anya Harrison is a curator and writer based in Montpellier, France. She has a background in art history and literature at the University of Oxford, Université de Sorbonne – Paris IV and The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, and has worked internationally as an independent curator and within institutions. Since 2019, she is curator at MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain where she has organised solo presentations of Betty Tompkins (2021), Marilyn Minter (2021), Max Hooper Schneider (2022), Aurélien Potier (2024) and Ivana Bašić (2025), as well as thematic group exhibitions, such as *Soleil Triste* (2023) and *Sense Unknown* (2025). Previously, she has worked with Le Bicolore - La Maison de Danemark (Paris, 2023), the Kosovo Pavilion - 58th Venice Biennale (2019), the Baltic Triennial 13 (2017-2018), Manchester International Festival (2017) and Garage Museum of Contemporary Art (Moscow and London, 2011-2013).

Her research interests include sexual and body politics, questions relating to transgression, representation and marginality (and their limits), often read through feminist, avant-garde and subcultural lenses. She is currently working on a major group exhibition *Under the Skin*, opening at MO.CO. in June 2026, exploring the notion of monstrosity, mutant and monstrous forms in contemporary art, as well as a solo exhibition of June Crespo (December 2026) in collaboration with Secession, Vienna, and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin. As a writer, she contributes regularly to magazines (*Flash Art International*, *Frieze*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Numéro art*, *Arcane*), exhibition catalogues and other publications.

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