



Gisèle Vienne LOVE LETTER

1 October 2025 – 17 January 2026



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This autumn, we are pleased to present a selection of works by Franco-Austrian artist Gisèle Vienne on the occasion of two recent international projects co-produced by Phileas. The exhibition is based on her 2024 solo presentation at Haus am Waldsee in Berlin, curated by Anna Gritz, and her participation in this year’s edition of SITE Santa Fe International in New Mexico, US, curated by Cecilia Alemani.

Vienne’s multifaceted practice as an artist, choreographer and director spans sculpture, film, photography and theatre, which are closely interwoven throughout her work. The exhibition at Phileas marks the first presentation in Austria of her sculptural and photographic practice, and features her life-sized dolls, which she has created over the past twenty years as part of an ensemble of around eighty figures. From the beginning, these figures have played a central role in her dance-theatre productions and films, alongside live dancers and actors.

The sculptures often depict teenagers in crisis, whose inner social conflicts become visible through their bodies. For Vienne, they serve as a medium to reflect on the body and the psyche, as well as on silence and stillness. She views the latter two notions as inherently political, shaping the ways in which we perceive the world. Silence and stillness represent distinct kinds of experiences—ones that are never entirely mute or motionless. These silenced, seemingly quiet bodies reveal social and cultural influences and become sites where power structures are made visible.

Vienne’s practice is based on an expanded definition of choreography, in which the semiotics of the body play a central role. She treats the exhibition space as a stage, engaging with its choreographic dimensions. She regards the interaction of bodies in space and time as a form of language—one that often goes unnoticed. Her work explores modes of expression that invite viewers to look and listen more carefully. Vienne's exhibitions also follow this approach, unfolding as compositions where silence and stillness are brought into focus.

Biography

Gisèle Vienne is a Franco-Austrian artist, choreographer, theatre director and film director. She was trained in the visual arts from an early age by Dorothea Vienne-Pollak, and later studied dance, music, philosophy and puppeteering.

Over the past twenty years, her work has toured Europe, Asia and America. Her productions include *Showroom-dummies* (2001–20), *I Apologize* (2004), *Kindertotenlieder* (2007), *Jerk* (2008), *This Is How You Will Disappear* (2010), *LAST SPRING: A Prequel* (2011), *The Ventriloquists Convention* (2015) in collaboration with Puppentheater Halle, *Crowd* (2017), *L’Étang* (2021) and *EXTRA LIFE* (2023). She directed the films *Jerk* in 2021 and *Kerstin Kraus* in 2024.

Vienne has frequently exhibited her work in museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires, the Centre d’Art Contemporain in Geneva and Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris. In 2024/25, she presented two exhibitions simultaneously in Berlin, at the Haus am Waldsee and the Georg Kolbe Museum.

Public programme

Film screening and artist talk
Jerk, 2021, 59 min 16 sec
Kerstin Kraus, 2019/24, 12 min 51 sec

Wednesday, 1 October, 6pm
Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus Wien
Akademiestraße 13, 1010 Vienna
www.stadtkinowien.at

Based on true events, *Jerk* reconstructs the brutal crimes of American serial killer Dean Corll in a disturbing puppet show. In the 1970s, Corll murdered more than twenty boys, with the help of two teenagers. The film explores the mechanisms of violence with great intensity, beginning with a dehumanising gaze.

In *Kerstin Kraus*, an unsettling, seemingly sibling-like relationship unfolds between Kerstin Kraus and Frankie, the ventriloquist’s dummy of her world-famous deceased father. The film offers a brief glimpse into Kerstin’s complicated childhood, which appears to have led to a dissociative state—a split consciousness—in which she seems trapped.

Following the screening, there will be a conversation between Gisèle Vienne and dramaturge and curator Tarun Kade.

Suggested minimum age: 16
Original with English subtitles. Admission is free
Please register at: screening@phileas.art

Production credits:

ROSE - Doll, 2003–2024
Resin, acrylic paint, wood, expanding foam and various materials
Doll design Gisèle Vienne
Creation of dolls Raphaël Rubbens, Dorothea Vienne-Pollak, and Gisèle Vienne

LOVE LETTER from *Klara to Rose*, August 12th, 2025
Written by Adèle Haenel

63 PORTRAITS 2003–2024
Photos and dolls by Gisèle Vienne
Series shot with Hasselblad
Digital silver print, 43cm x 43cm

This Causes Consciousness to Fracture, 2024
A publication by Gisèle Vienne, Estelle Hanania, Elsa Dorlin
Performance and film by Gisèle Vienne
Photographs by Estelle Hanania
Photo Editing by Estelle Hanania and Gisèle Vienne
Essay *Choreo-graph: Pulsation, Flesh, Colour* von Elsa Dorlin
Afterwords by Anna Gritz
Edited by Anna Gritz, Estelle Hanania, and Gisèle Vienne
Published by Haus am Waldsee and Spector Books in 2024

Estelle Hanania
This Causes Consciousness to Fracture
2024 © adagp
From the show *EXTRA LIFE* by Gisèle Vienne

Estelle Hanania
This Causes Consciousness to Fracture
2024 © adagp
From the show *L’Étang* by Gisèle Vienne

Images from left to right:
Gisèle Vienne, Series *PORTRAITS 2003–2024*, 46/63, 47/63, 43/63. Photos and dolls by Gisèle Vienne
Graphic design: grafikum.com

Phileas THE AUSTRIAN OFFICE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art supports artists, curators, galleries and institutions in Austria and works to strengthen their presence on the international landscape of contemporary art. Through long-term partnerships with museums, biennials and art institutions around the world, we enable the production and exhibition of new artworks and their donation to public collections.

We run an active Visitor Programme that brings international curators and art critics to Austria throughout the year to engage with the local art scene. Our exhibition space and office in Vienna provides a window onto our international activities and serves as a meeting place for public talks, screenings and performances.

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