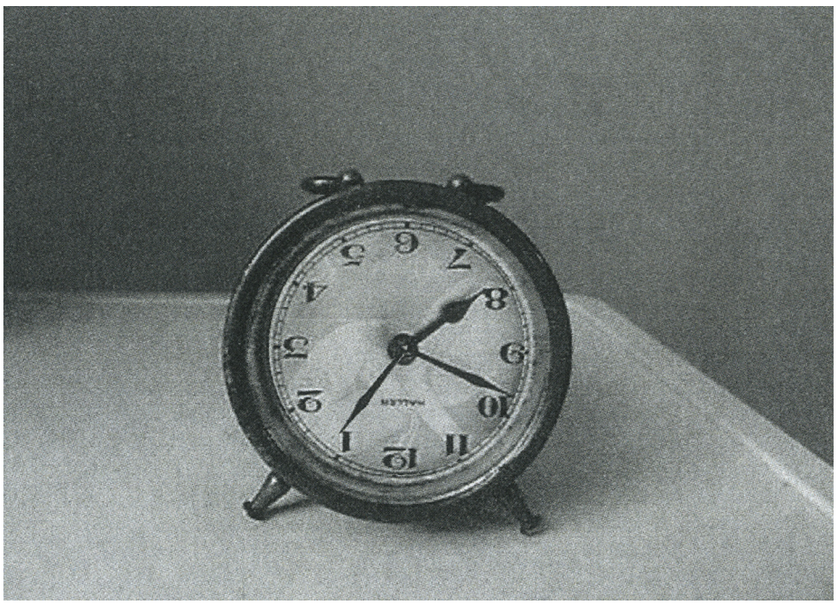
SYNCHRONISED BY MURDER:

THE 1930 KILLING OF A BERLIN CLOCKMAKER

Fig 1
Ronit Porat, photographic collage from *Mr. Ulbrich and Miss Neumann*, 2017.

Fig 2
Ronit Porat, photographic collage from *The Hunter of Time*, 2016 (original publication as part of Eugen Steinach's 1920s experiments of hormone treatments on rats).



'You know because people don't walk past it in an exhibition, because people are attracted by a page in a magazine or stop browsing a book. Neither technical perfection nor striking subject matter are decisive; what matters is the power of the image, the expression – the secret of the moment captured.'

Marianne Breslauer[1]

The murder of a clockmaker can be understood as a moment of historical synchronisation. Like the slap of a clapperboard at the beginning of a movie scene to synchronise multiple cameras and sound recorders, a murder synchronises multiple narratives and experiences. In one act, histories that otherwise follow their own rhythm, moving at different speeds, curling in different directions or drifting and sliding sideways along different trajectories, are bound by a singular reference point. The eruptive moment is usually later investigated, litigated, filed, acted upon and debated so intensely as to produce mountains of words, documents, reports and processes involving multiple witnesses, experts and dozens of legal professionals. Everything that led up to it – the thoughts, actions and gestures that would otherwise only temporarily remain in the memory of those involved before fading away – acquires new meaning as causes, correlations and contributing factors. Doubts and ambiguities become facts; unstable social relations become contexts – mitigating or aggravating circumstances. And, needless to say, everything that unfolds outwards from that point impacts the lives of everyone involved. The moment of a murder is a refracting lens that pulls in multiple pasts and forms them into new futures.

Everybody in the business of horology – particularly those concerned with the historical technology of analogue apparatuses – knows how important synchronisation is. First, one has to define a reference point – perhaps an incorrect one, but one that everybody agrees to recognise: a radio signal aligns the clocks in early 21st-century Europe, as did the clock towers on mayoral houses in previous decades or the bells on churches before that.[2] In public broadcasts, it is the state that issues this signal. At the time the clockmaker Fritz Ulbrich was murdered in Berlin during the night of 28 October 1930, the state in question was on the verge of a form of self-destruction that would drown it, the rest of Europe and much more in blood. The beautiful artwork that this essay seeks to complement – a trilogy of exhibitions by Ronit Porat that unpacks this murder in multiple ways – acts, I believe, as a moment of historical synchronisation.

Between 2016 and 2018, Porat produced three standalone shows: *The Hunter of Time* (2016), *Mr. Ulbrich and Miss Neumann* (2017) and *The Sentence* (2018). These individual chapters, which could also be combined into a single comprehensive exhibition, present the artist's explorations of the murder through historical archives and literature, which she combines with a series of experiments in photography and her own biographical references. Porat carefully studies the photographs, rearranging, narrating and in some ways appropriating other peoples' stories of the past and incorporating them with her own.

This attempt to bridge a temporal gap of almost 100 years creates the uncanny effect of synchronising time, as though the story of 1930 coexists with the present moment; as if the torn threads and disconnected ends of lost stories from Berlin in the final moments of the Weimar Republic could be reconnected and re-examined. Porat explores her material through photographic collages and narrations that range from prints made on paper to displays on walls that, in curatorial terms, might be described as 'Petersburg' or salon hangs, but in a forensic context could be seen to borrow from the evidence boards of detective yarns, or mind maps. Her visual findings – interrogated through historical photographs and enlarged details thereof, combined with associative images – are laid out on the wall, unpacking the facts of the crime. The viewer is instantaneously drawn into the investigation by examining the photographs for potential clues. In the story of the clockmaker, the murderer is known, but revisiting the circumstances of the deed reveals connections that seem larger and more complex. From the centre of the crime – in fact from the clockmaker's shop – the threads lead outwards in different directions, traversing places and scales, connecting victims, eyewitnesses, bystanders, Berlin neighbourhoods, shops, underground salons, clinics and photo studios, and extend further to contemporary discourses on technology, fashion, zoology, sexology and criminology. A whole world seems to be evoked through the young artist's curious and poetic mode of questioning.

Porat's research also extends to photographic production techniques and viewing mechanisms. Particularly noteworthy are her meticulous reconstructions of historical instruments, such as the praxinoscope and kaiserpanorama, the latter an early-20th century multi-station apparatus that afforded a collective means of viewing static slides in three dimensions, though it was soon to be replaced by the moving image and film projection. These mechanical objects invite the viewer to recreate the body language of voyeuristic gazing, but it is Porat who sets the terms of narration for images on display. Like a second hand moving across a clock face and timed like the rotating centre of the historical kaiserpanorama, a new

1 María Mercedes Valdivieso Rodrigo, *Marianne Breslauer: Fotografies 1927–1938* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2016), p 8.

2 In his book, Alain Corbin beautifully attempts to reconstruct the changed 'auditory landscape' in rural communities when, shortly after the French Revolution, bells were destroyed or removed from churches. The clocks now displayed on municipal buildings, he argues, not only silenced the countryside, but also introduced new orders of time. See Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

3 In similar form this essay was published in Ronit Porat's *Hunting in Time* (Montreal: Sternthal, 2023).

4 For more historical context on the problem of media coverage and the sensationalisation of sex crime trials, see Heidi Sack, *Moderne Jugend vor Gericht: Sensationsprozesse, 'Sexualtragödien' und die Krise der Jugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Bielefeld: Transcript

stereogram takes the viewer, or several viewers, into her narrative sequences every 20 seconds. In her third exhibition, which shows larger collages of photographs on the wall, Porat uses the faint and gently drawn line of her own handwriting to share autobiographical references and experiences that draw the viewer into her world. And so, inspired by her explorations, this essay is formed like a bundle of contemporaneous stories that have been brought together, knotted and synchronised by the murder.[3]

THE MURDER

Lieschen Neumann was only 16 years old when she, her boyfriend and his friend, were accused of having plotted the murder of the clockmaker Fritz Ulbrich in Berlin's Wedding neighbourhood on the night of 28 October 1930. For about a year, Neumann had been a model for the clockmaker, who had set up a photographic studio in the back of his shop where he seduced young women to model for him – first clothed, then naked, and later in more pornographic poses. Neumann also was sexually intimate with him while she was in a relationship with her boyfriend, Richard Stolpe. One night, the three youths decided to rob the clockmaker, but – as the plan went awry – ended up killing him.

The murder trial lasted six days during January 1931. Neumann was four months pregnant at the time. Stolpe was convicted of murder and given the death penalty. His friend, Erich Benzinger, received six years and three months in prison. Neumann was sentenced to eight years and two months in prison. From there, their stories fade. Three generations later, the artist Ronit Porat would revisit the murder, curiously questioning the evidence and the protagonists who were entangled in the case and the historical and social forces that had brought them together. Porat studies media archives, photographs and historical documents. She subjects these images to new photographic processes, technological experimentation and further scrutiny by rearranging their narrative chronology and logic. Rather than aiming to solve the puzzle, her work instead draws its viewer into a past that, though fragmented and interrupted, has not ceased to haunt us.

It seems astonishing today quite how extensive the media coverage of the clockmaker's murder trial was at the time. It was covered not only in Berlin and throughout Germany, but also internationally by journalists, cultural critics, social reformers and lawmakers in daily newspapers, feuilletons, police magazines and academic literature.[4] The spectacular reception the case received might also be historically significant, as it points to a public recognition of the harmful influence of modern media – photography, radio, music, film and potentially even architecture – on society.

Reflecting on the Lieschen Neumann trial, Siegfried Kracauer was convinced that the three young people had 'stumbled into the crime without any genuinely personal motivation'; he empathised

Fig 3 and 4
Ronit Porat, photographic collage from *The Sentence*, 2018.

with the milieu of the unemployed, which by 1930 included around five million people in Germany.[5] He wrote: 'For Lieschen Neumann and her unemployed comrades, the insecurity of society in regard to all critical matters has become their doom.'[6] To Kracauer, the murder was a pathology of a society in a 'state of confusion', the ethical foundations of which were being shaken: social hierarchies were disappearing and the 'suppression of binding social obligations [was]…intensified by the neutrality of important public expressions of opinions'.[7]

Verlag, 2016), pp 377–384.
5 A similar argument was made by the German Jewish philosopher Theodor Lessing in his article 'Nach dem Urteil', in *Prager Tageblatt*, 6 February 1931.
6 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Murder Trials and Society', in *Die neue Rundschau*, no 42 (1931), reprinted in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (eds), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp 740–741.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Yva: Photographies 1925–1938* (Tübingen: Ernst Wassmuth Verlag, 2001), p 42.
10 See Elizabeth Otto, *Haunted Bauhaus: Occult Spirituality, Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019); and Elizabeth Otto, 'Queer Coded Bauhaus', in Ines Weizman (ed), *Dust and Data: Traces of the Bauhaus across 100 Years* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2019), pp 86–88.
11 Persephone Allen, 'The Metallic Sphere as Mechanical Eye:

Two years before Hitler came to power, in the midst of a global economic crisis, hyperinflation, repeated stock market crashes and mass unemployment, Kracauer was acutely aware of the rise of fake news, mass propaganda and the potential instrumentalisation of media for the propagation of right-wing ideologies:

> 'Dominating the radio and ruling over the fake variety of juxtapositions in many big newspapers, neutrality expands to every area it possibly can to inspire the impression of plenitude – a neutrality that is the precise opposite of wisdom and attests to nothing more than the absence of any guiding principles. The lack of substantiative consensus necessarily endangers the suffering masses the most.'[8]

In his view, the spectacular coverage of the trial lacked a more consequential inquiry into the circumstances that had led to the murder.

THE CONTEXT

In March 1930, Yva – one of Weimar Berlin's most sought-after fashion and celebrity photographers – was commissioned by the popular magazine *UHU* to illustrate a poem by Erich Kästner about a day in the life of a fictional Berlin resident, coincidentally titled 'Lieschen Neumann will Karriere Machen. Das Scheindasein vor der Kamera' ('Lieschen Neumann Wants to Pursue a Career: The Illusive Existence in Front of the Camera'). Her work ranged from commercial fashion photography to experimental photography and montage works that explored filmic narratives through multiple exposures and movement. In her images, she explored 'seeing through the camera'[9] by carefully composing the scene in which her models would sit and capturing the materiality of the fabrics and furs of their attire.

Yva belonged to a new generation of international female photographers, which encompassed students at the Bauhaus such as Ré Soupault[10] and Marianne Brandt[11], through to Germaine Krull and Madame d'Ora in Vienna and later Paris, to Marianne Breslauer,[12] a favourite of Porat. These women were keen to explore the technology and liberating potential of their medium, and committed to exploring fields that had previously been reserved only for men. They also helped nude photography to break out of the narrow scope of sexist obsession. In her images and posters for theatre revues and dances, such as *Revue, Revue: Inez G, Lewis Brody* (1926), *Charleston* (1926–1927) and *Sisters G* (1926), Yva used a method similar to what Bauhaus master László Moholy-Nagy had called 'fotoplastik'. By combining associative elements of a situation with close-ups and long shots in double or multiple exposures, she was able not only to capture movement in space and the rhythm of a dance, but also to convey the seductiveness of revealing dresses, legs, high-heeled shoes, stockings, hair, wigs and feathered hats. Yva mastered the techniques required to generate multiple exposures, fractured views, repetitive sequences of images and distortions. She also used them to depict psychological themes relating to alcohol and drug abuse, crime, sexual fantasies, dreams and fears of doppelgängers.[13] In 1930–1931, some of these photographs of highly dramatised and surreal scenes of horror relating the experience of alcohol consumption, burglary and murder were published in *Das Kriminal-Magazin* to illustrate crime novels or reports of crimes.

Fig 5
Photographs by Yva for 'Lieschen Neumann will Karriere Machen. Das Scheindasein vor der Kamera' by Erich Kästner, in *UHU* 6 (1930), p 68.

Sadly, Yva's archive was destroyed in 1943 when the warehouse in Hamburg harbour within which the artist had stored her belongings – in preparation for an unsuccessful last-minute attempt to emigrate to New York in 1940 – was destroyed in an aerial bombardment. We are thus forced to reconstruct her wide-ranging oeuvre by searching through contemporary publications.

Reflected Identities at the Bauhaus', in Ines Weizman (ed), op cit, pp 90–110.

12 See Kathrin Beer and Christina Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer: Photographs* (Zoelmond: Parvenu, 2011).

13 Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, op cit, pp 48–52.

14 Ibid, p 78.

15 Ibid, p 90.

16 In 1934, when Yva was developing her elaborate photographic settings in her new studio on the top floors of Schlüterstrasse 45, she would have had what it takes to make a career for herself as an artist, possibly even in film production. But in 1933, when the National Socialist Party took power and the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was passed, preventing Jews and political opponents of the Nazi regime from serving in official positions, Yva was forbidden to go about her work. In 1938, she was forced to close her studio. She worked as an X-ray assistant at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin until 1942, when the Gestapo arrested her and her husband and deported

Interestingly, she seems to have broken more explicitly with sexual norms and gender identities in her later work for entertainment magazines. Her photographs at this time, such as *Sisters* (1930), and illustrations, such as the one drawn for Paul Leppin's short text 'Kisses' (1931) in the magazine *Das Leben*,[14] present fascinating compositions of contrasts across the diagonal dynamic of the image, as well as remarkably sensual scenes between women.

In collaboration with the editor-in-chief of *UHU* magazine at the time, Friedrich Kroner, Yva developed longer photo essays as well.[15] She decorated and composed the scenes of her shots with enormous enthusiasm. They seem as vivid as film stills. Her photo essays during this period, which successfully supplanted the need for text and wording, also employed a technique that resonates in the work of Ronit Porat – a mode of display that through the hanging of photographs of different sizes as cut-outs, enlargements and full-page views allows for multiple associations and narrative hinges to emerge, exemplifying the shared approach both artists take to 'see through the camera'.

It was Kroner who commissioned Yva to illustrate Kästner's poem. For her photo essay, she invited the model and actress Beatrice Garga, who had had a famous role in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), to pose for her. The photographer often worked with actors and actresses from the UFA film studios in Berlin, many of whom had found their way into the movies through her. Using a narrative technique akin to the documentary portraits of urban life over the course of one day shot by Walter Ruttmann in *Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Yva placed her model in various settings and moods. Starting in the morning, Garga is portrayed in front of her boudoir. Her hair cut into a bob, she is wearing only a short silk négligée and is smiling as if singing a cheerful melody, expecting a happy day. In another photograph, she is dressed in a fine coat with sleeves and a collar of fur, about to leave the house. This is followed by scenes in which she plays golf in a sporty skirt, a pullover, a short scarf and a beret that cheekily reveals the curls of her hair. A few more shots fashion her first in a British riding outfit, posing with a horse, then breezily sitting in an aeroplane and as the confident driver of a car (probably Yva's own) – always smiling charmingly. Yet halfway through the series, the mood seems to become one of loneliness and trouble. Rather than driving any of the fancy vehicles she was using earlier in the day, Garga is shown waiting for the tram in a busy street in Berlin. Stunningly captured in the reflection of a display case, she is seen window-shopping, unable to afford any of the delights she was previously advertising. The last image shows her back in her boudoir, sobbing.

Kästner's poem captions the images in simple rhymes ('Yva' rhymes with 'diva'), intending to warn all the Lieschen Neumanns of Berlin of the false promises and pretences of show business and the world of fashion. For readers, the author's patronising undertone might not have trumped the desirability of the world of fashion and film – especially in a magazine that was building its success on reflecting and promoting cultural trends and the lure of mass culture. Kästner's words could certainly not dampen the liberating air that surrounded women trying to break out of their milieu, explore their potential in new professions, experiment with modern media or discover their identity in a society that in many ways had become increasingly tolerant and reform-minded. Beatrice Garga also managed a livelihood as a well-known model and actress. Yva, born Else Neuländer into a Jewish family with nine siblings, had started her successful career as a photographer with her own photo studio.[16] Kästner's moralising was in tune with those critics who cautioned against the ever-expanding culture of mass entertainment, many of whom were writing in feuilletons or offering their prose to the

Fig 6
Photographs by Yva for 'Lieschen Neumann will Karriere Machen. Das Scheindasein vor der Kamera' by Erich Kästner, in *UHU* 6 (1930), p 73.

them to Majdanek, where they were murdered. In the late 1960s, Heinz Rewald, who had emigrated from Berlin to Colombia before Hitler's rise to power, developed the building in Schlüterstrasse 45 into the Hotel Bogotá, which until 2013 regularly hosted photographers and artists, and devoted exhibitions and photographic projects to the memory of Yva.

17 Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y Levin, 'Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces', in *New German Critique*, no 40 (1987), pp 91–96.

18 See Erich Wulffen, Felix Abraham and Institut für Sexualforschung Wien (eds), *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor: Eine sexual-psychologische Untersuchung des den Mordprozess Lieschen Neumann charakterisierenden Milieus und seiner psychopathologischen Typen* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1931).

19 Very little is known about this publishing house; its existence was too short-lived before the national socialist regime closed it.

very same magazines they criticised. Rather than exposing the social conflicts and the disintegration of society, Siegfried Kracauer argued in a feuilleton essay that the 'cult of distraction' forged by mass media forms such as the cinema only masked the wider disintegration of society:

> 'Rather, [movie theatres] should free their offerings of all trappings that deprive film of its rights and must aim radically towards a kind of distraction which exposes disintegration instead of masking it. It could be done in Berlin, home of the masses who so easily allow themselves to be stupefied only because they are so close to the truth.'[17]

Readers of the article in *UHU*, which had a print run of more than 200,000 copies a month, might have memorised some of the catchy rhymes from Kästner's poem, or were perhaps still amused by the garden-variety name Lieschen Neumann when the media storm surrounding a real-life Lieschen Neumann from Berlin erupted just a few months later. Somewhat uncannily, the readers might have felt familiar with her when she became known as a suspect in a sensationalised murder trial.

THE BOOK

Shortly after the murder trial, a book titled *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor* was published by the Institut für Sexualforschung (Institute for Sexual Research) in Vienna[18] as part of a publishing initiative by the Verlag für Kulturforschung, which was headquartered in the city, as well as Berlin and Leipzig.[19] The book – its cover designed with modernist graphics and typography that could have come out of a Herbert Bayer design workshop at the Bauhaus – contained photographic material from the estate of the murdered clockmaker and images taken by the photojournalist Ernst Vespermann, who had documented the crime scene in Drontheimer Strasse. Prior to its publication, the book was heavily censored: first by authorities in Germany, then in two further rounds by the publishers themselves. Most copies still circulating in antiquarian bookshops have several pages cut out of them. Despite this extensive censorship, the book was still suspected of being subject to laws prohibiting the distribution of obscene photographs. Nevertheless, it turned out to be a bestseller. Even though official bookshops and libraries would not sell it, it was successfully traded under the counter among specialised circles of friends and the initiated.

The publication was part of the burgeoning fields of crime and criminology in academia, literature and popular culture, which perhaps explained why the media was so interested in the murder trial. Its authors, however, certainly had more academic and political reform-minded ambitions for their work. On the one hand, it was part of an emancipatory project to educate a section of the public about the psychology of criminals and to further society's understanding of the criminal mind. On the other, it was meant to contribute to public education about gender identity and sexual psychology.

Fig 7
Ronit Porat, photographic collage from *Mr. Ulbrich and Miss Neumann*, 2017.

One of the book's authors, Dr Erich Wulffen, was to lend authority and respectability to the publication as a former state prosecutor and Head of Department at the Saxon Ministry of Justice. According to Birgit Lang, Wulffen can be considered the first legal expert on sex offences in Wilhelmine Germany and a broker of knowledge between specialist discourse and the wider public in modern society, in addition to being a prolific writer of creative fiction on criminal psychology and legal reform.[20] Lang gives him special credit for shaping two new case modalities – the expert case and the case story:

> 'Wulffen's expert case studies relied on his privileged position and expertise to communicate new academic insights to the reading public. Wulffen's case stories were conceived as creative works of fiction with the purpose of illustrating certain criminal psychological insights gained in his academic work.'[21]

20 Birgit Lang, Joy Damousi and Alison Lewis, 'Erich Wulffen and the Case of the Criminal', in *A History of the Case Study: Sexology, Psychoanalysis, Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp 119–155.
21 Ibid.
22 See Erich Wulffen, 'Der Fall Ulbrich in diesem Zusammenhang' and 'Lieschen Neumann. Eine psychologische Durchleuchtung ihres Wesens', in Erich Wulffen, Felix Abraham and Institut für Sexualforschung Wien (eds), op cit.
23 Ibid, p 52.
24 See Ralf Dose and Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014).
25 Felix Abraham, 'Der Uhrmacher Ulbrich und sein Triebleben: Seine Photographierleidenschaft als krankhafter Hypererotismus', in Erich Wulffen, Felix Abraham and Institut für Sexualforschung Wien (eds), op cit, pp 61–75.
26 Ibid.
27 Felix Abraham, 'Die Groszstädtische Geheimindustrie

Wulffen prefaces *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor* with a series of international case studies linking robbery homicides to sexual impulses. It is a gruesome read about young women who had been tricked into sexual intimacy and were desperate to defend themselves or get revenge through murder. Others were involved in same-sex and queer relationships; in their extreme desperation, all had to resort to murder or suicide in some way. In his position, Wulffen had privileged access to court records, crime scene documentation and expert knowledge. In that capacity he also reported on the Lieschen Neumann trial, for which he wrote a biographical and psychological analysis of each of the perpetrators.[22] It is not known whether he had any role in the trial, but his observations suggest that he had travelled from Dresden to Berlin to attend at least a few of its sessions. Although his account acknowledged the social context of the perpetrators and the circumstances of poverty in which they had grown up during the war and post-war years – which undeniably had a long-lasting psychological effect on each of them – it nonetheless attested to Lieschen Neumann and her friends' cold-bloodedness and very limited intelligence, describing them as mentally deficient psychopaths.[23] For more detailed insight into the case, Wulffen respectfully referred to the expertise of his co-author, Dr Felix Abraham.

Abraham was the head of sexual forensics at the Institute for Sexology in Berlin, which was founded by Magnus Hirschfeld, a pioneer of the gay liberation movement, in 1919.[24] Abraham was invited to the trial as an expert witness to give an account of the clockmaker and of what he would diagnose as the latter's 'passion for photography' and 'pathological hyper-eroticism'.[25] The trial revealed that the clockmaker had taken more than 1,500 photographs of some 150 to 160 young women, many of them nude or in obscene poses. Abraham's report acknowledged the victim's care and passion in storing and handling his collection of images, but claimed that this behaviour was a consequence of his erotic nature rather than a means by which to protect the commercial interests of his trade.[26] To Abraham, Ulbrich's manic collection of photographs was an ideal example of so-called *Erotophotomanie*, a term that seems to be his own but which he explained at length, drawing upon historical references and his own experience with patients to demonstrate a link between the sex drive and compulsive behaviour, particularly the acts of erotic writing, drawing and photographing or collecting photographs.

To do research for his report, Abraham investigated independently of the police. He analysed and captioned Ulbrich's photographs with detailed descriptions and the names of some of the models he could find. Abraham visited the crime scene and interrogated neighbours, the postman, a pub owner, the clockmaker's ex-girlfriend and about a dozen models, the majority of whom described Ulbrich's kindness and professionalism or largely denied having seen anything suspicious. The phrases 'everybody knew' and 'no one said a thing' echo through Ronit Porat's exhibition wall texts and in her book *Hunting in Time*. Abraham was ambiguous in regarding the models in the clockmaker's back room as victims of a crime committed by the photographer. Rather, he used his account to reflect on the legal and commercial framework within which obscene and pornographic images were being distributed in Berlin. With much insight and critique, he presented his further research on various traders, photographers and establishments that would have bought and sold photographs such as Ulbrich's on the black market.[27] He was particularly concerned with photographic collections that were entering the market after the death of their creators or collectors. Only in the rarest of cases, he argued, did the heirs of such collections command such reverence and self-discipline as to destroy their sad legacy or hand it over to a dedicated research centre.[28]

THE DEATH OF THE COLLECTOR

Now a short excursus to Vienna. Around 1928, Madame d'Ora took a photograph of the actress and operetta star then known as Elsie Altmann-Loos. This photograph of her tossing her head back with her loose hair flying high up, her breast revealed by the parting of a modernist fabric wrapped loosely around her shoulders, would become iconic as a symbol of feminist emancipation. Its reception was, however, to collide with the infamous trial of her ex-husband, in which she became involved at around the same time.

Fig 8
Fritz Ulbrich's shop circa 1927,
from *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor*, 1931.

unzüchtiger Bilder: Vom Winkelatelier Ulbrichs bis zum Fabriksbetrieb', in ibid, pp 75–130.

28 Ibid, p 76.

29 See Christopher Long, *Loos on Trial* (Prague: Kant, 2017).

30 The legal ownership of an author's legacy is regulated by inheritance and copyright law. The 1914 Berne Convention defined the minimum duration for legal copyright protection as 50 years after the death of the author, but many countries have raised this to 75 years, somehow aligning the life of a copyright with the average duration of a person's lifetime. This period is what we could call the 'second life' of an artwork. When the copyright protection expires, the work falls into the public domain; that is, the work effectively becomes public property and may be used freely. Interestingly, we are now entering an era of 'modernism's third life', the period past the 75-year second life from the time of the death of these authors. One could argue that it's only in their third life that the works of art by early modernists can become truly

Altmann was the second wife of the famed Viennese architect Adolf Loos, whom she had divorced in 1924 and who was accused of seducing minors, but she still testified on his behalf.

Although the story of the crime committed by the architect represented an enormous media sensation in Vienna at the time – from which Loos was able to flee to Paris – his post-war biographers rather played down its details or even ignored it entirely. His architecture and writings were still widely discussed and circulated at universities and in books on the theory and history of architecture. It took another generation of researchers, architects and historians to revisit the architect's biography and properly address the crime committed.[29] Elsewhere, I have argued that after the death of an author, their 'second life' enters an ambiguous terrain of contested ownership, which has an impact on the material evidence of their first life. It is only in the 'third life' of an artist or architect that their archives are able to be opened and their secrets revealed.[30] When Elsie Altmann wrote down her story in Buenos Aires in the late 1970s, she had given up hope of ever returning to Vienna, but was still claiming to be the heiress to the work of Adolf Loos – a notion that the Viennese institutions, archives and publishers that held works and published writings of his were eager to contest. Nobody at the time seemed able to acknowledge the circumstances of her departure from Vienna and the reason why she had never returned. They also seemed to be oblivious to the fact that Loos's third wife, Claire Beck-Loos, was murdered in the Holocaust, along with her mother and family.

Altmann left Vienna in 1933, shortly after the death of Loos, for a concert tour in Argentina, and monitored the increasing anti-Semitic sentiment and eventually the Anschluss of Austria to Hitler's Germany in 1938 from afar. Unable to return, Elsie could not complete the formal paperwork to accept her inheritance. In her book, she recounts Loos's own handling of documents 'inherited' from a friend, which were supposed to be burned but that, rather than bringing him fame, provided important evidence in that lawsuit against him for seducing minors in his apartment in Bösendorfer Strasse, in Vienna. According to Altmann, in that same apartment, which had been designed by Loos and in which they had lived together until their divorce, investigators found a box of 2,271 stereoscopic photographs including pornographic images that seriously incriminated the defendant in his trial (not to mention in the Viennese newspapers, too, many of which published and openly discussed the contents of the box in detail).[31] Altmann recalls that she had always urged Loos to destroy the box, but he had refused to do so as it had once belonged to one of his first clients, the physiologist and scientist Theodor Beer, for whom the architect redesigned Villa Karma in 1904.[32] Shortly after the renovation was completed, Beer had been put on trial after his wife reported to the police that he had taken indecent photographs of young women and men.

Fig 9
Madame d'Ora, *Portrait of Elsie Altmann-Loos*, 1922. Photo courtesy of Archiv Setzer-Tschiedel and Brandstaetter Images.

It is possible that Theodor Beer did not take those photographs himself. Stereoscopic photographs were purchased from specialised shops and viewed through optical devices such as the so-called *guckkasten*, or 'peep box'. The scientist and optical entrepreneur August Furmann famously ran one of the largest kaiserpanoramas in Berlin in the shopping and amusement gallery Kaisergalerie 'Unter den Linden'. Surrounded by other attractions of oddities, absurdities and obscenities, the kaiserpanorama offered educational tours to visitors who, depending on their preferred theme, could view an urban or natural scene anywhere in the world as an illusory three-dimensional image for about 20 seconds.[33] To adults, it also offered erotic peep shows. The strange and seductive world evoked in the architecture of the Kaisergalerie in Berlin, with its kaiserpanorama and under-the-counter trade in erotic and prohibited objects, was described by many novelists and writers from Franz Kafka to Walter Benjamin to Siegfried Kracauer.[34] We can assume that the book of 1,500 photographs taken by Ulbrich was also sold in one of the bookshops that traded in the Kaisergalerie. Three-dimensional photography was apparently used for scientific work, entertainment and porn. Adolf Loos was among the witnesses in the 1905 trial of Beer, who was accused of indecent acts against two boys. But the

modern. See Ines Weizman, 'The Three Lives of Modern Architecture: Wills, Copyrights and Their Violations', in Thordis Arrhenius et al (eds), *Exhibiting Architecture: Place and Displacement* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014), pp 183–196, and Ines Weizman, '2900 Degrees Fahrenheit', in Jill Magid (ed), *The Proposal* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), pp 87–110.

31 *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 September 1928. Excerpts printed in Elsie Altmann-Loos, *Mein Leben mit Adolf Loos* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1986), pp 46–47 and pp 284–289.

32 Ibid, pp 46–47.

33 See Johann Friedrich Geist, *Die Kaisergalerie. Biographie der Berliner Passage* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1997).

34 Ibid. See also Walter Benjamin, 'Einbahnstraße', in *Gesammelte Schriften 4* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), pp 94–101; and Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (London: Verso, 2021), pp 53–61.

35 Erich Wulffen, Felix Abraham and Institut für Sexualforschung Wien (eds), op cit, p 76.

physiologist, sentenced to three months in prison, was eventually unable to cope with the publicity and died by suicide in 1919.

Beer had entrusted Loos with the box of stereoscopic photographs, requesting that he burn its contents. But Loos could not bring himself to do so, neither at the time of its owner's death in 1919 nor in 1925, when he himself, in a moment of frustration, asked his friends and colleagues to burn all of his own drawings. Of course, one may have other motivations when not burning a box of pornography, but it might also have had to do with his love for his friend, Theodor Beer.

THE ARCHIVE

Felix Abraham was keen to collect archives such as Beer's and the clockmaker's for the Institute for Sexology.[35] Devoted to the study of homosexuality, transvestism and eroticism, the Institute offered psychological support, sex counselling and clinical surgery, and was also a safe place where queer and transgender people could meet and occasionally live. At the centre of the Institute was a library open to both scientific and lay visitors from around the world, among them artists, filmmakers, doctors, scientists and campaigners. Walter Benjamin and Erika Mann were among its famous residents.

On 6 May 1933, the Institute was raided by a Nazi student group, which publicly burned the library. One of the first sites of book burnings, Hirschfeld's Institute was attacked because it embodied the Nazis' hatred of all modern human sciences, modern art, criticism, enlightenment ideals, ethnic tolerance and social and sexual reform. The attack was also strongly motivated by anti-Semitism.[36] The Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, a regular visitor to the Institute, suspected that the Institute was one of the first targets of book burning because some prominent Nazis had been among its clients and were now keen to make sure that their names remained undisclosed.[37] Hirschfeld was away on a lecture tour when his Institute was destroyed. Unable to return to Germany, it became his exile. The tour, however, was extremely popular. In the United States, he became known as 'the Einstein of sex'. In Palestine, in 1932, he gave numerous lectures in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the kibbutz of Beit Alfa. The tour met with such success that the facilities of the movie theatre in Tel Aviv, the gymnasium of the Italian school in Jerusalem and the auditorium of the Technical College in Haifa proved too small for Hirschfeld's large audiences.[38]

The historiography of the Institute, and the global dissemination and influence of Hirschfeld's and his collaborators' ideas, are still to be written, especially as the sudden end of the organisation and the persecution of its members left so many painful and irretrievable gaps. Very little is known of Felix Abraham, a key figure at the Institute for Sexology who had been an expert in work involving sexual hormone therapies and transvestites. The relationship between Abraham and Wulffen is also a desideratum for future research. Preserved in Wulffen's archive is a short note bearing greetings from Magnus Hirschfeld, which suggests that Wulffen was closely connected to the work of the Institute and to the ideas of Hirschfeld and Abraham. Certainly, Abraham's report in *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor* could still be studied in more detail to help understand his life and work. Persecuted and unable to practice his profession, killed himself in Florence in 1937.[39]

In *The Hirschfeld Archives*, Heike Bauer studies the worldwide dissemination of the Institute's surviving documents and ideas while critically scrutinising the conflation of colonial, racist and discriminatory theories in Hirschfeld's work that also marginalised women and overstated racist ideas about the health of a nation.[40] Her fascinatingly detailed research goes far beyond this, but through it she acknowledges the silences and gaps in writing and research on queer history. She argues in favour of a theory of slowness that apprehends historical experience as something simultaneously formed and fragmented: 'Slowness refers to the lingering impact of past traumas that continue to shape, and sometimes haunt, queer lives across time.'[41] The study of chronopolitics, the politics of time, which assumes a connection between political power and specific regimes and concepts of time, tasks us with exploring anew the intersections of subjectivity, emotional life and the public spheres of law, science and society.

THE BODY CLOCK

Between 1910 and 1914, a few years after serving his three-month prison sentence, Theodor Beer spent much of his time at the Zoological Station in Naples. Studying the eyes of birds, fish and reptiles, he became part of an international network of zoologists that who were examining animals, embryology, reproduction and biodiversity. The facility was founded by Anton Dohrn, a late-19th century German zoologist who was fascinated by Charles Darwin's 1859 theory of evolution and Ernst Haeckel's studies of marine organisms, and had who had helped to establish several independent scientific institutions for zoological research. Although interrupted by the First World War, the exchange of knowledge among international academics who were invited to conduct research at the Zoological Station lasted until the early 1930s. Here, many scientists and researchers could undertake innovative experiments in the fields of reproduction, transplantation and sexual behaviour, both on animals and humans. The unique history of the Zoological Station also ended when researchers stopped arriving after being discredited by Nazi propaganda in Europe and forced out of their laboratories and institutions.

Humans share with animals, plants and even microbes an internal 'body clock' that regulates biological activities such

36 Erwin J Haeberle, 'The Jewish Contribution to the Development of Sexology', in *The Journal of Sex Research* 18, no 4 (1982), pp 305–323.

37 Evgenii Bershtein, 'Eisenstein's Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld: Text and Context', in Joan Neuberger and Antonio Somaini (eds), *The Flying Carpet: Studies on Eisenstein and Russian Cinema in Honor of Naum Kleiman* (Milan: Éditions Mimésis, 2017), pp 75–86.

38 Erwin J Haeberle, op cit, pp 305–323.

39 Ralf Dose, "Es gab doch für ihn ein sogenanntes bürgerliches Leben schon sehr lange nicht mehr' Dr med Felix Abraham – Fragmente eines Lebens', in *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft*, no 54 (2016), pp 9–23.

40 Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), p 8.

41 Ibid, p 9.

42 Harry Benjamin, 'Eugen Steinach, 1861–1944: A Life of Research', in *The Scientific Monthly* 61, no 6 (1945), pp 427–442.

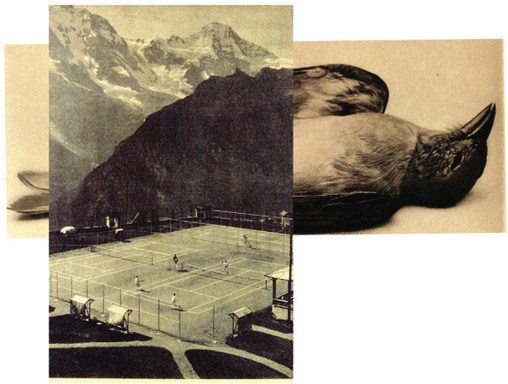


Fig 10
Ronit Porat, photographic collage from *The Sentence*, 2018.

as sleeping, waking and reproduction. When Albert Einstein introduced his theory of relativity in the early 1920s, he questioned the concept of absolute time and, with it, the mechanical Newtonian universe, which regulated the movements of celestial objects like those of workers in a modern factory as if they were governed by a single timekeeping device. Working beyond the neat synchronisation of Newtonian clockwork physics and railway timetables, Einstein's concept of time became relative to observers and their motion. Synchronisation lost its absolute reference point. This form of hyper-synchronisation is one in which different movements at different speeds and rhythms have their own chronological reference – a concept manifested in the work of researchers such as Theodor Beer or later Eugen Steinach, an Austrian physiologist who became known in the early 20th century for his pioneering work in endocrinology. His research into the reproductive cycles of mammals would, in 1930, lead to the discovery that sex hormones act as an internally regulating clock.

Steinach experimented with guinea pigs and rats to study the revivifying effect of hormone treatments, which he controversially claimed could 'rejuvenate' not only animals but men as well, though to a lesser degree.[42] Later, he promised that his 'Steinach Rejuvenation Procedure' could increase the production of sex hormones in men. While this work was later discredited, his research regarding female sex hormones and ovarian extracts led to the development of the first standardised injectable oestrogen. In autumn 1926, Steinach was the 'star speaker' at the First International Congress of Sexual Research in Berlin, organised by, among others, Magnus Hirschfeld and Felix Abraham, with whom he had jointly developed operations for transgender surgery.[43] Although no documents can be evidenced to support this theory, it is nonetheless possible that it was through the connection between Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexology and Eugen Steinach, who in 1931 was still director of the Biological Institute at the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, that publications by the Institute for Sexual Research, such as the book *Fritz Ulbrichs lebender Marmor*, could be produced and circulated.

Rejuvenation is also an interference with time. Just minutes after the two accomplices of Lieschen Neumann entered the clockmaker's shop to carry out their robbery – a scene that Yva would likely have captured in one her photographs of scenes depicting horror and fear – dozens of automated clocks sounded midnight and a new date appeared on their calendars. The sound startled the intruders so much that they almost abandoned their plan (one of the friends suddenly needed to use the toilet).[44] For a moment, the clocks were out of tune with their plan to synchronise. Instead of only robbing the clockmaker, they now decided to kill him.

POSTSCRIPT

History can be understood as a relation between objects and flows. Objects here include Ronit Porat's reconstruction of a kaiserpanorama, but also institutions, sometimes architectural details and elements, sometimes different technologies and experiments that create a photographic image. The threads are the flows along which ideas, materials, migrants and sometimes refugees travelled.

The method of microhistory comes to mind here. Microhistory is a concept developed in the 1970s by the 'Italian school', to which Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg belonged.[45] These historians sought to depart from a history of kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, the so-called *'histoire événementielle'* in which the important documents are official letters or transcripts of courts and summits. Microhistory was also pitted against the history of the *longue durée* that the Marxist historians of the Annales school – Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel – had developed in the interwar period.[46] The history of the *longue durée* is the impersonal history of processes, of undercurrents; the history of capital, the history of trades, the history of large territories such as the Mediterranean. Microhistory concentrates instead on a history of artisans, of outliers, of those not conforming to what was considered the norm, of those who left almost no trace.

It is easy to understand why a murder in 1930 might not be remembered. This killing was to be drowned by the bloodshed of the years that followed. Yet Porat's detective-yarn evidence board connects both different entities of time and a global web of references and connections. Invisible threads run through her installations, tying together seemingly unrelated, disparate bits of information. Each bit of information is like a doorway to others, all of which are assembled through ever more intricate evidentiary matrices that bring together disparate places, people and charts of evidence. Porat's revisiting of a moment lost, giving it a 'third life', offers an unexpected, enormously rich exploration – a synchronisation – of a set of simultaneous events in time, reconstructed and intersected in space. In the context of intersectional thinking: one never looks at a single issue alone. From the point of intersection, one begins to unpack, navigate and travel outwards along those assembled nodes of knowledge.

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43 Ibid.
44 Unknown author (SPD), 'Mörder ohne Mut. Der Begin des Mordprozesses Lieschen Neumann vor dem Berliner Schwurgericht', in *Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst*, 28 January 1931, p 15.
45 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', in *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*, translated by Anne C Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp 193–214.
46 See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, translated by Siân Reynolds (London: Collins, 1972).

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