

Konstantin Zhukov

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EDUCATION

London College of Communication
BA (Hons) Graphic and Media Design,
2012–2016

Central Saint Martins
Foundation Diploma, 2011/2012

PUBLICATIONS

CAP 74024
Cupiditatem, photo story
[see here](#)

o-zine.ru, Moscow-based LGBTQ+ online publication (closed down since)
Bath House: an essay on self-confidence and homoerotic Islamic poetry, words and photography (in Russian)

Jezga, Vol.2
Bath House: an essay on self-confidence and homoerotic Islamic poetry, words and photography
[read here](#)

Contra Journal, Issue 1
Token of a Lost Utopia, essay
[read here](#)

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND BOOK ART FAIRS

More Than Human
Blanc Art Center, Beijing
group show curated by Nessa Cui
Presented by DOSSIER and EUNIC
27 May – 23 July 2023

MacArthur Park
Cromwell Place, London
group show curated by Will Ballantyne-Reid
27 September – 2 October 2022

Paris Ass Book Fair
Lafayette Anticipations, Paris
exhibitor and presenter of a talk
3–5 June 2022

Black Carnation Part Two
ISSP Gallery, Riga
solo exhibition
4 February – 31 March 2022

Riga Photomonth 2021
online projection
June 2021

Riga Photography Biennial
Next 2021 programme
To Fall In Love Click Here, group show,
comissioned work
8 May – 27 June 2021

Open Studio Riga
work-in-progress exhibition
October 2020

Queer Frontiers by ARTIQ and Pride in London
participating artist
July 2018 and July 2020

Strange Perfume in South London Gallery
participating artist
May 2018

SELECTED TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

ISSP School, Riga
Master-class for the photography students
2 November 2022

Paris Ass Book Fair, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris
Black Carnations or a Gay History of Latvia, talk
5 June 2022

Latvian Academy of Arts
A week-long workshop on the modes and the role of research for artists and designers
30 August – 3 September 2021

SELECTED PRESS IN ENGLISH

FK magazine
[FK Artist - Konstantīns Žukovs](#)
video in Latvian with English subtitles
27 April 2023

Echo Gone Wrong
[Konstantin Zhukov's exhibition 'Black Carnation Part 2' at the ISSP Gallery](#)
3 February 2022

i-D
[A new exhibition looks at sex, love and dick pics in Latvia](#)
21 July 2021

i-D
[The Latvian artist archiving Riga's queer history](#)
26 January 2021

SELECTED PRESS IN LATVIAN

Kultūras Diena, national daily
[The History of Whispers and Reeds exhibition review by Santa Hirša \(print and online\)](#)
24 February 2022

Latvian Radio 1
[interview with Toms Treiberis](#)
10 February 2022

FK
[10 Minutes with Konstantin Zhukov](#)
by Arnis Balčus
4 February 2022

Kultūras Diena, national daily
[Black Carnation Blossoms Again](#)
interview by Ilze Auzāne (print and online)
3 February 2022

LTV1, Latvian Public Broadcaster
[Evening News](#)
3 February 2022

Arterritory
[What is the Artist Konstantin Zhukov up to now?](#)
by Auguste Petre
18 March 2021

In the bath-house

Photography and words.

First published in *Jezga* magazine issue 2 – a publication focusing on post-Soviet youth culture – in January 2019.

Russian version of the essay was published in *Открытые* (o-zine.ru) – a pioneering LGBTQ+ publication based in Moscow – in January 2020.

Expanded into the series of fine art prints in June 2020 for the occasion of *Queer Frontiers* group show by Artiq and Pride in London.

In the bath-house, the mysteries hidden
by trousers
Are revealed to you.

All becomes radiantly manifest.
Feast your eyes without restraint!

You see handsome buttocks, shapely trimtorsos,

You hear the guys whispering pious formulas
to one another
("God is Great!" "Praise be to God!")

Ah, what a palace of pleasure is the bathhouse!

Even when the towel-bearers come in.
And spoil the fun a bit.

– Abū Nuwās (c. 756 – c. 814 AD)
Translated by Geoff Puterbaugh

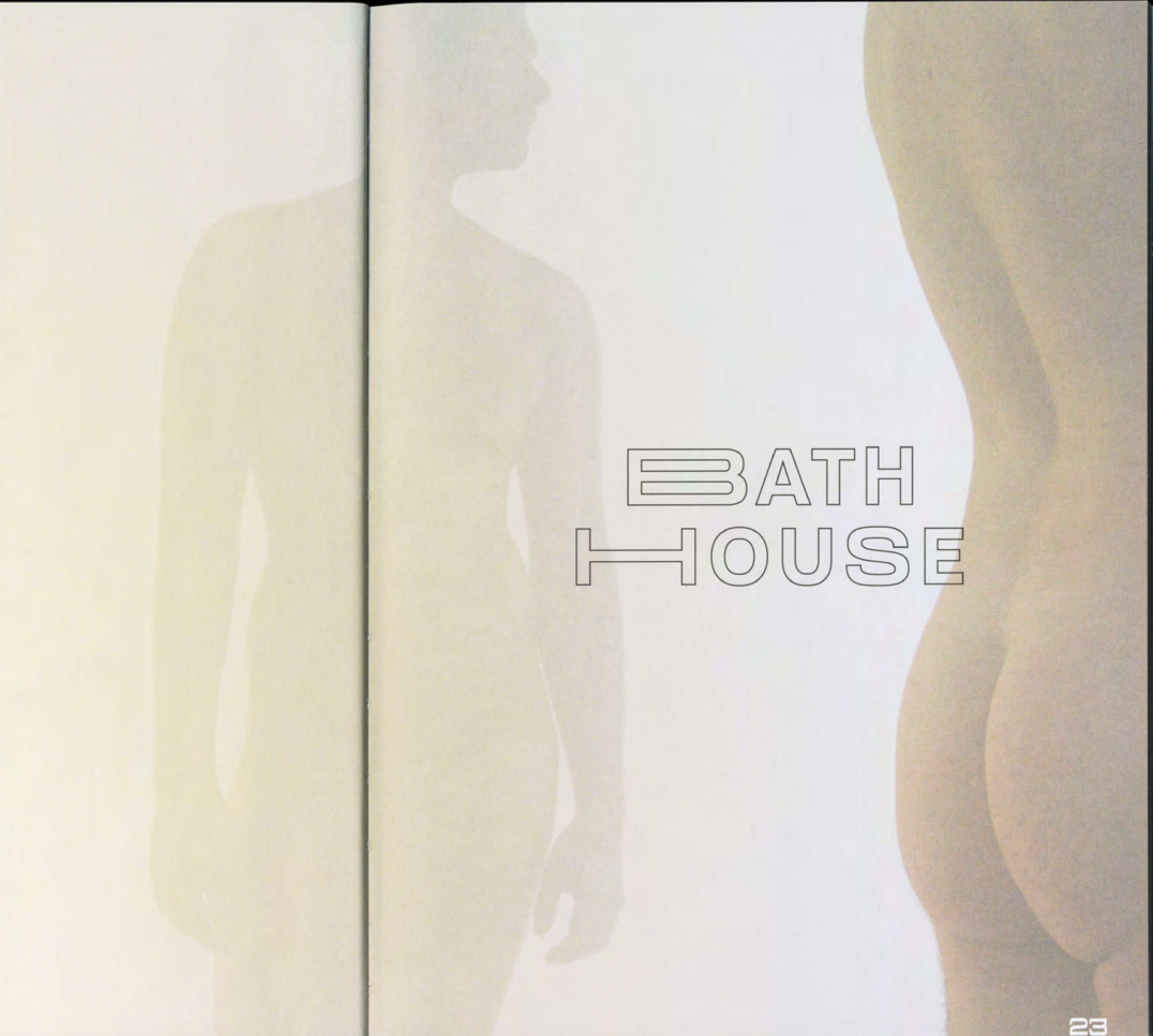
**AN ESSAY ON SELF-CONFIDENCE
& HOMOEROTIC ARABIC POETRY**

photography and text KONSTANTIN ZHUKOV

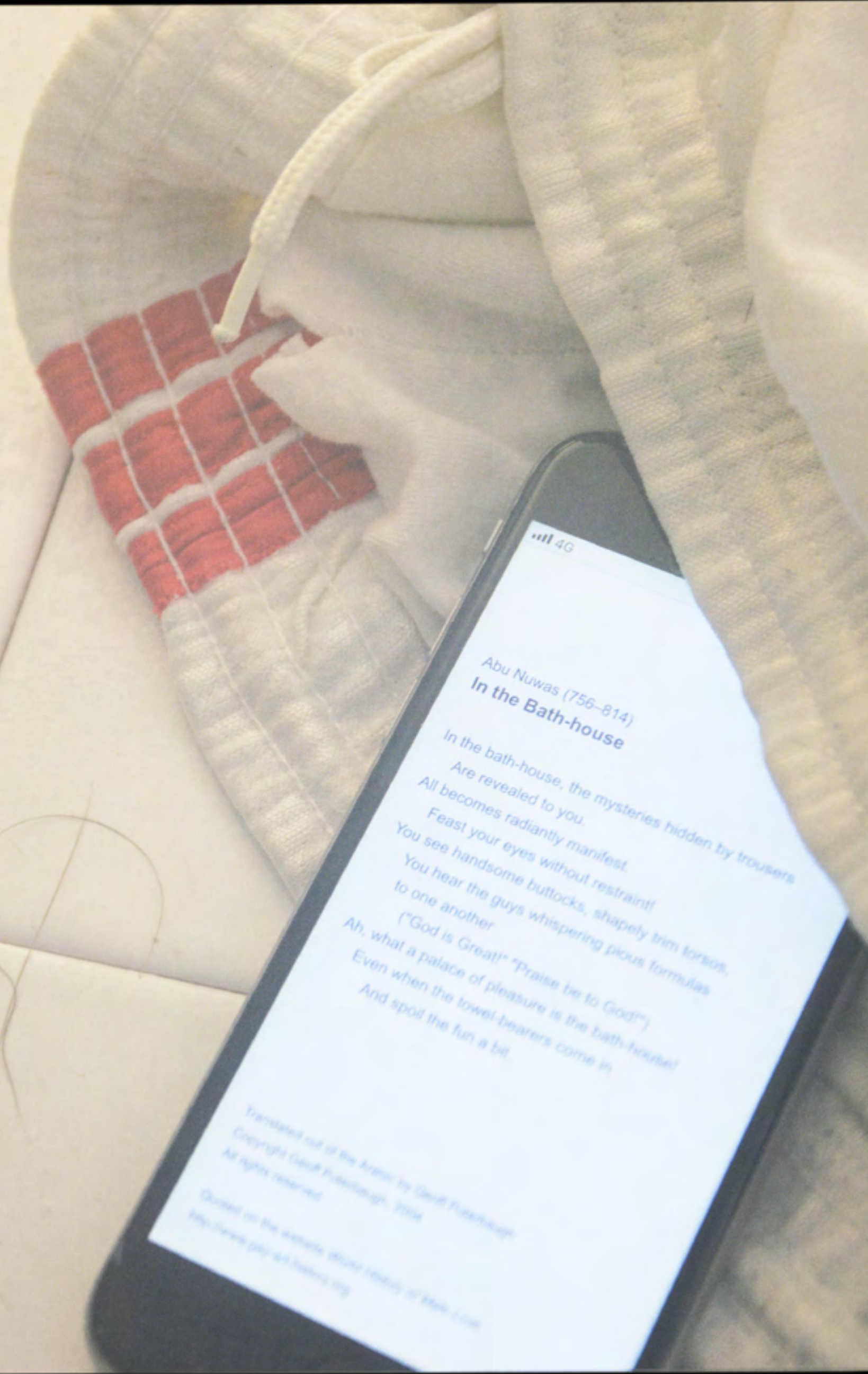
I was one of those kids who preferred Barbie dolls to toy cars, who used to know the release date of every Madonna album, and who wanted to become a fashion designer, obviously. Were these the first signs of a gay kid? Not sure, but when we got the Internet, just like a proper millennial, I quickly found my way to porn sites, where my favourite section was 'Gay'. "That's the last time", I told myself, "I must be straight" I thought, and I promised myself to find a girlfriend. Because that's who boys should be attracted to. My first sexual encounters proved me wrong.

With time, although still conflicted, I gave up on the idea of a girlfriend, but it was a "don't ask, don't tell" kind of situation. Not a unique one for Riga, at least some time ago. Amsterdam, the capital of gay marriage and weed, seemed like a different kind of deal – a hard-to-believe place in my mind. I had this dream to travel to Amsterdam with a secret lover of mine, and have a long kiss straight after the arrival, right in the airport, right in public. Unreal. But I moved to London instead.

London was for education, for different perspectives, ideas and sources. I was a student now. London was a much more open and freeing space, but my self-confidence had yet to catch up. My personal work, the photos I was taking in response to the books I was reading, became an important tool for self-exploration. Part of the "therapy" of accepting my own homosexuality was to prove to myself that it is normal, and that it always has been around. Thus, discovering historical accounts and the texts – from Ancient Greece and Rome, poetic letters of medieval monks, the accounts of Victorian era and the story of Oscar Wilde – was a mind-opening exercise. How intricate and varied are our relationships and sexualities, how interlinked they are with the politics of a society of the time.



BATH
HOUSE



Abu Nuwas (756-814)
In the Bath-house

In the bath-house, the mysteries hidden by trousers
Are revealed to you.
All becomes radiantly manifest.
Feast your eyes without restraint!
You see handsome buttocks, shapely trim torsos.
You hear the guys whispering pious formulas
to one another
("God is Great!" "Praise be to God!")
Ah, what a palace of pleasure is the bath-house!
Even when the towel-bearers come in
And spoil the fun a bit.

Translated out of the Arabic by Geoff Fuenfschuh
Copyright Geoff Fuenfschuh, 2004
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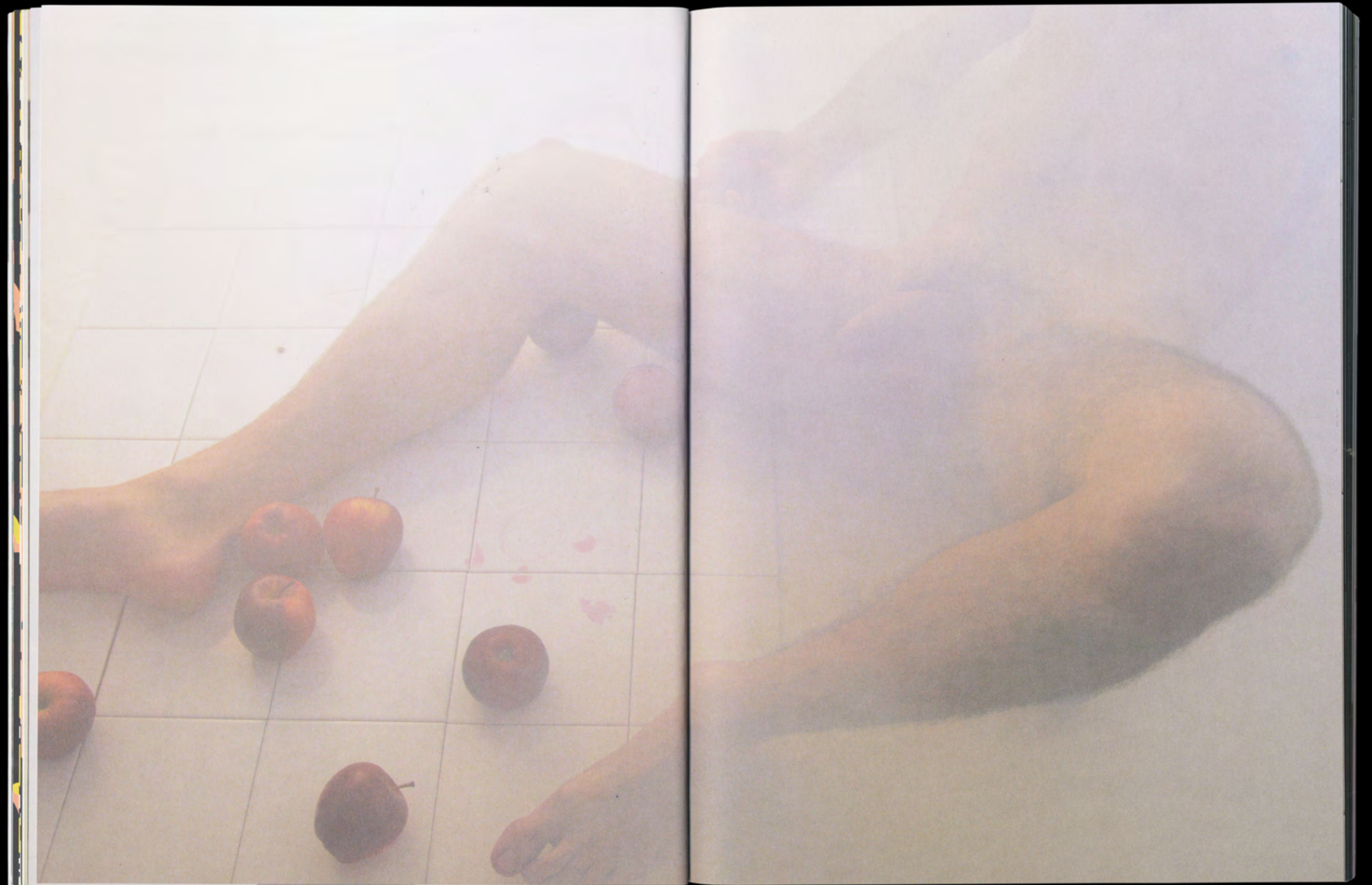
Quoted on the website: www.geoff-fuenfschuh.com



In the bath-house #5 2019
Jezga magazine Vol. 2



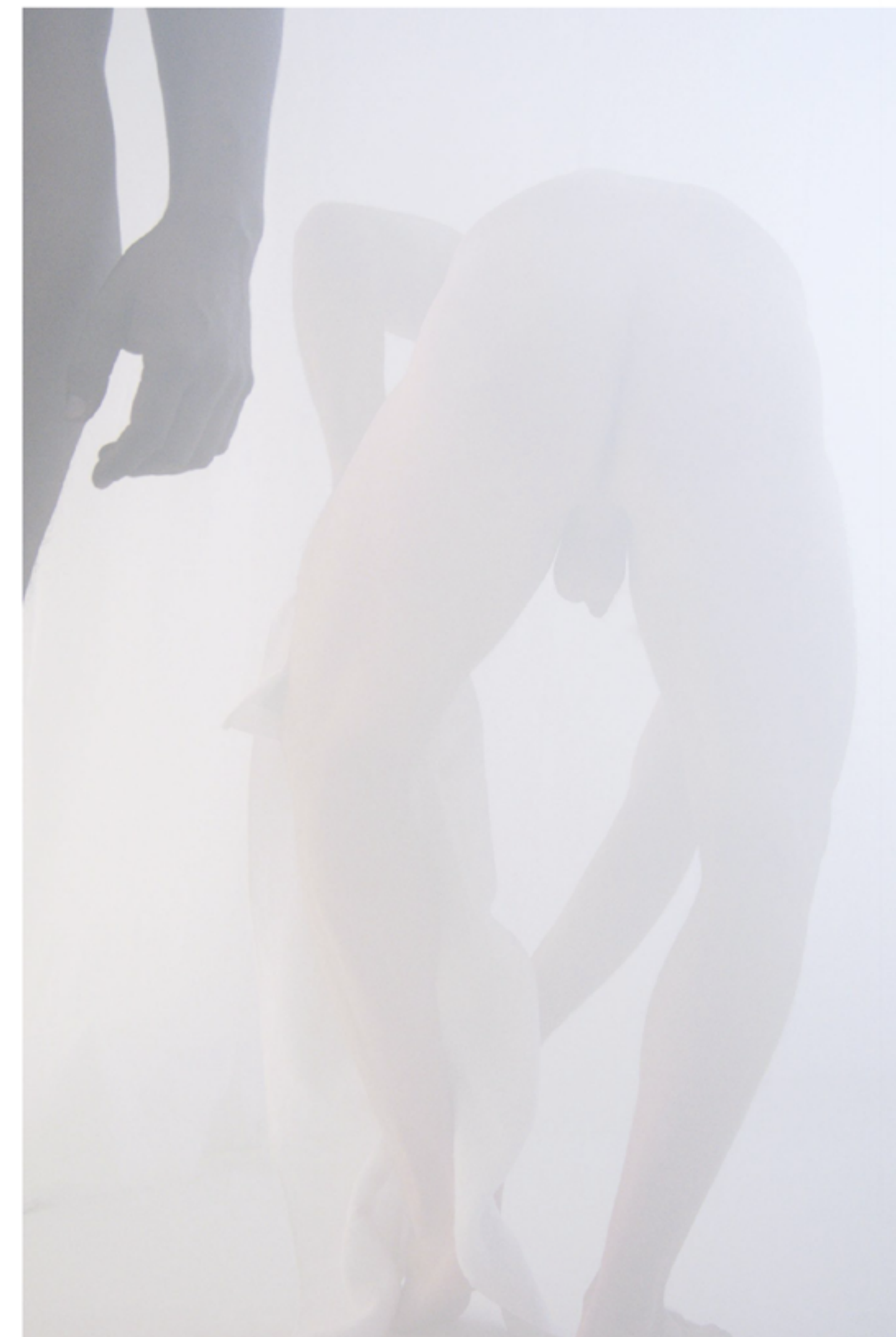
In the bath-house #6 2019
In the bath-house #7 2019
Jezga magazine Vol. 2



Лондон для меня был знаменателем новых смыслов и идей. Я стал студентом. Лондон был открытым и раскрепощающим, но с моей самоуверенностью все ещё были проблемы. В итоге «терапией» для принятия своей гомосексуальности стали мои фотографии. Важной частью этой «терапии» было доказать себе то, что «это» нормально и что «это» придумали не вчера. Исторические тексты и свидетельства о любви двух мужчин стали для меня важными источниками вдохновения, уверенности в себе и своих желаниях. От Древней Греции, Рима и поэтических писем средневековых монахов, до заметок о Викторианской эпохе и истории Оскара Уальда — как сложны наши отношения и сексуальность, и как они плотно переплетаются с политикой государства определенного времени!

Из прочитанных текстов самым неожиданным мне показалась статья Винченцо Патане «Гомосексуальность на Ближнем Востоке и Северной Африке»¹. Заинтересовавшись этой темой, я стал копать дальше и начал открывать мир гомоэротических поэм и анекдотов, написанных одними из самых выдающихся поэтов Исламского Золотого Века (примерно 8-10 век нашей эры). Поэмы, воспевающие красоту мужчин, сравнивая их с изящными газелями и лицами полной луны, полные любви и страсти.

ПОДПИШИТЕСЬ
- ФБ ИНСТ ТГ



Black Carnation Part Two

Solo show at ISSP Gallery, Riga, Latvia
04 February - 31 March 2022

Black Carnation is an ongoing project exploring and responding to the scarcely documented and preserved LGBTQ+ histories of Latvia.

The project's title is a reference to the name for homosexual men used in Latvia before World War II, and to a widely reported criminal case of that time where several men were prosecuted for their homosexuality.

With contributions by the historian Ineta Lipša and the poet Kārlis Vērdiņš, *Black Carnation Part Two* introduced the issues that defined the lives of LGBTQ+ people for the most of 20th century - medicine, law, modes of communication and survival mechanisms.

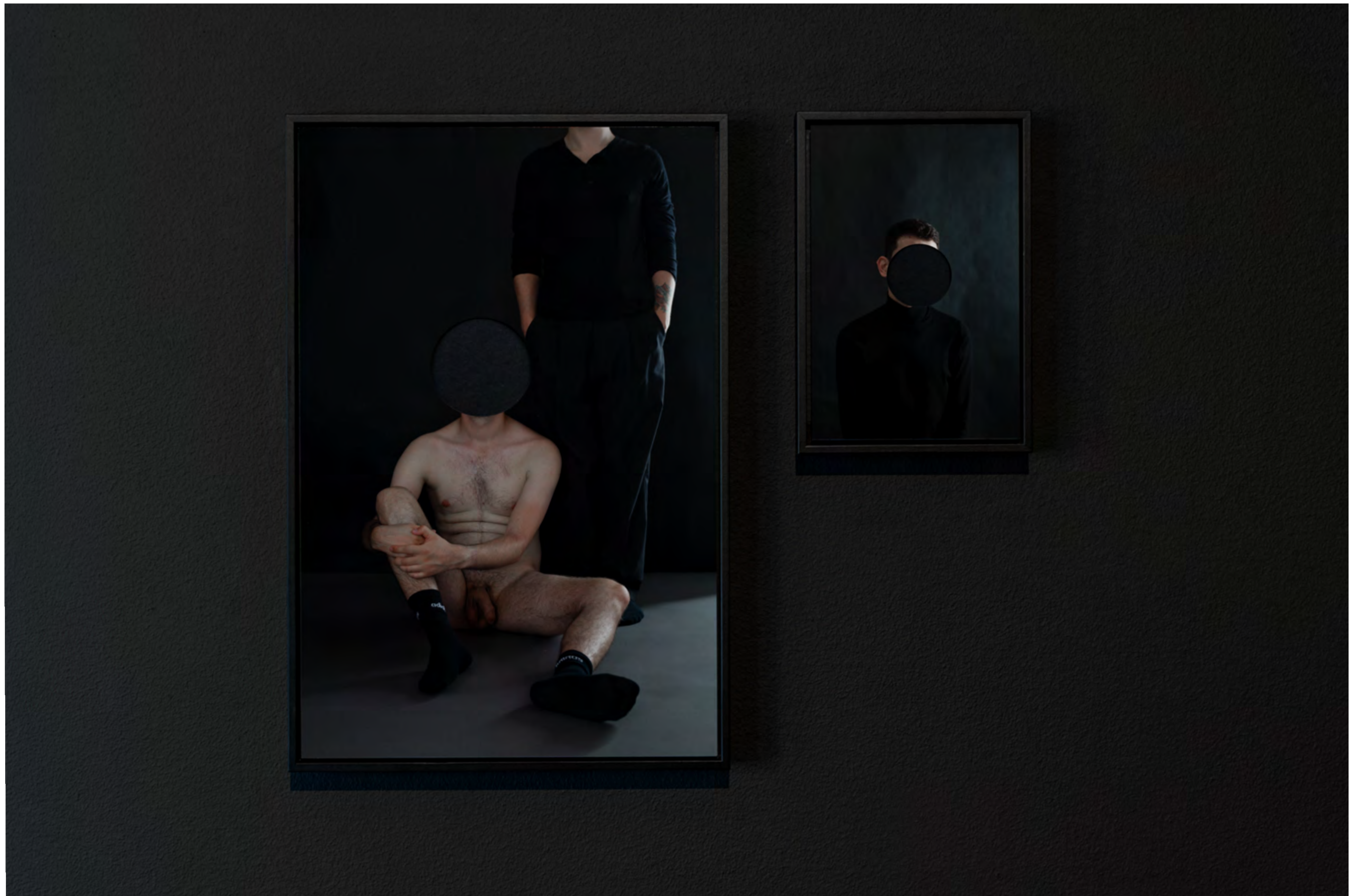
Scans of a chapter 'Love' Forbidden by Law from the popular Soviet-time book on sexual health *In the Name of Love* (1981) by Jānis Zālītis covered the gallery windows. The author, an influential physician of the time, saw heteronormativity and heterosexuality as a key to happiness and suggested to treat such 'sexual deviation' as homosexuality with hypnotherapy.



In the Name of Love 2022
Site-specific installation

7 panels measuring 237x176cm
each, made up of A3 laser
printed pages

Black Carnation is a subculture that carries a historical record of the survival instinct within its DNA – to be invisible, unnoticeable. The laws and codes of this subculture were passed by word of mouth, but history fades with people. Often hidden and thus undocumented, this subculture communicated in whispers, just like reeds on a nudist beach.



Black Carnation #1 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet

Black Carnation #2 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet



Installation view
ISSP Gallery, Riga
Photo: Ingus Bajārs

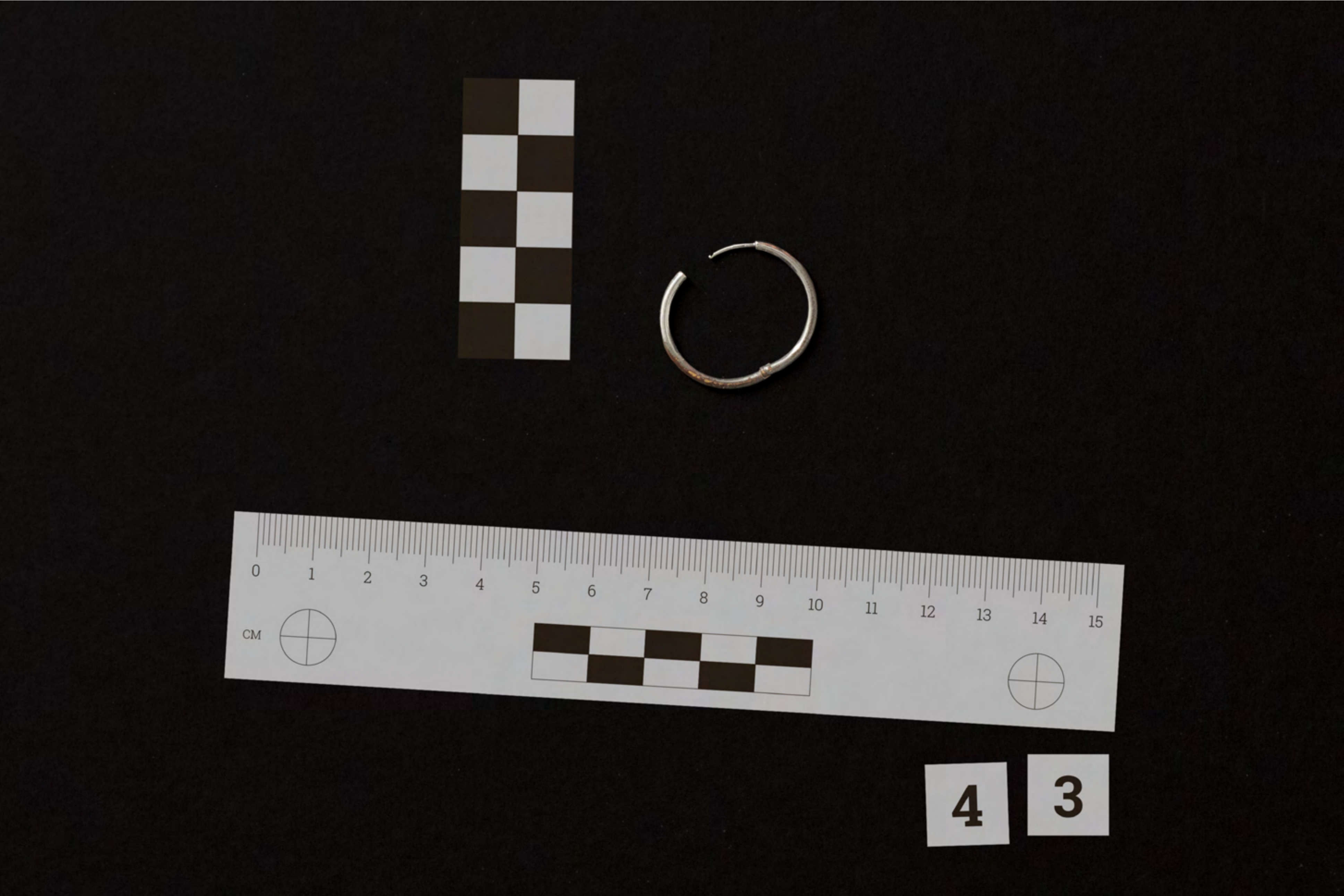
The objects collected at the cruising beaches outside of Riga were photographed in the style of forensic photography - a memento of the criminalisation of homosexuality in Latvia until 1992.



Installation view
ISSP Gallery, Riga
Photo: Ingus Bajārs

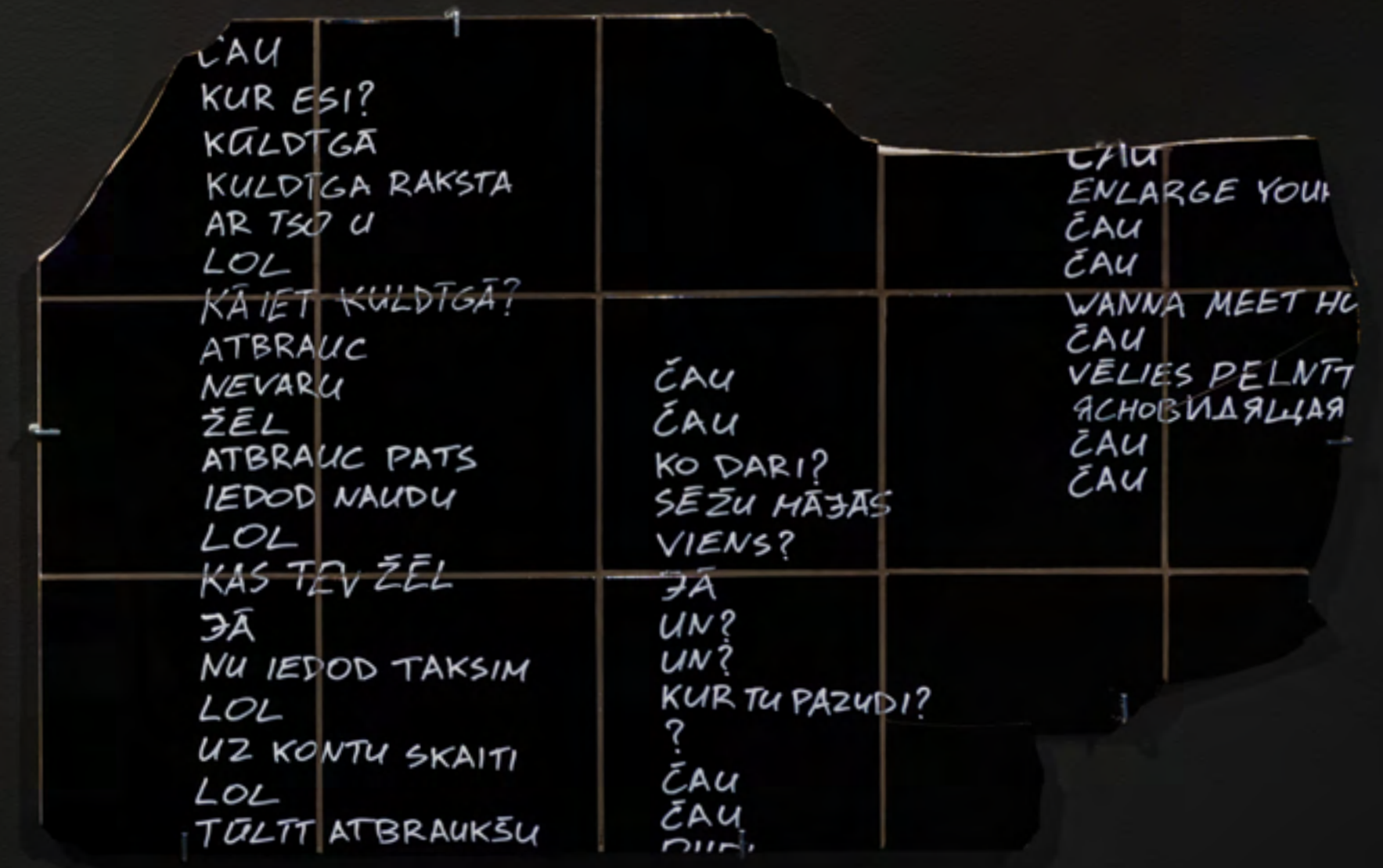
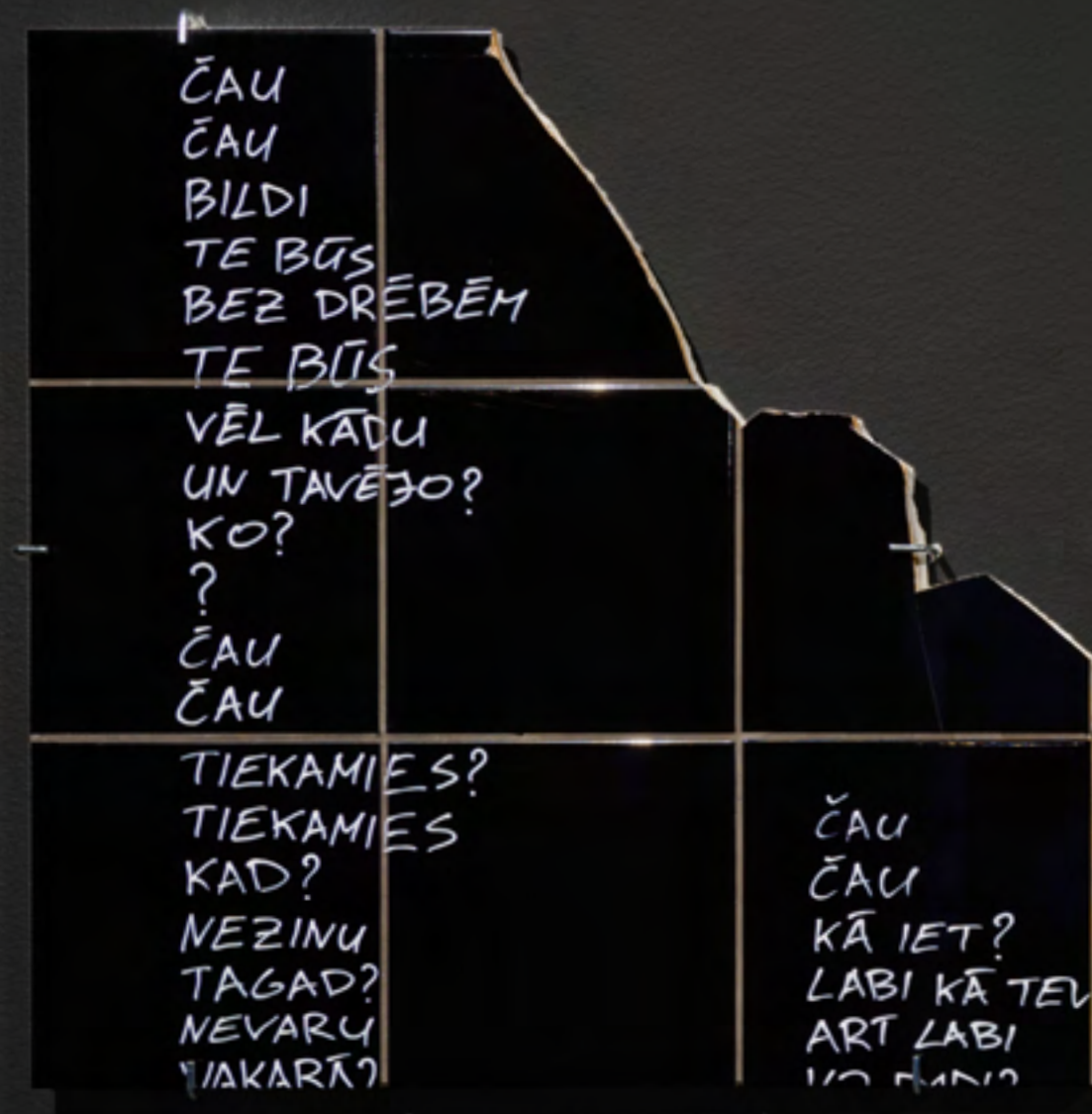


*Black Carnation: evidence
photography #10 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet*



*Black Carnation: evidence
photography #43 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet*

Anonymous messages covering some of the public bathrooms – an urban space for meeting like-minded partners – were the form of indirect communication, a testament to one's existence. A poem Čau by Kārlis Vērdiņš, inspired by the language of the gay dating apps of today, covers the tiled sculptures.



Vērdiņš Marbles #1 2022
 Ceramic tiles, plasterboard, white permanent marker pen, L-hooks

Vērdiņš Marbles #2 2022
 Ceramic tiles, plasterboard, white permanent marker pen, L-hooks



Vērdiņš Marbles #1 (detail) 2022
Ceramic tiles, plasterboard, white
permanent marker pen, L-hooks

Black Carnation

The Latvian press began using the term Black Carnation for the male homosexual community in the 1920s. The metaphor may have been invented by this community themselves. This is evidenced by a mark of identification described by a journalist of the time – a black carnation on a green enameled locket, that had to be presented in order to enter a club. After this publication, homosexuals began to be called members of the Black Carnation Club in interwar Latvian public discourse, and later – simply black carnations. They formed a specific subculture, the traditions of which were influenced by the legal framework.

Law

30 years ago, on 1 March 1992, amendments to the Criminal Code came into force, decriminalizing sexual intercourse between men in Latvia. Until then – at least from the 18th century – it was threatened with criminal punishment. In the Republic of Latvia, until 1 August 1933, convicted men were imprisoned for a period of not less than three months, and after that, the duration of imprisonment was not specified by law. Judges were guided by previous practice and sentences mostly specified several weeks' imprisonment. The situation was drastically changed by the Soviet occupation in 1940, which imposed new legal terms on the people of Soviet Latvia, stipulating imprisonment for a term of three to five years (§ 154a). This was mitigated by the Soviet Latvian Criminal Code of 1961, which set only the maximum limit of imprisonment – up to five years (§ 124.1). The government criminalized only same-sex anal sex acts, while stigmatizing homosexuality as such, whether among men or women.

Medicine

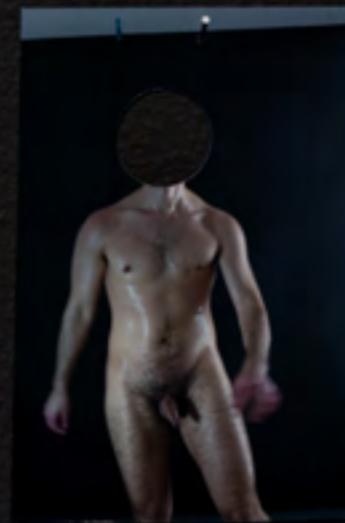
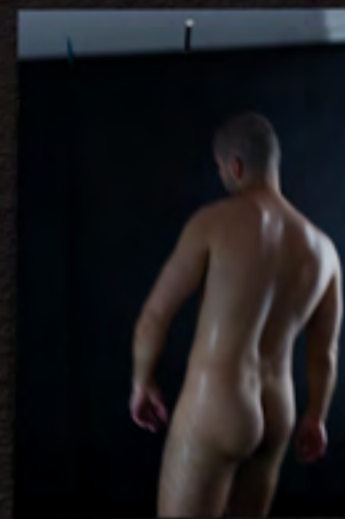
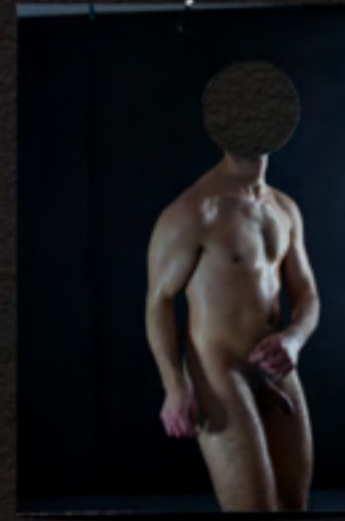
In the 1960s and 70s, while the West was experiencing a sexual revolution, the Soviet Union saw changes both in the sexual behaviour of the population and the sciences that explained it. In 1965, Soviet psychiatrists established a new branch, sexual pathology. It promoted a new, 'scientific' perception of homosexuality, which differed from the hitherto simplistic notion adopted by police of homosexuality as criminal psychopathy. Soviet sexual pathologists presented homosexuals as individuals who are aware of their different sexuality and are looking for ways to treat it, describing homosexuality as a treatable disease. Their views differed significantly from those of homosexuality as a normal variant of human sexuality, which led to the American Psychiatric Association's 1973 decision to exclude homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders. These new ideas also influenced the efforts of Soviet lawyers. They repeatedly discussed the proposal to repeal the article criminalizing consensual sex among males, but the general public was unaware of this.

Meeting places

The long-standing legal framework contributed to the emergence of a specific ethos of secrecy in the male homosexual subculture. Both before and after World War II, this subculture was characterized by a group-specific irony, vocabulary, solidarity, and self-censorship. One of the hidden traditions was walking around known socializing locations in the public space of Riga in search of possible sexual partners. Historical sources are silent about the term used by homosexuals in Latvia. Some described it as a flirting process. Nowadays, the term 'cruising' has entered common use, adopted from English. In the summer, homosexuals also frequented several beaches near Riga. The most popular were in Bulļi and Kalngale.



Black Carnation #3 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet
Installation view, photo: Ingus Bajārs



Black Carnation #4-7 2022
Giclée print on Formei Velvet



Black Carnation: real evidence #1
2022
Burnt log, tiled platform

Black Carnation Part Three

A work in progress first presented at
More Than Human group show,
Blanc Art Space A1 in Beijing, China
27 May - 23 July 2023

Using a polaroid-like camera that prints on receipt paper, Zhukov documents his queer contemporaries both in gay cruising spaces and in the privacy of artist's studio. The till roll that is used to print the photos is symbolic of the transactional nature of the encounters that take place while cruising for sex. In turn the nature of thermal printing is that the image will irreversibly disappear with time; like the many queer identities and their stories that disappeared in a historical void.

Black Carnation Part Three is a reflection on the near absence of recorded queer histories in Latvia. On histories that have been censored, forgotten, or denied. On the small actions and private lives that make up our History.

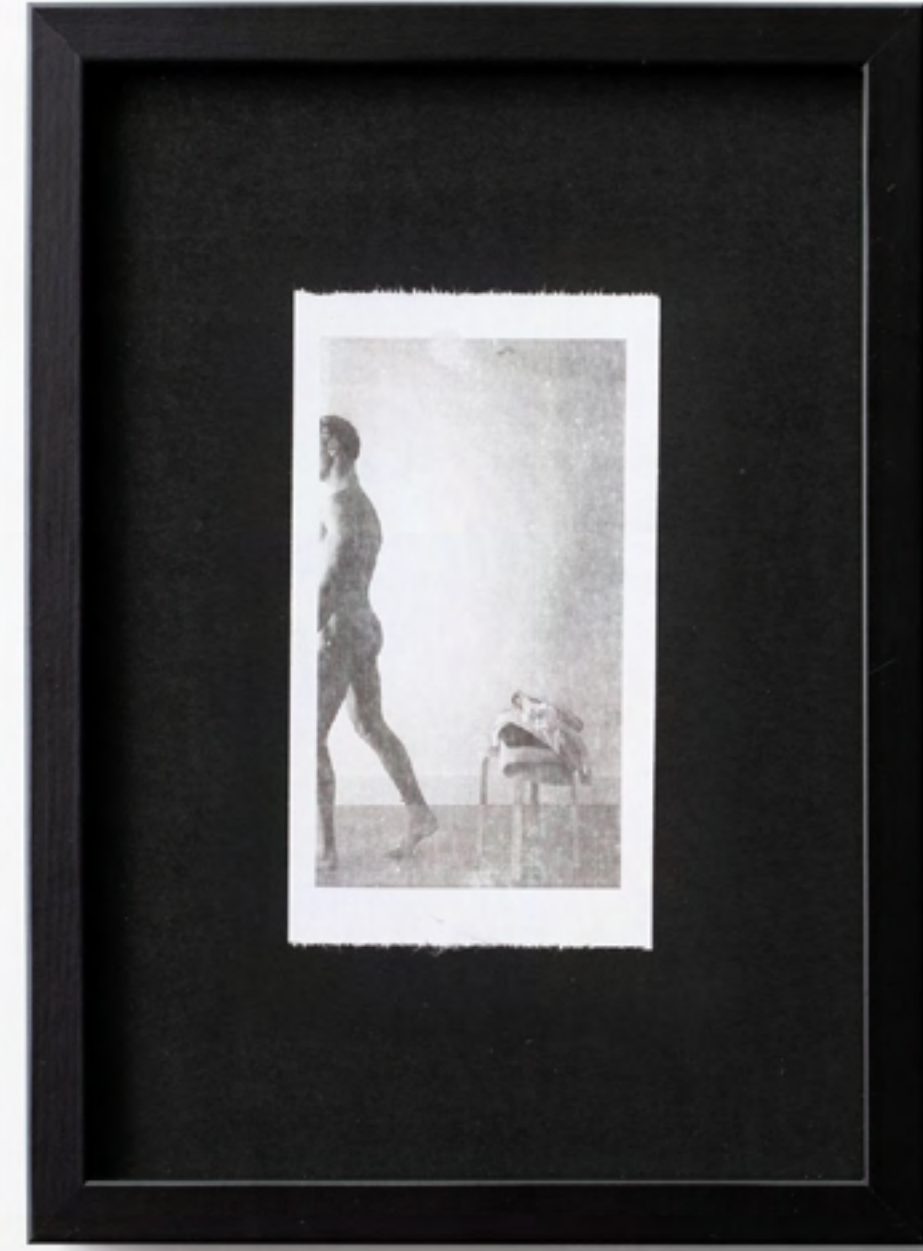
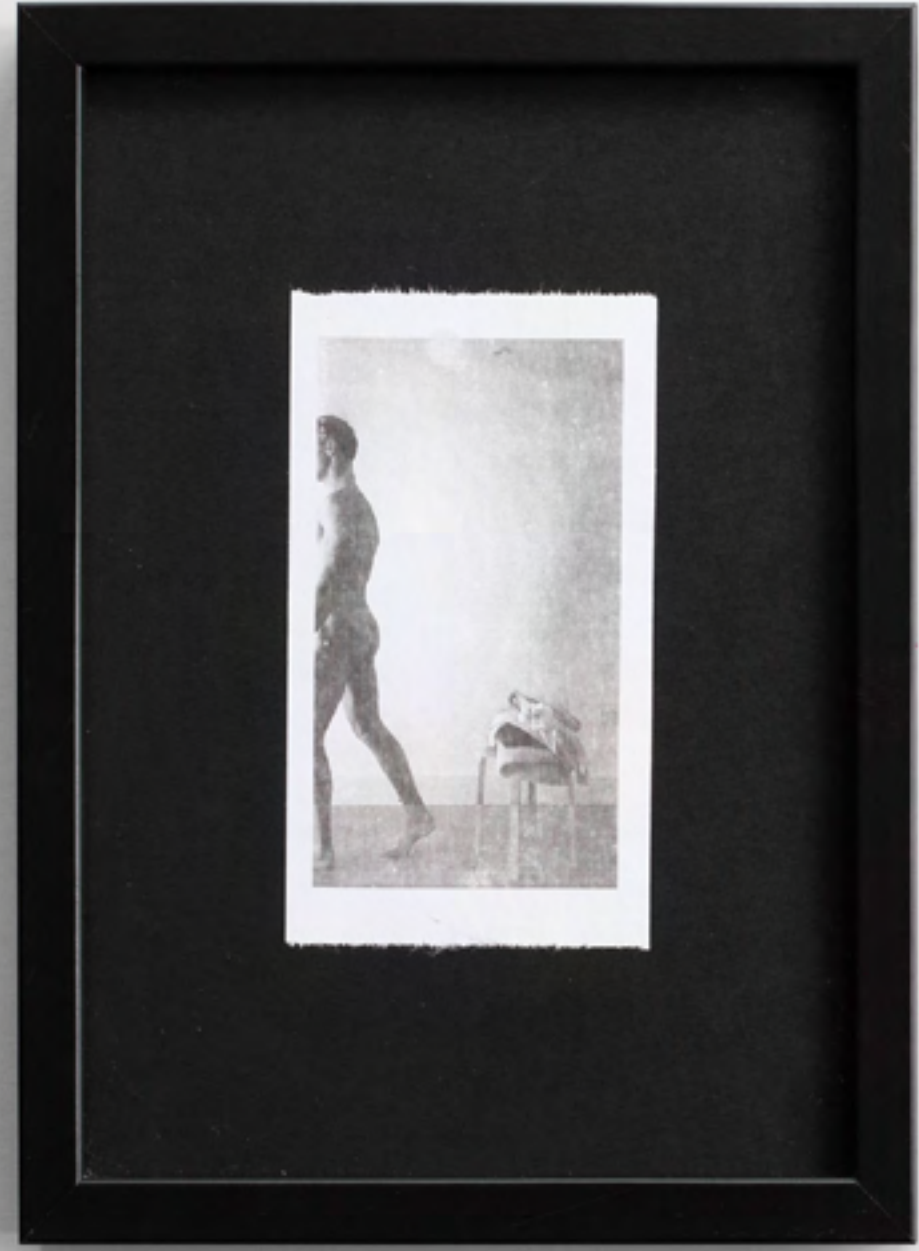


Left: original receipt print, the image will fade with time

Right: archival print of a scan, the image will stay unchanged for 100+ years

Black Carnation Part Three
2023/03/17 11:37:35 1 of 2 2023
Original, thermal print on till roll

Black Carnation Part Three
2023/03/17 11:37:35 2 of 2 2023
Scan, archival grade giclée print on
Canson Rag Photographique





Left: burnt piece of a log collected at a cruising beach near Riga, Latvia
Right: latex replica

Black Carnation Part Three
Oversized composition number 1
2023

Inkjet print on paper, black studio
backdrop stand



Black Carnation Part One

Riga Photography Biennial - NEXT 2021

To Fall in Love, Click Here group exhibition at
Pilot art space, Riga, Latvia
8 May - 27 June 2021

Black Carnation is an ongoing project exploring and responding to the scarcely documented and preserved LGBTQ+ histories of Latvia.

The project's title is a reference to the name for homosexual men used in interwar Latvia and to the so-called *Black Carnation Club Case* - the first and only criminal case in interwar Latvia where several men were accused of *pederasty* (male homosexuality).



Black Carnation Part One 2021
Installation view, Pilot art space, Riga
Photo: Madara Gritāne

‘In fall 1926 the Riga criminal police learned that regular meetings between men are held at Emīls Kozlovskis’ flat on 14 M. Ķēniņa [street], with the participation of young soldiers of the local garrison, and that during these meetings various unnatural acts of intercourse are taking place <...> After learning of this, criminal police sub-inspector Liepiņš, on November 3 of the same year, arrived at the flat of Kozlovskis without prior notice and carried out a search.’

This is an excerpt of the police report that started off the so-called *Black Carnation Club* case, which was the first and only criminal case in inter-war Latvia where several men were accused of *pederasty* (male homosexuality).¹

Almost 100 years later, standing on the Līvu Square, where Kozlovskis’ flat was formerly located, I opened the Grindr app, one of the most popular dating platforms for gay, bisexual and queer people. The ‘Black Carnation Club’ has been replaced by a virtual space, whereas dress codes and passwords have given way to emojis and English-language abbreviations. To people whose sexuality lies outside the boundaries of heteronormativity, dating apps are often the only way to meet other people in relative safety, for one night or until death does them part.

The layout of the app is a grid made up of the users’ profile pictures – faces, cropped body parts, or black squares of anonymous profiles. What are these squares hiding? I decided to invite people using the app to a video call. Similarly to the way in which the app asks users to fill in a form with information about themselves – their height, weight, body type, preferred sexual position... I, too, posed them short questions in the form of a questionnaire. But I was interested in something else – what is their notion of happiness, what their fears are...

Men who are using or formerly used Grindr took part in the work. Some of them stopped using the app as they are in a monogamous relationship, while others have done so due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Heartfelt thanks to those who expressed interest and decided to take part in making the work.

¹ Lipša I. (2006) ‘Melnās neļķes ziedināšana. Homoseksuālisms starpkaru Latvijā’, Rīgas Laiks, Augusts



Black Carnation Part One 2021
Portrait panel 15

Name, age	Daniel, 31 + Bumbieris, 26
Occupation	PR specialist + bartender.
Your idea of happiness?	B: Doing something you feel like doing, something that makes you happy basically. D: My idea of happiness is to somehow accept who I am, and what I am doing – and not worry.
The quality you like in yourself?	D: I think it's my good skills in reaching people – conversing with people – even if they are alien or foreign to me. I am pretty open and people feel comfortable with that. B: Being truthful to myself. It doesn't matter what your rank in society is, just think of yourself as not being put in some kind of box.
The quality you dislike in yourself?	D: I sometimes lack determination, because I want everything but I can only do one thing. I'm not capable of doing everything. B: I was going to reply something similar, but not really; I can be pretty obsessive about things for one day, two days, three days, then I change to something completely different. I'll be listening to an astrology podcast, then I'm learning Danish, and next I'm into some kind of herbal stuff with alcohol.
Talent you would like to have?	D: Being able to fly. B: When I was a kid I dreamt of being a wizard. Other boys wanted to be policemen, firemen... It's also some kind of karma thing, like if you do bad, you get bad. For example, if people bully someone... It might be because of my personal experience...
Your greatest fear?	D: I think my greatest fear is not to feel one hundred per cent content with who I am and what I am doing; where I am living, my work, my hobbies, my body... not to be content with life. B: I went through some fears in my head, starting from spiders, insects and clowns. Then I moved to the fear of death, which



Black Carnation Part One 2021
Installation view, Pilot art space, Riga
Photo: Madara Gritāne



Black Carnation Part One 2021
Installation view featuring *Black Carnation Part Two #9* displayed on a tablet, Pilot art space, Riga
Photo: Madara Gritāne

Riga Open Studio

A work-in-progress exhibition part of a self-initiated research residency in Riga, Latvia. October 2020.



I am he whom I love
2017-2020
Installation view





Installation view



Shy Bladder 2020
Installation view



Installation views





Cupiditatem 2020
Installation view

Questionnaire

Series of publications self-published for the occasion of Paris Ass Book Fair at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, March 2018.

15x21cm each, French-bound,
Edition of 50

I invite different people to a white studio. I ask them to stand still in front of my camera and remove one piece of clothing or jewellery at a time until naked. I press the shutter button after each piece of clothing is removed. I ask them the Proust Questionnaire.

Questionnaire

J'invite des personnes dans un studio blanc. Je leur demande de rester immobile devant mon appareil photo et d'enlever leurs vêtements et leurs bijoux un par un jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient nus. J'appuie sur le déclencheur après chaque vêtement enlevé. Je les soumetts au Questionnaire de Proust.

Ton idée du bonheur ?
Comment aimerais-tu mourir ?

Questionnaire

I invite different people to a white studio. I ask them to stand still in front of my camera and remove one piece of clothing or jewellery at a time until naked. I press the shutter button after each piece of clothing is removed. I ask them the Proust Questionnaire.

Your idea of happiness?
How would you like to die?

NB

Je vous invite d'acheter plusieurs publications mais vous ne pouvez pas choisir le modèle. Votre choix sera caché dans une enveloppe noire.

You are welcome to buy as many publications as you wish, but you can't choose the sitter. You'll get your random choice hidden in a black envelope.

Prix/Price: € 10

SJ 15-10-1991



ASH 03-11-1992



JL 06-05-1993



18. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I wish I was an easy going person who likes to socialise.

19. What do you consider your greatest achievement?

my ability to always do what I want to do.

20. If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?

I would come back as Beyoncé, I am desperate to know what this kind of power feels like.

21. Where would you most like to live?

In a hybrid of a big city and the countryside.

22. What is your most treasured possession?

My gold jewellery & my grandmother's ring.

23. What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

when depression takes you into the abyss & you can feel your toes touching it.

24. What is your favorite occupation?

Anyone who does things that give me goosebumps.

25. What is your most marked characteristic?

Angry, up & down, hopefully loving and stubborn as hell.

26. What do you most value in your friends?

loyalty

9. On what occasion do you lie?

all of the time, to make people happy

10. What do you most dislike about your appearance?

I wouldn't mind my facial hair if my skin didn't scar so easily

11. Which living person do you most despise?

Jeremy Hunt probably, or Rex Tillerson
tuck that guy

12. What is the quality you most like in a man?

access to femininity

13. What is the quality you most like in a woman?

humour and giving zero fucks

14. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

"don't worry I'm just chatting shit"
"Yes, I can do that"

15. What or who is the greatest love of your life?

No doubt my mother, the moon

16. When and where were you happiest?

My best friend was leaving the city for a while so we managed to catch each other at this dingy dive bar and hit the floor, sober, ecstatic, danced til 6am

17. Which talent would you most like to have?

I wish I could play double bass,
I would settle for (single) bass

18. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

lack of discipline

19. What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I survived for a year working 70 hours a week, no disposable income, eating frozen peas, spent about \$4000 max, managing other people's emotions, kept most of my

20. If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?

a giant sequoia tree !!

21. Where would you most like to live?

In a magical land where my family could all be nearby without visa or work issues

22. What is your most treasured possession?

The diary I've had since I was eleven & a hard drive with all my work on it

23. What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

absolutism, fundamentalism, taking yourself too seriously

24. What is your favorite occupation?

fun: cooking with an abundance of food and time ingredients
work: my job is the best in the world, making films

25. What is your most marked characteristic?

I speak and think at the same pace, both very fast, both a bit messy

26. What do you most value in your friends?

openness towards new experiences and thoughts
loyalty and no drama

mental health! I think I can't back this up



