



[Home](#) [What's on](#) [Music](#) [Dance](#) [Opera](#) [Theatre](#) [Visual arts](#) [Museums](#) [Kids](#) [Competitions](#) [Recent posts](#)

The Wolf Man at the Freud Museum

This installation, set in Freud's bedroom, contains numerous works by Slava Harasymowicz illustrating Freud's most famous case study, the Wolf Man. It's a fascinating and beautifully presented view of the Wolf Man story.

[Paul Kilbey](#) 8th June 2012









Sigmund Freud's most famous case study, the Wolf Man, has gained a life beyond the annals of psychoanalytic literature. The strange story of a young Russian man who comes to Freud with a sexual perversion, bowel issues, and a wolf phobia remains a fascinating insight into Freud's methods, and is also as gripping and detailed an account of an individual's early life as any biography could hope to give.

Original listing details

That's not to say that it's an easy read, however. Freud's case study is written in a meandering and frankly rather messy style, as he is characteristically willing to admit: 'I do not know whether my readers will have succeeded in forming a clear picture of the genesis and development of my patient's state of illness from the report of the analysis given above', he writes. 'Indeed, I fear that this will not be the case.' Freud's account perhaps resembles his counselling method in this sense – events do not necessarily present themselves in the clearest or most rational order – and, rather like Freud's treatment itself, the answers and results of all the analytic work are not presented so much as suggested. Interpretation is ultimately left to the reader, just as any cure must come from the patient himself.

Update!

We regret to announce that from January 2014, One Stop Arts will no longer be maintained. The site will remain live for at least a year from that date, but new listings will not be approved and it will not be possible to edit current listings.

Backtrack.com (the parent site of One Stop Arts) continues to go from strength to strength, expanding into the global cultural tourism sector.

Visit our recently relaunched [bachtrack.com](#)

And recently, a new interpretation of the Wolf Man's story has been published in the form of a graphic novel: writer Richard Appignanesi and illustrator Sława Harasymowicz's *The Wolf Man* is an account not only of the case study but of the rest of its protagonist's life as well. It becomes clear towards the end that the obsessions of the Wolf Man, or Sergei Pankejeff as he should perhaps be called, grew rather than shrunk over a lifetime of psychoanalytic treatment, and by the end of his life his obsession with Freud and his methods surely rivalled any of his other psychiatric issues.

But what is always abundantly clear is the fascination of the story, and as subjects for obsession go, you could certainly do worse than the Wolf Man. The Freud Museum's new small installation of illustrations and other artworks on this subject by Harasymowicz, curated by Sarah Jury, speaks very eloquently of Harasymowicz's own obsession with the case, and provides yet another layer of intrigue to this dense network of stories.

Presented in the room which was once Freud's bedroom, a number of Harasymowicz's pencil sketches are scattered in a sort of precise disarray over a large central table. The whole cast of characters is there, from Freud and Pankejeff themselves to Pankejeff's sister (who 'seduced' him at an early age), his nurse, his alcoholic governess, and of course his parents, along with a plethora of insects and snakes, a generously proportioned drainpipe and a gently curved and pert bedside lamp.

There's also a display case with yet more details, as well as Pankejeff's death mask, and cut-out sets of characters which cast careful silhouettes and which reminded me of a Victorian toy theatre scene. But even here, there are also (literal) piles of sketches presented, only the top pages of which can of course be seen: these again speak of the ridiculous depth to which the obsession has reached. Harasymowicz has apparently now sketched these scenes more frequently even than Pankejeff himself, an amateur artist.

One of Pankejeff's own paintings is presented alongside the sketches: the dream-image of the white wolves in the tree which lies at the heart of the story. Remarkably, it is signed 'Wolfmann': Pankejeff, by the time of this painting, had *become* the case study.

As a testament to the case's enduring fascination and indeed importance, this exhibition is a real success. It is somewhat dependent on knowledge of the story, and perhaps works best as a supplement to the case study or the graphic novel – but it's a subject well worth exploring, and the Freud Museum is always worth a trip to Hampstead.

It's a little ironic that rather than curing his patient of the various obsessions which provoked him to seek therapy, Freud instead succeeded in documenting a subject which would come to obsess countless others for years to come. But that being the case, we would do well to explore the story of the Wolf Man as thoroughly as we can, and this installation is an excellent way to do so.