

THE CULTURAL WORK OF ARTIST GERTIE FRÖHLICH

21:36

► Examining the history of the Galerie Sankt Stephan, considered the seminal avant-garde post-war Viennese gallery, which was seemingly launched from nowhere by a former Cardinal of the Catholic Church in 1954, Julia Jarrett chose Monsignore Otto Mauer as the subject of her master's thesis.

When the LA-based researcher came to Vienna to contact the surviving witnesses, all roads seemed to lead to just one name: Gertie Fröhlich. With so many period witnesses corroborating that Gertie Fröhlich, officially Mauer's secretary who initiated the gallery introduced the artists, curated the first exhibitions and showed the later Gruppe Four (Markus Prachensky, Josef Mikl, Arnulf Rainer, Wolfgang Hollegha) the first time together in the Christmas exhibition for young artists, in December 1955.



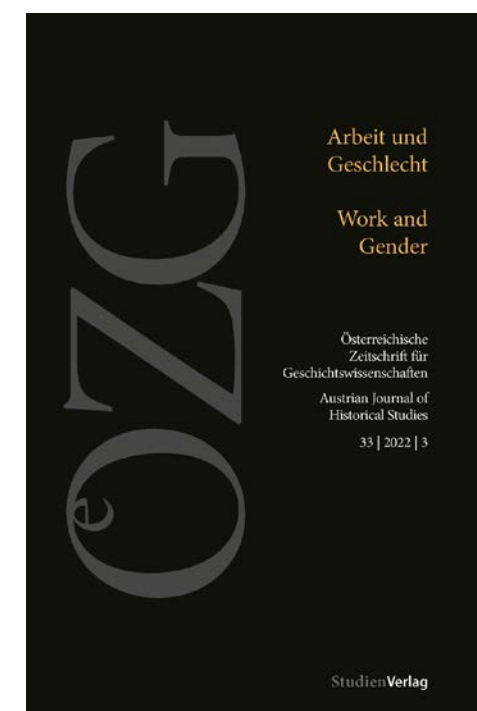
Arnulf Rainer & Gertie Fröhlich at gallery Sankt Stephan, 1955
© Jakob Laub

What began as critical research of Otto Mauer and his Gallery St. Stephan grew into an in-depth analysis of the art and life of Gertie Fröhlich and the challenges faced by women cultural workers during the post-war period, and how Fröhlich overcame these obstacles.

"Why have the cultural contributions of the Viennese artist Gertie Fröhlich remained invisible in the dominant cultural history of the post-war period? What were Fröhlich's strategies for overcoming the gender-specific barriers of that time? When I brought up the subject of Mauer and his gallery in my interview with Gertie Fröhlich, she claimed, I didn't invent the Gallery Saint Stephan. I invented Otto Mauer. It was only after further research that I realized what she meant."



Julia Jarrett, from her book (In)visibility in Viennese Post-war Histories. II



(In)visibility in Viennese Post-war Histories. Julia Jarrett, MA. As published in Work and Gender Austrian Journal of Historical Studies, 33/2022/ 3 Studien Verlag

ONE THING THAT I REALLY ADMIRER ABOUT GERTIE WAS HER INDEPENDENCE. SHE WAS REALLY INDEPENDENT AND FREE.

Julia Jarrett MA, researcher, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023



1930-2022

Gertie Fröhlich, What's happening? Aquarell, 1986



WHAT'S HAPPENING?



(IN)VISIBLE PIONEER

23:57

► It is hard to think of someone who singlehandedly influenced the Viennese Post-war Avant-garde movement more than Gertie Fröhlich (1930-2020). While studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, she met other young students who would become part of the Viennese art scene and played a key role at Galerie Sankt Stephan, albeit under the shadow of gallery owner Otto Mauer. In little time, her Viennese apartment became a creative hub and springboard for many of her fellow artist's careers. The MAK's exhibition is the first comprehensive retrospective of Fröhlich's work, delving into her Gesamtkunstwerk as an artist, graphic designer, creator of edible art, and advocate of Viennese post-war modernism. Gertie Fröhlich left an extensive oeuvre encompassing a wide range of disciplines and played a historical role during the early stages of the Viennese Avantgarde. II



Gertie Fröhlich New York, 1967



MILTON GLASER, AT THE TIME ALREADY A SUPERSTAR, WAS A GREAT FAN OF HER.

Mariusz Jan Demner, founder of DMB, advertising agency, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2022

00:01

► In 2018, director Marieli Fröhlich initiated a documentary about her mother, the artist Gertie Fröhlich. The seeds of the film began as a series of interviews with the 88-year-old artist, which were interrupted by her passing in 2020. What's Happening? is the title of both the finished documentary and a painting dated 1986. The picture shows a running woman, her back turned towards the viewer, fleeing her bourgeois interior. She has knocked over a chair and abandoned an unfinished book beneath a painting of a bucking horse. The horse is too wild for the constraints of its frame, a picture within the painting's horizon, which also lines up with an unseen vanishing point beyond the window. Is this exterior landscape outside the window an infinite stage in which the vicissitudes of the protagonist's daily life fall away, making way for lasting freedom in Fröhlich's Arcadia?

WATERCOLOR WAS GERTIE'S FAVORED MEDIUM, WHICH REFLECTED HER LIFE – UNPREDICTABLE, HARD TO CONTROL, BUT YET CAPABLE OF POETIC HEIGHTS.

Julia Jarrett MA, researcher interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023

The director interviews over 20 artists, friends, and former collaborators whose recollections unveil the themes and the controversy surrounding Gertie Fröhlich's status as an artist, uncovering her influence on the Post-War Vienna Avant-Garde starting in her early 20s. As the film unfolds, these contradictions come to a head: Is the existence of the most important Austrian post-war gallery, Galerie nächst St. Stephan, indebted to Gertie Fröhlich, or was she merely the good spirit and secretary? Was her retelling of Greek myths an analogy for her vision of a refreshed matriarchal psyche — a position of equal significance to manifestations and deterritorialization of the body by Austria's feminist artists?

2023 is proving to be a milestone year for all things Gertie: the opening of the greatly anticipated retrospective at the MAK, the premiere of the documentary film by director Marieli Fröhlich, the launch of the first handprinted limited edition print from Ariadne Editions, as well as her participation in the re-launch of Luna Luna from LA, the world's first art amusement park. II



Gertie Fröhlich in her studio, Vienna 1979
© Christine de Grancy

Herausgeber Estate of Gertie Fröhlich.
Mit Texten & Zitaten von Carl Auböck, Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, Gertie Fröhlich, Marieli Fröhlich, Julia Jarrett, Peter Kubelka, Peter Noever, Peter Pakesch, Rudolf Polanszky, Steven Pollock, John Sailer, Barbara Steffen, Andreas Ungeböck.

Mit der großzügigen Unterstützung von:
Mariusz Jan Demner (DemnerGroup), Daniela Sobitschka, Anna Reptsch, Bianca Schediwy, Sabrina Hajek, Janina Schwarz (alle DMB) sowie Media und Wograndl Druck GmbH. Sowie dem Otto Mauer Fond, Christine de Grancy, Gerhard Heller, Jakob Laub.



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EACH
OF HER
POSTERS
WAS A
WORK
OF ART.

John Sailer, art dealer, gallery Ulysses
interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2022

THE ZYPHIUS PRINCIPAL

02:23

►The Austrian Post issued a new stamp in 2022, which features Gertie Fröhlich's mythical creature "Zyphius," the logo for the Film Museum, chosen because of its ability to live both on land and in the water. The Zyphius is a fitting symbol for the Film Museum and the artist herself, whose work has shown remarkable resilience.

"It amazed me that Gertie chose the Zyphius as a logo for the Film Museum. She found it in a treatise on mythical creatures from 1558, where out of unicorns, phoenixes, sphinxes, sirens and others, it was clearly the ugliest animal." John Sailer, art dealer gallery Ulysses, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2022

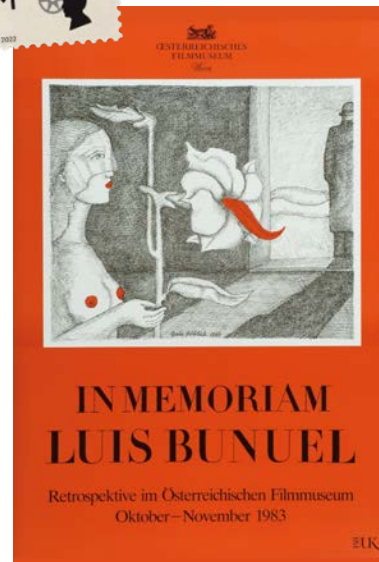
"I immediately liked the Zyphius because it will never sink and is armed with sharp teeth that bite." Peter Kubelka, film maker, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023

"Not only did she design the posters, over a hundred handmade designs for the Film Museum, which were so extraordinary that they received great international attention, but also the legendary coat of arms Zyphius exists thanks to her." Andreas Ungerböck, journalist Ray Film-magazin 05/2020

"It had the intelligence of the aesthetics; that's what it had." Peter Noever, Ausstellungs-macher, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich, 2022. II



Gertie Fröhlich Filmmuseum
© Gerhard Heller



ARIADNE TIES THE MINOTAUR

11:05

GODDESSES AND MONSTERS

►In her series from Ovid's Metamorphoses, Fröhlich's images depict powerful goddesses as protectors and guides. Alongside them, monsters appear in various forms, such as ordinary men, mythological animals, or even unseen antagonistic forces. Drawing from texts and images of ancient Greece and Egyptian mythology, her poetic depictions capture the essence of archetypes that echo life's trials. In contrast, Fröhlich's monsters delve into the aggressions that hinder the evolved by their dangerous disdain and jealousy. Mostly, they are subdued by a goddess's cunning, like the Minotaur bound by Ariadne's string or a placid Beast exposed to his guile, robbed of his princely crown by Beauty. Her parables exist to leverage the psyche and are a testament that liberation from everyday mundanities and societal restrictions is possible.

"Her choice to represent Greek myths, seems to have strong ties to feminist psychoanalysis. Especially her focus on the female protagonists in these representations. Yet, the subtlety of her themes did not fit in with the provocative works of artists such as Valie Export." Julia Jarrett MA, researcher, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich, 2023

I'm far from blaming you,
but you are a monster. Gertie Fröhlich
Watercolor, 1972

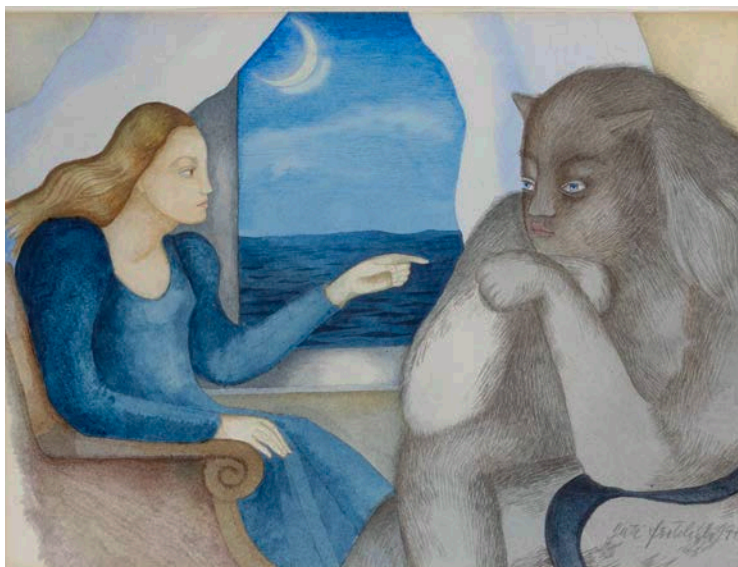


Gertie Fröhlich, Flying woman
egg tempera, 1980

"Avant-garde artists saw her subversive reinterpretation of mythology as an affront. If you look at her stories, the pictures with goddesses or any type of woman, whether she chose a statue of the Virgin Mary or a pagan folkloric carving as inspiration, the women she paints are free, they don't need men, some are in flight. Are they running away from something or is it the power of flight? I think it's the power of flight." Steven Pollock, curator, writer, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023



Gertie Fröhlich, Four Goddesses
egg tempera, 1988



"Gertie then often said, Yes, there is a war between women and men, ... you'll see, it is coming, and she foresaw it correctly and, of course, to my deepest regret, it turned out that way, but hopefully it will be different again." Peter Kubelka, film maker, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023

"As an actor between Surrealism, Fantastic Realism, and her aesthetic ideas of representation at the beginning of the feminist art movement, Fröhlich should be considered the only female Surrealist in Austria. The complexity of her work, from mythological pictures and drawings to tapestries and posters, proves her skillful examination of the female psyche, dreams, and visions." Barbara Steffen, curator, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023. II



Gertie Fröhlich, Ariadne ties the Minotaur, 1996
handprinted, signed aluminium etching, 2023

Printed by master printers ZEIN Editions Vienna,
from the original watercolor 1996 at Albertina Collection.
More information:
welcome@gertiefroehlichestate.com

►Gertie Fröhlich's knowledge of classicism and her painterly skills make her a master storyteller, albeit from the female protagonist's perspective. Drawing on allegory and Greek mythology, Fröhlich sets her sites on reclaiming the female psyche, as seen with her 1976 interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, where the roles of Daphne, Andromeda, Arethusa, and Syrinx were the subject. Ariadne Ties Up the Minotaur traditionally depicts Ariadne overshadowed by Theseus, as he heroically defeats the Minotaur with her clever use of the string to escape the labyrinth; in contrast to Fröhlich's version, where she uses it to bind the monster. The artist deliberately breaks with the subject favored by Picasso & the Surrealists and subtly shifts the focus with her erotic feminine subject.

The Estate of Gertie Fröhlich announces the first release of Ariadne Editions, an exclusive Estate-approved limited fine-art edition on paper, the first available since Gertie Fröhlich's celebrated Metamorphoses Portfolio of 7 etchings, 1976. II

OUTSIDER

18:29

GERTIE
WAS AN
OUTSIDER
IN THE
CENTER
OF THE
ACTION.

►Gertie Fröhlich knew everyone of importance in the Viennese art scene, thus was an insider, but she was also considered an outsider. While she actively created opportunities for the artistic cliques of her friends, she wasn't tempted to join any particular group at the expense of greater visibility for her work.



Gertie Fröhlich in her studio, 1979
© Christine de Grancy

"Gertie was an outsider in the center of the action; that had to interest Kippenberger and he stood up for her and suggested that I should exhibit her work, which was a kind of breach of my principle, showing only artists of my generation. But it also made sense because she didn't por-

tray the then very, very successful mainstream of Viennese art between Rainer, Pichler and Nitsch, or Attersee, and because it was a completely unexpected position, which especially caught Martin Kippenberger's attention, it wasn't just unexpected but also went against the grain." Peter Pakesch, board director Maria Lassnig Foundation, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023

"Gertie developed her aesthetic, which comes from a time before mine as she studied with Albert Paris Gütersloh, where there was this kind of conception of art, a tendency towards pictorial illusionism or something that you could read as a picture. She created her very personal representation of mythological themes, incredibly beautiful paintings. I saw the exhibition at Galerie Peter Pakesch (1985), some people, these idiots got upset. That is Pakesch, the avant-garde gallery. Gertie's not avant-garde. Then I said, but she's a good artist; those two things don't have to belong together." Rudolf Polanszky, artist, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023. II



Gertie Fröhlich, Ikarus bride
egg tempera, 1988



Gertie Fröhlich, Odipus and the Sphinx
egg tempera, 1988

FIRST DISTRICT VENUS

20:18

SUDDENLY
IT WAS
A PARTY,
BUT
BEFORE
THAT IT
WAS
THURSDAY.

Peter Kubelka, film maker
interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023



Al Hansen, First district Venus
Zigarette buds, 1988

►Art historians would be hard-pressed to name a single address that can be linked with so many major figures of the Viennese Avant-garde, all due to the generous spirit of Gertie Fröhlich. First District Venus (1984) is an allegorical portrait by her late partner, Neo-Dada Fluxus artist Al Hansen (US 1927-1995). Like some archaic relic from a pre-Hellenistic ritual — Hansen's voluptuous and enigmatic Venus is made from snuffed-out cigarette butts. One can only wonder whose extinguished cigarettes he used. It might have been Gertie herself or any of her numerous friends, including Markus Prachensky, Peter Kubelka, Raimund Abraham, Arnulf Rainer, Günther Brus, Valie Export, John Sailer, Gerhard Rühm, Al Hansen, Friedrich Achleitner, Hermann Nitsch, Kiki Kogelnik, Kurt Kocherscheidt, Sybille Dallmer & Guy Bourdin, Oswald & Ingrid Wiener, Maria Lassnig, Padhi Frieberger, Franz West, Rudolf Polanszky, Martin Kippenberger, Hans Hollein, Wilhelm Holzbauer, H.C. Artmann, Wolfgang Hutter, Arik Brauer, Wilhelm & Ulla Holzbauer, Walter Pichler or André Heller — just to name a few of the brightest flames illuminating those rooms.

"Gertie was a generous and patient host; most of the time the boys turned the apartment upside down." Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, journalist, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2022.

"Sonnenfelsgasse was a harbour where shipwrecked artists found refuge. That's where I first met the four crucial painters; Prachensky, Rainer, Mikl and Hollegha, the regular crew from Galerie Sankt Stephan." John Sailer, art dealer, gallery Ulysses, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2022.

"...my film Schwechater consists of twelve films that were cut into one another; and I put these twelve films next to each other and they went through the whole apartment from Sonnenfelsgasse back to the kitchen..." Peter Kubelka, film maker, interviewed by Marieli Fröhlich 2023. II



Photo booth, Vienna 1979
Gertie Fröhlich, Raimund Abraham,
Henry Abraham, Elisabeth Pichler,
Walter Pichler

I ALREADY
KNOW THAT
EVERYONE
IS AN
ISLAND.
BUT SOME
ISLANDS
ARE QUITE
CLOSE TO
EACH OTHER.

Gertie Fröhlich



Photo Gertie Fröhlich
Polaroid 1975