

"...the child was standing by his bed, clasping his arm and crying reproachfully: 'Father, can't you see I'm burning.'"

- SIGMUND FREUD

THE BURNING CHILD

A FILM BY
JOSEPH LEO KOERNER



DIRECTED BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER AND CHRISTIAN D. BRUUN EDITED BY SABINE KRAYENBÜHL MUSIC BY ANTHONY CHEUNG
PRODUCED BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER, CHRISTIAN D. BRUUN, AND BO-MI CHOI WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ANDREW M. MELLON FOUNDATION AND HARVARD UNIVERSITY



THE BURNING CHILD

Haunted by his father's portrait of his grandparents
who vanished in the Holocaust,
Joseph Koerner returns to Vienna to solve their mystery.



“A remarkable interweaving of the public and the private, the exploration of a city that is also an investigation into personal history.”

—*William Kentridge.*

“A beautiful film, deeply moving, hauntingly lyrical, and smart and learned.”

—*Henry Louis Gates, Jr.*

“We enter interiors—of Viennese homes, of people's dreams and aspirations—to confront how we construct identity and meaning. A remarkable film.”

—*Yô-Yô Ma.*



Synopsis

A painting haunts Joseph Koerner. It shows his grandparents before they vanished in the Holocaust. The film follows Joseph's return to Vienna to solve the riddle of their disappearance.

The painting lovingly details the grandparents' apartment, the private sanctuary from which they were taken and from which their son—Henry Koerner, Joseph's father and the painting's creator—barely escaped. With his father's painting as his guide, Joseph visits historians, architects, and artists who conjure Vienna's passion for homemaking—the apartments, bars, galleries, and sanatoria that are the triumphs of modern interior design. He enters interiors created by Gustav Klimt and Sigmund Freud that bring to light the dark recesses of the soul.

In the city's maze of archives, Joseph pursues the fate of his grandparents' home in the catastrophe brought about by the Anschluss—Adolf Hitler's 1938 annexation of Austria and the systematic destruction of the homes and families of Viennese Jews, who sought safe haven in the city after centuries of persecution.

Completed eighty years after the Anschluss, the film is a moving, visually-stunning journey through Vienna's urban and psychic interior to a buried past, when dreams of home became, for a city's most ardent homemakers, an unimaginable nightmare.





Filmmakers

Directed by	Joseph Leo Koerner
Directed by	Christian D. Bruun
Produced by	Joseph Leo Koerner, Christian D. Bruun, Bo-Mi Choi
Edited by	Sabine Krayenbühl
Written by	Joseph Leo Koerner
Cinematography	Christian D. Bruun
Original Score	Anthony Cheung

With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Harvard University.





Specifications

Genre	Documentary
Running Time	113 minutes
Format	DCP: 4K/2K, Color
Audio	Dolby 5.1
Languages	German, English
Production Country	United States / Austria
Filming Locations	Vienna, Austria / London, UK
Year of Completion	2018







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