

EN

Nina Wakeford

Concrete Comeback

Arms Are For Linking

May 18 – July 06, 2024

A metal door in a wall. You open it, and a blue light immediately comes on. You continue through a heavy concrete armoured door. The next room is decorated in familiar colours, domestic but not too domestic. Behind a pane of glass is the reception desk. This is where you register. Name? Age? Sex? etc. Laminated sheets provide information. Do they think you are contaminated? Go left if you are a woman, or right if you are a man. Dispose of your personal belongings in the hatch provided. Behind the showers is the changing room where you will find new clothes according to your size and sex. Now you are in the shelter. You are Swiss.

‘There might be some usefulness in lulling individuals in the heteropatriarchy by pretending we are not dangerous to them’

This is the exhibition. Its architecture mimics an idealised shelter. Or one which has been adapted by a subculture. The scenography is reminiscent of the Bletchley Park Museum or other kinds of museum-based knowledge display. Amongst other things, *Concrete Comeback & Arms are for Linking* speaks of the suspicion and mistrust that were widespread during the Cold War. This mistrust is also transferred to the factuality of the archival material presented in the exhibition. Before you immerse yourself in the infrastructure, you are confronted with a series of questions. Do you understand the coded language? Do you know the answers?

The groundbreaking film *Bar jeder Frau* (1991) by director Katrin Barben, which was shot in Bern, plays a part of the scenography. Every twenty minutes, echoing through the room, is the sound of a whistle always carried by a gay man from Bern, at least since the time of the Homosexual Register, to alert the police. At the back of the room, two women from the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp talk about their experiences in a shelter in Geneva.

A voice comes from the jukebox next door. Ingo is speaking to you. Again. The work is by Gianmaria Andreetta and Public Universal Frxnd, who have created a link to a past exhibition in the Stadtgalerie programme, which they realised together with Nina Wakeford and Luca Beeler: *Being a faggot-space-man I am awesome.*, about the artist, author, clairvoyant and spy Ingo Swann.

Notes on the artist:

Artist and sociologist Nina Wakeford often takes as her starting point the ‘unfinished business’ of times past. For the last fifteen years she has been exploring the 1980s and its social movements, and the challenges posed by revisiting the energies these movements created. Her works and exhibitions deal with the ambivalence that this revisiting can evoke. In her exhibition at the Stadtgalerie, she confronts the family and security policies of the Cold War and their infrastructures with objects, archive materials and current voices and memories of LGBTQ+ people from Bern. Archival material and interviews are anonymised, edited and re-recorded by the artist. She makes the voice the material of her artistic practice. *Concrete Comeback & Arms are for Linking* is an associative game with the parallels and interdependencies between the life experiences of LGBTQ+ people, their struggles for freedom and emancipation, and the policies of Switzerland’s civilian national defence (and beyond) during the Cold War. In doing so, she understands the heterosexual nuclear family, the defence culture of a nation and shelter spaces as congealed, mutually intersecting, effects of policies of this time of drummed up fears.

Rule 1

Avoid any obvious cheek kissing, hugs or other tender physical expressions during your stay at the Marzili.

Rule 2

Try to join one of the existing groups of cheerful sisters. This is widely considered absolutely essential and will save you the stress of having to make new friends, which is tiresome.

Rule 3

Limit your activities to being seen and admired. Cast only furtive glances at the beautiful people, whether they are close to you or passing by.

Rule 4

Avoid profound topics and especially conversations with political content. Do not give your fellow sisters the impression that you sympathise with the gay movement. Avoid using the ugly word 'gay' at all. Rather use 'like us', 'belonging to the family', 'alti Dschädärä', 'Zwätschge', 'in the same faculty.'

Rule 5

Don't leave your clothes lying around randomly, but stack them neatly next to your towel. This shows that you are capable of keeping a tidy house.

Rule 6

Don't forget to surprise your potential admirers several times a season with new, fashionably correct swimming trunks.

Rule 7

If a nice gentleman nearby (we are at the Zwätschgegrill*) pays you a courtesy visit, only invite him to sit on the edge of your bath towel after a lengthy conversation. If there is mutual interest, you may later ask him to pick up his things and place them next to yours.

Rule 8

Allow your partner to oil your back. However, avoid treatment on your chest, legs and other, more intimate areas.

Rule 9

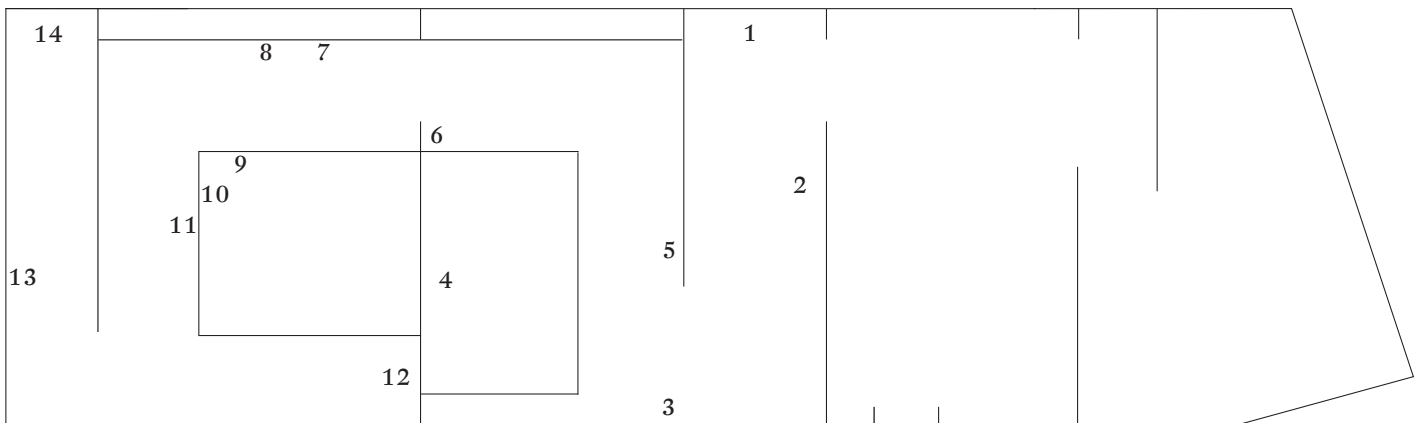
Pay attention to the distance between the bath towels. It is an unmistakable sign of how intimate the owners are.

- Zwätschgegrill: Plum-grill. The plums (gay men) sunbathe (grill) there, on slanted wooden slats.

the artist thanks:

Luca Beeler, instigator
Andrea Bracher, Stadtgalerie
Silvia Berger Ziauddin, Professorin für Schweizer
Geschichte, Universität Bern, conversation
Frédéric Deshusses, Archives Contestataires,
Geneva, archival assistance
Verena Dietze, Stadtgalerie
David Ferrando Giraut, video editing
Rose Goddard, animation
Michael Guggenheim, Reader in Sociology,
Goldsmiths, University of London
Werner Heierli, Civil Engineer
David Kaplowitz, subtitling
Dani V. Keller, research assistance
Urslé von Mathilde, conversation
Veronika Minder, filmmaker (*Katzenball*, 2005)
Claudio Pupolin Erni, Zivilschutz-Museum
Gareth Rees (with Claire Lacaden, Tasnima
Rahim, Solomon Whitehouse, Galahad Wisbey),
Archaeology South-East, UCL Institute of
Archaeology, photogrammetry of whistles
Corinne Rufli, scholar of Swiss LGBTQ+ history
London Sculpture Studios
Christoph Studer, voice
Paula Thomaka, research assistance, Stadtgalerie
Soundnode (David Crane and Daniel Jaramillo),
audio restoration
Steve Whitten, sandcasting

FLOOR PLAN



1
with Dani V Keller
Wer ist?, 2024
stereo audio loop
3:10 min

2
Katrin Barben
Bar Jeder Frau, 1991
film transferred to digital
6:00 min

3
Some usefulness in lulling them,
2024
digital print on Forex
52 x 52 cm

4
Whistles, 2024
digital animation
4:50 min

5
*From Cold War America to the
Schänzli*, 2024
audio for handset
3:02 min

6
*The Civil Engineer and the
Nation*, 2024
audio for handset
1:10 min

7
Now that I found you, 2024
audio for handset
1:10 min

8
At the Zwätschgegrill (plum grill),
2024
audio for handset
2:41 min

9
Account, 2024
digital video
12:03 min

10
A Window To My Time, 2024
sand-cast aluminium of British
supermarket time capsule.

11
*From Café Bali to the Homosexuelle
Arbeitsgruppen Bern*, 2024
audio for handset
2:33 min

12
Just a normal door, in a big wall,
2024
digital video
12:26 min

13
with Public Universal Frxnd
and Gianmaria Andreetta
*Hero Haubold aka Ingo Swann,
psychic*, 2013-1933
audio
2:02 min

14
Mannequin borrowed from the
machinery room of the Zivil-
schutz-Museum, Zürich

15
Whistles, 2024
continuous audio loop
throughout the exhibition

16
Response by Vanille Fraise, 1986
3 laminated colour laser jet
prints
at reception desk

Events

Exhibition opening
Fri, May 17, 6–9pm

Guided tour with sign language
translation
Thu, July 4, 6pm

Finissage & Goodbye Party
Sat, July 6
Nina Wakeford in dialogue,
2pm
Book presentation, 6pm
Good bye party, 9pm



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Opening hours
Wednesday–Friday
2–6pm
Saturday
12–4 pm