



22 Rue de l'Échiquier, 75010 Paris

(liii)

Levi van Gelder

Ötza and the Social Credit Billboard

Exhibition 23 May – 4 July 2026
Open Thursday – Saturday 14h – 18h

In a fictional post-Parisian city—with much more smog and much less history—5300-year old cryodesiccated fan fiction entrepreneur Ötza sits down in front of a café with a coffee and a ciggy.

A scale model illustrates the scene: a cut of a street, with a Parisian(ish) café on one side and something described as a falafel-/pornstand on the other. Above it, an ominous billboard looms over the street, illuminating the miniature and giving the exhibition its title. The street view is void of people, text, and much detail—an eerie half-rendered space in which only the billboard is fully formed, alternating between delinquent faces and commercials. The miniature street exists only through the glass of the vitrine, separating the viewer from this fictional vacuum.

The text *The Social Credit Billboard*¹ is the central subject of the first solo exhibition in France by artist Levi van Gelder. The chapter is part of Ötza's pluriverse of fan fiction vignettes, in which the Neolithic mummy reiterates and regenerates across media universes, pseudo-real worlds, and fictions of her own creation.

In this chapter, presented in the exhibition as a sound piece, Ötza is sitting in front of a social credit billboard that broadcasts a public shaming system in which citizens are called out for social faux-pas. The writing is replete with themes of embarrassment. Ötza shames a nonexistent Peeping Tom for imagining her naked; she reads a sexual Harry Styles x Hans Ulrich Obrist fanfic but writes *Honoré de Balzac* on the cover because she's afraid it won't seem smart enough; and throughout the chapter, she repeatedly finds herself in awkward interactions with strangers.

Embarrassment and shame circulate through the work as social forces, but also as narrative engines. Ötza chooses to work through these emotions via fan fiction, a tool often used to develop identity and personhood when day-to-day life offers little room for experimentation. Through characters and story beats borrowed from popular media, you can write yourself (or a version of yourself) into transformation.

Ötza, being an invaluable archaeological artefact and scientific subject, might need this process more than anyone else. Locked in a cooling cell at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy, her body was exhaustively studied, analysed, and catalogued. (Her bowels laid bare only for the world to find out she had a high-fat snack before passing? Rude.) Her body has helped shape how we understand our humanity, yet she is denied agency—sealed behind glass, preserved, kept from elapsing and decomposing.

In his work, van Gelder uses worldbuilding and fan fiction as strategies for reclaiming hegemonic narratives, whether historical, scientific, or mediated through mass culture. Science fiction and prehistoric drag become a way to scrutinize the human condition by distorting it into something unfamiliar (and simultaneously weirdly familiar)—offering radical speculative alternatives of identity, gender, historicity, shame, desire, and the difficulties of contemporary life. The performance of characters and identities expands into the performance of worlds and realities. Here, performance has the possibility to bleed into other media—texts, objects, and videos.

Ötza inhabits an incongruous fictional perspective that resists categorization. The vitrine in the exhibition holds this position, isolating it from the outside world of unidirectional time. In this heterotopic space—a non-Euclidian vacuum which might be an immediate present, the end of history, or an open-ended becoming—she finds space to imagine her own interpretations, rewriting the narrative (unfairly) extrapolated from scientific reconstructions. Normally embedded with hefty patriarchal narratives and naturalized worldviews of capital, progress, and conquest; here, the narrative collapses into a destabilized, autofictional pluriverse—fragmented, inconsistent, and bound together by Ötza's writing. Via projection, Ötza oversees the exhibition herself as the invigilator, becoming both subject and object of museological superintendence.

How do we write about history? What happens when we are pressed to the point where continuities simply dissolve, when “history becomes no more than a galaxy of current conjunctures, a cluster of eternal presents, which is to say hardly history at all²”? And what if Ötza wanted to collapse past, present, and future—to destroy historicity in hopes of escaping her atemporal fate of permafrost—would that really be so bad?

¹ This text, along with five others, is included in *petit objet ö*, the latest publication by Ötza, published by Road House and available for purchase in the exhibition.

² Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996

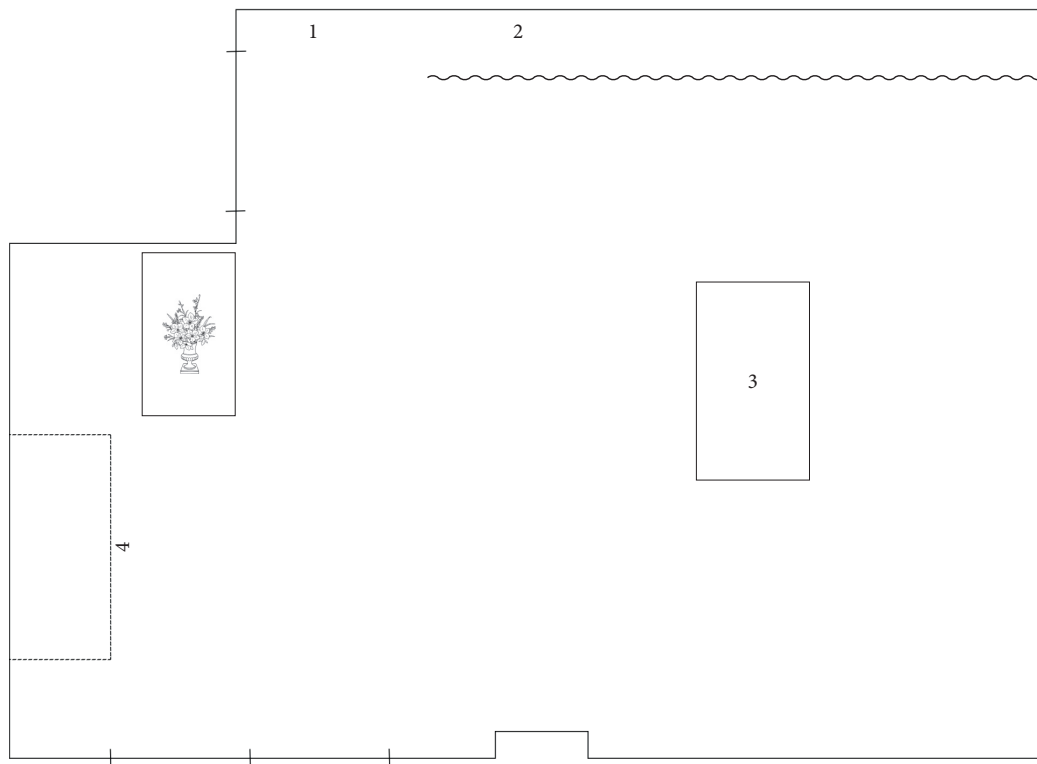


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- 1 Levi van Gelder, *Ötza, Employed*, 2025 (video, 10m52s)
- 2 Levi van Gelder, *Ötza, Employed*, 2026 (graphite drawing on paper, MDF, glass and kraft paper tape)
- 3 Levi van Gelder, *Ötza and the Social Credit Billboard*, 2026 (multimedia installation)
- 4 Levi van Gelder, *Annales School*, 2026 (chalk marker on MDF, kraft paper tape)

Levi van Gelder (b. 1995, NL) is a visual artist working in performance, writing, sculpture and video. By writing, performing and making as Ötza, he creates a subversive, post-historical rendering of the Neolithic mummy, queering (pre)history in a meta-textualized account of misrepresentation, questioning and resisting claims to truth with quick-witted storytelling and playful critique. Levi lives and works in Amsterdam.

Costume design and styling: Leila El Alaoui
Scale model assistance: Pablo Rezzonico Bongcam
Editing text: Maia Kenney, Anthony Stephinson
DOP video projection: Giovanni Salice
Tailoring costume: Eef Hietbrink
Airbrushing costume: Ruperto Herrador
Soundscape music: Gediminas Žygas

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