

Felt, soap, lamp shades: the Nazi regime was inventive about cannibalizing dead human bodies. The transformation into consumer goods erased every memory, every trace of individuality and difference. Effectively.

Only selectively will historiography recover these erased traces.

The reason is shameful: gays and lesbians who were murdered by the Nazis are apparently still relegated to the lowest rank within the victim hierarchy.

The Innsbruck concept artist Franz Wassermann has found a sensuous, irritating, provocative, and condensed form of expressing the suffering of gays and lesbians during the NS regime -- a suffering suppressed by a post-war generation eager for disclosing the cruelties of the past but nevertheless homophobic.

A book, bound in a cover of felted human hair, painfully pierced by five nails (Christ's cross), discloses a disturbing interplay between Eros, Thanatos, and Nothingness. Franz Wassermann conceived the book as a reminder of dehumanized laws and a journey through spaces of love, suffering, and lust.

On cool plastic pages, the Tyrolean concept artist (who, in May 1996, realized "Barbie and Ken are HIV-positive" as a nationwide project in public space), presents a provocative Way of the Cross: in "it was a T-bone steak," gay pornography, enlarged and distorted through a photocopying process, alternates with pictures of the shroud of Turin and isolated text quotations.

What might appear as blasphemous is merely an analogy: meat chopped from the bones in the form of a broken cross (T-bone steak) becomes a metaphor for the cross and for stigmatization.

Around May 5, the day commemorating the liberation of the concentration camps, Franz Wassermann will display the book simultaneously in Mauthausen, in the parliament, and in the Innsbruck Jesuit church.

It was a T-bone steak: simultaneously in Mauthausen, in the parliament, and in the Innsbruck Jesuit church from May 4 to May 12.