

The Art of Memory

Variations around women choreographers of the Viennese Avant-Garde

a composition for an evening in 3 stations

“Qing” by Simon Wachsmuth / “Fast ein Wunder” by Loulou Omer / Performative exchange with the audience

Compagnie Ode et encore



Loulou Omer

PRESENTATION

A three-part evening, conceived by Loulou Omer and Simon Wachsmuth, co-produced by Regarding Art - Verein für polyartistische Kunst & Compagnie Ode et encore (2023)

The evening is divided into three parts that take us through fragments of dance history. Icons of Viennese modern dance take centre stage: Dita and Gertie Tenger as well as Gertrud Kraus. These choreographers are closely linked to the family history of Loulou Omer and Simon Wachsmuth and have also influenced their respective artistic expression:

- The **screen-dance video installation "Qing"** is a tribute to Gertie and Dita Tenger, grandmother and great-aunt of Simon Wachsmuth, dancers and choreographers of Viennese Modernism, icons of free dance.
- The **polyartistic performance "Fast Ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus"** (15 min.) is a homage to Gertrud Kraus, one of the most important choreographers of Expressionism and the Viennese avant-garde of the interwar period. Kraus was a dance teacher to Loulou Omer's mother, who joined her company and later founded her own dance school.
- A **performative exchange with the audience** in the form of a playful-intuitive encounter.

With this combination, both artists want to place the question of memory and personal biography in a broader historical context. The works set out in search of the artistic traces that we carry within us as heirs, in the way in which body gestures and dance are transformed, which change not only in time and place, but also through their reactivation in a different time of artistic expression. These are the questions that will be exchanged and discussed with the audience.

STATION 1 - Qing - screen dance installation / 2 channels video projection, HD colour 2016 | Length: 22'30

Concept, idea and direction: Simon Wachsmuth in collaboration with Loulou Omer (choreography, dance) | **Director of photography/video/ editing:** Simon Wachsmuth

STATION 2 - *Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus (2022)* - An intimate choreographic ode - For all ages | Length: 15'

Concept, text, music, choreography and performance:
Loulou Omer

Artistic collaboration/image and video:
Goran Rebić

Dramaturgy: Tal Omer

Lighting and technology: Dulci Jan

Sound designer: Gustavo Petek

Special Thanks to Nataša Mirković und Danilo Rebić

Fast Ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus
A choreographic and poly-artistic performance.

Fast ein Wunder has been commissioned by Andrea Amort / Verein Lebendiges Tanz-Archiv Wien as part of the exhibition "Alles tanzt. Kosmos Wiener Tanzmoderne" at the Vienna Theatre Museum (2019).

Production: Regarding Art - Verein für polyartistische Kunst

Co-productions and support: Verein Lebendiges Tanz-Archiv | Theatrumuseum Wien | ImPulsTanz - Vienna International Dance Festival 2021 | MUK - University of Music and Performing Arts of the City of Vienna

STATION 3 - Performative exchange with the audience

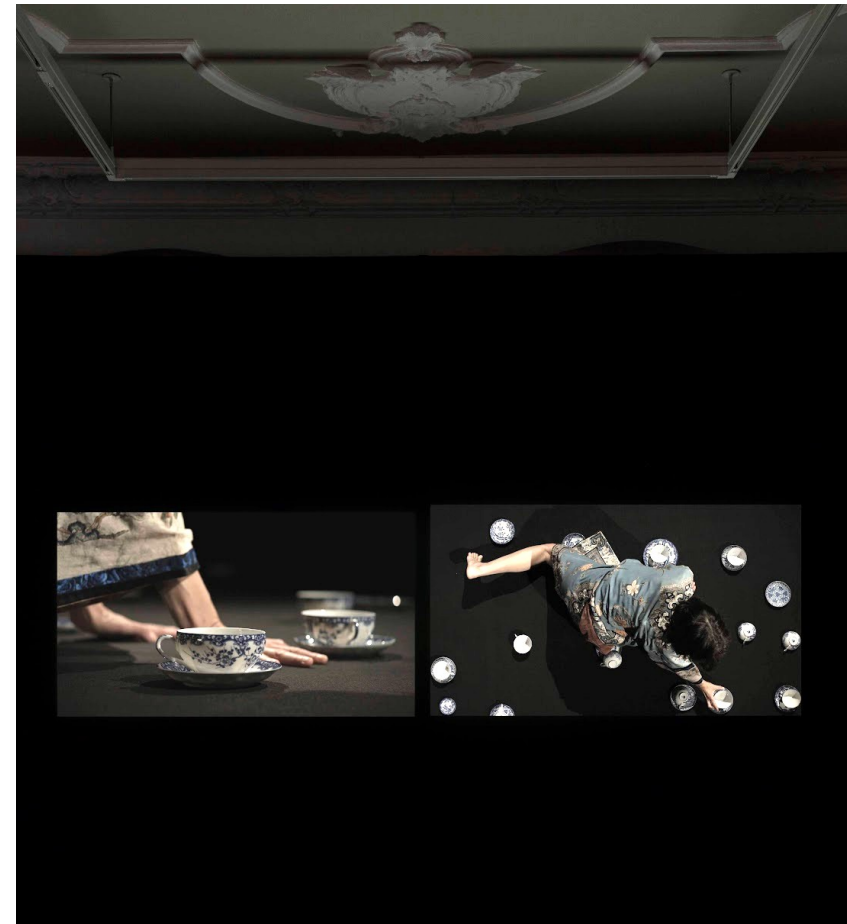
STATION 1 - SCREEN-DANCE INSTALLATION (25 min)

QING by Simon Wachsmuth

How can history be depicted using artistic means? What possibilities are there to create current references to past events and how can interaction with material objects contribute to such a process? What kind of "body baggage" does a dancer take with her when she is forced into exile? These are some of the questions that Simon Wachsmuth answers in his video installation "Qing".

Simon Wachsmuth's family is closely linked to the dance avant-garde of the early 20th century. Not only is the artist the grandson of Viennese dancer Gertie Tenger, but Dita, his great-aunt, his German-born grandfather Werner Wachsmuth and his sister Ellinor Tordis were also modern dancers. With the rise of fascism in Germany and Austria, the situation for the Tenger sisters became increasingly threatening due to their Jewish origins. Wachsmuth's great-aunt Dita did not return to Vienna from a trip to Shanghai in the mid-1930s, and her sister Gertie also looked for ways to escape persecution by the regime. Gertie tried to travel to Shanghai to join her sister. However, she was refused permission to travel to the country of refuge. Her parents were murdered in the Sobibor and Theresienstadt concentration camps. She survived the Nazi era in Vienna with her son.

At a time when it was still possible to receive mail from China in Vienna, Gertie Tenger-Wachsmuth received a parcel from her sister Dita, who had moved to Shanghai to escape National Socialism. The parcel contained three silk robes from the late Qing dynasty, which ruled the Chinese empire from 1644 to 1911.





The choreographer and dancer Loulou Omer, wearing the robes of this ancient court, moves in a dark room and through a fan of blue and white porcelain bowls and cups. The Chinese robes and porcelain are not only part of Wachsmuth's family history, they are themselves carriers of a migration history.

The video installation "Qing" is a choreographed journey through time and space. The film accompanies Gertie Tenger on the journey she was never able to make: from Vienna to Shanghai, from West to East. "Qing" plays with the material and the suggestive qualities of the objects, the delicacy of the fabric and the fragility of the porcelain. Loulou Omer's choreography and dance animate the objects, which sometimes offer protection, sometimes represent a disturbing encounter with the unknown. Although the objects are interwoven with the artist's family history, they transcend their meaning into the present and thus tell a story of uprooting and the experience of being a stranger.





STATION 2 - POLYARTISTIC PERFORMANCE DANCE/MUSIC/POETRY (15 min.)

Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus, a piece about Gertrud Kraus and her work, was commissioned by the curator Andrea Amort/Verein Lebendiges Tanz-Archiv Wien and the MUK (University of Music and Arts of the City of Vienna) as part of the exhibition "***Alles tanzt. Kosmos Wiener Tanzmoderne***" at the Vienna Theatre Museum. Loulou Omer's family history is closely linked to that of Kraus. However, she was not aware of Kraus' influence on her life for a long time.

This intimate choreographic ode is the result of a phantom dialogue between Gertrud Kraus and myself. A ghost dialogue, because the interlocutor is no longer among the living and her work has left few traces. It is listening in on an absence.

Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus is like touching a buried mystery that would predetermine the course of a life. They are the desire to revive that which is no longer, to communicate with that which is absent, to trace the realm of the forgotten, a fleeting past. It is a dialogue with the enigma of our existence, it is our relationship to history, to heritage, to memory.

Above all, it is a tribute to a woman whose life, passion and work have contributed to who I am today. Also to my happiness. It is a tribute to my mother, who taught me all this as a mother and in her work. Ultimately, with this piece I want to celebrate all mothers, not just biological mothers, but all those who have lived, worked and given and then disappeared from the narrative of history.

Re-enacting - re-constituting, is it bringing the past to life, making it present, giving it substance? Or would it be the making of the only image, like a facade behind which hides emptiness, absence, death, like the imprint of something that is no longer? And if it is the only imprint, would it not be precisely the very nature of memory? Memory as an imprint of a past event in our mind. And memory, would it not be a living thing, present and shareable?

These are the questions that led me to "grope" with my whole body in the photographic imprints of the dancer Gertrude Kraus, in particular in my personal archives, to make myself an imprint, to invest myself in a gestural corporeality, restraint, measured movements, stopped, and questioning the nature of this present time, performative of re-enactment, of its vitality, and of its relationship to me.

It is a back and forth between a "body-imprint" and a vibrating body - a presence in search of its landmarks, its history, its form and its movement - a body always in a state of becoming.

It is the desire to capture this elusive time that made me place the two scenic objects, a table and a piano, as far apart as possible - almost at the edge of the stage, leaving a great void between them. The present at the front and the past at the back, and between the two is what I reincarnate. A simple table, which I find every time in the theatre, on the spot, a table which belongs to here and now, where I am, where I work, where I ask my questions and tell my story to the public. The piano belongs to the past, to the heritage that I was offered without knowing it, to my personal, intimate history, to the unconscious perhaps. It is in the space that separates them, without objects or landmarks, neither present nor past, in this void, that my mother's song finds me.

STATION 3 - Performative exchange with the audience

An important part of the evening is the exchange with the audience in order to reflect on the topics of the evening. A playful and intuitive approach is used to break down inhibitions and enable a different approach.

Playful experiments will be carried out with an artistic, collective-popular heirloom that is defined in advance with the institution and in relation to the cultural background of the audience. Whether artist, song, narrative, image... like an archive fragment, we will call it forth from the past in order to revive together a piece of our history, our roots, our heritage, which may otherwise remain hidden. "Witnesses" can also be invited.

Depending on the interests and possibilities of the venue and the audience, the performative exchange will be developed together in order to respond to the specific needs of the audiences.

LOULOU OMER - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Choreographer, author, musician and composer

Originally from Israel, Loulou Omer is a dancer, choreographer, musician and poet. In Tel Aviv, she takes music and dance lessons as a child with the encouragement of her mother Zipporah Omer, herself being a dancer from an early age with the renowned avant-garde choreographer [Gertrud Kraus](#).

At the age of 20, Loulou Omer joins the Israeli company "[Nir Ben-Gal and Liat Dror Company](#)" for a European tour, then arrives in Paris thanks to a grant from the Institut Français de Tel-Aviv to follow a training workshop with Maguy Marin.

Between 1992 and 1997, she lives between Paris and Brussels and takes further training courses with various choreographers (including Josef Nadj, the Pina Bausch company and Michèle Anne de Mey). It is in Brussels that she devotes herself entirely to her choreographic work, both solo and with other dancers and artists (Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, Paul Wenninger, etc.).

In 1997, she is awarded with the 1st price of the "Festival des Jeunes Chorégraphes Contemporains de Pantin". She does not return to live in Israel; she settles in Vienna where she pursues her artistic work. Her relocation to Berlin in 2007 and then her return to Vienna in 2016 mark a turning point. During this period, and up until today, she has been incorporating into her choreographic practice other disciplines that she has practised in parallel for several years: writing, singing and musical composition. The Berlin years were particularly devoted to music and writing, especially poetry, which she had been immersed in all her childhood thanks to her father [Ayin Hillel \(Omer\)](#), a celebrated Israeli poet.

Her work increasingly takes a transdisciplinary approach, intertwining dance, music and poetry, and cultivating a multitude of aesthetics and languages. Questions of cultural and geographical rootedness - in relation to the individual, his or her subjectivity, autobiography and self-narration in relation to the group and History - are also taking on a central role. It is this approach, drawn from the experience of the multitude - of arts, cultures and languages - has given rise to a particular working method, a philosophy and a practice: [Choreography of sound poetry](#).

She creates poly-artistic pieces, integrating all these disciplines, notably in "[Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus](#)" (commissioned by Vienna's Theatermuseum, 2019) and presented amongst others at Impulstanz - International Dance Festival Vienna in 2021, as well as "[Hinsichtlich der Frage](#)" (2017) that premiered at Das Off Theater.

Loulou Omer collaborates with other artists, for her own projects or as associate artist. Some of them include visual and multimedia artists Simon Wachsmuth and Isa Rosenberger, percussionist Tobias Steinberger, her husband, film director and screenwriter Goran Rebic, and her sister, author and theatre director Tal Omer.

She is awarded the "2021 Exile Poetry Price" by Austrian association and publishing house Exil. e.V., jointly with the Literaturhaus in Vienna [AT]. In 2023, she is the recipient of a writing grant from the City of Vienna (Austria) for the "[Rhapsodic Writing](#)" project (one-year writing grant). She is currently working on the piece [Curriculum Vitae](#) and on the extended reprise of the play "Fast ein Wunder", [Au hasard la mémoire](#).



SIMON WACHSMUTH

Bildender Künstler



[Simon Wachsmuth](#), geboren 1964, lebt und arbeitet als Künstler in Berlin. Sein Werk umfasst Installationen, Performances und Filme. Die Konstruktion historischer Erzählungen ist ein zentrales Thema seiner Arbeit.

Er nahm an der "Documenta 12" in Kassel (Deutschland, 2007), der "Istanbul Biennale" (Türkei, 2009), der "Busan Biennale" (Südkorea, 2012), "Suzhou Documents" (China, 2016) und der "Macao Biennale" (China, 2021) teil.

Seine Arbeiten wurden in verschiedenen Institutionen wie dem Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, dem Museu Serralves in Porto, dem CAAC in Sevilla, dem Neues Museum Nürnberg, dem Musée Picasso, Barcelona, dem Museum Belvedere in Wien, der Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin und dem Gropiusbau in Berlin gezeigt.

Contact

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Videos and infos of previous works

Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus (2019) - 15 min. <https://vimeo.com/699415934>

Press on FEW

<https://onlinemerker.com/wien-theatermuseum-eroica-saal-rosalia-chladek-reenacted-part-ii/>

<https://www.tanzschrift.at/buehne/kritisch-gesehen/1366-impulstanz-kosmos-wiener-tanzmoderne>

The Art Of Memory - An evening in 3 parts based on two figures of Viennese modern dance, conceived and proposed by Loulou Omer and Simon Wachsmuth: <https://www.odeetencore.org/en/productions/the-art-of-memory>

- **Qing (2017)** screendance installation by S. Wachsmuth in collaboration with L. Omer - 20 min. <https://vimeo.com/704187619>
- **“Fast ein Wunder - Reenacting Gertrud Kraus” (15 min)** or **“Au Hasard la Mémoire” (recreation of Fast ein Wunder) (30 min) (2022)**, choreographic and poly-artistic works by Loulou Omer
[Sound Excerpt](#) (Au Hasard la Mémoire)
- **Performative exchange/gathering with the audiences** - 30 min.

Curriculum Vitae - Excerpts from residencies (*Creation 2024-25*)

<https://vimeo.com/channels/cieodeetencore>

Rhapsodic Writing - Writing process around Curriculum Vitae

<https://www.odeetencore.org/en/rhapsodic-writing>

Hinsichtlich der Frage (2017)

<https://vimeo.com/701017336>

Music

<https://www.odeetencore.org/de/musik>