

Anna Boghiguan

The Chess Game, 2022

Anna Boghiguan has painted historical figures on cardboard, assembling them into an oversized chess game on the upper floor of the Scuola di San Pasquale. *The Chess Game* is a remarkable work in that the majority its protagonists are of Austrian origin – a bizarre panopticon of political ideas and conflicts. This new work by Anna Boghiguan will also be on view at Kunsthau Bregenz in late fall 2022.

The following short descriptions are original quotations by Anna Boghiguan from an interview in March 2022

1 Marie Antoinette (1755 – 1793), born as Archduchess of Austria, later Queen of France “This is Marie Antoinette. I think she liked hats and she also had a very beautiful garden she made for herself. The garden outside Trianon. That’s why she has all these flowers around her. And because she used a lot of perfume. She was also well dressed, invented the chemise. She cut out all the unnecessary layers of tulle, which was also very bad they say, because some of the dresses couldn’t be worn more than once, because the floors were all covered in shit. So when they walked, all this dirt got on their clothing. So she made the chemise, which did not have all these layers.”

2 Maria Theresia (1717 – 1780), ruler of the Habsburg dominions “Maria Theresia was the mother of Marie Antoinette. She was a very powerful woman. And she had a lot of power over her daughter, who would write to her and then her mother would advise her what she had to do. Because Marie Antoinette was very unhappy in Paris.”

3 Rose Bertin (1747 – 1813), dressmaker to Queen Marie Antoinette “Madame Bertin used to make the dresses for Marie Antoinette. It’s said that she used to make dresses costing several millions in today’s money. Her worth dropped per year. The French called Marie Antoinette Madame Déficit. Madame Bertin once brought an invoice for the dresses of Marie Antoinette, which was very high and created a lot of pressure from the general population. The dressmaker came from a poor family, but then she went on to open her own shop on rue Saint-Honoré, which is still very famous in Paris. She got all the aristocracy to come to her. She later fled to England during the time of the revolution and many people thought that she worked as a spy. You know it’s the same story as Coco Chanel.”

4 Léonard Autié (c. 1746/1751 – 1820), favorite hairdresser of Queen Marie Antoinette “Monsieur Léonard was the hairdresser of Marie Antoinette. He always had to stand on something, in order to do her hair. Because she wanted to do poufs and then after she had the poufs done, he would put flour on her hair. The poufs could be two meters, one meter high. So he had to stand to do it. Also they used to put pictures on it and create drawings: images of little people, boats, forests. You know they made all kinds of drawings in their hair. And I suppose, you know, most of them did not take a bath. Some of them took a bath maybe once a year, once in their lifetime, some of them twice in their lifetime.”

5 Ferdinand I (1503 – 1564), Holy Roman Emperor from 1556, King of Bohemia, Hungary, and Croatia from 1526, and Archduke of Austria from 1521 until his death in 1564 “This is Ferdinand I and I made a mistake, because I was going to draw Ferdinand I of Austria, King of Lombardy-Venice, and I looked up this picture on the internet. His clothing wasn’t the same as Ferdinand I’s, but I thought the face looked similar. But it turned out that he has a different face and so it became Ferdinand of the 16th/17th century that people loved. But the Ferdinand I wanted to do was Ferdinand I, who ruled Venice in the 19th century and was epileptic. He was very, very sick. His mother was Maria Theresia and she put a guardian in place for him, so that he wouldn’t fall apart. There was a revolution against him in Venice and so he abdicated. But now we have this one instead, I made a mistake.”

6 Franz Ferdinand (1863 – 1914), heir presumptive to the throne of Austria-Hungary, assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914 “Franz Ferdinand was the cause of World War I, of the Great War. He was a close friend of Wilhelm II, so when he was assassinated by the Sarajevo Liberal Party it triggered the outbreak of the First World War. He was a hunter who bragged that he has killed 5000 deer. That’s why I have one here. He was supposed to become the Emperor of Austria. Also, he died one week after Bertha von Suttner died.”

7 Felix Salten (1869 – 1945), Austro-Hungarian author of “Bambi” “Felix Salten wrote a book called ‘Bambi.’ And it was supposed to be a classic. It was bought by somebody who sold it to Disney, and the company made a film, which is supposed to be for children. But it frightens children more than anything else in the world. He was a Marxist and Jewish and he became friends with Herzl. And then Herzl turned his mind to Zionism.”

8 Theodor Herzl (1860 – 1904), Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, political activist, and writer, father of modern political Zionism “Theodor Herzl was a journalist who became a Zionist. He also wrote about Zionism and was very important to Bertha von Suttner, as he paid for her trip to The Hague to attend the peace conference.”

9 Bertha von Suttner (1843 – 1914), Austrian-Bohemian pacifist and novelist, first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and the first Austrian laureate. “Bertha von Suttner is very well known for her book ‘Ground Arms!’ and for her love of peace. She was friends with Alfred Nobel and told him to create the peace prize, which in 1905 she won herself.”

10 Aribert Heim (1914 – 1992), Austrian SS doctor, known as Dr. Death and Butcher of Mauthausen, “He was an Austrian and known as Dr. Death. He was a doctor and a Nazi who escaped to Egypt and died in 1992. He used to give lithium to people and when the poison reached their heart they would die. He killed many people and then he would take their skull and put it on his table.”

11 Egon Schiele (1890 – 1918), Austrian expressionist painter “Egon Schiele was a very well-known expressionistic painter, who used his girlfriend or wife as his model and people looked at his paintings as being perverse and sexually explicit. I think he’s a very important artist. I think he’s more important than Klimt. That’s only my opinion, of course. I put his underwear in the image because of the way people treated him and his sexuality. He died as well, which is why he has a mask, of Spanish Flu. You know he lived during a pandemic like in our times. So there’s a picture of him with his mask here. His wife got it first and then he got it and they died. He died, very young, 28 maybe. But he left a very important body of work.”

12 Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis “Sigmund Freud. He’s a very important man. He was a very important psychoanalyst. Of course we know that he created the concept of psychoanalysis and the concept of the unconscious, which in many ways is influenced by Nietzsche.”

13 Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951), Austrian-British philosopher “Ludwig Wittgenstein is the most important philosopher after Aristotle and Plato. He was a man who spoke about vision and how people see and he had a passion for light. Before he died, he said that he’d lived his life fully. What’s interesting, I think, is the way he speaks about vision and visualization. They say that his brain was on fire.”

14 Knights (Horses) (♘, ♞), chess piece “Well, I just drew two horsemen. There are two horsemen and we had to have a horseman. So I did a horseman.”

15 Rook (Tower) (♖, ♜), chess piece “This is the castle. Because in a chess game you have to have a castle.”

