



Marc Bauer

Fear Rage Desire,
Still Standing

english

I A PROJECT IN THREE STAGES

The artist Marc Bauer (b. 1975) was invited by the Kunstmuseum Basel to develop a project in conjunction with the exhibition *The First Homosexuals. The Birth of New Identities 1869–1939*, which is on view in the Neubau from March 7 to August 2, 2026. The exhibition explores the visibility of same-sex desire and gender diversity in art.

Bauer's work makes use of the connecting wing between the Hauptbau and the Neubau. The artist has filled the space with drawings that combine to produce a cohesive whole in the context of the multimedia installation. Working on site over the course of several days, he used charcoal and pastel chalk to draw directly on the white walls (Nos. 18–23). Smaller works on paper (Nos. 1–13) were completed earlier in his studio. In addition, four canvases executed in oil paint and charcoal hang in the space in two pairs, back-to-back (Nos. 14–17). Display cases feature additional drawings as well as copies of documents from the Swiss Gay Archives (Nos. 24–25).

Music transforms the space into an immersive experience: Bauer commissioned Berlin-based artists Sin Maldita (Tim Roth, b. 1994) and Philipp Hülsenbeck (b. 1991) to compose a soundtrack referencing music that holds significance for the queer movement.

The installation—which visitors were able to observe in the process of creation during museum opening hours—has been on view since March 7, 2026 (Nos. 1–19, 21–23). Over the course of its 14-month run, the project will be expanded twice: On May 17, 2026, it was supplemented with another large-scale wall drawing (No. 20). The second and final expansion will follow in November 2026—again in front of an audience.

II FEAR RAGE DESIRE, STILL STANDING

In his project, Bauer explores what it means to be a man—and how this image of masculinity comes into being. The prevailing image of manhood in the Western world is the root cause of the violence that society, and especially queer people, continue to face to this day.¹ Since this is hardly a new phenomenon, the artist traces an arc from the present day back through history, revealing how deeply this violence is embedded in social structures. He draws connections between biblical narratives and the current political situation, as well as between his own biography and the self-empowerment of queer communities.

Bauer calls his project *Fear Rage Desire, Still Standing*. These are the terms that, from his perspective as a queer artist, define the present situation: fear and rage are the prevalent emotions. Sadness and melancholy are also palpable in the works. Yet desire—the longing for closeness and joy—remains present. The words “still standing” express unwavering resistance and the will to survive; perhaps even a glimmer of hope.

An overview of the global situation makes clear that Bauer’s project is not just about his individual perspective: around 65 countries worldwide criminalize same-sex relationships or sexual acts. In Switzerland, some gains have been made toward legal equality for LGBTQIA+ people in recent years, primarily through the expansion of the law prohibiting discrimination.² However, the law only protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation, not gender identity. And despite these legal measures, queer people once again find themselves facing increased discrimination as well as verbal, physical, sexual, and psychological violence. The incidence of hate crime

has risen sharply recently as prejudice and intolerance create conditions for verbal and physical assault.

1 The word “queer” means strange. Today, it is a term of self-identification used by people whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity does not conform to heteronormative expectations. Heteronormativity refers to the societal notion that heterosexuality and the binary gender system (only male and female) are the norm from which any other gender identities and sexual orientations deviate. Queer is also an umbrella term for diverse identities and is often used synonymously with the acronym LGBTQIA+.

2 LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for: Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Trans; Queer; Intersex; Asexual. The acronym thus refers to a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities that do not correspond to the heteronormative, binary model.

III DRAWINGS IN THE SPACE

Bauer thematizes the historical reference points of his work in the four canvases that hang from the ceiling. Here, the power wielded by politicians and economic elites today is juxtaposed against the early Christian ideal of compassion for the down-trodden. In a parallel exploration, the rise of queer women in the early 20th century is reflected in the self-empowering queer club culture of the younger generation.

Men in Power

For the canvas titled *Them* (No. 14), Bauer chose to start with a press photo from January 20, 2025: the inauguration of Donald Trump (b. 1946) as the 47th President of the United States in the US capital Washington, D.C. At the start of his term, Trump announced that from then on there would be only two genders. His policies have aimed to abolish the legal recognition of trans and non-binary individuals at the federal level.³ This has meant promoting discrimination against the entire LGBTQIA+ community in all areas of life, along with exhibiting crude sexism toward women. Attending the inauguration ceremony were the heads of the largest tech companies,

who all support Trump's traditional authoritarian image of masculinity. Bauer smears paint across their faces in an act of rage.

Self-Determination of Queer Women

Bauer pairs this canvas with the work *Manifesto* (No. 15), which references three works by female artists featured in the exhibition *The First Homosexuals*: Sarah Bernhardt's (1844–1923) *Self-Portrait as a Sphinx* (1880), Nasta Rojc's (1883–1964) self-assured self-portrait in a hunting suit (1912), and the painting by Louise Abbéma (1853–1927) that depicts her together with her life partner, the actress and artist Sarah Bernhardt. These works are an expression of resistance against the patriarchy: confident queer women who determine the course of their own lives and portray themselves as such in their works. At the bottom edge of the canvas, Marc Bauer quotes the *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) by the US-American feminist writer Valerie Solanas (1936–1988), which blames the catastrophic state of the world on the male gender.

Another work by Bauer—a drawing composed of several sheets joined together—features the black swans from Abbéma's *Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur le lac au bois de Boulogne* (1883), showcasing their beauty as well as their loyal bond (No. 13). Black swans stand out as an exception in nature and have come to symbolize the rare and unexpected.

Ecstasy as Liberation

At the far end of the room hangs the painting *Ecstasy* (No. 16), which depicts young people ecstatically dancing. The soundtrack by Sin Maldita and Hülsenbeck is fitting for this party scene. For many LGBTQIA+ people, raves, parties featuring electronic music, serve as safe spaces where social norms and stigmas are temporarily suspended. They foster community, enable emotional intimacy, and create a setting in which sexual and gender identities can be lived and expressed without social pressure.

Humiliation and Exclusion

On the reverse side, *Ecstasy* finds its counterpart in the pendant painting *The Crowd* (No. 17). This work is based on the painting *The Carrying of the Cross* (c. 1510–16), produced by a follower of the artist Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516). Bauer adopts the radical composition, in which several aspects of Christ’s Passion are depicted simultaneously within the setting of a dense crowd of people: his mockery, physical humiliation, and social exclusion. Christ is not only punished, but also ridiculed, degraded, and dehumanized—a fate that LGBTQIA+ people continue to suffer in many places to this day.

³ When a person’s gender differs from the gender assigned to them at birth, they are trans. The term “trans” stands for the diversity of trans people and encompasses a broad spectrum of self-definitions and ways of life. Non-binarity is often used as an umbrella term for all gender identities outside the binary categories of “female” and “male”.

IV DRAWINGS ON THE WALL

Along the long wall, Bauer weaves small-format drawings on paper and fragments of personal text into a biographical narrative (Nos. 1–12). The notes, produced during the preparatory phase of the project, complement the images and create an irregular, rhythmic path akin to an obstacle course. These delicate, almost intimate works demand close viewing and draw the audience directly into the artist’s personal story. They form a radical counterpoint to the monumental wall drawings, which draw on familiar motifs from the Christian pictorial tradition (Nos. 18–20).

Childhood

To emphasize the collective dimension of queer experiences, Bauer refrains from depicting the boy in profile as a self-portrait (No. 1). The image is followed by the figure of Babar the Elephant (No. 2)—a reference to the artist’s uncle, who used

the children's book character to make fun of an overweight relative. This uncle, an authoritarian surgeon whose interventions in the human body alienated the child (No. 3), recurs as a leitmotif throughout the series. In another drawing (No. 4), he mocks the boy's compassion for live-grilled lobsters—a display of “pampering” that he warned was supposedly associated with the “danger” of homosexuality.

Such disparagement leaves its mark on the boy: first, Bauer focuses on the flawless yet tormented teenage body (No. 5). The next drawing, depicting a suit of armor, symbolizes the need for protection (No. 6). Its decorative nature, however, masks the fact that defending and protecting oneself can also lead to inner hardening.

The Body

The large-scale wall drawing on the left takes up the motif of “Doubting Thomas” (John 20:24–29), who would not believe in the Resurrection until he had touched Christ's wounds (No. 19). Bauer links this biblical scene to the figure of his uncle but also interprets it as a singular theme in Western art history: a man's penetration of another male body. The visual model here is the radical depiction (c. 1601) by Caravaggio (1571–1610), which is famous for its drastic, almost physically palpable “penetration” of the wound.

Desire

The drawings that follow explore desire, touch, vulnerability, and care. They go together with the large central wall drawing (No. 20) depicting three teenagers lost in music. The work thematizes the queer rave culture of the 1980s, which emerged at the height of the crisis caused by the AIDS disease. In the face of stigmatization and loss, these spaces of collective ecstasy became places of existential significance. Raves offered not only joy, but also space for grief, solidarity, and resistance.

Vengeance

The third large-scale wall drawing is based on the painting *Judith and Holofernes* (1612–13) by Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1664) (No. 21), which represents a radical reinterpretation of the biblical heroine Judith. Unlike her predecessors, Gentileschi does not portray her as a distant, symbolic figure, but as a woman who commits physical violence as a necessary act of resistance. She embodies courage and the overcoming of male violence.

Identities

The final drawing, *At the Edge of the Sea* (No. 11), with its enigmatic polyhedron, evokes Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) *Melencolia I* (1514). The accompanying sheet of text quotes Michel Foucault (1926–1984): "...man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea." While Foucault was describing the end of a framework of knowledge, the quote is often applied today to the dissolution of rigid identities. For the LGBTQIA+ community, the naming of one's own identity is indeed an act of self-empowerment and belonging, but it also entails the compulsion to constantly define oneself within social and medical norms. Bauer's work poses the question: what if naming were no longer necessary? What if freedom lay beyond categories? Despite the fundamentally melancholic mood of the drawing, the rising sun in the image suggests a future in which identities may dissolve in favor of pure freedom.

V THE DISPLAY CASES

In 2007, Bauer's book *History of Masculinity* was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the art space Attitudes in Geneva. Drawing on personal memories, the book and the

exhibition explores the connections between male identity and fascist ideologies. Bauer also addresses our relationship to nature by featuring contests in which men pit their rabbits against each other, thereby degrading the animals as objects.

A second display case features drawings that reproduce hate mail from the Swiss Gay Archives. They document the discrimination and violence to which queer people are subjected. In May, the display was supplemented with drawings based on flyers from the now defunct Zurich Rage Club.

VI DRAWING AS STATEMENT

In the installation *Fear Rage Desire, Still Standing*, drawing becomes an instrument to define space. Bauer employs the full array of drawing techniques—placing on paper sharp, deep black accents with lithographic chalk while producing diffuse, delicate shades of gray with graphite. Sections of the work reminiscent of monumental, high-contrast murals alternate with small-scale, meticulously rendered details. This technical variation allows him to precisely translate the effects of various visual sources, from the blurriness of yellowed family photos to the opulence of art-historical paintings. The variety of styles and visual qualities also reflects the diversity of the source material used.

The creative process remains physically present in the works. Watercolors create ripples in the paper, causing the drawing to lose its two-dimensionality and protrude from the wall as a three-dimensional object. Deliberately left traces, stains, and imperfections emphasize the material immediacy.

A significant portion of the technical execution takes place directly on site: the wall drawings are produced during opening hours with the utmost concentration. The lifespan of the site-specific works is, however, limited in time. They will ultimately be painted over in 2027, making transience an integral part of the artistic strategy.

All works: Courtesy Marc Bauer und Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

1. *Profile I*, 2026

Pencil on paper

50 × 70 cm



2. *Babar*, 2026

Pencil, lithographic crayon and watercolor on paper

48 × 33 cm



3. *Fixing (Surgery)*, 2026
Pencil and watercolor on paper
70 × 100 cm



4. *On the Grill*, 2026
Pencil, lithographic crayon and watercolor on paper
50 × 70 cm



5. *Oppression*, 2026
Pencil, lithographic crayon and watercolor on paper
100 × 70 cm



6. *Armour*, 2026
Pencil on paper
70 × 100 cm

Image source: *Hercules Armour*, c. 1555–1560, iron,
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

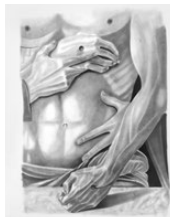


7. *2 Boys*, 2026
Pencil and lithographic crayon on paper
100 × 70 cm



8. *Stigmata*, 2026
Pencil on paper
100 × 70 cm

Image source: Giovanni Bellini, *Pietà*, c. 1460,
tempera on wood, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan



9. *My Sister and I*, 1979, 2026

Pencil on paper
50 × 70 cm



10. *Profile II (older)*, 2026

Pencil and lithographic crayon on paper
70 × 100 cm



11. *At the Edge of the Sea*, 2026

Pencil, lithographic crayon and watercolor on paper
70 × 100 cm



12. *Fear Rage Desire, Still Standing*, 2026

Pencil on paper, series of 12 works
44 × 31 cm



13. *Black Swans*, 2026

Lithographic crayon and watercolor on 6 sheets of paper
136 × 170 cm



14. *Them*, 2026

Oil and charcoal on canvas
287 × 360 cm

Image source: press photography



15. Manifesto, 2026

Oil and charcoal on canvas

287 × 360 cm

Image source: Three works exhibited in *The First Homosexuals. The birth of a New Identity 1869–1939*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 7.3.–2.8.2026:

Sarah Bernhardt, *Self-Portrait as a Sphinx*, 1880, bronze, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Gift of the Fabergé Society of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 99.24a-b
Nasta Rojc, *Autoportret u lovačkom odijelu*, 1912, oil on canvas, National Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb
Louise Abbéma, *Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur le lac au bois de Boulogne*, 1883, oil on canvas, Collections de la Comédie-Française



16. Ecstasy, 2026

Oil and charcoal on canvas

287 × 360 cm

Image source: Image from the internet and photography by Marc Bauer



17. The Crowd, 2026

Oil and charcoal on canvas

287 × 360 cm

Image source: follower of Hieronymous Bosch, *The Carrying of the Cross*, c. 1510–16, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent



18. The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, 2026

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, c. 1601, oil on canvas, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam



19. On the Dancefloor, 2026

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Photography by Marc Bauer



20. *Judith Beheading Holofernes, 2026*

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, 1612–13, Museo Capodimonte, Naples



21. *The Straight Paradigm. The King, 2026*

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Image from the internet



22. *The Straight Paradigm. Privilege, 2026*

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Photography from the internet



23. *The Straight Paradigm. Prometheus, 2026*

Charcoal on wall

Image source: Arkesilas painter, *Laconic Kylix with Prometheus and Atlas*, 560–550 B.C., painted black-figure ceramic, Vatican Museums, Rome



24. *History of Masculinity, 2007*

Display case with drawings and artist book



25. *The Straight Paradigm, 2026*

Display case with drawings of documents from the Swiss Gay Archive



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marc Bauer (b. Geneva, 1975) lives and works in Zurich. He studied at the École Supérieure d'Arts Visuels Genève (now HEAD) and at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. He has been a lecturer at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) since 2015. His art has been on display in solo projects at renowned international institutions including the Menil Drawing Institute, Houston (2023–2024); the Berlinische Galerie (2020–2021), Berlin; the Istituto Svizzero, Milan (2020); Drawing Room, London (2019); the Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2013), and MAMCO, Geneva (2010). His work has also been showcased in group exhibitions, including at Kunsthaus Zürich (2025, 2019, 2015, and 2008); the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2021); the Migros Museum, Zurich (2019 and 2014); S.M.A.K., Ghent (2015), and the Albertina, Vienna (2015). Bauer moreover participated in the 2018 Biennale of Sydney and the 2014 Liverpool Biennial. He was awarded the Prix Meret Oppenheim in 2020 and the GASAG Art Prize in 2020 and won the Prix Culturel Manor in Geneva in 2009 and Swiss Art Awards in 2001, 2005, and 2006.

EDITION

The edition is available at the museum shop.

Plus fort que moi, 2026

Digital print and watercolor on paper, 30 × 42 cm

Edition of 25 copies

CHF 690

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Marc Bauer – The Blow-Up Regime, exh. cat. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum der Moderne, ed. by Marc Bauer and Berlinische Galerie, Berlin: Distanz Verlag, 2020.

Marc Bauer – White Violence, on Domination, Displacement and Populism, exh. cat. FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand (2021); Drawing Room, London (2019); Pavillon De La Warr, Bexhill (2020), ed. by FRAC Auvergne, 2021.

Marc Bauer – The History of Masculinity, artist book, ed. by Attitudes Geneva, 2007.

The First Homosexuals. The Birth of a New Identity 1869–1939, exh. cat. Wrightwood 659, Alphawood Foundation Chicago, 2.5. – 26.7.2025, ed. by Jonathan D. Katz und Johnny Willis, New York: The Monacelli Press, 2025.

The First Homosexuals. The Birth of a New Identity 1869–1939, exh. booklet Kunstmuseum Basel, 7.3. – 2.8.2026, ed. by Len Schaller, Basel: Kunstmuseum, 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Kunstmuseum Basel thanks Dr. Samuel Werenfels for the financial support, as well as Marc Bauer and the Gallery Peter Kilchmann for the loans.

Marc Bauer likes to thank

Juline Andresen, Anne-Marie and Yves Bauer, Sebastian Baumgarten, Davide Ciresa and the team at Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Nadia Hauri, Philipp Hülsenbeck, Amélie Joller, Jonathan D. Katz, Izidora L. Lethe, Maika Montavon, Daniel C. Müller, Rahel Müller, Amanda Sandberg, Len Schaller, Schwulenarchiv Schweiz, Johnny Willis, David Wolf and the Pink Cross team

Marc Bauer's special thanks go to

Anita Haldemann, Peter Kilchmann, Vincent van der Marck, Samuel Obst, Annemarie Reichen, Tim Roth, Andrei Stănescu, Rolf Thalmann

COLOPHON

This booklet is published on the occasion of the project *Marc Bauer. Fear Rage Desire, Still Standing* 7.3.2026 – 2.5.2027
Kunstmuseum Basel

Curator / text: Anita Haldemann

Curatorial assistant / editorial: Amélie Joller

Translation: Anna Brailovskiy

Photographic Credits: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Sebastian Schaub (Nos. 1–18, 24–25); Kunstmuseum Basel, Jonas Schaffter (Nos. 19–23)

Works © Marc Bauer

© 2026 Kunstmuseum Basel, artist,
author Antia Haldemann



PUBLIC EVENTS

Sat, 29.8.2026, 11–12 a.m.

Artist talk with Marc Bauer, moderated by Anita Haldemann and Len Schaller in the context of the *Kunsttage Basel*, 28.–30.8.2026
→ kunsttagebasel.ch

Sun, 8.11.2026 12.30 a.m.–1.10 p.m.

Artist talk with Marc Bauer moderated by Anita Haldemann in the context of the *Wochenende der Graphik*
Bauer will work on the installation again in the days leading up to the event.

For additional tours, please consult the event calendar
→ kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/events

OPENING HOURS

Tue–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Wed 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

Special opening hours

kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/visit

Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau

St. Alban-Graben 20

+41 61 206 62 62

info@kunstmuseumbasel.ch /

kunstmuseumbasel.ch

kunstmuseum basel