

Preface

It has become a tradition for us to give artists room for their works in our Cologne city centre churches during Lent.

This year in, we are presenting Jakob Kirchmayr's Lenten cloth in St. Gereon. Covering the chancels during Lent has been a tradition for centuries. **It sounds like a paradox. We veil something in order to make something visible.** We veil the cross in order to unveil it on Good Friday; there is also a curtain in the tabernacle and the host chalice is hidden under a cloak. It is always about making visible the inaccessible we cannot grasp. We know this from everyday life. Particularly precious and meaningful gifts are wrapped in elaborate packaging. Our clothes, our home, our car are casings that sometimes tell us more about ourselves than we are ready to reveal. All wrappings and casings tell us something about the inaccessible and hidden that is nevertheless present.

Jakob Kirchmayr's Lenten cloth separates the high choir of St. Gereon's Basilica as a gripping, expansive object and is thus part of the centuries-old tradition of Lenten cloths. At the same time, its confrontational aesthetics, surprising choice of materials and boundary-crossing workmanship also challenge the viewer. Earthy, burnt cotton fabrics tell of growth and fading, of cohesion and decay, of heavy earth and airy sky, of divine creativity and human destruction.

In this 1700-year-old church, Kirchmayr's Lenten cloth invites you not to stop at the superficial, to develop a sensitivity for what lies behind and to think anew. Because that is what the word 'metanoia', which is used to describe Lent in the Bible, means: 'to think anew'.

Dominik Meiering

Dr. Dominik Meiering, Senior Pastor Cologne Centre



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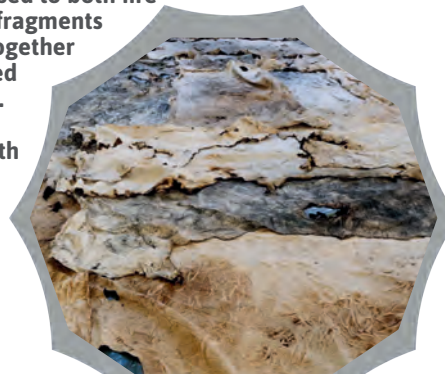
"In summer of 2023, I was given the opportunity to create a Lenten cloth for St Michael's Church in Vienna. The idea appealed to me, even though the necessary format of about 12 x 6 metres would exceed my largest works by a factor of five.

A new format usually requires a new approach and so I decided to completely abandon the materials I was familiar with. I was looking for a medium that would allow me to express my feelings.

Influenced by gloomy predictions for the future, the business strategies of large corporations, climate change, the progressive global destruction of nature and the horrific armed conflicts of our time, I finally chose water and fire as transformative media instead of pencils and paint - earth, ash, smoke and coal as colouring media. The traces of fire, apocalyptic and beautiful at the same time."

Jakob Kirchmayr, Vienna/Austria, 2025

Around 140 square metres of cotton fabric were cut up for this work, processed with ash, earth and coal, smoked, exposed to both fire and rain. The fragments finally sewn together again, gathered and crumpled. The result is a work of art with a sculptural character.





Jakob Kirchmayr is an artist in third generation. His roots are in Tyrol, Austria, and the time he spent there in nature and in the mountains has a strong influence on his art today.

'It was an archaic world in which I grew up, characterised by my father's irrepressible thirst for adventure,' Kirchmayr says.

He combines colors and smells with strong emotions and memories from his childhood. Memories of the many trips to Greece with his family before the really big environmental sins were made and mass tourism was able to unleash its destructive force.

Over the years, Kirchmayr observed how untouched nature was steadily disappearing and the pollution was increasing. Over time, he began to feel melancholy, sadness and anger at the global abuses and ruthlessness of the system in which we live.

All of this is reflected in Kirchmayr's multi-layered, over-dimensional works. Starting from an impulse, without a sketch or plan, something slowly emerges from the initially completely abstract painting process, which usually takes a long time. Something reminiscent of mystical, rugged, rocky landscapes, whose many facets, shades and depths reflect the artist's world of thought. With metaphors and projections by Kirchmayr on the one hand, one is also inclined to interpret these paintings as a portrait of the collective state of mind of their time.

Between the dense, interlocking layers of paint, drawing and lettering elements, delicate and expressive at the same time and attributable to a veritable catharsis on the part of the artist, strong and distinct moments of light repeatedly emerge. Bright blue, a small spark of orange, and the ever-present, translucent white are some of the elements that create the fascinating balance and appeal of Jakob Kirchmayr's profound painting - and this, too, can be applied to the bigger whole.

Upcoming Events

06.04. 18.00: 'Spuren des Feuers' – das Fastentuch von Jakob Kirchmayr in St. Gereon,
Dr Dominik Meiering und Markus Michael
an der Weimbs Orgel

18.04. (Good Friday): The Lenten cloth will be removed during the service at 3 pm.



Further information

Jakob Kirchmayr: SPUREN DES FEUERS

**Basilica of St Gereon
Gereonshof 2
50670 Cologne/Germany**

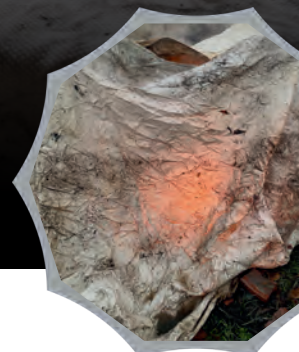
Opening times:
Daily 10 am - 6 pm
Visits only possible outside of church services.

Please announce guided tours/group visits in advance via the parish office (see legal notice for contact details).



Further information about the artist and the fasting cloth:

www.jakob.kirchmayr.com



Legal Notice
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