

SILENT

Anda,

Gilel,

and

others

NAMES:

A documentation

A cooperation between Pochen Biennale
and Asortymetna kimnata

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AN INTRODUCTION

Memory is never easy, and now especially. Now when we can see freedom being regained and history being created (or repeated). Now when the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine and the Israel-Palestine conflict are shaking the world security system. Now when U.S. democracy seems to be deconstructed and when European democracies are under clear pressure from a far-right thread. With all that around it, Central Europe — including both eastern parts of Germany and western parts of Ukraine — remains a complex space filled with traumatic history, but also a lot of potential for solidarity and learning from the history of each other.

In this complex context, Pochen (Chemnitz) and Asortymetna kimnata (Ivano-Frankivsk) have developed the common project *Silent names: Anda, Gilel, and others* which was thought to explore through an artistic research the way in which Jewish and Holocaust-related memories are collected, exploited, restored and told in (Western) Ukraine and (Eastern) Germany — during this complex “now” of 2025. The starting point of the artistic research are the two figures, who have also given the name to this project — Anda Luft from Stanislav (former name of Ivano-Frankivsk) and Gilel Reiter from Chemnitz, but born in Cherson and studied in Odessa. Both of them were engineers, and they died with the difference of only three months — Anda was killed as a leader of the Jewish resistance unit in November 1943, Gilel died in February 1944 from the diseases he had received during his capture in Buchenwald.

In order to explore both these two stories, in particular, and the dilemmas and challenges of the remembrance culture in general, we've selected the classical instrument of a residency. Those were thought to be organized in a mirror format — two in former east Germany, based in Chemnitz, and two others in Ukraine, based in Ivano-Frankivsk. In frames of those the four selected artists from Ukraine and Germany were invited to research more the Jewish- and Holocaust-related history as well as to create artistic ideas or works-in-progress reflecting the results of this research. Taking into account a very unstable geopolitical and security situation, as well as a short period of implementation, the outcome of the residencies was held open. The process of exchange and the fact of the mutual visits are valuable themselves and are — unfortunately — not self-understanding any more. So, we were not putting pressure on the result, but were trying hard to observe the insights during the process instead. This publication is a documentation of both this process, and its outcomes — both planned, and unintended.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REMEMBER?

What does remembrance culture mean in times like these — and especially for the future? How can we remember? What does it even mean to remember? What role do transnational and transcultural projects such as *Silent Names: Anda, Gilel, and others* play in this? What can we learn from these brief encounters, connections, and research?

What questions should be asked again and again in order to transfer memories, which are mostly related to the past, into the future?

The culture of remembrance in Germany is closely linked to the examination of the Holocaust. Since the end of World War II, the country has been striving to come to terms with the crimes of National Socialism and to publicly commemorate the victims. This is done through memorials, museums, educational programs, and days of remembrance that emphasize the responsibility not to forget the past. In eastern Germany in particular, the memory of Nazi crimes was initially strongly ideological. The focus was on anti-fascist resistance and war victims in general, while specific reappraisal of the Holocaust only came to the fore after 1990.

The culture of remembrance in Ukraine reflects the country's complex history of occupation, war, and political repression. Local communities play a central role in preserving memory, with regional differences shaping how historical events are remembered and taught. Since independence in 1991, there have been increasing efforts to integrate the Holocaust and other mass atrocities into na-

tional education and public discourse, recognizing the unique experiences of Ukrainian Jews and other persecuted groups. Despite these efforts and the opening of archives, the preservation of memory remains a complex issue. In particular, the war initiated by Russia has shifted state priorities, and initiatives regarding memory and Jewish heritage have ceased to be a primary focus. Nevertheless, processing the past remains a vital tool for learning from history and preventing future mistakes.

For the present, the culture of remembrance is more than just the preservation of history: it is an active social and important mission. It raises awareness of discrimination, racism, and political manipulation, strengthens democratic values and solidarity, and sharpens our ethical consciousness. The importance of the culture of remembrance is particularly evident in times of crisis, such as the war in Ukraine: it helps to document and highlight the destruction, suffering, and threats to cultural heritage. From a philosophical perspective, remembrance calls on us to fight against forgetting – not only as a historical duty, but as a moral responsibility to reflect on human actions in the present.

For the future, the culture of remembrance becomes an ethical compass. It promotes critical thinking and the ability to form moral judgments. It reminds us that the future cannot be thought of in isolation from the past: every generation has a responsibility to learn from history in order to prevent violence, intolerance, and oppression. The culture of remembrance is also an attempt to create continuity between different periods — a dialogue between the past, present, and future that preserves humanity. This becomes particularly clear in a globalized world: values such as human dignity, justice, and solidarity are universal and require constant reflection and cultivation.

Thus, remembrance is an active instrument for consciously shaping the present, living social responsibility, and building an ethically reflective future. It even challenges us not only to know the past, but to understand it as an opportunity for self-reflection, moral orientation, and shaping a better world.



↑ Photo by Fabian Bechtle, done during the residency in Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025

REFLECTION ON THE CHEMNITZ RESIDENCY

As part of the project *Silent Names: Anda, Gilel, and others* artists Olesia Saienko and Anastasiia Shcherban from Ukraine spent three weeks in Chemnitz from 16 June to 6 July 2025. In an intensive, research-based residency, they explored the city's little-known Jewish and Holocaust-related memories. The residency was conceived as an open laboratory that uncovers traces of Jewish life in Chemnitz, highlights breaks in the city's history, and sheds new light on them artistically.

The central point of reference for the residency is the biography of engineer Gilel Reiter, whose life exemplifies the mobility, tensions, and dangers of Jewish life in the 20th century. Reiter was born in Kherson, studied in Odessa, and then worked in Chemnitz in the city's industrial environment.

With the Nazis' seizure of power, the coordinates of his life shifted radically. He was arrested and deported to Buchenwald. The conditions of his imprisonment led to serious, life-threatening illnesses, from which he died in February 1944. He is one of many whose names have hardly been passed down and whose lives have hardly been documented. But his journey - Odessa, Kherson, Chemnitz, Buchenwald - bears witness to European connections that were severed by violence and to the movements of Jewish people through a Europe marked by political upheaval.

The artistic work process in Chemnitz ties in with these biographical fragments. Ukrainian artists Olesia Saienko and Anastasiia Shcherban conduct research in local ar-

chives such as the city archives and various art depots. They explore places where Reiter may have worked or lived and question spaces that carry the silence of history within them. The goal is not to reconstruct a complete biography — these gaps are often unbridgeable — but to uncover those voids that are themselves part of the culture of remembrance.

Their stay in Chemnitz becomes a kind of “cartography of disappearance”: the artists come across various documents and texts that enable them to get to know and understand Reiter and his environment better and that could be related to his engineering work. They also find places in the city that were once shaped by Jewish families and working environments. Finding such traces — whether clearly recognizable or barely legible — forms the basis of their artistic exploration and is the starting point for their further (artistic) research.

The three weeks in Chemnitz are marked by research, discussions, studio visits, and moments of pause. The artists engage in dialogue with the public, share initial research findings, and show fragments, sketches, and initial further artistic ideas. Their artistic ideas do not understand artistic work as an illustration of the past, but as a means of re-examining history. They turn the gaps themselves into material, absence into image, and silence into a starting point for new forms of remembrance.

At a time when historical narratives are increasingly being exploited for political purposes and the number of contemporary witnesses is rapidly declining, the residency in Chemnitz becomes a place of remembrance. It shows how art breaks down familiar patterns of memory, recontextualizes buried stories, and brings European spaces of remembrance into dialogue with one another. Gilel Reiter, whose life spanned cities, languages, and political systems, becomes a figure who

embodies the complexity and multi-layered nature of European history — and an occasion to take a closer look. This raises further questions: How can art break down familiar patterns of memory and open up new perspectives? And how does our understanding of history change when it is reflected upon or interpreted artistically?



↑ Photo by Olesia Saienko, done during the residency in Chemnitz, 2025 Anastasiia Shcherban at the Karl Marx Monument.

OLEZIA SAIENKO

At the invitation of Asortymentna Kimnata and Pochen Biennale, I travelled to Chemnitz with fellow artist Anastasiia Shcherban to research the story of Gilel Reiter, a Ukrainian Jew from Kherson who was sent to a concentration camp during the Holocaust. He was a victim of the Holocaust, dying from health complications after being imprisoned in Buchenwald concentration camp in February 1944. However, information about him was scarce, so our primary task was to find out more about his life, family and legacy.

Through extensive research using online and archival resources, we found a significant amount of material, including several patents for his inventions. Before the Second World War, Reiter was an engineer and the owner of a patent office, demonstrating his innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. However, due to Aryanisation policies, his business and property were confiscated and taken over by Germans. Interestingly, these very patents later played a crucial role in saving the lives of the Reiter family, as I discovered while studying the memoirs of his son, Horst.

I found these memoirs particularly interesting, as my artistic and research practice often focuses on genealo-

gy, family histories, and the processes of remembrance. Horst's recollections offered a deeply human and emotional perspective on historical trauma. One of the most powerful episodes he describes is when he and his younger brother, aged just 13 and 14 respectively, were forced to bury their father themselves.

"On February 18, 1944, my father died in unbearable pain. Since there was no more 'chevra kadisha' (Jewish burial society) in the city and no religious funerals were allowed, we had to bring our father to the crematorium. My brother Joachim and I bought a coffin in the city and brought it home on a sled. We lived on the third floor. We, two boys aged 14 and 13, had to place our father in the coffin with the help of our mother. The next morning, while it was still dark so that no one would see us, we brought our beloved father to the crematorium. After a few days, we received the urn and buried it ourselves in the Jewish cemetery in Chemnitz, without any ceremony.

That, I believe, was the most horrific experience of our lives."¹

Inspired by this tragic yet tender image, I would like to create an art object — a snow globe containing a miniature scene of two boys pulling a coffin-bearing sled through the snow. The snow globe serves as a memorial and a metaphor for memory itself: fragile, enclosed yet alive. The snow globe also refers to the cold February of 1944, symbolising the season and the emotional isolation of that time.

Additionally, Horst's memoirs revealed that Gilel Reiter had worked as the director of the Diamond bicycle factory near Chemnitz for some time. However, this fact

1 <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/11094017>

is not mentioned on the company's official website, nor is there any visible commemoration at the site. This absence of memory — the erasure of personal histories — became one of the central themes of our visit.

During our research, we visited the Jewish cemetery in Chemnitz, where Gilel Reiter is buried, and the neighbourhood where his family lived before they were deported. I also tried to retrace the route taken by his sons — from the ghetto to the crematorium and finally to the cemetery — to gain an understanding of their experience through physical movement and space.

We also attempted to establish contact with representatives of the local Jewish community. Together with our colleagues, we visited a Jewish restaurant where we spoke with the owners about the current state of the community, memory preservation, and the relationship between present-day residents and the city's Jewish past. These conversations provided valuable insight into how memory and silence coexist in Chemnitz today.

This residency became a process not only of historical reconstruction, but also of personal reflection on loss, transmission and the ethics of remembering.

Kunstsammlungen am
Chemnitz-~~Theater~~platz

State Museum of
Archaeology ✓

Gunzenhauser ✓

ANASTASIIA SHCHERBAN

During my three-week residency in Chemnitz, I conducted research into Jewish history and culture in the city and surrounding area. The Ukrainian Jew Gilel Reiter was my particular reference point, and his story became central to my exploration. I collaborated with local individuals, consulted historical sources, and examined city archives. My project examines how Jewish and Holocaust-related memories are collected, interpreted and artistically processed in eastern Germany and western Ukraine.

I already had a deep personal interest in Jewish and Holocaust history in Western Ukraine, especially in the context of memorialisation. Prior to the residency, I had studied academic works and books related to these themes, including materials provided by the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies. These included works by Omer Bartov, Suzan Wynne, Will and Nancy Kahane, as well as various essays by other historians. These studies have shaped my understanding of the influence of collective trauma and fragmented memory on historical narratives.

Therefore, I was delighted to be invited to a residency offering an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences between Ukrainian and German approaches

to memorialisation, and to examine how both regions remember, silence and reinterpret their histories.

In my artistic practice, I often focus on 'blind spots' in history – aspects that remain under-researched or overlooked due to the manipulation of information, collective trauma or a simple lack of surviving evidence and witnesses. From this perspective, I chose to focus on the appropriation of intellectual property during the Nazi period as the key subject of my research in Chemnitz.

My colleague Olesya and I carefully studied the biography of Gilel Reiter. We discovered an aspect of his life that had not been explored much: Not only was Gilel a victim of persecution, he was also an engineer who designed various technical devices and machines. From 1940 until his premature death in 1944, his inventions were urgently needed by the German industry, including the military. Despite being severely ill, he was forced to regularly work on the production of machines that relied partly on his own inventions.

Not only was his intellectual property appropriated by the Nazi government, it was also used in the manufacture of military equipment, while Gilel had no choice but to work in poor conditions. His family's safety and life depended on his collaboration. Unsurprisingly, after his death and the fall of the Nazi regime, his family was not offered any compensation for the loss of his patent rights.

This story formed the basis of my further research. I searched local databases and archives, including the Chemnitz City Archive, for similar cases of looted intellectual property. Survivors' testimonies recorded in post-war court documents revealed the circumstances surrounding the appropriation of patents in detail. Most patents belonging to Jewish inventors were lost as a direct result of persecution. Victims often filed claims

for indemnification not for the confiscation itself, but for their inability to maintain their patents under Nazi law.

They described how social discrimination made it impossible to find buyers or financial support for their inventions. At best, they were forced to sell their rights for far less than they were worth. Many others had to flee or were deported, leaving behind equipment and documentation which was later stolen, destroyed or simply disappeared. In numerous cases, inventors could not pay their patent fees on time, resulting in their rights lapsing automatically. Administrative restrictions targeting Jews further obstructed their ability to maintain these rights.

Some Jewish scientists and technicians were temporarily retained by German companies or research institutes if their expertise was considered indispensable (as was the case for Gilel). Whether or not their contributions were acknowledged or compensated was decided on a case-by-case basis. In many cases, patents were published without naming the Jewish inventors, erasing their intellectual contributions from history.

Compared to the extensive research on looted art and property, the appropriation of intellectual property remains a largely underexplored topic. The theft of paintings, furniture or books is easier to trace and prove than the loss of ideas and inventions, which is almost invisible. The only substantial publication I found on the subject was Lida Barner's text *"Aryanization" Expanded?*², which investigates the fate of intellectual property rights owned by Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The book asks a crucial question: when authors and inven-

2 Lida Barner: *"Aryanization" Expanded? Patent Rights of Jews under the Nazi Regime*, in: Augusta Dimou (Editor), Hannes Siegrist (Editor): *Expanding Intellectual Property. Copyrights and Patents in Twentieth-Century Europe and Beyond*, 2017, p. 127-144.

tors were purged from society as 'non-Aryans', what became of their innovations and creations?

At the same time, I became interested in the role of Jews in the industrial development of Chemnitz, particularly as factory owners, inventors and investors. Their stories were somewhat easier to research through local publications and archives. This inspired me to start compiling a list of Jewish inventors and scientists from Germany and other countries whose patents were seized during the process of 'Aryanisation'. Each case requires careful examination of archival records and databases. If this project could continue, I would dedicate at least another one or two months to creating a more comprehensive database independently.

Alongside the historical and research dimension, I began developing ideas for artistic implementation. One of the most promising ideas is to create a decorative visualisation of stolen patents by transforming technical drawings of machines, mechanisms and processes into large-scale embroideries on textiles illuminated by light installations in a gallery setting. This approach would combine precision and fragility, translating the invisible loss of stolen ideas into a tangible, material form.

The residency in Chemnitz provided a valuable opportunity to explore the historical perspectives of both Ukraine and Germany, and to continue investigating how artistic practice can reclaim forgotten intellectual legacies and give voice to those whose ideas were taken but not erased.



↑ Photo by Anastasiia Shcherban, done during the residency in Chemnitz, 2025

REFLECTION ON THE IVANO-FRANKIVSK RESIDENCY

Ivano-Frankivsk residency was much more turbulent than the residency in Chemnitz — due to safety reasons and need for short-term changes after the attacks.

The residency, therefore, took place in a hybrid format — both in Ivano-Frankivsk and online. Specifically, consultations and meetings with local researchers were held online.

One of the resident artists, Fabian Bechtle, had worked in Ivano-Frankivsk multiple times. He visited twice; during his second visit, he was joined by another resident, Leon Kahane. Together, they explored the historical traces of Jewish life in Ivano-Frankivsk, which reflect the rich yet tragic history of the local Jewish community.

During their stay, the artists visited important sites of Jewish heritage, including the Jewish Tempel Synagogue (built in 1899). Today, this synagogue is one of the few remaining symbols of Jewish spiritual life in the city. Here, the artists learned about the architectural heritage and the history of a community that once numbered thousands.

They also visited the New Jewish Cemetery on Linkavskoho Street, where over 4,000 gravestones dating back to the early 20th century are preserved, and which also contains a mass grave for victims of repression and the Holocaust. Although some of Ivano-Frankivsk's old Jewish cemeteries have been lost to urbanization, other memorial sites and cemeteries remain in the city and region, serving as a reminder of the historical presence of the Jewish community.

Fabian and Leon also had the opportunity to travel to Burshtyn, home to an old Jewish cemetery — another historical memorial site attesting to the life and communities that existed there before World War II.

These field studies, archival research, and direct communication with local historians and activists helped deepen their understanding of the complex history of the Jewish community in Ivano-Frankivsk and the significance of its cultural heritage.



↑ Photo by Fabian Bechtle, done during the residency in Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025. The city lake, around which a myth has emerged that it was built on the site of a former Jewish cemetery.

FABIAN BECHTLE

I visited the city twice as part of the artist residency in Ivano-Frankivsk. Due to the increasing number of drone attacks, including in the west of the country, I cut short my first stay after consulting with my family — even though I felt somehow safe there. A few weeks later, I returned for a short stay. Both trips were made possible by the reliable support of the local partner organisation. I would particularly like to highlight the personal support provided by Alona Karavai. Her team on site arranged excellent accommodation, helped with all practical matters and provided relevant information about the city and its history. A central part of the stay was city walks to historical sites — the Jewish cemetery, the former ghetto, various memorial sites and the former synagogue, among others. I was also able to find places that are not so easy to find, such as the former SiPo headquarters. These explorations formed the starting point for discussions about the culture of remembrance and the city's relationship to its past. I also gained insights into previous artistic explorations of Ivano-Frankivsk's (formerly Stanislav) Nazi past. It became apparent that only a few works deal with this topic. Particularly noteworthy is the *Flooding* project by a group of artists, which examines the myth that a Jewish

cemetery once lay beneath the city's large artificial lake. The lake symbolises repressed and overlaid layers of memory. My observations during my stay led to a key insight: in Ivano-Frankivsk, there is too much history and too little reappraisal. The Shoah was initially overshadowed by the narrative of the 'Great Patriotic War,' later by that of the national liberation struggle, and finally by the current war. This repression is also evident in the practice of remembrance in public spaces. Next to the former synagogue is a memorial to murdered 'patriots,' presumably members of the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists). There are no references to the Jewish history of the place or to the so-called 'Bloody Sunday,' when up to 14,000 Jews were murdered (with the cynical justification that the planned ghetto was too small). The almost complete annihilation of the Jewish population of Stanislavs remains invisible in today's cityscape — in other words, 'silent.'

At the same time, the presence of war is omnipresent: men with prosthetic limbs, hundreds of photographs of the fallen in the city centre, countless flowers as an expression of individual grief. How can the memory of the Shoah, which raged so brutally here, be kept alive — in the midst of war, threat and collective loss? This question forms the starting point for my further artistic work.

During my residency, I took numerous photographs and videos documenting barely visible perpetrator and victim sites as well as everyday moments. I explored the city mainly on foot, later also by car, and was thus able to gain a comprehensive picture of the surroundings and establish contacts with local actors. I am currently working on a video essay that reflects the experiences and main themes of the residency and serves as a prologue for further work. In this context, I am also planning a trip to Bełżec, where most of the Jews from Stanislav were murdered.

I am very happy to have had these experiences and hope that further forms of artistic exchange between Germany and Ukraine will continue to be possible in the near future.



↑ Photo by Fabian Bechtle, done during the residency in Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025

LEON KAHANE

The trip to Ivano-Frankivsk was particularly significant for me for two reasons. Firstly, it took me to a place that is closely connected to my own family history. My great-grandfather was born in Ivano-Frankivsk in 1889 and grew up there in a Hasidic family. In 1905, the family left the city and emigrated to Germany, driven primarily by the rapidly increasing anti-Semitism at the time.

About fifteen years ago, I visited Ivano-Frankivsk and the surrounding area with a group of family members to trace this history. At that time, we also visited the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery. During my most recent trip, which I undertook together with Fabian Bechtle, I visited these places again. I noticed that little has changed in terms of remembrance and reappraisal over the years.

A large nationalist monument stands in front of the Synagogue, whose address is, significantly, 'Boulevard of Executed Nationalists No. 7'. I find it difficult to regard this as mere coincidence. Our visit to the Jewish cemetery also coincided with the day before the anniversary of the so-called 'Bloody Sunday' — the day on which around 10,000 Jews were rounded up in the cemetery, shot and thrown into a pit that had been dug. Nevertheless, there

were no indications of an upcoming memorial service or any form of public remembrance.

I am aware that in the context of an ongoing war, many questions of reappraisal and remembrance take a back seat. Nevertheless, I had hoped that the country's increasing orientation towards the West and the desire to distance itself from Russia not only politically but also socially would already have left visible traces in the culture of remembrance.

The second reason for my trip was the desire to see for myself the challenges a society at war faces. Despite the short duration of my stay, the language barriers and the fundamental impossibility of truly comprehending the experiences of war, this trip made a deep impression on me. I could sense how deeply insecurity, loss and adaptation are inscribed in people's everyday lives.

I am convinced that art and culture can play a central role in conveying such experiences — especially across borders. More trips of this kind should be organised in the future, even if they only allow us to experience a fraction of reality.

I believe it is particularly important to highlight the connection between coming to terms with our own history and the challenges of the present — especially when it comes to communicating the cultural aspects of this war on an international level.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been able to undertake this insightful trip and for the commitment of all those involved in such a challenging and painful context.



↑ Photo by Fabian Bechtle, done during the residency in Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025. The former Cosmos Cinema (now abandoned), known as the “cinema built on bones,” where slabs from Jewish gravestones were used as construction material.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER?

Like in case with many residency projects, the work was not finished with the last day of the residency, but was rather started. This was also the case for this project, and there is some unintended impact which happened in winter 2025-26, and which will hopefully unfold further on.

Asortymentna kimata continued to work on the research and visibility of the figure of Anda Luft. In January 2026 in cooperation with the local media post impreza and the historian from Kolomyia Illia Kryvoruchko, they published a profound material about Anda as well as a lack of remembrance about her.

Fabian Bechtle continued to be in touch with Asortymentna kimnata — in November 2025 he recorded an interview with Alona Karavai, who's co-founder of Asortymentna kimnata and one of the co-founders of this project. This interview was published in TAZ in the beginning of 2026. Also, Fabian Bechtle and Alona Karavai were selected to be the curatorial team of the common project of Goethe-Institut Athens and Kultrustiftung des Bundes "Mittel- und Osteuropa Reise". In frames of this project, they will jointly conceptualize and accompany two learning visits of German museums and curators to this region, one the focus will be getting to know new Ukrainian diasporas on the border with the European Union.

Spinnerei e.V. and Asortymentna kimnata are continuing their cooperation — in 2026 it will go on in trilateral format, involving the Matter of Art of Prague Biennial.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Remembering has never been easy — and today it is less so than ever. At a time when old certainties are crumbling and new and old forms of violence are shaking the world order, the culture of remembrance is also under pressure. Remembrance does not take place in a vacuum. It is embedded in a 'now' that is characterised by uncertainty, polarisation and competing narratives.

It is precisely in this context that Central Europe — especially eastern Germany and western Ukraine — proves to be a particularly dense space: historically layered, traumatised, fragmented, but at the same time full of potential for solidarity, learning and transnational understanding. This is where different cultures of remembrance, marked by ruptures, ideological transformations and gaps, meet. This is precisely where the joint project by Pochen Biennale (Chemnitz) and Asortymentna Kimnata (Ivano-Frankivsk) comes in.

Silent Names: Anda, Gilel, and others is not a closed narrative of remembrance, but an open process. The starting point are two biographical figures — Anda Luft and Gilel Reiter — whose lives and deaths exemplify the intertwining of Jewish history, technical modernity, violence and extermination. Both were engineers, both were victims of National Socialism, and both are hardly known today. Their stories do not serve as a destination, but as a gateway: to questions of visibility and invisibility, of what is remembered — and what is lost.

The decision to use a residency format was central to this. The mirror structure of the stays in Chemnitz and

Ivano-Frankivsk not only enabled research, but above all encounters: between artists, places, archives, empty spaces and contemporary realities. Under conditions of war, security risks and time constraints, the pressure to produce results was deliberately avoided. Instead, the focus was placed on the process itself. This openness proved to be a strength: mutual visits, cross-border exchanges and joint reflection on memory are no longer a matter of course today — and are therefore particularly valuable.

The artistic research in Chemnitz and Ivano-Frankivsk revealed how differently memory works — and how similar its problems are. In eastern Germany, there is a highly developed, institutionalised culture of remembrance, but it also struggles with blind spots, political instrumentalisation and signs of fatigue. In western Ukraine, on the other hand, the Shoah is often overshadowed by other narratives: by the Soviet myth of the 'Great Patriotic War,' by national liberation narratives, and today by the existential demands of a country at war. Jewish history is present in both contexts — and at the same time often silent, fragmented or invisible.

The artistic works and research have shown that memory consists not only in preservation, but also in asking questions. This became particularly clear in the examination of topics such as the expropriation of intellectual property, the invisibility of Jewish contributions to industrialisation, and the lack of marking of places of action and suffering. Art was not understood here as an illustration of history, but as a method of insight: it makes gaps visible, translates absence into form and creates new approaches to complex, painful topics.

This is precisely where the central outlook of this project lies. Remembrance is not a backward-looking exercise, but a practice for the future. It helps deter-

mine which values a society upholds, which forms of violence it recognises — and which it overlooks. In times of growing authoritarian tendencies, the culture of remembrance is a democratic tool. It sharpens awareness of discrimination, the mechanisms of exclusion and the fragility of freedom.

Transnational and transcultural projects such as *Silent Names: Anda, Gilel, and others* play a special role in this. They disrupt national assumptions and open up spaces for comparison and solidarity. They show that memory does not stop at borders — and that European history can only be understood as an intertwined history. The biographies of Anda Luft and Gilel Reiter are not local stories; they tell of mobility, coercion, interconnectedness and destruction across the entire continent.

The most important outcome of this project is therefore not the individual artistic results, but the relationships that have been formed: between artists, institutions, cities and perspectives. These relationships are fragile, but they are real. They form a foundation for future collaboration — even and especially under difficult conditions. At a time when physical mobility is restricted and trust is being undermined politically, such forms of exchange are an act of hope.

For the future, the question is not only how we remember, but why. Memory must be constantly re-established. It must not be ritualised or depoliticised. Rather, it needs spaces for experimentation, artistic research and listening. It needs time — and the willingness to endure uncertainty.

‘Silent Names’ understands memory not as a closed archive, but as a living, fragile practice. The silence of the names is not an end point, but a starting point. It calls on us to listen, to ask further questions and to take

responsibility — not only for the past, but also for what is yet to come. This is precisely where a cautious but determined optimism lies: that solidarity can arise from dealing with loss, new connections from fragments — and a shared future from memory.



↑ Photo by Fabian Bechtle, created during the residency in Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025. Locals resting by the river.

ARTISTS

Fabian Bechtle, born in Berlin in 1980. Studied fine art at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig (HGB) and at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon. Between 2009 and 2011, he studied under Prof. Joachim Blank (HGB Leipzig) and worked as an assistant to Armin Linke in Berlin. From 2014 to the end of 2017, he was an artistic assistant in the Installation and Space class at the HGB Leipzig. Since 2018, he has been co-director of the Forum for Democratic Culture and Contemporary Art (Forum DCCA). The forum is a place for artistic cultural criticism. In cooperation with cultural institutions, it produces artistic contributions and accompanying programs that deal with current socio-political debates. Exhibitions by Fabian Bechtle have been held at HMKV (Dortmund), Kunstinstituut Melly (Rotterdam), Museum of Yugoslav History (Belgrade), Fabbrica del Vapore (Milan), nGbK Berlin, and others.

Instagram: @fabianbechtle

Leon Kahane, born in Berlin in 1985, creates conceptual video works, photographs, and installations that focus on themes such as migration, identity, and the confrontation with majorities and minorities in a globalized society. His interest often centers on the geopolitical and social changes of the recent past. He repeatedly draws attention to events and institutions that express the contradictions inherent in history. They reflect historical, political, and economic aspects, as well as biographical ones, which he takes up and processes in his works. Above all, the sociocultural positioning of current political discourses and dynamics is of central importance to his artistic approach, which represents a form of cultural criticism.

Instagram: @leonkahane

Olesia Saienko (1992) is a photographer and storyteller who lives and works between Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk. She was born in Lutsk, received her master's degree in psychology in Ostroh, and started working as a photojournalist and freelance photographer in 2017. Her debut exhibition took place in 2020 under the curatorship of Anna Potemkina — it was called *Want to know a secret* and was a detective investigation superimposed on reflections on growing up. The next staff member in the Assortment Room, “Verification of the Paranormal Phenomenon of Vampirism in the Dimension of Carpathian Mythmaking” curated by Anton Usanov in 2023, was already site-specific and explored the local mythology of the Frankivsk vampire, putting it on a par with propaganda myths. She is a member of the Ukrainian Women Photographers Organization and MYPH / Mykolaiv School of Young Photography. Her photos have been published in PHROOM, Reporters.media, F-Stop magazine, Kiosk of democracy, Liberation. She is engaged in documentary and conceptual photography and keeps a documentary photo diary. Her practice moves on the border between documentary and fiction with a critical focus on the phenomena of post-truth and propaganda. The artist takes on the role of an archivist and a trickster, often using irony but without crossing into the zone of sarcasm. By manipulating the viewer and deliberately confusing her artistic narratives, Olesia reflects on the interconnections between the themes of archive and memory.

www.olesiasaienko.myportfolio.com

Instagram: @olesia_saienko

Anastasiia Shcherban (1997) is an artist from the Kherson region of southern Ukraine. Her practice focuses on the memory of place and the social and historical narratives embedded in the landscapes of the South, where she spent most of her life. Through her works, she intertwines personal stories with collective experiences, creating a space where fiction and reality coexist and reinforce each other.

Currently, Anastasiia works primarily with textiles, integrating them into installations and sculptural forms, often combining fabric with graphics, found objects and elements of media art. This materi-

al-based approach allows her to explore fragility, identity, and the layered nature of memory in a tactile, embodied way.

Shcherban has participated in exhibitions in Ukraine, the United States, the Czech Republic, Poland, Denmark and Austria. She continues to live and work in Ukraine, grounding her artistic research in the shifting cultural, social and political landscape of her home region.

www.shcherban.com

Instagram: [@shchecreates](https://www.instagram.com/shchecreates)

Silent Names: Anda, Gilel, and others (June 2025 - January 2026)
A cooperation between Pochen Biennale and Asortymentna kimnata

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