

Artistic Design

Memorial Commemorating the Homosexual and Transgender Victims of the Nazi Regime at Morzinplatz

HANS KUPELWIESER: DER ROSA PLATZ

In collaboration with: Günther Dreger, Benedikt Frass

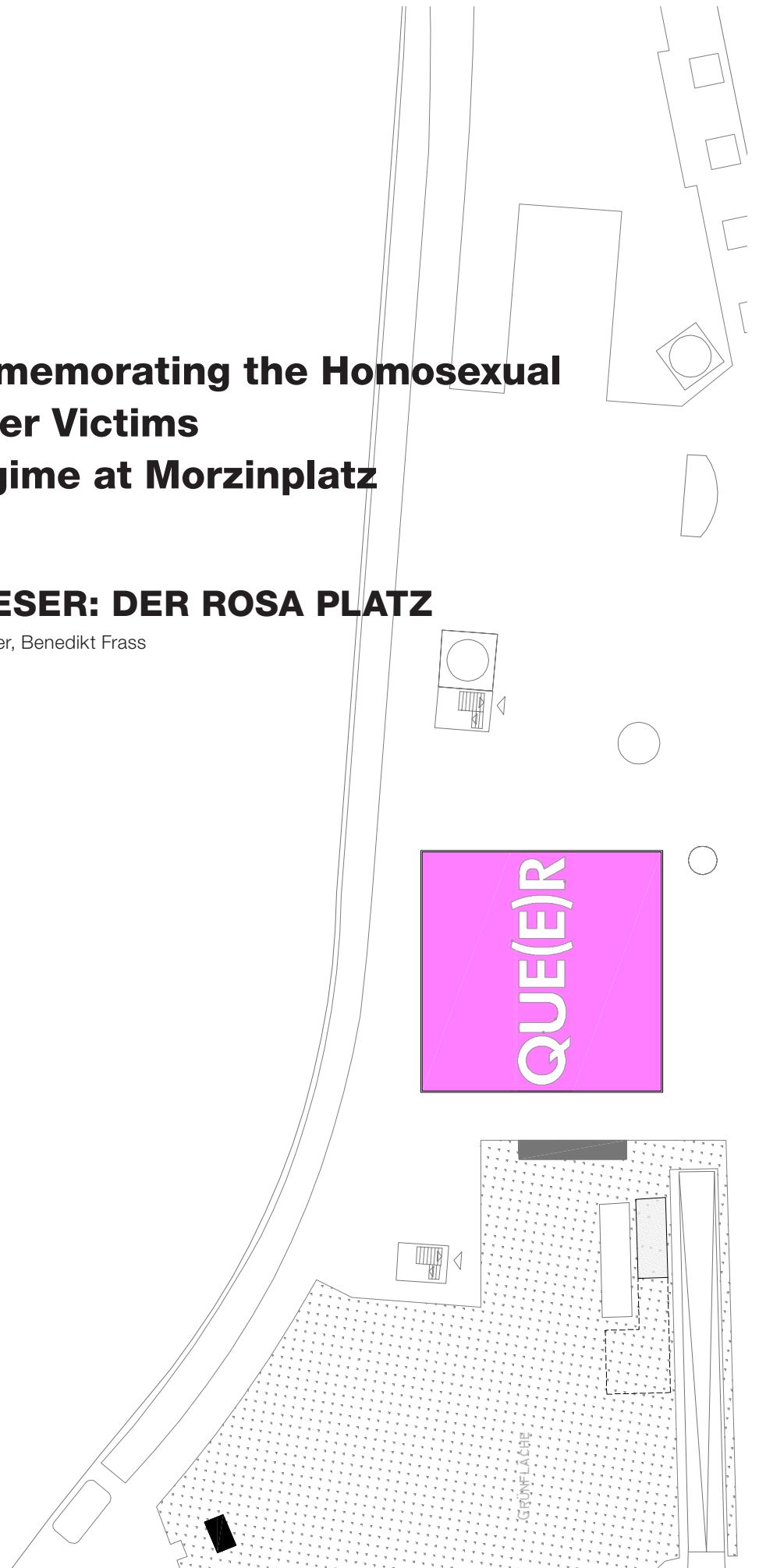


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Setting up a Memorial Commemorating the Homosexual and Transgender Victims of the Nazi Regime in Vienna

Vienna is going to have a memorial commemorating the homosexual and transgender victims of the Nazi Regime. Such a place of memory is supposed to make both, passersby and the broad public representing Vienna's city life, aware of the fact that under the National Socialist dictatorship, persons had been persecuted, deported and murdered because of their sexual orientation and identity together with many other groups of victims.

This initiative was launched on the occasion of the anniversary year of the Austrian Republic 2005 by Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science, and Sonja Wehsely, the City Councillor responsible for antidiscrimination. *"Fifty years following the defeat of National Socialism and the end of World War II, it is – especially in the anniversary year of the Austrian Republic – absolutely imperative to remember a group of victims who were not just forgotten during the past fifty years but were also subject to criminal persecution. The lacking recognition of homosexuals in Austria is also reflected by the fact that only as a result of the big reform of criminal law in 1971, homosexual acts were no longer deemed criminal. It is clearly high time to signal to the community that it determines an important part of this city."*, states Andreas Mailath-Pokorny at the press conference on the 15th of June, 2005 which took place on the occasion of the invitation to the competition.

The City of Vienna's Department for Cultural Affairs and Science and its Department for Integration, Questions of Women's Rights, Consumer's Protection and Human Resources decided Morzinplatz square, situated at the edge of the Inner City at Donaukanal, to be the location for the memorial. *"The erection of a monument for the homosexual and transgender victims of the Nazi Period in Vienna is an important step – especially at Morzinplatz where the Gestapo had their headquarters. In 2001, as a part of the Europride event, a beam for the homosexual and transgender victims of the Nazi Regime was added to the monument at Morzinplatz. The City of Vienna is now taking up the community's idea."* explained City Councillor Sonja Wehsely at the press conference mentioned above.



Morzinplatz, Vienna

That is why **Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien (Art in Public Space Vienna)** invited seven artists to participate in an international competition. Wissenschaftszentrum Wien organized the competition. The advisory board for **Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien** and members of the jury coopted as experts decided on the submitted concepts. A community board with representatives from Vienna's main lesbian, gay and transgender institutions, created especially for this competition, had also been incorporated in the discussion process.

The project *Der Rosa Platz* submitted by the Austrian artist *Hans Kupelwieser* is going to be realized.

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Der Rosa Platz

Der Rosa Platz (The Pink Place) consists in a shallow basin full of water at Morzinplatz with a surface of 400 m². The water is pink. The letters “QUE(E)R” look out of the basin as a relief. They allow crossing the basin.

“QUE(E)R” stands for the homosexuals and transgenders persecuted and murdered in the past. “QUE(E)R” is an independent “platform” and a basis for the future of those who (sexually) think in a different way. “QUE(E)R” is an internationally valid name for gays, lesbians, intersexuals and transgenders, i. e. for those who break the rules of hetero-normativity. “Unconventional thinker” (“Querdenker” in German), “to be crosswise” (“quer sein”), “to oppose to something” (“sich querlegen”) are further associations which the term “QUE(E)R” provokes. “QUE(E)R” builds a bridge across time. It is memory; it breaks traditions, opens new ways and makes waves.

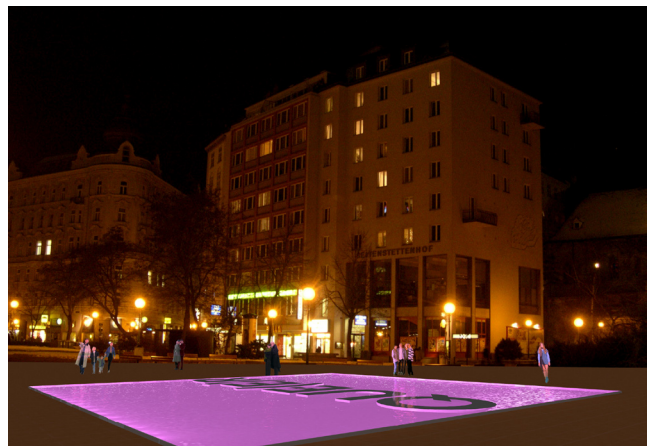
The colour pink of *Der Rosa Platz* reminds of the “Rosa Winkel” (pink triangle), it reminds of the people who were persecuted and murdered because of their sexual orientation during the Nazi period.

“QUE(E)R” is an open place for an open-minded society. *Der Rosa Platz* is a place to meet, a site of contemplation. “QUE(E)R” is a water sculpture, a design with identity. In this place, at *Der Rosa Platz*, the borders become blurred: Who is “different”? Those who balance on the letters “QUE(E)R”? Those wading through the pink water? Or is it the outside observers?

Like a “red” carpet, “QUE(E)R” leads to the Inner City which, at the same time, is reflected on its surface. This temporary reproduction of the city gets overlapped by reflections of the passersby and invites them to stay, to watch and to remember.



Der Rosa Platz in the daylight



Der Rosa Platz at night

Water is an important element of city designing, it has a relaxing effect and creates an agreeable atmosphere. In summer, it evaporates in the sun and, as a result, emits cool air into the environment.

Hans Kupelwieser

Hans Kupelwieser

Hans Kupelwieser is regarded as one of the most consequent representatives of Austria's post medial sculpture. His work is to be situated within the so-called "Expanded Field". This term was formed by the American art historian Rosalind E. Krauss concerning the sculpture of the seventies which broke the limits of the traditional genre by integrating and forming the surroundings. Regarding *Kupelwieser's* work, this expansion is not only confined to the capture of space, but also to the experimental use of new materials. Hardly any other artist handles the keyboard of material and media-immanent variety like he does.

In the tension between the classical categories sculpture and photography – in his work they do not only co-exist equally but, furthermore, interact methodically – the sculptor deals with the traditional conflict between area and object, which culminates in an interplay between two- and three-dimensionality. By using the photogramme, a simple photographic method of illustration without a camera by which objects are directly arranged and exposed on sensitized paper, *Kupelwieser* found an ideal means to transform objects into pictures, that is to say into two-dimensional negative pictures. As an indexical sign, namely the print of a real object, shade and mark are able to visualize the object in space.

Kupelwieser uses the photographic effect of turning positive into negative for reprojecting objects into the third dimension. Like a picture puzzle, his photogrammatical works oscillate between the contrasts positive – negative, area – space, presence – absence. Pointed out as precise analysis, *Kupelwieser's* works also present the absent in a concentrated way. Dealing with the Holocaust and its victims, he articulates the irretrievable loss by making the blank space a subject.

It is to mention that, within *Hans Kupelwieser's* multiform and strictly conceived oeuvre, some monuments reminding of National Socialist atrocities have already been realized, for example the Erinnerungsstätte für die Widerstandsgruppe Kirchl-Trauttmannsdorff (Memorial for the Kirchl-Trauttmannsdorff Resistance Group) in St. Pölten in 1988, the memorial "Ohne Titel" ("Without a Title") at the Jewish cemetery in Krems in 1995, and the memorial "Standpunkt Geschichte" ("Standpoint History") commemorating the



Hans Kupelwieser

former synagogue in Hietzing in 2004. That is due to the fact that *Kupelwieser's* monuments and memorials are able to present substantial concerns in a rigid form, far from expressive sentimentalism or emotional gesture of bewilderment. By all means of formal discretion, *Kupelwieser* has repeatedly succeeded in very much setting the spectator's thinking in motion.

Hans Kupelwieser was born in Lunz am See (Lower Austria) in 1948. He lives and works in Vienna where he attended Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt from 1970 to 1973. From 1976 to 1982, *Kupelwieser* studied at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst Wien with Herbert Tasquil, Bazon Brock and Peter Weibel. Since 1995, he has been professor at the Institute for Contemporary Art at the University of Technology in Graz.

The Jury's Argumentation

With his idea of *Der Rosa Platz*, Hans Kupelwieser reflects on commemorating and remembering the horrors of National Socialism in a convincing and modern way. In the form of a large surface basin which is twenty metres by twenty, he creates an urban sign that is clearly visible without being dominant. For its dimensions, the basin asks for both attention and urbanistic generosity.

Its visibility is of particular importance because it is not assumed that a programmatic work of art like the memorial is noticed with an accuracy that satisfies the artist's intention and message.

Der Rosa Platz is present in a self-confident way; because of its horizontal position, however, it too remains appropriate in comparison to the monuments for the other groups of victims.

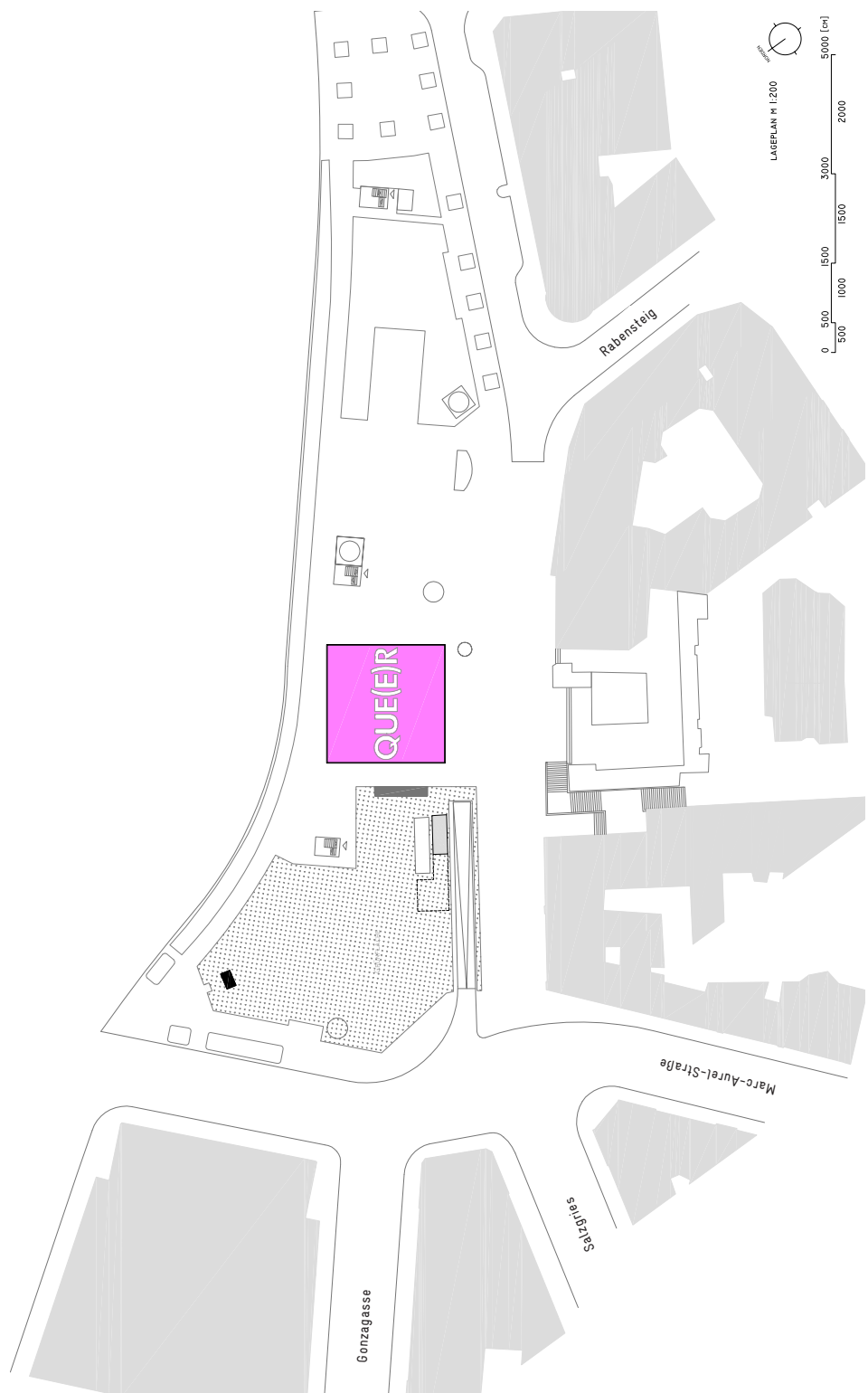
So *Kupelwieser* is conscious of the fact that there are already several references to the terrors of National Socialism in the area of Morzinplatz. At the same time, he deals with the "task" memorial in a critical way by radically detaching his concept from traditional solutions as sculpture or the monument in the city. The medium water surface is constantly stirring and symbolically communicates depth by its colour. The location which is going to be created is a place of meditation, a place of peace and pause. Particularly because of its colour, it explicitly reminds of the gays, lesbians and transgenders as a group of victims which had been hushed up for a long time.

The colour pink had already been attributed to gay men before the period of National Socialism in a discriminating way. Focusing on the colour pink refers to the practise of extermination in the concentration camps and, at the same time, draws a bow towards a wider period of time. Since later the colour pink was consciously adopted by the homosexual movement as a sign for liberation and in order to visualize same-sex desire. The term "QUE(E)R" in large-sized letters has a double meaning: it is a generic term for those who break the rules of heterosexual norms in the sense of "exotic", "strange" or just "queer"; at the same time it stands for a glance at history because homosexuals were oppressed and persecuted during the first centuries of the Second Republic too, and the total prohibition of homosexual acts ("Totalverbot") was only removed in 1971. So the work draws the bow from the persecution of homosexuals during the Nazi Regime to the emancipation movement of gays and lesbians, from the past rich in victims to an emancipated present time and future in an exciting way.

The artist has already dealt with the subject "memorial" several times; he is conscious of how difficult it is to approach the most important clash of civilization in the 20th century and carries out his analyses from the angle of present time. Representatives of the different communities had also been incorporated in the discussion process about the submitted concepts. Many of them commented on *Kupelwieser's* project in a positive way.

Both the letters integrated into the basin, which is characterized by its elegant and shallow water surface, as well as this entire place of commemoration *Kupelwieser* created, stand for the possibility of an open-minded contact with homosexuality, and they are a visible sign against its suppression in society. Being within a (tourist) access area to the historical centre of Vienna, the memorial formulates an esthetic mark for the open-mindedness of a Central European metropolis.

General Plan Morzinplatz



Competition for the Artistic Design of a Memorial at Morzinplatz Commemorating the Homosexual and Transgender Victims of the Nazi Regime in Austria

AA Bronson (CAN)

Born in Vancouver (Canada) in 1946; he lives and works in New York. AA Bronson was one of three members of the Canadian artists group General Idea (1969–1994). After his two partners' deaths due to AIDS, Bronson continued to work under his own name. Since then, AA Bronson's work is marked by his own experience with illness and death. It is remarkable how he succeeds in formulating universally valid statements about global tragedies as AIDS by means of rigid formal concepts or a sign code borrowed from the Holocaust and beyond his own experiences. Bronson still approaches taboo themes as illness and death with a humanity that does not allow suspecting him of any ostentatious scandal making.

Tom Burr (USA)

Born in New Haven (USA) in 1963; he lives and works in New York. Tom Burr belongs to a generation of artists who, since the early nineties and starting from an analysis of Minimal Art, deal with the political and critical implications of art. The notions of "adoption" and "sampling" could stand for the methods Tom Burr applies in order to expose the ingrained structures of power and to unmask and bypass social coding. Burr juggles with existent forms, colours, materials, and contents, and he breaks rigidities through displacement – often between public space and exposition hall, too. Burrs architectural and sculptural work shows places of every day life and subculture like public toilets, garden hedges, porn cinemas, gloomy bars, and video rooms.

Ines Doujak (A)

Born in Klagenfurt (Austria) in 1959; she lives and works in Vienna. In her mostly long-time projects, Ines Doujak examines the rules of sexual forming and sexual behaviour as a society's structural and constitutional elements. Aiming at the transformation of collective angles, Doujak deals with media stereotypes as far as the so called "being different" (being Jewish, black, woman, immigrant, and homosexual) is concerned. Her photography, installations and performative works in public space manifest subjectivity and desire, as well as social power and structures of violence.

Michael Elmgreen (DK) & Ingar Dragset (N)

Michael Elmgreen was born in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 1961, Ingar Dragset was born in 1969 in Trondheim (Norway); they live and work in Berlin. The Danish-Norwegian duo Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset have been ranking among the internationally mostly demanded artists during the last ten years. Dealing with conventional patterns of perception, Elmgreen & Dragset reveal their work in the intermediate zone between art, architecture and design, using a variety of media. Their objects, performances, installations in space and environment result from ideological meanings which present areas of life where social power is exerted on the individual. Having become sensitive by watching the world from the gay artist couple's angle in a middle class urban society, Elmgreen & Dragset precisely analyse conventional premises and patterns in social life.

Matt Mullican (USA)

Born in Santa Monica (USA) in 1951; he lives and works in New York. During years of artistic work, the US artist Matt Mullican has developed his own universe of symbolic forms, an imaginary world consisting of a collection of found and imagined signs. Mullican creates a highly complex system of pictures, signs and symbols of a global culture breaking up into fragments rapidly. Mullican expresses this phenomenon in the variety of the artistic means he uses and links.

Ann-Sofi Sidén (S)

Born in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1962; she lives and works in Berlin, New York and Stockholm. The Swedish artist Ann-Sofi Sidén deals with socio-political themes and does her research in a nearly scientific way; she includes psychological aspects as well as questions of gender and sexuality. Sidén lends shape to her well thought-out subject complexes in an artistically creative way, being critical of symbols. She realizes her works in the form of sculpture – in a wider sense –, photography, film, and text.

**Competition for the Artistic Design of a Memorial
Commemorating the Homosexual and Transgender Victims
of the Nazi Regime in Austria**

Public Promise of Reward from

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in cooperation with

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Patronage

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Realization

Wissenschaftszentrum Wien

Direction

Roland Schöny

Execution

Clemens Haslinger

The Jury

Silvia Eiblmayr director Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck

Berthold Ecker director Referat Bildende Kunst der Stadt Wien
(Department for Visual Arts of the City of Vienna)

Matthias Herrmann president Wiener Secession, professor
for art and photography at Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna

Brigitte Huck free curator and writer

Edelbert Köb director Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna

Wolfgang Kos director Wien Museum

Frank Wagner project management Realismusstudio,
Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin

Wolfgang Wilhelm Wiener Antidiskriminierungsstelle
für Gleichgeschlechtliche Lebensweisen
(Anti Discrimination Office for Same-Sex Ways of Life)

Expert

Franz Kobermaier Dezernat Gestaltung öffentlicher Raum, MA 19:
Architektur und Stadtgestaltung (Department Design of Public Space,
MA 19: Architecture and City Design)

Technical Consultant

Michael Rieper

Preliminary Technical Examination

Thomas Sandri (Die Firma/Technik für Kunstwerke)

Textual Research

Alexander Mejstrik (Political Topography at Morzinplatz)

Wolfgang Wilhelm (Persecution of Homosexuals Because of their
Sexual Orientation During the Nazi Period and Afterwards)

Specialized Consultation

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ministrated by the culture department.

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Minutes

Katrin Oberhofer

Management and Administrative Organisation

Astrid Rypar

Project Management and Curatorial Support

Roland Schöny

Contact

MA 7 – Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien

Friedrich-Schmidt-Platz 5, 1080 Wien

Tel.: 0043-1-4000-84 752

E-Mail: ryp@m07.magwien.gv.at

Editors

Alexandra Henning, Roland Schöny, w.hoch2wei

Editorial Assistance

Clemens Haslinger

Proof-Reading

Horst Ebner

Translation

Emilie Brandl

Grafik-Design

erwin bauer konzept & gestaltung

Picture Credits

Clemens Haslinger p.3, Nikolaus Korab p.5, Hans Kupelwieser p.4

Press

Christina Werner

w.hoch.2wei, Kulturelles Projektmanagement

Breitegasse 17/4, 1070 Wien

Tel.: 0043-1-524 96 46-22

Fax: 0043-1 524 96 32

E-Mail: werner@kunstnet.at

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**Birgit Brodner, Bernhard Denscher, Günther Dreger, Sonja
Graf-Barhoumi, Sigrit Fleiß, Benedikt Frass, Thomas Haffner,
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