

After Love
NANNA KAISER und R. SEBASTIAN
SCHACHINGER, MUSEUM OF BROKEN
RELATIONSHIPS
curated by Benedikt Wyss

Vienna

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What becomes of love when it changes its form?

A relationship ends without everything that emerged from it disappearing. Things remain, rooms carry memories, and relationships continue to shape the present – in ways that cannot be assigned clearly to either the past or the future. *After Love* brings together two artistic perspectives on what happens when love changes its form.

The title remains deliberately open. *After Love* describes what follows love, but equally a movement beyond it, alongside it, or in relation to it. One could use the term post-love for this. But post-love suggests a concept, a theoretical category that looks at love from a distance and describes a state after it. This is not the position I want to take. The itself also suggests an overcoming, perhaps even the end of what came before. That is precisely not what this is about. *After Love* does not ask what takes the place of love, but what love can become when it changes its form – and how it remains present in that changed form.

As Ariana Reines writes in her text for the curated by festival, referring to a poem by James Schuyler: «It isn't obviously about love, but it is palpably made of love.» This is where *After Love* begins. The artists do not approach love as a subject to be examined. They are themselves part of situations shaped by love, its past, and its present forms. I did not want to bring together artists who engage with love as a subject, but works in which this situation itself is part of the artistic proposition. They do not represent or explain love. They allow it to become active in things, actions, relationships, and encounters.

The Museum of Broken Relationships, originally conceived by Olinka Vištica and Dražen Grubišić as a one-time art project following the end of their own relationship, collects personal objects that people have kept after a breakup. Each object is accompanied by an anonymously told story. What is initially private and personal becomes part of a growing archive: a collection of things in which stories of love, loss, memory, and separation overlap. With permanent locations in Zagreb and Chiang Mai and numerous exhibitions around the world, the museum has become a place where individual experiences are transformed into a shared cultural history.

The museum looks at what relationships leave behind. Yet the objects it collects are not simply relics of the past. Once they enter the museum, they enter a new context and acquire a new presence. Their stories are no longer only about what happened. They become part of what happens now. They inhabit a space in which private experiences can be shared, remembered, imagined, and read anew. An object that was once part of a relationship does not thereby become evidence of its end. It remains the bearer of a story, while becoming a starting point for new encounters.

Nanna Kaiser and R. Sebastian Schachinger approach the changing form of love from another direction. The two artists were once a couple and are working together in this constellation for the first time for *After Love*. Their installation takes its starting point in their personal lives and moves playfully between fiction and reality. Kaiser and Schachinger embody a couple expecting their first child and together set up the future nursery. Objects are borrowed from friends and family, taken from existing collections, altered, softened, raised, and given new functions. What begins as a game gradually becomes a real situation: a room takes shape, things are gathered, relationships are activated.

The room does not represent a failed future. Nor does it reconstruct a past relationship. It moves speculatively between what is and what might have been, while existing very concretely in the present – between two people who are no longer a couple and yet continue to share intimate aspects of their lives and imagine a future together. The things in this room are not props in a story. They are part of an action that is taking place now. They are borrowed, altered, and arranged. The room is real, and so is what happens in its making.

This is where the two works meet. The Museum of Broken Relationships takes objects whose original relationships have changed and gives them a new function. Kaiser and Schachinger take a relationship that has changed and play with it. At first glance, the museum belongs to the past, the nursery to the future. But this temporal order remains on the surface. The museum brings what has been left behind into the present; the nursery allows a future once set in motion to emerge in the present. What seemed to belong to the past becomes present; what was imaginable takes shape.

In both works, time is not simply remembered or imagined, but becomes present through things, spaces, and relationships. Love appears here neither as a completed story nor as an abstract idea. Its presence becomes tangible: in things that are kept, in stories that are retold, in relationships that change, and in actions that emerge from them.

I do not read “after” primarily as what comes next. What interests me instead is the continuity of a love that changes its form while remaining present. There is no clear before and after, but forms that flow into one another, change, and continue to have an effect. The past can be remembered, the future imagined – but love happens now: in the things we keep, in the stories we tell, in the spaces we create, and in the games we play.

After Love is not about the end of love. It asks what love can become.

BENEDIKT WYSS is a freelance curator based in Basel, known for his interdisciplinary and dynamic practice. Wyss studied Sports Science, History, African Studies, Education, Art History, and Curating in Basel and Berlin. His exhibitions and happenings are often conceived as series and take place in unconventional spaces. He initiated formats such as the Draisine Derby on railway tracks, the Lago Mio Artist Residency, and the AR app Primo Print in Motion. Wyss regularly curates projects at Theater Basel. Since 2020, he has been Head of Exhibitions at Kunstverein SALTS in Basel.

NANNA KAISER

The conditions of my life and experience are the rules of the game for what I call my art. Lightweight materials that do not require complicated storage, for example, are one such condition. These materials come from ongoing collections and incidental finds gathered from different situations in life. In an exhibition, my own conditions become intertwined with those of an institution and a space.

For *After Love*, this starting point has shifted into fiction. Sebastian and I are having a child. I am heavily pregnant, the room is not yet finished, and we begin to set up a nursery. Things are borrowed from friends or taken from the gallery's existing holdings. I alter them temporarily: a corner is raised, an object made softer, functions shift slightly. The interventions remain subtle and reversible.

Sebastian joins me a few weeks before the birth. Two ideas of what this room could look like then meet. Perhaps they fit together. Perhaps they do not. We are no longer together. The room is nevertheless ours. I am not interested in a finished image of a nursery. The room remains in motion and carries the trace of a process that could continue. An exhibition gives a state a stage for a limited period of time. What should remain is the feeling that something is still missing. Something that becomes complete only in the imagination of the child.

NANNA KAISER lives and works between Vienna and Neumarkt in Styria. Her practice draws on fragments of painting, sculpture, video, and text, developing within the context of an exhibition and in relation to each specific spatial situation. Her work has been presented, among other venues, at Belvedere 21, Vienna (AT); FOX, Vienna, (AT); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade (SRB), *viennacontemporary*, Vienna, (AT); Shore Gallery, Vienna, AT; Fünfzig, Salzburg, AT; Frac Île-de-France, Romainville (FR); as well as in further exhibitions across Europe.

R. SEBASTIAN SCHACHINGER

The starting point of my work is always very close to my personal life. This allows me to take responsibility for my position. It allows me to speak about something that only I know. And perhaps, in doing so, I can surprise one or two people. But above all, it allows me to assume that others might recognize themselves in it. Because in the end, I do not work out of a desire for self-realization, but out of love. I want to do something that makes the moment burst open, that pulses, that proves that somehow everything can also be nothing. In this sense, I explore my life and its relationship to the world in an aimless way.

When you said love and Vienna, I said Nanna.

Couples, duality, and doubles are phenomena that keep appearing in my work, and I think I like them because each one calls the other into question simply by being, in a way that seems so inevitable that they might just as well both cease to be defined. What I am writing is not a humanities claim. None of it needs to be proven. I would actually prefer the words to dissolve again after they have been read, leaving no trace, like ringing a doorbell and running away. Like my feet in a river when I take them out again.

It is a modest attempt to speak about something that requires no logic.

Nanna and I are a duo. We used to be a couple. We do not want to be one anymore. I still love her. Differently. We are pregnant. (Since there will, I believe, be no physical birth in this case, I think it is okay to say "we.") A child is coming.

A child needs ambivalence:

two poles,
two positions,
two voices – stereo,
two eyes – depth,
in order to understand itself as a self.
Two become one. Synthesis.

We are playing at being parents. But is it still a game when I ask my mother if she still has baby things and she replies, "Of course, I've been waiting for this moment"?

I am 32 years old. I do not have many friends who have had children, but three come to mind. Is it a test of our friendship when I ask them whether I can borrow the things from their first baby.

In my parents' entryway there is a wooden toy for small children. Mum says Boris bought it at the flea market yesterday for two euros. I ask him if I can borrow it and he says he actually wanted to give it to his ** for their child, but if it comes back, why not.

What happens when we borrow these objects to put them in a gallery? Somehow, it feels unsettling. A gallery is clean, after all, isn't it?

A child is born into a network.

Nanna and I have furnished several spaces together. After our first visit to the gallery, we once again rearrange the living room of her apartment in Vienna's second district, where we lived together for a year, as if we had never done anything else. She tells me about her desire to have a child, which surprises me deeply. What in me made me want to become part of it?

Are we playing?

W. Tristan Schachinger lost his mind when he became a father.

Now I am the father.

The nursery.

A workspace.

A practice.

A workshop.

A studio.

A laboratory.

A classroom.

A shelter.

A home.

A projection space.

A place of longing.

A room filled with objects, all of which pursue an intention and have therefore been selected accordingly.

Every idea becomes an object.

The ideas of civilization.

I keep thinking about a scene from Dogville, in which Lars von Trier says in an interview that he tried to argue against his own position. This sentence emerged from it:

"Dogs can be taught a lot of good things, but not if we forgive them every time they follow their nature."

A crib.

Apparently, newborns put EVERYTHING in their mouths. Through their mouths they experience the world. They have come to eat. You have to wean them off that first.

My father had his first psychotic episode shortly after I was born. Somehow, he could not find a healthy relationship to that responsibility. What could have led the self into a dead end?

Because I no longer want to live in the studio, I am temporarily living at my parents' house, and I read the objects as a lush bouquet of spring and summer flowers.

Will I go crazy too?

Fortunately, as a high civilization, we only play at having children. But war against barbarism is still real. The ball game teaches the steady throw of a stone.

In Vienna Beni talked about what he understood soon after the birth of his children: Here, where life is pulsing, you have to put your ideals aside – you need your hands free.

Compromise

The negotiating parties move towards each other. They leave their own position and move towards a new shared position.

R. Sebastian Schachinger, born in Freiburg im Breisgau (DE), lives and works in Basel (CH). He received his Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts from the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel. His exhibitions include City Salts, Birsfelden/Basel (CH), Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (CH), Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal (CH), Kunsthaus Baselland, MuttENZ/Basel (CH), Fasan, Basel (CH), Amore, Basel (CH), Kaiserwache, Freiburg (DE), Wittockiana, Brussels (BE), and WAF Galerie, Vienna (AT). In 2024, he was represented by Galerie Windhager von Kaenel at Vienna Contemporary. In 2022, Schachinger was awarded the Swiss Art Awards / Kiefer Hablitzel Göhner Prize. From 2023 onwards, he directed the project space RUF in Vienna (AT).

MUSEUM OF BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Once the relationship dies, where does the 21 grams of its soul go? This was the question that, in 2006, prompted Olinka Vištica and Dražen Grubišić to conceive an art project around objects and stories left behind in love's wake. Since then, thousands of people have sent them their objects in a unique farewell ritual that has, over the years, grown into the largest public archive dedicated to the end of love. The museum operates from two permanent locations, in Zagreb (HR) since 2010 and Chiang Mai (TH) since 2024, and to date has held sixty-six exhibitions around the world. The objects and stories exhibited at Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman represent a selection from the museum's collection of 4,000 objects, including the latest additions donated in Vienna.

The *Museum of Broken Relationships* has become a reference point for thinking about love, loss and memory through everyday objects. In 2017, its collection was published as *Museum of Broken Relationships: Modern Love in 203 Everyday Objects*. In 2010, the museum received the EMYA Kenneth Hudson Award, recognising it as the most innovative and daring museum project in Europe. For more information about the museum and how to contribute → brokenrelationships.com.