

● Marmorschlossl  
●: Bad Ischl

# SUMMER RETREAT

01.05.–  
31.10.26

*Jakob Lena  
Knebl*

**ENGLISH**

# *Jakob Lena Knebl* SUMMER RETREAT

Jakob Lena Knebl (born 1970 in Baden) studied contextual sculpture under Heimo Zobernig and fashion under Raf Simons. She explores themes drawn from history, art history, fashion, religion, and mythology in her work. The transmedial artist employs a variety of means of expression that are as diverse as the subjects themselves.

She works both independently and in collaboration with Ashley Hans Scheirl. She combines her artistic practice with curatorial work, rethinking presentations of museum collections with Markus Pires Mata and others.

As a professor of transmedia art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Knebl regularly incorporates students into her projects.

Inspired by art and design history, as well as socio-cultural phenomena, Knebl develops transmedia works focusing on sculpture and space. She refers to her spatial installations as spaces of desire. These installations combine hybrid forms and references, addressing questions of construction, transformation, and identity.

Knebl transformed the Marmorschlössl into a stage where different protagonists – both figures and objects – are arranged in a way that makes it seem as if the audience is moving through a parallel universe. Knebl herself is undoubtedly part of this universe, as it ultimately represents a projection of her ongoing engagement with her own multifaceted personality.

In the exhibition on the second floor, Knebl presents her own works, some of which are made of fabric, as well as pieces by students and artist friends.

**Works 1-24:** Jakob Lena Knebl

**Works A-J:** Artists in Residence by Jakob Lena Knebl

## 1 **Penelope, 2026**

The object *Penelope* directly connects the two outdoor exhibits. In the truest sense of the word, it is a “modern” interpretation of Baba Yaga’s hut. This architectural model, which stands on two chicken legs, is actually the legendary German Pavilion designed by German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition.

## 2 **Vally, 2026**

The installation consists of two Hoffmann Fledermaus chairs, a ceramic head, two snakes made of Backhausen fabrics, and a pearl necklace. It is a tribute to the great Austrian-American artist and craftswoman, Vally Wieselthier (1895–1945). Wieselthier studied at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts under Rosalia Rothansl, Koloman Moser, Michael Powolny, and Josef Hoffmann. Wieselthier worked with a variety of materials, primarily ceramics.

### 3 **Lucky Lady, 2024/2026**

In this work, the artist once again employs the stylistic device of duplication, a significant element of her oeuvre. It can be understood as a critique of the dual system, but Knebl also uses it for her own purposes. The title itself refers to one of the most common names for racehorses. In this sculpture, the artist also uses cord and red hair as a surrogate for herself. The horses' formal design is based on representations from the Etruscan period.

### 4 **Emil, 2025**

The *Emil* object is the combination of two items that serve the same purpose: illuminating a space. The supposed head is a variation of the *Snowflake* designer lamp by Austrian designer Emil Stejnar (1897–1983), while the blue corduroy-covered body imitates the form of a classical four-armed candelabrum. In this work, Knebl employs the linguistic device of tautology in a spatial sense.

### 5 **Ada & Mary, 2024**

The work is based on the fictional children's book series *Ada & Mary's Incredibly Successful Agency for Solving Impossible Cases*, which is inspired by the historical figures Ada Lovelace and Mary Godwin. Lovelace (1815–1852), the daughter of Lord Byron, was a mathematician who collaborated with Charles Babbage on the *Analytical Engine*, a calculating machine. For this reason, some historians regard her as the world's first computer programmer. Mary Godwin (1798–1852) was a 19th-century English writer. During a summer stay at Lake Geneva in 1816, she conceived her most famous literary figure, Frankenstein's monster. She was in the company of her future husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822); her stepsister, Claire Clairmont (1798–1879); and Lord Byron (1788–1824). To pass the time and entertain one another, they wrote ghost stories. However, there is no historical documentation of whether the two women ever actually met.

## 6 Art of Noise, 2026

The surreal work, in which two legs appear to step out of the wall into space and into boots, references pieces by American surrealist artist Dorothea Tanning (1910–2012), one of Jakob Lena Knebl’s primary influences. Consisting of Art Nouveau-style fabric and ceramic boots, Knebl once again draws on classical, craft-based materials.

## 7 Edgar Knebl (Big Little Dancer), 2026

Jakob Lena Knebl’s œuvre is centered on the reception of icons from art history. Unlike other artists, however, she does not simply take up a theme and translate it into the same medium; she often reenacts it using her own body. This is evident in the present sculpture, where Knebl references Edgar Degas’s *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans*, originally created around 1880 with wax, satin, tulle, and real hair.

## 8 Friends of Mine, 2026

Regarding the “static figure,” JLK says, “It is similar in design to children’s craft kits, which allow them to begin realizing their ideas of the world.” Following Pippi Longstocking’s motto: “I make the world as I like it.” To this end, the design incorporates corduroy, leather, and Backhausen fabrics. In this case, the work depicts two witches – one with a snub nose and the other with a hooked nose – in line with prevailing stereotypes. Duplication plays an important role here once again. However, on the reverse side, both the head and body are absent.

9 **Claire, 2026**

The display, titled *Claire*, composed of elements similar to *Friends of Mine*, is an erotic homage by the artist to Claire Clairmont (1798–1879), the beloved stepsister of Mary Godwin Shelley. In 1817, Claire gave birth to a daughter named Allegra, the result of a brief but passionate liaison with Lord Byron during their time together at Lake Geneva in 1816.

10 **Piero, 2025**

Consisting of corduroy, leather, and two plates, the object *Piero* is an homage to Piero Fornasetti (1913–1988), the Italian painter, sculptor, stage designer, and craftsman who combined art and craft in his workshop. Throughout his career, Fornasetti created over 11,000 art objects, including plates that often featured the face of opera singer Lina Cavalieri (1874–1944). In her time, Cavalieri was considered the most beautiful woman in the world.

## 11 **Equinox, 2026**

The title *Equinox* refers to the turning points of the year: the equinoxes. The artist chose this title because the various objects that make up the installation represent historical turning points. The installation, which occupies most of the space, consists of a furniture ensemble belonging to a former Imperial and Royal cavalry captain from the early 20th century, as well as a large table and several pieces of furniture from the Space Age era. The installation is the artist's critical engagement with the present situation, particularly in relation to the Iran-Iraq War and the accompanying oil crisis. Space Age design was abruptly brought to an end by an oil crisis in the 1970s because these objects were predominantly made of petroleum-derived plastics. Additionally, figures, ceramic plates, and even a taxidermied crocodile are incorporated into this oversized assemblage.

## 12 **Magda & Lena, 2025**

The figure, based in part on Donatello's 1457 sculpture of Mary Magdalene, is presented in duplication once again. However, only the back is shown, thereby preserving a sense of anonymity. Many medieval artists depicted Mary Magdalene with long red hair, which, unlike today, did not carry negative connotations at the time. In fact, long hair was considered a symbol of chastity because a naked woman could cover herself with it. Furthermore, red hair symbolized royal descent.

13 **Little fluffy clouds, 2026**

The figure is a hybrid composed of Magda's and Lena's legs and an 18th-century satirical caricature that mocks the fashion of the time, namely the extremely large wigs and hairstyles worn by women. The figure depicts a woman as a "no-body," whose body consists solely of an enormous hairstyle placed directly on her buttocks. These subjects were referred to as "no-body prints" and were erotic variants of an earlier pictorial genre from the 17th century.

14 **The Floating One, 2026**

Once again, Jakob Lena Knebl references an art historical source of interest to her: the German sculptor, draftsman, and writer Ernst Barlach (1870–1938). Barlach's use of smooth, reduced forms in his work strongly corresponds to Knebl's artistic approach. The witch's name, formed from a substantivized adjective, also references Barlach. Furthermore, the witch bears the artist's facial features, implying an identification with the figure.

15 **Magda & Lena (green), 2026**

See the previous page.

## 16 **Me, myself and I, 2026**

Referencing the swan that once stood in Empress Elisabeth's former bedroom, Jakob Lena Knebl created a three-headed swan. The swan is accompanied by a group of big cats that the artist borrowed from the taxidermy collection of Upper Austria. The three-headed swan represents various concepts, including the trinity of body, mind, and soul. It also plays a role similar to that of Cerberus, the hellhound, acting as a mediator between worlds. Notably, Knebl's interpretation depicts the figure as a chimera, a hybrid of human and animal. Another important aspect for Knebl is that the figure's gender cannot be clearly determined. While the legs appear to be a woman's, the swans' beaks, due to the black knob on the upper beak, are associated with the male sex.

ROOM 4 / OVALZIMMER

## 17 **Adelaide, 2026**

Supported by a steady, almost trance-like sound, light moves spirally upward within an installation consisting of 14 lanterns. In this piece, the artist draws on the Gothic scene, a socio-cultural phenomenon of youth culture characterized by twilight and darkness. This highly aestheticized piece is considered a classic example of Black Romanticism.

ROOM 5

**18 Nouveau 2, 2025**

This carpet design is based on an Art Nouveau-style drawing by the artist featuring classical floral elements.

**A Ymo09  
The Multiples of Èsù, 2025**

Exu (Èxù) is the deity who eats everything. He is also an Orisha, or important primordial deity. In the Yoruba language, Eshu means “sphere” and refers to the fundamental principle of all things. Eshu is the beginning, the starting point, birth, and power of creation. *The multiples of Eshu* represent the initial step in a new direction, which the artist took when he experimented with a new medium – a two-dimensional canvas – to transform it into a hybrid form of painting and sculpture. Rather than providing definitive answers, the series aims to stimulate questions.

**B** **Cris Anutoiu, 2024**  
un-be-becoming.000 I, installation –  
video (looped, 16:51min)  
Sound by Tony Renaissance

Bodies are dynamic entities that constantly react to their environment and are in a constant state of change themselves. They are networks of cells that coexist. They are both software and hardware. This work explores technology that transcends its traditional role as merely an extension of the body. From everyday elements, such as contact lenses, to more complex structures, such as prostheses, subdermal implants, and transplants, technology is merging with biology to create chimeric beings.

**C** **David Spanier, 2025**  
1200x600x400

The so-called Varioblock is used to “protect” public events, as well as to construct bunkers and border walls. But what message does the 1200 mm x 600 mm x 400 mm gray concrete block convey to visitors of an event such as a Christmas market? The replica, which has been implemented as an inflatable, and the accompanying performance negotiate the question of a sense of security in public space, which has become charged over the last few years.

## ROOM 8

### 19 **Allseeing I, 2026**

With a certain degree of irony, the installation consisting of red hair and fragments of an altar can be understood as an apotheosis, or deification, of the artist, as the recurring red hair points to the artist's absence.

## ROOM 9

### D **LA GEORGETTA**

Stöckelstaub, 10.05.2023 at 11:35 pm

Lippenstift, 04.11.2023 at 7:35 pm

Lippenbart, 04.11.2023 at 8:05 pm

The present photographic series is based on LA GEORGETTA's private cabinet of curiosities, which has grown over the course of nearly two decades. In this subjective, queer microcosm, the artist plays with standards by presenting exaggerated artifacts of clichéd hyper-femininity. These artifacts are in the tradition of drag culture and tell the story of the artist's own existence. The artist's preoccupation with fashion, interiors, and aesthetic codes — the outer shell of our reality — is a preoccupation with what lurks behind the facade, with the hidden. What is beauty? Who decides?

### E **Raphael Haider** **Support, 2025**

These are installation materials from electrical engineering that are strung together and connected by a rope. These tools provide the power supply and form a chain that resembles a backbone. The cable remnants give the impression of a process: a slaughter or an intervention. The object resembles anatomical shapes, such as a spine, which is a central pillar without which life would not be possible.

**F** **Margo Dubovska**  
KN-23 lullaby, 2025

The work *KN-23 Lullaby* is named after a ballistic missile produced in North Korea that Russia is actively using in the war in Ukraine. The sculpture is inspired by carousel-shaped music boxes that help children fall asleep. The usual figurative elements, such as horses or ballerinas, have been replaced with the debris of a Russian missile, which is now trapped in a peaceful dance. *I collected the debris next to my home after surviving Russian ballistic shelling.*

**G** **Johannes Hartmann**  
lost & found (anywhere but a nation), 2025

With their warm, familiar, and gentle appearance suggesting closeness, this series of soft sculptures, mainly made of faux fur, negotiates themes of security, contradiction, and the fragile nature of collective identity. Arranged in a heap, seemingly forgotten and waiting to be rediscovered, each sculpture bears a label reminiscent of a clothing tag with the words: "I'd rather seek closeness anywhere but a nation." This invites reflection on the boundaries that define who we are and where we belong, as well as whether these structures support or constrain us.

**H** **Maximilian Hissek**  
BALACLAVA, 2025

Two balaclavas molded from wool and converted into ceramic. The softness is preserved, and the textile structure remains inscribed. The work is understood as a revolutionary gesture, falling somewhere between craft, fetish, and play. Although the masks are associated with anonymity and resistance, their striking coloration postpones this association. This creates a deliberate exaggeration. This colorful, slightly ironic piece does not remain hidden; it shows itself as a new attempt to manifest resistance through visibility.

The room is covered with forest-themed wallpaper and has three carpet images on the walls that refer to myths and legends. Other components of the installation include a rocky landscape and a fabric doll.

## 20 **Observer, 2026**

In the tapestry *Observer*, an owl sits on a tree branch. Throughout history and across cultures, owls have been assigned specific attributes. With their penetrating gaze and mysterious call, owls move through the night as silent hunters. Because darkness is often perceived as a spiritual realm, owls are seen as beings that move between worlds. For this reason, owls are also feared as symbols of death. According to one myth, witches can transform into owls.

## 21 **Leda, 2026**

Another tapestry depicts a famous scene from Greek mythology: *Leda and the Swan*. This scene is regarded as a symbol of seduction. Here, Zeus takes the form of a swan to seduce Princess Leda. From this union came the beautiful Helen, who was later abducted by Paris, thereby triggering the Trojan War.

## 22 **Cruising, 2026**

In another tapestry, dryads—tree spirits or forest nymphs—are depicted among the trees. Once again, they are understood as mediators between the divine and human worlds.

## 23 Down in the park, 2026

The installation *Down in the Park* consists of four moss-covered rocks. At first, they seem to be just part of the overall staging, but upon closer inspection, they reveal themselves to be a small-scale sculpture park. When one lowers one's gaze, one can discover the exhibition's protagonists in small cavities. Thus, one encounters miniatures of *The Floating One*, *Little fluffy clouds*, and one of the tapestries in the same room.

## 24 Vampira, 2020

The figure references the Gothic vampire character Elvira from the 1988 comedy film *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark*, who is notable for her erotic appearance. Jakob Lena Knebl humorously and diminutively responds to this by staging Elvira as a fabric doll, Vampira. This evokes the character of the Count from the puppet show *Sesame Street*, whose companion Vampira could plausibly be.

I **Olha Horiunova**  
Date with Erbkönig, 2025

The work explores the topic of irrational fear, which is closely linked to curiosity about the source of fear itself—or its absence. This process is described as numinosity. Conversely, a numinous experience is an intense, mysterious, divine experience that evokes both panic and awe. This is similar to the myth of Persephone, who was condemned to the underworld after tasting a pomegranate. Here, the Erbkönig refers to a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

J **Francesca Centonze**  
The Soft Archive, 2024

The handkerchief carries cultural and symbolic meaning as an object of farewell, emotion, and intimacy. This work is a selection of sixteen of the original sixty-three ceramic handkerchiefs from the installation, transforming this everyday object into an emotional archive. The archive and ceramic shaping become places of exploration, cataloging, and reflection. Firing is the process of transformation, as the ceramic piece becomes a crystallized artifact of stone, memory, and time.

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Jakob Lena Knebl  
Summer retreat  
01.05.–31.10.26

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