

# GERECHT? Geschichten über soziale Ungleichheiten

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## Creative Writing Project

### FOREWORD

**The ordinary is never obvious.** The everyday and the seemingly normal always carry traces of the extraordinary and of exclusion. While some forms of social injustice are blatantly visible, the seemingly ordinary, the *Alltägliche*, often makes us forget who or what has been left out in order to construct this very idea of “normalcy” in the first place.

Both, curation and creative writing, can defamiliarize and unsettle the everyday. In this sense, the creative writing by the students of the University of Innsbruck, is similar to what the curators of the exhibition *GERECHT? Geschichten über soziale Ungleichheiten* at the Tiroler Volkskunstmuseum have done. The exhibition gathers objects shared by several museums across Tyrol, South Tyrol and Trentino. These range from the historical to the artistic and from the religious to the commercial. What unites them is their ability to communicate – sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly – their entanglement with histories of social class, gender, religion, and the broader questions of social justice in Tyrol and beyond.

At first glance, and without context, many of these objects may appear innocuous. A dress inspired by Klimt’s artwork. Toilets and scales. Old cassette players alongside religious imagery. Paintings next to burnt wood. All of these form seemingly random juxtapositions. Yet, when seen together, they open up striking, surprising, and unsettling insights into how communities have created and sustained their social orders.

These objects shaped subjects: they marked who belongs and who does not. They suggest who fits into the ‘norm’ and on whose exclusion this norm is predicated in the first place. Often, the objects normalize certain ideas of *Gerechtigkeit* so deeply that they cease to be questioned. And in the most extreme cases, they essentialize difference by turning individual traits first into supposedly unalterable truths, secondly, into the unquestioned reign of “common sense.”

The Tiroler Volkskunstmuseum disrupts these illusions of obviousness by juxtaposing these objects in ways that invite visitors to question them. Viewers are encouraged to reflect on their provenance, history, and meaning before being given further context. The exhibition thus creates new relationships: first, among the objects themselves; second, between the visitors and the exhibits; and third, between the visitors and their own perspectives.

Creative writing works, as shown by the students of the University of Innsbruck, in similar ways. Writing re-contextualizes and re-creates relationships. The students of the University of Innsbruck’s Creative Writing Club, themselves coming from diverse backgrounds, translate the exhibited objects into stories, poems, and vignettes. In

doing so, their texts uncover the extraordinary within the ordinary. Some students use the objects as lenses through which to reflect on questions of social justice today. All of them, like the exhibition itself, form new relationships with the past by defamiliarizing and making it strange again.

For this reason, both creative writing and careful curation matter, especially in times shaped by artificial intelligence. What is AI, after all, if not a palimpsest of data and texts, recycled as raw material for seemingly new texts and for new ways of normalizing ideas?

Only where curators and writers unsettle the ordinary and call the unquestioned into question, culture continues to grow and evolve, even if only by reflecting and expressing what we currently think and believe.

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