

Art campaign on the occasion of „Dementia Week“ in Rhein-Erft-Kreis, April 2022

Dementia - When the self fades away

It begins so sneakingly. One cannot find one's glasses. Forgot, what was only just on the agenda. Goes shopping without one's coat.

Worries get played down: Elderly people tend to forget things. Pretty normal. And as long as one remembers childhood adventures so clearly, everything is alright.

But it is not. Dementia, this atrocious thief who step by step steals every detail a personality contains of – thus extinguishes an identity – tends to hide behind a wall of early memories which it leaves untouched. In the beginning.

Those early memories can be triggered deceptively easy: with a song. A scent. A nursery rhyme. And while the person concerned smilingly sings along or quotes a poem from schooldays, clinging on to the hope that everything is alright, his or her mind starts to fade away. Piece by piece, like photos in a picturebook, everything gets taken away from him. What he had learned. What he experienced. What he was.

Until nothing remains. When the last nursery rhyme dies away and the last memory had been deleted from the picture book of his life, man does not exist any longer. Only his empty shell remains, a blank page. Exchangeable at will, without identity.

With his art campaign „When the self fades away“ the artist Dennis Josef Meseg wishes to call peoples' attention to the fate of dementia patients and their relatives. Twelve mannequins, distributed all over the city of Wesseling wrapped in white ribbons with printed symptom descriptions such as "Losing personal colors", "Memory-Time travel", "Loss", "Confusion", "Losing dignity", "Creeping farewell", "Film tear", "Feelings remain" and "Self-determination", represent the mainly female patients. Every one of these figures has a „sponsor“, e.g. a pharmacy, where it is on display outside the shop and next to an info booth of the organization Senior Citizen Center Wesseling.

Awareness of dementia is more important than ever in an ageing society like ours. It can strike everyone, and nobody should turn away. For the only thing that can oppose this final tragic is humanity.