

Program DHF Lecture and Workshop

Artistic Creativity in Times of War – Women’s Perspectives

Thursday, 23rd of May, 2024

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Beethovenstraße 21, 8010 Graz

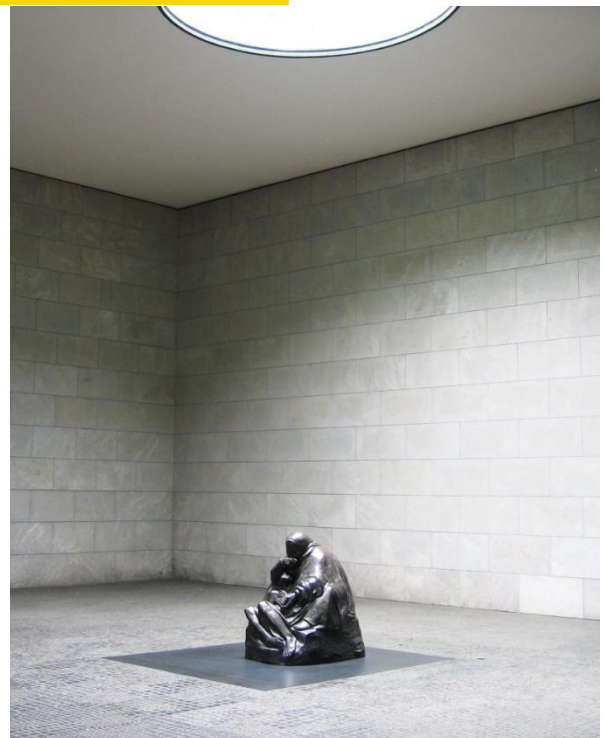
David-Herzog-Fonds Lecturer Prof. Mirjam Rajner

The talk and the workshop will be hybrid.

Please register for online participation under: office.cjs@uni-graz.at

The renowned saying „Inter Arma Silent Musae” (During the War the Muses Are Silent) stands in stark opposition to reality. Stemming from classical and romantic conceptions of muses as fragile feminine inspirations of male artistic creativity that fall silent in the wake of destruction and death, the aphorism has been proven false time and again. Often destruction brings forth its opposite — artistic creation as affirmation of life — one’s own, or as a need for preservation and documentation for posterity.

Prompted by wars witnessed in our own times, filled with trauma and suffering, the workshop includes and links topics examining means of coping by modern Jewish women activists and artists working across regions and periods — from World War One Vienna, during the Holocaust years in Germany and Southern France, to contemporary Ukraine and Israel.



Käthe Kollwitz, *Mother with her Dead Son (Pietà)*, 1937-38, in Berlin’s anti-war memorial (Neue Wache) 1993; © Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin,_Neue_Wache,_interior_view,_2005.jpg

Program

14:00 Opening Remarks

Mirjam Rajner (Bar Ilan University), Olaf Terpitz (University of Graz)

14.15 Lecture

The Images of Victimization in Jewish East European Modern and Avant-Garde Art and Zoya Cherkassky's Response to the October 7, 2023 Massacre

Mirjam Rajner (Bar Ilan University)

15:00 – 16:45 Workshop

Artistic Creativity in Times of War – Women's Perspectives

Chair: Olaf Terpitz

15:00 *The Art of the Needle: Art and Crafts on display in Anitta Müller's Exhibitions for Refugees from Galicia and Bukovina during and after the First World War*

Elana Shapira (University of Applied Arts Vienna)

15:20 *Charlotte Salomon's Life? or Theatre? – A Work in and of the Feminine*

Astrid Schmetterling (Goldsmiths, University of London)

15:40 *Bleeding Amazons: Women's Art in Israel Following October 7, 2023, and the Ensuing War*

Mor Presiado (Bar Ilan University)

16:00 Discussion

Abstracts:

Mirjam Rajner

The Images of Victimization in Jewish East European Modern and Avant-Garde Art and Zoya Cherkassky's Response to the October 7, 2023 Massacre

Jewish suffering and victimhood of enormous proportions, experienced during World War One and its aftermath in Eastern Europe, were captured by East European Jewish artists such as Leopold Pilichowski, Maurycy Minkowski, Artur Markowicz, Marc Chagall and Issachar Rybak, just to mention the more prominent ones. While using a variety of stylistic languages – from realism and impressionism to avant-garde primitivism, cubo-futurism and abstract art, those artists left behind a body of work that anticipated the now well-established “genre” of Holocaust art.

My paper will explore their creations, the circumstances under which they were created and the messages they carried. It will conclude with an examination of contemporary works created by Zoya Cherkassky, an Israeli artist of Ukrainian Jewish origin, who, drawing upon the traditions of her Jewish predecessors and icons of modern art, created a series of works that comments powerfully upon the horrific atrocities carried out against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023.

Elana Shapira

The Art of the Needle: Art and Crafts on display in Anitta Müller's Exhibitions for Refugees from Galicia and Bukovina during and after the First World War

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, when thousands of refugees arrived from Galicia and Bukovina, the then 24-year-old Anitta Müller, inspired by Bertha Pappenheim and her Jewish Women's Association in Germany, founded a relief organization, aimed largely at helping the displaced women. The organization included a maternity care home, an infant care center, a kindergarten, tea and soup houses, a girls' and boys' home, a children's sanatorium, and a vocational school for women and girls. Despite the organization's original nondenominational orientation, which was also due to strategic considerations in the context of the war, both board members and staff, as well as the vast majority of refugees receiving help, were of Jewish origin.

The students of Anitta Müller's vocational school designed various handicrafts identified as home industry, which were exhibited annually at central locations in the city, from 1915 until 1921, including an interruption after the First World War. The purpose of the exhibitions was to raise funds for the refugees.

This paper examines how a perceptive view of the Viennese arts and crafts scene combined with skillful social work and professional media exposure, made Anitta Müller's project a cultural and social role model, especially given the insecure position of female Jewish refugees.

Astrid Schmetterling

Charlotte Salomon's Life? or Theatre? – A Work in and of the Feminine

The German-Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon is renowned for *Life? Or Theatre?* (1940-42), a body of work that she created in France. Interweaving hundreds of images and texts, references to art, literature, music and film, the work's narrative revolves around suicide and pain, love and disappointment, Jewishness in Germany and in exile. While early recipients viewed *Life? Or Theatre?* as a historical document that was belatedly – hence unoriginal – expressionist, feminist scholarship has now enabled us to recognise this extraordinary work as both belonging to the artistic avant-garde of its own time and anticipating our contemporary art practices. My paper will explore how both content and form of Salomon's work constitute a kind of *écriture* and *peinture féminine*.

Mor Presiado

Bleeding Amazons: Women's Art in Israel Following October 7, 2023, and the Ensuing War

In the aftermath of the Hamas attack against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent outbreak of the war in the region, the Israeli art community has experienced a significant surge in artistic production. This extensive body of work, shared widely on social media and exhibited in galleries and museums, documents the events and captures the conflict's personal and collective experiences.

Israeli women have been at the forefront of the October 7 massacre events, with many women and children among the casualties. Women have also played crucial roles as soldiers and police officers that day and continue to serve in these capacities during the war. Their massive involvement also extends across all civil society sectors, contributing to national resilience, including the arts. Despite these, the status of women in Israel has decreased since the establishment of the last government in December 2022, which strives for a wide range of judicial reform. These ignited a broad protest movement in Israel, where women are fighting government policies that increasingly threaten their rights and exclude them from government and decision-making positions before and during the war.

My lecture introduces some central themes of women's artist's responses to the October 7 massacre and the ensuing war through three interconnected dimensions: political-social, home, and body. Together, these themes form a narrative that maps the transition from public roles and perceptions to the most personal experiences of women, highlighting the inseparable link between the personal and the political.