

Memento Mori: Art during Lent

at the Ursuline Church in Linz

Heribert Friedl: It will be its afterglow that will outshine everything, 2021 / 2026 | Sound installation (church interior)

Magdalena Berger: Untitled (loop) / (motor, metal construction, textile objects), 2026 (crypt)

Maria Nalbantova: Disposable Care (porcelain, metal pipes), 2025 (crypt)

Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026 – Good Friday, April 3, 2026

An event organized by Forum St. Severin, Ursuline Church, and the Art Department of the Diocese of Linz

Under the theme “Memento Mori” (“Remember Death”), artists have been invited to the Ursuline Church in Linz for 35 years now to present existing works or site-specific interventions during Lent. From Ash Wednesday to Good Friday 2026, works by Heribert Friedl, Magdalena Berger, and Maria Nalbantova will be on display and audible.

The sound installation in the church interior and the sculptural works in the crypt create moments of reflection on death and transience for visitors to the Ursuline Church during Lent. These are poetic interventions in space that tell stories in different ways and invite conscious perception and attention.

Heribert Friedl, a lecturer at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, has developed a multifaceted body of work over several decades with his “nonvisual objects.” Six times a day, the sound installation in the church interior interrupts the silence and opens up a new sensory experience in the baroque church interior with familiar motifs such as the ticking of a clock or the “breathing” of a bellows.

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Maria Nalbantova and Magdalena Berger, master's students in the Plastic Concepts/Ceramics program at the University of Art and Design Linz, take familiar objects and transform them into new symbols through their sculptural interventions. In interaction with the space and in the field of tension between standstill, constant movement, everyday actions, and rituals, they create new associations with death and transience.

<https://marianalbantova.com/>

<https://www.magdalena-berger.at/>

The exhibition will open on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026, after the Ash Wednesday liturgy, which begins at 7:00 p.m.; the introduction will be given by curator Martina Gelsinger from the Art Department of the Diocese of Linz.

The Ursuline Church (Landstraße 31, 4020 Linz) is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. up to the entrance balustrade.

The sound installation in the church interior lasts around 15 minutes and can be heard daily at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.

Opening hours of the crypt and the church interior:

Thursdays and Fridays, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., with art information provided at 5:00 p.m.

The artists and their works in detail

Magdalena Berger

Untitled (loop)

Motor, metal construction, textile object

Crypt

2026

Five motors are mounted on the wall in the former viewing room of the crypt of the Ursuline Church. White linen handkerchiefs are attached to them, which rotate in a circle and continuously brush against the wall. Each handkerchief is embroidered with a word: distance, love, closeness, touch, yours

The handkerchiefs brush against the walls. The touch constantly scans the room in a calm rhythm. The rotation follows an endless loop in which the beginning and the end touch each other. The constant rotation creates a rhythm that inscribes the room into a temporal track. What remains is a mechanical presence in which movement, technology, and perception intertwine and engage the room in a silent, ongoing dialogue.

As an intimate object, the linen handkerchief touches the skin in everyday use and absorbs tears and sweat. Here, they come into contact with the wall of the approximately 270-year-old crypt.

The motors produce a steady noise. The cloth handkerchiefs create a soft, almost whispering sound as they brush against the walls. The audible sound is a sign of friction; the cloth and the wall change slowly and gently over time.

The room installation metaphorically addresses grief, consolation, and memory. The continuous movement can be understood as a metaphor for the time inherent in a process of change or farewell, which is also attributed with a "healing" effect. The handkerchiefs and the terms embroidered on them represent intimacy, closeness, and relationship in the relationship between body and space, between people and their environment.

Magdalena Berger is studying for a master's degree in Plastic Concepts/Ceramics at the University of Art and Design Linz. In Berger's installations, motors, sound, video, latex, and red wine become elements that not only occupy spaces visually, but also make them tangible through smell and acoustic intensity. The focus is on the question of how materials and spatial structures make physicality and identity visible.

Installations, sound works, photographs, and objects by Magdalena Berger have been exhibited at the Salon "Rosa Beige" at Galerie FÜNFZIGZWANZIG Salzburg, the Salzburg Museum, Parallel Vienna, the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, the Foto Wien Festival at IFK Vienna, and periscope Salzburg, among others. Works are represented in the collections of the Province of Salzburg and the Province of Upper Austria.

www.magdalena-berger.at

Maria Nalbantova

Disposable Care

Installation

Porcelain, metal pipes

Crypt

2025

Four sculptural objects hang on the front wall of the crypt, and two more are on the floor next to the supports that hold up the vaulted ceiling. The works in the "Disposable Care" series are sculptural objects made of porcelain. They are shaped like white towels. Their apparent softness is solidified and retains the subtle trace of a body. They reveal a tension between use and purity, intimacy and anonymity. By fixing a fleeting moment of touch, the works make visible what is otherwise overlooked: the fragile, often invisible act of care that is embedded in trust and support.

In the contemporary context, the white towel has become a symbol of comfort and hospitality, of spaces where renewal appears effortless and continuous. The white towel embodies cleanliness, safety, and reliability, but at the same time refers to the invisible systems of maintenance and attention that make this feeling possible in the first place. Made of porcelain, they capture a moment of transition - a trace of a body, frozen softness.

Maria Nalbantova on her artistic work: "I am drawn to the small gestures that structure our everyday lives, gestures that are so familiar that they often go unnoticed. I am particularly interested in those moments when care is present but not visibly acknowledged, when trust is embedded in routine actions and supported by invisible work.

One of the most common daily rituals worldwide is washing one's hands and body, followed by the simple act of drying off with a towel. Underneath this ordinary gesture lies a structure of care, care for oneself and care provided by others. It is a gesture based on trust, yet the work that makes it possible often remains invisible.

In “Disposable Care,” sculptural objects made of porcelain take the form of white towels in a frozen state. Their apparent softness is solidified, preserving the subtle trace of a body. They reveal a tension between use and purity, intimacy and anonymity. By fixing a fleeting moment of touch, the works make visible what is otherwise overlooked: the fragile, often invisible act of care, embedded in trust and support.

Maria Nalbantova was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1990. She is a visual artist working with sculpture, DIY biomaterials, video, and drawing, and is currently completing a master's degree in Plastic Concepts/Ceramics at the University of Art and Design Linz. She creates mixed-media installations, often in dialogue with specific locations, exploring their historical, socio-political, and ecological dimensions. Her work focuses on the concepts of coexistence, care, and responsibility.

Her works are part of the collections of the European Parliament's Contemporary Art Collection, the China International Culture Association, and the Sofia City Art Gallery in Bulgaria.

Maria Nalbantova, who already completed her studies at the Academy of Arts in Sofia, will be exhibiting at the Bulgarian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2026 together with three other artists.

www.marianalbantova.com

Heribert Friedl

It will be its afterglow that will outshine everything else.

Sound installation in the church interior.

2021 / 2026.

Duration: 15 min.

The baroque church interior transports visitors to another time. The richness and splendor of the furnishings were intended to give people at that time a foretaste of paradise as a state of heavenly joy and eternal carefreeness. However, Heribert Friedl does not add any additional visual elements to this Baroque Gesamtkunstwerk. Instead, he uses the specific atmosphere of this space to create a new sensory experience: a sound installation that interrupts the silence six times a day at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. for around 15 minutes. The sound installation formally consists of just a few elements: the ticking of a clock, an ever-changing organ tone, the flageolet tones of a guitar, and the “breathing” of a bellows.

With the ticking of the clock and the sounds of the organ, Heribert Friedl draws on familiar auditory experiences and metaphors for the finiteness of time and human existence. However, he also understands the clock as a symbol of infinity, reflecting the ever-continuing rhythm of life. The sounds in different frequency ranges overlap and seem to be removed from place and time.

What remains is the memory, the afterglow, the echo beyond time. Space and sound merge into one.

Heribert Friedl was born in Feldbach (Styria) in 1969 and lives in Vienna. He studied sculpture at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and has been a lecturer there since 2021, teaching at the Institute for Fine and Media Arts in the Department of Site-Specific Art. His works have been shown in national and international exhibitions since 1994, including at the Museum Folkwang in Essen (Germany), Kunstverein Arnsberg (Germany), Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon (Portugal), Kunsthalle Kiel (Germany), Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken (Germany), Neue Galerie Graz, Forum Stadtpark, Kunsthalle Exnergasse in Vienna, and Salzburger Kunstverein. Heribert Friedl became known around 20 years ago for his work with fragrances and their effects. He describes his installations in visually empty spaces, which he combines with scents, as “nonvisual objects.”

The composition was already heard in the Ursuline Church in 2021. Heribert Friedl's series of paintings “15 Aufenthalte” (15 Stays) is currently on display in the ballroom and chapel of the Bischofshof in Linz.

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