

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34  
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

## Press release

### SoiL Thornton *Choosing Suitor*

September 15 – November 12, 2023  
Hauptraum

**Preview for the press:** Thursday, September 14, 2023, 11 a.m.

**Opening:** Thursday, September 14, 2023, 7 p.m.

SoiL Thornton was born in the U.S. in 1990, now lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, and is a nonbinary person. Their pronouns are they / them. Thornton's art crosses boundaries of media, ranging from painting, sculpture, and photography to installation art. Their art has been presented internationally in solo and group exhibitions. Thornton also works as a curator.

SoiL grapples with identity politics, diversity, systems of order, and regulative apparatuses. Instead of toying with the cultivation of individualism that prevails on social media and dating platforms and conceiving their own persona and biography as capital to be valorized, SoiL takes an interest in the prerequisites and rules of various systems, including those of the art world. These (external) orders serve Thornton as "neutral" aids for creative decisions—to be followed (or not)—while also enabling the artist-figure to disappear behind this structural setting.

For the exhibition *Choosing Suitor*, Thornton has created a series of new works. Their titles and the accompanying factual information give illuminating clues concerning their subject matter. Reflecting Thornton's penchant for playing with language and meaning, they also evince distinctive lyrical qualities.

Visitors arriving to see the exhibition are immediately confronted with an intervention by Thornton: the entrance to the gallery is barred by a large inflatable sculpture that also blocks the view of the space's interior. Titled *Husband Chair (SV)*,\* the object was manufactured specifically for this exhibition; at circa 85 feet wide, it is custom-tailored to fit the gallery's dimensions. Its height and depth, meanwhile, are derived from the height of the exhibition's curator. Its placement compels the visitors to enter the exhibition through the backdoor—an unusual mode of access. The dislocation may remind us that there are always multiple alternative standpoints and that we have the ability to change our perspectives and orientations. The artificial constraint also draws attention to another concern: the question of access to institutions, spaces, and discourses of art, which are supposedly open to everyone, could actually be established and lived.

Once visitors are inside the gallery, the inflated sculpture spreads out before their eyes in its full size. The installation also comprises photoprints and series of pictures as well as objects loosely scattered across the floor; acquired elements of New York construction site barriers painted in the characteristic hunter green and embellished with small mirrored tiles accentuate subdivisions of the space. An extended series of photographs featuring Tinder profiles—the customary information on names, ages, and distances is set in front of abstract color fields rather than "tweaked" profile pictures—forms a horizontal line running along the walls of the entrance area. Pink plush toys with nametags individually embroidered in pink, blue, and

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white lie scattered across the floor. The names are hybrids, each blending a girl's and a boy's name that currently rank among the most popular names in the U.S.; small green number tags attached to wooden letters that once served as Christmas decorations allude to the commonplace practice of registering and identifying livestock, making for an odd contrast with the individualization of the names. Some of the letters are left inactive, while others are screwed into the floor and might be read as a statement or a question (IS MR MS).

Sprawling over an entire wall, Name that Grisaille consists of sheets of paper painted a monochrome luminous green, and white ones that are blank except for names written in red nail polish by different hands; they were contributed by people from SoIL's orbit. Who might Fiona, Graham, or Puppies be? The piece raises questions: can a person's attributes—sex, gender, cultural or social background—be inferred from a name? And to which extent do names and signatures lend themselves to commercial exploitation as "labels"?

Thornton challenges the dominance of a "heteronormative normal" that speaks, for instance, from the conventional allocation of names and colors or from certain dress codes: think only of baby pink and baby blue, which still cater to clichéd ideas about gender. A neutral alternative to these colors fraught with meaning, SoIL argues, is the bold Chroma key green used in film and television productions in so-called "green screens," which make it easy to insert different backdrops later on. The green color fields are placeholders, leaving room for unconstrained projections of personal ideas and associations and alternative readings.

While working on the exhibition, SoIL has also created an exciting publication: it combines street-style photographs they have taken with their cell phone since 2015 with codes from a game app representing countless gender identities and sexualities. The Instagram account `choosing_suitor_intervention` presents a kind of live feed of images, words, ideas, offering rare insight into SoIL's creative practice, as when they draw an analogy between Tinder and the art world, portraying both as "attention marketplaces" in which people typically fashion (perfect) "personas"—simulacra of who they are.

\* "Husband chair" is the American term for a piece of seating furniture that is often found in fashion boutiques or luxury stores and meant for the shoppers' companions (who, as the term indicates, are presumed to be men).

**Visitors can enter the exhibition through the entrance at the back of the Secession.**

SoiL Thornton was born in 1990 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Programmed by the Board of the Secession  
Curated by Jeanette Pacher

Con Tempus – Plattform für zeitgenössische Kunst by legero united supports SoiL Thornton's exhibition.

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## **Publication**

### ***SoiL Thornton. Choosing Suitor***

Format: 21 x 29,7 cm

Details: Softcover, dustjacket, 168 pages

Series design concept: Sabo Day

Graphic design: Sabo Day

Design assistance: Augustinas Milkus

Text: Andrew Blackley

Languages: German, English

115 images

Secession 2023

Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln

ISBN 978-3-7533-0522-6

A multifaceted play with language and meaning can be grasped in their work and exhibition titles. In their practice, they have been working against the grain of some of the art world's conventions, from medium specificity to questions of branding and commodification. In so doing, they inquire into modes of circulation of artworks and into how artists can become brands and accrue value with their public personas. To the artist, renegotiating the limits of artistic media and common presentation formats seems as crucial as unsettling expectations and conceptions of identity directed at individuals—above all, artists.

A comprehensive publication of street-style photographs taken by SoiL Thornton with their cell phone since 2015 combined with the codes for gender identities and sexualities of the LGBT Flags Merge! game app and a text commissioned by the artist (author: Andrew Blackley) will accompany the exhibition *Choosing Suitor*.

The artistic intervention consists of the Instagram account @choosing\_suitor\_intervention, which extends the exploration of these various curiosities.

The digital publication is available for free at [https://secession.at/category/digital\\_publication](https://secession.at/category/digital_publication).

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### Current exhibitions

Hauptraum

**SoiL Thornton *Choosing Suitor***

September 15 – November 12, 2023

Galerie

**Mai Ling *NOT YOUR ORNAMENT***

September 15 – November 12, 2023

Grafisches Kabinett

**Mykola Ridnyi**

September 15 – November 12, 2023

### Publications

*SoiL Thornton. Choosing Suitor*

Softcover, dustjacket, 168 pages, EUR 24,00

*Mai Ling. NOT YOUR ORNAMENT*

Softcover, 88 pages, EUR 18,00

*Mykola Ridnyi*

Softcover, dustjacket, 80 pages, EUR 18,00

### Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

*Beethoven – Painting and Music* in cooperation with  
Wiener Symphoniker

### Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### Admission

Regular € 12,00 | Students under 26 € 7,50

Seniors 65+ € 10,00 | Free admission for children under 12

### Press contact Secession

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### Press images

download at <https://secession.at/presse>

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## SoiL Thornton *Choosing Suitor*

### List of works

1

***My Pet Tinder's Blank Stare (Voyage Vanity)***, 2019–2021  
57 archival pigment prints, each 41.5 x 30 x 3.5 cm (framed)  
Private Collection

2

***Splinter from bouquet of each year of me as you under them (painting)***, 2023  
Epoxy and mirror tiles on acquired pre-painted hunter green (as mandated by The City of New York's Local Law No. 47 of 2013) wood scaffold/fence piece originally 327 Bleecker St, Manhattan  
244 x 6.5 x 4 cm

3

***Chode***, 2023  
Nail polish on archival inkjet print on canvas, 194 x 142 x 3 cm

4

***Splinter from bouquet of each year of me as you under them (painting)***, 2023  
Epoxy and mirror tiles on acquired pre-painted hunter green (as mandated by The City of New York's Local Law No. 47 of 2013) wood scaffold/fence piece originally from 138 Allen St, Manhattan  
255 x 4 x 2 cm

5

***Husband Chair (VS)***, 2023  
Vinyl stitched, velcro, blower, insulated wood quiet box constructed and painted pink by Secession install team, 2574 x 163 x 163 cm

6

***Name that Grisaille***, 2018–2023  
Nail polish and commercial grade chromakey paint on paper in 39 parts  
Each 60 x 76.5 x 5 cm (framed)

7

***Splinter from bouquet of each year of me as you under them (painting)***, 2023  
Epoxy and mirror tiles on acquired pre-painted hunter green (as mandated by The City of New York's Local Law No. 47 of 2013) wood scaffold/fence piece originally from 282 Lafayette Ave, Brooklyn  
243.5 x 122 x 7.5 cm

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8

### ***Splinter from bouquet of each year of me as you under them (painting), 2023***

Epoxy and mirror tiles on acquired pre-painted hunter green (as mandated by The City of New York's Local Law No. 47 of 2013) wood scaffold/fence piece originally from 127 10th Ave, Manhattan  
256.5 x 6 x 2 cm

9

### ***Reconstituting the anatomy through exchanging info, 2023***

Nail polish on archival inkjet print on canvas, 142 x 230.5 x 3 cm

10

### ***merry christmas splintered bouquet (IS, MS., MR.), 2023***

VINTAGE 1950S PLYWOOD LARGE MERRY CHRISTMAS CUTOUT LETTERS YARD DOOR DECORATION, livestock ear tags and hardware, wood screw-in supports constructed and painted hunter green (as mandated by The City of New York's Local Law No. 47 of 2013) by Secession install team  
Dimensions variable

11

### ***Spot your rectum versus mine, untitled Political aliens (top fifty US babies 2023 gender mashed to make my new)(with four typos from embroidery name tag producer), 2023***

Plush toys, embroidered name tags and dental floss  
Dimensions variable

Unless stated otherwise, all works courtesy of the artist and Galerie Neu, Berlin; Maxwell Graham / Essex Street, New York; Modern Art, London; Morán Morán, Los Angeles

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## SoiL Thornton

### Biografie | Biography

Geboren 1990 in Macon, USA, lebt und arbeitet in Brooklyn, New York, USA.  
Born 1990 in Macon, US, lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, US.

### Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) | Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2023 *Painting, the shorter of the longest*, 2023, In The Office, Maxwell Graham, New York, US
- 2022 *Decomposition Evaluation*, Kunstverein Bielefeld, Bielefeld, DE  
*Olivier Mosset – SoiL Thornton*, No Name, Paris, FR
- 2021 *Moreover, does productivity know what it's named, maybe it calls itself identity?*, Galerie Neu, Berlin, DE  
*My Child will be named after me, Invasive, or was it Prayer? I need to check my notes.*, Morán Morán, Los Angeles, US
- 2020 *Does productivity know what it's named, maybe it calls itself identity?*, Essex Street, New York, US
- 2019 *Subdominium Edges Y Assumed Legalities*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Sustenance Traversing Foundational Urgencies (STFU [Some]) (Re-Faux Outing)*, Essex Street, New York, US
- 2018 *Sir Veil's Faux Outing*, Essex Street, New York, US  
*Rose And Torey on Paper (with Rose Wylie)*, The Journal, New York, US
- 2017 *When you look in eyes you can only look into one at a time, unless you're further away and aligned perfectly with mirrored feature of spacing*, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles, US
- 2016 *Extensions Made To Trouble Transformation*, with Eric Mack, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, FR  
*Rapport Vroom*, Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago, US  
*Sir Veil*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, US
- 2015 *Knead a Sea Ware Groin*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Rigor Raging Rigger*, with Colin Foster, Freddy Gallery, Baltimore, US
- 2014 *Some Narrow Sleeping*, OH WOW, Los Angeles, US  
*Oh Strange, That's Your Name*, TORRI, Paris, FR
- 2013 *Agro Fiddling*, Karma, New York, US

### Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) | Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2023 *In Defense of Symbolic Value: Artistic Procedures in the Resort*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, DE  
*The Collection*, curated by Krist Gruijthuijsen, Haubrok Fahrbereitschaft, Berlin, DE  
Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York, US
- 2022 *Hamishi Farah, Ser Serpas, SoiL Thornton*, Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, New York, US  
*My Reflection of You*, The Perimeter, London, UK  
*Pooky's Reform*, Fri-Art, Kunsthalle Fribourg, Fribourg, CH
- 2021 *Alien Nation*, von ammon co, Washington, D.C., US  
*Autohaus St. Marx*, Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna, AT  
*Benefit of the Doubt*, Deborah Schamoni, Munich, DE  
*Group Show*, Modern Art, London, UK

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*Niloufar Emamifar, SoIL Thornton, and an Oral History of Knobkerry*, SculptureCenter, Long Island City, US

*Sharing a (S)hell*, Rebecca Camacho, San Francisco, US

*Sustainable Museum: Practical Action Plans*, Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Busan, South Korea

2020 *Bleecker & West 11th Biennale*, Bleecker St. & West 11th St., New York, US

*I Yield My Time. Fuck You!*, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, US

*Prix Jean Francois Prat 2020*, Bredin Prat Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris, FR

2019 *Q-Tip: The Collection*, Bonhams, New York, US

2018 *Carnegie Museum of Art's Collection, 1945 to Now*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, US

*Eckhaus Latta: Possessed*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, US

*The Vitalist Economy of Painting*, Galerie Neu, Berlin, DE

2017 2017 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, US

*Living Apart Together*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, US

*Horror Vacui, or The Annihilation of Space*, Misako & Rosen, Tokyo, JP

*Third Space /shifting conversations about contemporary art*, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, US

*Trick Brain*, Aishti Foundation, Beirut, LB

*Trip of the Tongue*, Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong, CN

2016 *A Shape That Stands Up*, curated by Jamillah James, Art + Practice, Los Angeles, US

*Goulding the Lolly*, curated by Brian Belott, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, US

*Paper in Practice*, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles, US

SURRREAL, Koenig Galerie, Berlin, DE

*Theories of Modern Art*, Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, UK

*With Institutions Like These*, curated by Victor Wang & Alex Meurice, The Averard Hotel, London, UK

## Kuarterische Projekte | Curatorial Projects

2021 *sub/dominium*, curated by SoIL Thornton, Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, US

2016 *When Did Intimacy Begin Width*, Jeffrey Stark, New York, US

*Your Face In The Mirror Isn't Your Face, Similar To Plastic Silverware*, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles, US

2015 *Some Stew You Got Inside Your Plastic Bag, and You Always Organize The Parts So Close*, OH WOW, Los Angeles, US

2014 *That's The Neighbor, Always Dressing These Boulders In The Yard*, The Suzanne Geiss Company, New York, US