

Biographical Queer and Fem*path

Exploring Feminist and Queer Issues in an Austrian City

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“Working in GloCo offers a great opportunity to learn about fascinating projects and engage in meaningful, intensive exchanges.”

Abstract: *Drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopia, schau.Räume, an interdisciplinary performance format, locates the absence of topics in the discourse within the empty sales rooms or public spaces. A temporary sense of abundance arises from these realizations. The events are developed in collaboration with artists, researchers, NGOs, and community members, aligning closely with the themes they aim to address. Essential for every schau.Räume event is a biographical workshop. The production “Biographical Queer and Fem*path” centered on biographical narratives exploring feminist and queer issues in Klagenfurt/Celovec and was performed in public spaces. This report also includes personal reflections from a participating performer and feedback from an audience member.*

Keywords: *Biography; Storytelling; Performance; Diversity; Participation*

Members of the project

Katrin Ackerl Konstantin, artistic director and researcher, cultural psychologist | Rosalia Kopeinig, psychologist | Mitch Noah Münzer, performer of his path as a diversity expert*

Project description: What is schau.Räume?

schau.Räume (show. Rooms) is an interdisciplinary performance format that addresses marginalized social issues in vacant business and public spaces through participatory engagement. schau.Räume uses participatory practices to give space to alternative forms of narration and expression and thus, creates impulses for cultural diversity and change.

Diversity in art and culture pertains to issues of representation and the availability of opportunities for participation. In each realization, schau.Räume pursues an interventionist and participatory approach: the themes are (re)presented temporarily through performances in empty sales rooms and public space. Artists, scientists, NGOs, and private individuals participate in each intervention—they are all currently working on the chosen theme or have a personal connection to it. schau.Räume has been active for over 10 years, with its primary base in Carinthia, Austria, while the events have been realized on a global scale. The performances aim to bring marginalized topics into temporary focus, transforming empty spaces, and highlighting the absence of content. Additionally, they foster encounters that, following Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics, become performances in their own right. schau.Räume has embraced artistic research as a core method since its inception.

The show.Rooms_local

Artistic research builds on the concept of embodied knowledge (cf. Peters, 2013). It questions social and cultural discourse, creating utopian and alternative perspectives grounded in historical or scientific contexts. This approach ventures into uncharted territories of knowledge transfer and creation, paving the way for new dialogues and insights. Over the years, schau.Räume has developed three event formats: show.Rooms_local, show.Rooms_regional, and show.Rooms_global. In the context of the glocal approach of GloCo, we will focus in this report on the show.Rooms_local.

This format is a one-time performance as an intervention in public space. Based on biographical narratives and historical omissions, guided performances are organized within the show.Rooms_local performances. They include people's personal experiences as stations in public space. The people involved in each individual "Biographical Path" become narrators of their personal life story. The biographies of these people are told and linked to historical parallels, which are also marginalized. The connection with the respective city's history leads to the visualization of an alternative historiography. Providing space for biographies and excerpts from life stories fosters a space for sharing and reconstructing. By recounting our experiences, we learn more about ourselves. By focusing on omissions, alternative perspectives on our own history can be adopted and uncovered. In addition, connections can also be drawn in relation to a shared—yet untold—story. Through a series of preparatory biographical and performative rehearsals, participants develop which part of their life stories they want to perform.

QUERGEHEN/ PREČNA STEZA

The *Biographical Queer and Fem*path 5* was held between January 2024 and April 2024 and took place in Klagenfurt/Celovec. This project was dedicated to making biographies related to queer and feminist social issues visible. To achieve this, biographical stories of people living in Klagenfurt/Celovec were prepared in advance in biographical work-

shops focused on feminist* and queer topics. Afterward, these queer and feminist* stories are implemented as paths and stations in public space. In each guided performance, the audience experienced an alternative history of the city. The preparatory phase began in January with biographical workshops led by Rosalia Kopeinig. In ten such workshops, participants developed biographical stories. More than 60 people participated, ten of whom agreed to share their stories as performers. Their stories were dramaturgically shaped with the artistic director, Katrin Ackerl Konstantin, ensuring that a performance could be realized. She developed a dramaturgical path from elevated personal stories; places were selected that were spatially accessible, allowing one to walk a path in 60 to 90 minutes.

Fig. 23: Biographical workshop



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One lecture and the performances

After the preparation phase, a lecture was held in March. The lecture was held by the historian Natascha Bobrowsky and was dedicated to the taboo topic of female homosexuality in Carinthia/Koroška: 1938–1945. The lecture began with a contextualization, giving an overview of the historical persecution of homosexuality. Three biographies followed, shedding light on the individual experiences and challenges of these people.

In April, the performances in public space took place on five evenings in the center of Klagenfurt/Celovec and at the University. On Domplatz and in front of the University, artist Barbara Ambrusch-Rapp installed two doors as part of her concept, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in another city's history by entering a performance room set in public space.

*Fig. 24: Biographical Queer*fempath*



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Each guided performance presented a biographical story that led the audience through public space. They were performed by participants of the biographical workshops, as experts on their own life stories. In this way, the audience experienced alternative city history by focusing on a city's communicative memory and on historical omissions in its representation. The small audience groups for each "path" were limited to no more than ten people. Attendees could choose to participate in multiple guided performances or just one, each focusing on a unique biography. They were announced as follows:

- "A Germanist (un)rolls her stories."
- "A radio producer whispers resistant stories into your ear."
- "A diversity expert connects you with challenges and places around trans(ition) issues."
- "An innovation manager with Carinthian-Slovenian roots sits under the table with you."
- "A mountain hiking guide and civil courage trainer cycles TOGETHER with you."
- "A drag queen asks how queer Klagenfurt/Celovec is."
- "An actress tries to escape machismo with you."
- "An activist takes you on the Trans-Siberian Railway."
- "A peace educator plants gardens with you."
- "A student takes to the streets with you."

Connection to Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

This project embodies key principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) by fostering critical reflection, empathy, and the recognition of diverse perspectives through participatory artistic practices. By bringing marginalized narratives—particularly those related to gender, sexuality, and alternative histories—into public space, *schau.Räume* encourages learners and audiences to question dominant discourses and engage with issues of representation, identity, and social justice.

In doing so, it contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) through transformative and experiential learning, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by highlighting feminist and queer perspectives, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by amplifying marginalized voices, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by fostering inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding. The project exemplifies how arts-based approaches can create meaningful connections between local experiences and global challenges, thereby strengthening the foundations of active and reflective global citizenship.

Lessons learned

Testimonial about the biographical workshops

“The biographical workshops turned out to be much more than a simple preparation exercise; they created a space where people could truly connect, and personal stories could emerge. Each session took place in a different setting, and these locations shaped the topics we discussed. For instance, one workshop was held in a cozy living room, where we began by discussing questions like “Where do we feel at home?” and “What places bring people together?” This warm environment made it easier for everyone to share their stories and open up. For me, there was always a central question: How do we create a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing deeply personal experiences? Deciding which parts of my own story to share was an ongoing inner conversation. With a calm, respectful atmosphere, we could really listen to each other, which often brought up my own memories and reflections that had been tucked away in the background. After attending a couple of these workshops, I received a document that divided my story into three parts. Together with the dramaturgical director, we mapped a route through the city with three meaningful stops, each with its own significance. Preparing for the tour and doing our first rehearsal helped me connect with each part of my story and gradually build up the confidence to present it publicly. Listening

to others and reflecting on my own story helped me to find a deeper sense of pride and belonging. These workshops felt like a bridge, connecting each person's experiences with a shared story.”

Testimonial about the challenges of performers

“Being part of the performance was much more than leading people through the city; it was about transforming familiar places into spaces of connection and reflection. Each stop along the route carried personal meaning, not only for me but for the participants, who added their own perspectives and reactions. Sharing vulnerable parts of my life helped us see these spaces in new ways, turning city streets into stages for shared experiences.

What struck me most was how storytelling could change how we connect with these places and each other. We were not just walking from one spot to another; each story encouraged us to look deeper, seeing beyond the surface of everyday life. In many ways, this experience felt like “lifelong learning,” connecting with SDG Goal 4’s focus on inclusive education. It allowed us all to step into perspectives we might rarely encounter, offering an informal yet impactful way of learning about one another. The performance reminded me of the power of personal narratives to foster empathy and understanding. This journey through the city was more than a performance—it was a way to build common ground and expand how we see the world together. It is a reminder that storytelling is about creating connections and broadening our view of what we share. One of the toughest parts of the play was finding a balance between openness and personal boundaries. Sharing parts of my life so openly in a public setting brought a lot of vulnerability. Sometimes, participants’ questions went deeper than I was comfortable with, and I had to figure out how to respond without losing the safe space we had built. It taught me a lot about the importance of protecting my own limits while still connecting with others in a real way. Another challenge came from navigating the group dynamics. Each group had its own vibe, and people brought different expectations and sometimes very personal questions. It took patience and empathy to keep these interactions respectful, especially when we touched on sensitive topics. Helping people understand the

need for boundaries and respect became a subtle but essential part of the experience. Keeping a steady rhythm throughout the tour was also something I had to manage. Moving between telling my story and physically guiding people through the city took focus and flexibility. Each stop was a chance to reconnect with my story, but it also meant adapting to the group and the setting. Through all of this, I learned a lot about setting boundaries, staying grounded in my story, and creating a welcoming space where people felt respected and included.”

*Fig. 25: Biographical Queer*fempath*



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After the performances, schau.Räume provided a safe space for both the audience and performers to reflect on their impressions. This opportunity was warmly welcomed and actively embraced.

Conclusion by testimony

We want to conclude this report with the voice of a participant of the guided path:

“I would like to thank you for the guided path that took place a few weeks ago. I was very impressed, and the feeling has not changed in retrospect. The level of openness, closeness, vulnerability, and intimacy that the guides conveyed was unpredictable, but all the more haunting when it came to us. I do not walk these paths again as the same person because I am offered stories I would not normally have access to, or a closeness I would not normally have. Now I feel like they are inscribed in the places we have visited, so that when I walk through them, they evoke the experiences the people I have met have lived. Not only the closeness to the stories of others, but also to my own, was evoked by the recognition of commonalities that resulted from these encounters. A rich experience, embodied and localized. Thank you very much! Hvala puno!”

For further reading

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