

united in grief. ein festival in togetherness and/in mourning

«Everybody grieves different»
— Kendrick Lamar

The fragility of all life, losses and irreversible damage we inflict on nature could be reasons to grieve. And yet, mourning is not something that has a recognized place in our society. What rituals, what spaces can we create through and with art? During this 4-day festival we will reflect, narrate, pause, surrender and celebrate (about) mourning together.

Die Zerbrechlichkeit allen Lebens, Verluste und irreversible Schäden, die wir der Natur zufügen, könnten Gründe sein, zu trauern. Und doch ist Trauer etwas, das in unserer Gesellschaft keinen anerkannten Platz hat. Welche Rituale, welche Räume können wir durch und mit Kunst schaffen? Während dieses 4-tägigen Festivals werden wir gemeinsam über Trauer nachdenken, erzählen, innehalten, uns hingeben und feiern.

Daily, 4–9pm
Chorgasse
At those terrifying frontiers, 2019
Video Installation by Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme

Fragments from Edwards Said's most personal and poetic work, «After the Last Sky», are repurposed to create a new script that reflects on what it means now to be constructed as an «illegal» person, body, or entity.

Day 1
17. January 2024

11–2pm
Helferei
Poetics of Grief
Workshop by Ali Chahrouh

The pain, suffering, and sobs in Ali Chahrouh's dance pieces always have a comforting poetic beauty. In this workshop he gives insights into the physical poetics of a grief body.

6.30pm
Vor dem Neumarkt
Infinite Dances Zürich Edition
Ritual by Michiel Vandevelde
Choreographer and dancer Michiel Vandevelde commemorates the death through a moment of sharing movement and togetherness. People from Zurich and dancers will perform the choreography for all passers-by and audience every day of the festival in front of Neumarkt and Helferei.

7pm
Neumarkt Saal
Fragments of a Language of Grief
Impuls von Hayat Erdoğan und Tine Milz
Die Sprache der Trauer ist eine fragmentarische. Die Unendlichkeit des Gefühls der Trauer stösst an die Grenzen der Sprache. Ein Satz bricht ab, ein stummer Schrei. In den Leerstellen zwischen den Fragmenten, liegt sie: stotternd, schluchzend, schweigend ... we let go, we run in circles, we breathe, we accept, eventually, we cry us a river. Co-empathetically.

7.30pm
Neumarkt Saal
Die Sätze gehen weiter
Rede von Senthuran Varatharajah
In seinem Text «Die Sätze gehen weiter» denkt der Schriftsteller, Theologe und Philosoph Senthuran Varatharajah über persönliche und familiäre Erinnerungen nach. In poetischer Präzision und in einer bildnerisch-berührenden Sprache sucht er nach dem, was hinter den Worten und Sätzen liegt.

8.15pm
Neumarkt Saal
Es ist genug Trauer für alle da!
Lecture von Max Czollek

Gesellschaften erzählen von sich gute Geschichte. Dadurch wird jedoch die Geschichte und Kontinuität der Gewalt unsichtbar gemacht. Was es braucht, ist eine andere Erzählung – eine Geschichte der Katastrophe, die wir Geschichte nennen. Denn im Gegensatz zur guten Nationalgeschichte ist Trauer keine begrenzte Ressource. Es ist genug Trauer für alle da.

10pm
Helferei
The Wake
Performance von Belle Santos mit Challenge Gumbodete, Bendix Fesefeldt, Susanne Sachsse, Belle Santos, Dylan Spencer-Davidson, and Mervan Ürkmez

«The Wake» ist eine kontemplative Performance-Installation mit choreografischen Elementen, in der die Zuschauenden eingeladen sind ihren Blick frei schweben zu lassen und sich somit auf ihre eigene Trauerreise zu begeben.

Day 2
18. January 2024

6.30pm
Vor dem Neumarkt
Infinite Dances Zürich Edition
Ritual by Michiel Vandevelde

7pm
Neumarkt Saal
«Ich möchte am Ende nicht nur ein Besucher auf dieser Welt gewesen sein»
Literarische Trauercollage von Louise Brown

Was bleibt, wenn wir sterben? Geschichten, Erinnerungen und vor allem das Gefühl eines Menschen, das bestenfalls bei einer Abschiedsfeier wieder spürbar wird. In ihren Trauerreden sucht die Journalistin, Autorin und Trauerrednerin Louise Brown den Klang eines Menschen.

7.45pm
Neumarkt Saal
What kind of life is this?
Sound Performance by Nour Sokhon

«What kind of life is this?» is an ongoing performative research, based on the many lives of migrants and asylum seekers that have disappeared at sea. Nour Sokhon, a Lebanese interdisciplinary artist, creates a cathartic ritual on stage.

8.30pm
Neumarkt Saal
(a kind of) Requiem
Performance by Lulu Obermayer with Noa Calluy

Performer and director Lulu Obermayer adapts Johannes Brahms German Requiem, picking up on its theme and transforms sorrow to joy. An emotional landscape is created, where the raw labor of mourning is performed and aestheticised to provide a non secular collective mourning experience.

9.45pm
Neumarkt Saal
Spring Spring Spring
A Poetry Performance by Ibrahim Nehme

A poetry performance baked under seven suns; a story of three springs; a flower meditation on letting go. Written and performed by Ibrahim Nehme, publisher, writer and artist with video work by photographer Tanya Traboulsi.

Day 3
19. January 2024

6.30pm
Vor der Helferei
Infinite Dances Zürich Edition
Ritual by Michiel Vandevelde

7pm
Helferei
The Love Behind My Eyes
Dance Piece by Ali Chahrouh with Leila Chahrouh, Chadi Aoun, and Ali Chahrouh

Can one die of a broken heart? In «The Love Behind My Eyes», Ali Chahrouh tells the tragic story of a forbidden love between two men in the Arabic world. Shrouded by the voice of a mourning woman, the intimate choreography pays homage to forbidden love. The dance embodies sensuality and the art of love but also conveys the frailty of the protagonists, their pain and silent protest against the oppression of (love) stories deemed to be illegitimate.

8.30pm
Neumarkt Saal
A Living Room Observed From Behind the Curtain: Notes on Grief and Time.
A Reading by Daniel Blanga Gubbay

Daniel Blanga Gubbay's writing partially emerges from the experience of growing up in a Lebanese Jewish family, making the narrative travel in parallel between the codes of Jewish mourning and the expressions of a Levantine diaspora: what does it mean to time grief and what does it mean grieving time?

9.30pm
Neumarkt Saal
An all die Trauer, die zwischen den Orten liegt.
Briefe an ein Gefühl von Sinthujan Varatharajah

Wie trauert es sich, wenn zwischen dem Geschehnis, den Orten, den Betroffenen, eine fast unüberbrückbare Distanz liegt, fragt Sinthujan Varatharajah, Essayist*in und Wissenschaftler*in. Was macht das mit dem Trauern und den Trauernden?

10.15pm
Neumarkt Saal
It Was Paradise, Unfortunately (No Such Thing As Theatre)
Performance von Raphael Khouri

Where does the idea of theatre begin in the Western World, and why there? Can theatre change the world? Did it ever? Jordanian-born Berlin-based trans playwright Raphael Khouri turns to history, where one utopia already existed.

24pm
Neumarkt Saal
When the Storm Comes ...
A Ritual Cleansing DJ Set by Nkisi

Nkisi is the pseudonym of Melika Ngombe Kolongo, who is active as a producer, live musician, and DJ. For United in Grief Nkisi ritually cleanses the dance floor and reunites us with her rhythms in danceable universes.

Day 4
20. January 2024

4pm
Helferei
«Wenn Frieden ist, dann bin ich als Erster zurück, denn ich liebe mein Land.»
Eine lyrische Naht zwischen Diaspora und Heimat von Elona Beqiraj & Fatbardh Kajiku

Warum kann es sich nicht jeder leisten, sein Handy nachts auf Flugmodus zu stellen? Wer

schafft seinen Flug? Was hat das alles mit Flugzeugen zu tun? Wie viel Trauer kann man über den Wolken lassen?

5pm
Helferei
Botany of Grief
Elise Lammer, Ian Wooldridge and Lena Maria Thüring sing and read about resilience

Lena Maria Thüring's «All that we touch, we change» deals with the resilience of plants and their reproduction under challenging conditions. Elise Lammer does research on the garden of British artist, filmmaker, author and gay rights activist Derek Jarman. She invited artist Ian Wooldridge to read together with her. Reflections on the ecological crisis and a personal approach to loss and grief.

6pm
Helferei
The autopsy of a connection through time (curse and enchantment)
by Carolina Bianchi and Carolina Mendonça

In this talk the artists Carolina Bianchi and Carolina Mendonça share partial connections they have established with dead writers and artists, with inaccessible memories, expanding the possibilities of engagement with all kinds of differences, enabling the formation of heterogeneous and supportive communities outside the bounds of identity.

7pm
Helferei
The First Flower
Concert (acoustic) by Astrit Ismaili

Astrit Ismaili is a performance artist from Kosovo, based in Amsterdam. They will perform exclusively for United in Grief' an acoustic version of their music album «The First Flower».

7.30pm
Vor der Helferei
Infinite Dances Zürich Edition
Ritual by Michiel Vandevelde

8pm
Neumarkt Saal
THE FEAST
A Musical and Performative Banquet with Marcel Babazadeh, Yara Bou Nassar, Challenge Gumbodete, DJ Bey alias Emrah Göktaş, and others

Room acoustician and sound designer Marcel Babazadeh immerses the banquet in a musically dense sound space. In this festive and mournful space, we become co-empathetic with the melancholic electronic Set by DJ Bey alias Emrah Göktaş as well with «Lay the Weight of Your Heart on My Shoulder» on by Yara Bou Nassar and Challenge Gumbodete.

10pm
Neumarkt Saal
The Blues
A Slow Reading Session by Slow Reading Club

Slow Reading Club (SRC) proposes a reader around an expanded definition of «the blues» as a bodily sensation and poetic tradition of carrying sadness collectively and across generations, deep in the bones.

24pm
Neumarkt Saal
Us – The Bereaved
A Mourning Listening Session and DJ Set by Fallon Mayanja

Sound and performance artist Fallon Mayanja seeks an artistic practice that resists racialised representational logic. For United in Grief Fallon composes a new collage composition «Breath to the Death». We shall explore mourning. We shall move forward in the face of uncertainty.

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Belle Santos
Nour Sokhon
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**Künstlerische Leitung
und Kuration**
Hayat Erdoğan
Tine Milz
Ibrahim Nehme

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17. bis 20. Januar 2024

Dank an
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17.-20. JANUAR 2024

The ABGs of Grief. A Glossary

Accept The first one is a difficult one, but it holds great power. It's difficult to admit that it's over, that it will never be the same again, that change is the only constant and there is no way back. But acceptance is the master key, that will unlock and lock the doors of grief. So don't be surprised when it comes at last.

Break To break free, you will first break down. So go down and deep. And then invite the light in, so you can see through the darkness. Shadow work is a lot of work, but it will break the chains and its taste of liberation is like no other.

Courage You will need lots of it to make many moves in the Game of Grief. Do whatever it takes to find and keep it. Grow with it. Then glow with it.

Care Be gentle to yourself, take long walks, take a bath, eat well, try to sleep and breathe, do things, that give you comfort, that give you pleasurable feelings.

Denial It is part of the Game of Grief; we have mechanisms and reflexes that at first don't want to believe in the cause of our grief, so we deny it. It's okay for a moment, but then try to face it, courageously take imaginary walks around the cause, look at it, and try to embrace it.

Drama Don't dwell there. Don't drill there. Don't get sucked in there. Just stay away from it because it will waste your energy and cloud your mind. Stay with your grief, but don't make a drama out of it. And don't victimize yourself.

Elevate Your talking points. Expand your perspectives to see new points of view emerge. Let yourself see things from higher up. It's clearer and makes way more sense from the top.

Endure Look for the long-held wish for enduring love that goes beyond time and space. Hold on it.

Find healthy ways to cope. Leave your phone at home and take a long walk outside. Smile at strangers on your way. Try hot showers or hot

chocolate. Try dancing, fasting, lifting weights, plate throwing (or breaking, if it tickles your taste). It will shift your attention and make you feel better. Find out what works for you. Don't judge yourself. Don't explain yourself. Just be gentle in your ways and on your body.

Grieve The ABG's come home with the letter G. Grief is a shockwave. It will send you into fire and back. So give yourself the space and time to grieve. Learn the language of grief so you could understand and unlock its secrets. Know that it can and will change you. So don't resist it. Let it take you through the A's to Z's at your own pace, and then find the way back to P(eace).

Garden Plant a garden of memorial like Derek Jarman did for all his friends and lovers whom he lost to HIV. Each circular bed in his garden is a dial and a true lover's knot – planted with lavender, helichrysum, and santolina.

Heart Grief is bottled up love, and love is the language of the heart. So send love to all the parts that need it. Then enjoy watching them grow like flowers in spring.

Hug yourself, let yourself be hugged. It will give you comfort – although you might feel like you want to reject it. Hang in there, in your own arms, and in those who care for you.

Hope is the thing with feathers, as Emily Dickinson wrote. Turn your grief in something imaginative, absurd, and joyful.

Involve your flings and followers, your better halves and half-siblings, your pets and friends, angels and anyone who will give you an ear, a hug, or a word that helps you out of this situation.

Joke Invite laughter in. Make it loud. Let it sound. Score jokes on YouTube. Go to a standup show. Seek funny friends. Let the joke make your jaw drop. You'll thank us later.

Keep a diary of how you feel and all the plot twists in your story of grief. A diary will take matters out of your mind and then help you free up

space for what really matters. Also, you might return to these pages later when you need to draw the dots and finish the lines.

Let go Grief is really all about it. Let your grief become your guru. And then let it go. It's only after you've let it go that it will let you grasp its teachings.

Move your body. The Mind-Body connection is real. Trust your body to change your mind.

Memory takes passion of the body. Leave the body open for the moon to break into. Let the beams of moon light shine on your memories.

No You might find yourself saying it a lot, especially when the conversation turns to forgiveness. Say what you may, but there is nothing that can completely transform your grief journey like forgiveness – for, but most importantly for yourself. There's so much wisdom behind its veil. So, go for a yes, unless you reeeeeeally have a good reason for no.

Open your mind to another way of telling your grief story. What if it's not about you? What if there is something you are failing to see? Try to zoom out to see the bigger picture. Then see what changes in the story.

Peace Fighting your grief will not make it go away. Instead, learn from A to make peace with it. What will eventually happen is, that you will end up making peace with yourself.

Question your intentions. Your ego will want to have its say. Go where it wants to take you to, entertain its possibilities, but make sure to come back to the reason in your heart.

Requiem Reposes the souls of the death. Compose your own mass and celebrate it.

Rage It will come and it will destroy everything and everyone in its wake. And it's ok. But know that your rage is also another great teacher: what bugs you burns within you. Try going behind your web of anger and untangle its motivations. Learn its ways so that you can learn your lessons.

Sing It will bring some joy and ease your resistance. And you need both.

Tears They will just come, mostly when you expect or want them the least, don't suppress them, let them flow, cry yourself a river, it's purifying.

Ten Count to ten when you panic. Slow your breath at each count. Continue to count backwards if needed.

Universe with capital U. The Universe (or whatever fills your blank). Trust that it's vast and out there and has your back. So lean on and listen in.

Verify Some people will speak to you in volumes. Others will speak to you in silence. Verify both in your wells of judgment and drown out what's not good for you, even if it's good.

Wait It will take time and lots of waiting to let it out and see it through. But in Spanish to wait comes from to hope. Try remembering this every time your grief tests your mettle.

Waves Or as Joan Didion writes: «Grief has no distance. Grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the dailiness of life.»

X Draw an X around all that has run its course, all that is past and not in your future. Get bold markers to enjoy the X-ing process. Tear the X's into many pieces and throw them in bins and a big fire. And then, walk away and turn the page.

You Taking care of your grief means taking care of yourself. Just know that you will eventually grow out of there. And there will be a bigger and better you waiting for you on the mainland.

Zigzag Grief is never straight and your road to Z is not a line nor a list, but a zigzag of ups, downs and U-turns. So, rub your back against this circle and make yourself comfortable around its round corners.