

Elia Gurna



Project Proposal: Lueger Mahnmal

Title: The birdhouse of sorrows

It seems to me that Austrians argue so much and so hatefully about things that are in actuality tragic. When I visit the city I feel a great sense of loss for all the people who once lived there who were murdered or had to flee. I wish their voices were still a part of the city's fabric. "The birdhouse of sorrows" is based on a poem by James Meetze, called the "Saint of Perpetual Sorrow."

*Call me a spent orange in the dirt, a primer-gray birdhouse in the tree
or a new world thesaurus but not over the telephone.
Call me a nearly empty water glass, a ceramic kitten toppled on the sill
or call me a sad and broken man but do not call tonight.
Call me a celebration of new democracy, a vest of explosives beside you
or the state of the union address, marked return to sender.
Call me an unfinished word puzzle, a dull pencil or doldrums
but do not call to lure me from the tar.
Call me a despot having gone too fast, a sickly poinsettia in the sink
or a failed plan for two but no, not etc.
Call me a conduit for perpetual sorrow, an ill mannered house finch
or pruned rosebushes beneath an empty birdfeeder.
Call me an empirical fault, call me tomorrow or don't bother using
words to say, don't from the other end just breathe.*

I consider "the birdhouse of sorrows" a kind of memorial to all the people who had to suffer and still suffer because of hateful ideas Karl Lueger popularized.

Birds are a symbol of peace and hope and often the only wildlife left in the city. I imagine the statue as a large home for birds, kind of ramshackle and dirty. The place would be beautiful but also sad to look at.

I think it is only just that someone like Lueger should be transformed into a shelter for pigeons and sparrows.