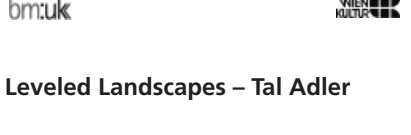# MemScreen Projects

About MemScreen

MemScreen project is funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), through the Program for Arts-based Research (PEEK). It is based at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. MemScreen is constructed to find new artistic methods to understand, document and represent narrations, private and "collective" memories, and politics of memory and history. MemScreen's artworks are created with particular methods for collecting and preserving information, and provide new possibilities for the understanding and appropriation of social issues.

Based on the thesis of a historical entanglement between Israel and Austria, the project MemScreen consciously and intentionally tackles the difficulties in the transformation of works of art and knowledge between Israel and Austria.

MemScreen team: Tal Adler, Friedemann Derschmidt, Attila Kosa, Karin Schneider
Board members: Marcus J. Carney, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, Ari Joskowicz, Don Laub, Eva Lezzi, Stefan Nowotny, Berta Pixner, Eytan Shouker, Hito Steyerl, Heidemarie Uhl
Funding institutions: Austrian Science Fund, Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department of Culture of the Tyrolean Regional Government; Department of Culture of the Upper Austrian Regional Government; Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna
Partner institutions: The Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon; The Museum of Natural History Vienna; The Petach Tikva Museum of Art; The Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue Vienna (lecture Michael Zupraner); The Wien Museum; Mode2Research –AIPO/Austria; Gnowsis.com, Vienna; Communications Engineering Institute, University Linz
Photo: Wehrschach / TAK-TIK (German propaganda game, 3rd Reich 1938-45), Private archive Friedemann Derschmidt, © Tal Adler, 2012

Leveled Landscapes – Tal Adler

The project researches the way Austria was (and still is) dealing with its history by looking at policies and practices regarding landscape and memory. The project is based on a series of landscape photographs all over Austria, shot through a spirit level (bubble level). The spirit level is a precision measurement tool; it is the precondition for leveling grounds and constructing new realities and evidence. It provides a visual assurance and a sense of reliability, and is commonly used as a tool in photography to assure a "natural" perception of the landscape. It is usually embedded in the photography equipment itself, and remains always "backstage" and invisible in the final image.

Landscape, one of the first subjects of photography, and one of the most captured, is neither neutral nor innocent.
The project raises questions regarding how we perceive and want landscape to be rendered; what is an acceptable and desired form of depicting and designing a landscape. The choice of the specific landscapes which are chosen invites a reading in the context of the debate regarding the creation of historical and national histories.

Funded by: Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department of Culture of the Tyrolean Regional Government (for the Tyrol chapter); SOLA Austria
Photo: Hunters' hut near Museum Perlmanhof, Bad Eisenkappel / Železna Kapla, Carinthia, 2012
© Tal Adler

The Skull Collection at the Natural History Museum, Vienna* – Tal Adler

The Anthropological department at the Natural History Museum in Vienna stores a collection of approximately 40,000 human skulls behind glass vitrines. Since the founding of the Department in 1876, various specimens were collected to provide research material for the developing field. A current research on the origins and purpose of the skull collection, lead by head of the department, Dr. Maria Teschler-Nicola, is underway.
A 30 meters long and 4 meters high display with around 10,000 of the skulls is located at a long hall at the anthropological department. Tal Adler photographed it, traveling parallel to the display, with over a hundred high-resolution captures. The files will be "stitched" together to create a super high-resolution, life size print of the skull display. The hall-size print

will be exhibited in representative and national institutions at the various origin countries of the skulls. The exhibitions will offer symbolic restitution. They will offer a platform to continue national and international discussions regarding the fate of artifacts and human remains exhibited and stored in museums and archives. Communities and peoples' representatives will be asked to participate in events around the exhibition, telling about the displacements of their artifacts, memories, knowledge and cultures.

In collaborations with The Anthropological department at the Natural History Museum in Vienna, The shooting was supported by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and Digital Store Vienna

*(part of the application Conserved Memories)
Photo: Natural History Museum, Vienna, 2012
© Tal Adler

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Dispersed Fragments – Tal Adler and Karin Schneider

We investigate Vienna's "places of memory", where history is displayed and taught: Small district museums (Bezirksmuseen), that are not prestigious, hardly included in official guides but rather in elementary schools' field trips, memorials like "The Exhibition in Vienna's Otto Wagner Hospital: On the History of Nazi Medicine in Vienna", or non-official Memorials like the Flak towers (military towers from WWII). On the other hand we examine details of the displays in the big, representative institutions like the military museum (Heeresgeschichtliche Museum), or the museum of Vienna (Wien Museum). All of these representations of memory invite multiple interpretations and support different aims and

agendas, which pertain to different viewpoints of the past as well as of the present. Our project provides a series of photographs of these places with sometimes surprising displays, room installations, specific objects and tableaus, combined with texts about the findings. The texts are also based on interviews with experts in this field and the workers of the institutions. Our aim is to understand how the production of history and its blind-spots functions in Vienna, a place so permeated with history.

Photo: Vienna's 15th district museum (Bezirksmuseum Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus), 2012
© Tal Adler

Voluntary Participation* – Tal Adler

The project "Voluntary Participation" creates a conceptual bridge between groups of Austrian Civil Society in the past, and the same groups of contemporary Austria, 2012. Within our understanding of Civil Society are: clubs; co-operatives; religious organizations; academia; professional associations; labor unions; NGOs, social movements; youth organizations; support groups and so on.
The groups are invited to be photographed in a group-portrait. The invitations are based on events in which the groups were involved (mostly but not always during National Socialism). The participation in this project allows the groups to be challenged with the concepts of heritage, complicity, responsibility, guilt, commemoration, and group politics. The correspondence and negotiations with the groups is regarded as part of the project,

not only as technical strategies to obtain the photographs, but also as a platform for researching the premises of memory and heritage in contemporary Austrian civil society.
The project operates within the genre of group photography – a genre with a legacy of its own, a history and a "memory". Being aware of the genre's "language", the project builds another conceptual bridge between the heritage and conventions of the genre and the possibility to use them as a tool for social and aesthetical analyses.

Funded by: Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department of Culture of the Tyrolean Regional Government (for the Tyrol chapter)
*(part of the application Conserved Memories)
Photo: Centropa Pessach dinner, Jewish Community Center, Vienna, 2012
www.centropa.org
©Tal Adler

The Phantom of Memory – Friedemann Derschmidt

Israeli poet Ilana Shmueli is researching memory. She investigates her own recollection of a story that happened, as she puts it, "at the margins of the Holocaust".
She was born in 1924 in Czernowitz. In October 1941, all Jews were ordered to move to the Ghetto. On her way to the Ghetto with the family's belongings, 17-year-old Ilana was approached by a Romanian Army officer. He offered her escape from Czernowitz. Not wishing to leave her family, Ilana refused. Ilana and her family survived the Holocaust and emigrated to Palestine in 1944.
Time and again, Ilana returns to the story of the officer, making a key incident in her "Holocaust Story." In each retelling, the story evolves. A police artist is brought in to create

a facial composite of the officer, and objects from her past are used as evidence in her attempt to catch the phantom of her memory. The Phantom of Memory is a film and a fine arts project.

Director: Friedemann Derschmidt
Script: Friedemann Derschmidt, Karin Schneider, Ilana Shmueli
Camera: Oliver Schneider, Friedemann Derschmidt, Marcus J. Carney, Eytan Shouker
Editor: Elke Groen
Sound: Amir Bowerman
Producer: Kurt Mayer
Funded by: Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna
Photo: Video still, Oliver Schneider
© Kurt Mayer Film / Friedemann Derschmidt

"Reichel komplex"* – Friedemann Derschmidt

"Reichel komplex" is a Community Web 2.0 Platform created by Friedemann Derschmidt as a closed weblog for the members of his extended family. The project aims to collect family myths and narratives, as well as support family members as they confront the sensitive questions of the culpability and involvement of their ancestors in the Nazi movement.
Following a period of two years restricted access and an on-going research process together with a scientific advisory board consisting of historians, sociologists, psychologists etc., parts of the Reichel Komplex archive will soon be published using different media. Reichel Komplex has already served as a knowledge base for background material on

the famous Austro-Columbian anthropologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, after historians revealed his Nazi criminal past in July 2012.

Funded by: Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department of Culture of the Upper Austrian Regional Government
*(part of the application Conserved Memories)
Photo: Reichel family picture, unknown photographer, 1941
© Reichel komplex Archive

8 x Roubicek* – Friedemann Derschmidt

Marcel Roubicek, who spent most of his life in Israel/Palestine, is a blind old man living in an old-people's home in Prague. In 8 x Roubicek he tells his remarkable life's story in a series of eight interviews. The interviews are conducted by alternating male and female interviewers, in Czech, German, Hebrew and Arabic, the languages through which he lived his unlikely tale. The result is a multi-channel video installation concerned with identity, language, memory and storytelling.
In the interviews, Roubicek changes his style of speech depending on the interviewers' language, gender or even personal background. Like the four gospels' synoptic tellings of the story of Jesus, Roubicek narrates his own life

story, but in eight, not four, different tellings. By putting the viewer to experience the videos this way, we hope to provoke a discussion on ambiguity in oral interviewing as well as the multi-layered nature of personal memory.

Camera: Tal Adler, Friedemann Derschmidt
Interviewers: Yakov Stassny, Tal Adler, Abbe Libansky, Barbara Zeidler, Osama Zatar, Jasmin Avissar, Ghaila Jaber, Jana Hradiková
Thanks to: Hubert Mühlbacher, Ludwig Löckinger, Yoav Weiss, Břetislav Tureček
Funded by: Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna
*(part of the application Conserved Memories)
Photo: Video still
© Friedemann Derschmidt

MemArchive / Memory Technologies and Digital Infrastructures in Holocaust Heritage Preservation – Attila Kosa

The deeper analysis of contemporary archive and media-theory makes radical changes in cultural memory conceptions visible. Archives are generally not about memory, as Pierre Nora reminds us, but about storage practices. Remembrance is always situated outside the archives, situated in the minds of humans who are stimulated by media – creating what communication science refers to as Mnemic Phenomena. In the context of attempts to teach the lessons of the Holocaust, this conceptual shift makes possible new models of digital memory partly based on advanced e-learning technology.
Inspired by the rich outcomes of MemScreen projects, MemArchive was undertaken as an

exploratory case study from the perspective of knowledge engineering and information sciences. This research was meant to complete the approach of the MemScreen art projects by focussing on questions about socio-technical trends and future scenarios in digital heritage preservation. Eventually, the MemArchive research project will gather new usage scenarios for virtual infrastructures in Holocaust education.

Study Author: Attila Kosa/Mode2Research, Vienna
Project Partners: Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna; Gnowsis.com, Vienna; Communications Engineering Institute, University Linz
Photo:
Jewish Museum, Vienna, 2012
© Attila Kosa

Artistic Research, Lectures and Residencies – Karin Schneider

Karin Schneider observes and documents how art methods in the MemScreen project are developed in order to describe the way art-based research in history can be done. She has been organizing a wide range of interviews and open lectures with MemScreen's board members, artists from Israel and Austria, and relevant experts. She wants to grasp how the divergent Israeli and Austrian contexts shape the understanding of art methods that deal with the blind spots of one's own society and history. MemScreen project has launched an open call in Israel and Austria to invite artists for short-term residencies. The resident artists hold lectures, participate in our research program, and engage with each

other's foreign contexts to create new artworks. Karin Schneider interviews the artists, observes audience reactions to their presentations and analyses them.
Karin's research enables MemScreen's artworks to be grounded in history and social research. She supplies the relevant publications and archive material about organizations and acquaints the participants of MemScreen with the main local initiatives and researchers.

Resident artists in Vienna: Michal Bar Or, Shimon Lev (co-funded by the Israeli Embassy in Austria), Ruti Sela and Maayan Amir, Michael Zupraner
Resident artists in Israel: Vida Rakonsky, Edi Freudmann, Kati Morawek, Niko Wahl
Photo: The Paintings Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Plaster Cast Collection, 2011
© Michal Bar Or