

Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

erika roessing (1903–1977) The Solitude of Objects

Lentos presents a major solo exhibition devoted to the painter erika roessing in Linz. Around 100 paintings reveal a rigorously developed body of work dedicated to still life. Birds, fruit, baskets, pitchers, and vases appear in ever-changing arrangements, combining with geometric ornament to create quietly poetic, sometimes melancholic pictorial spaces.

roessing's Œuvre, documented in her notebooks, comprises about 180 still lifes. Working primarily in tempera on hardboard, she developed a muted palette, textured surfaces, and carefully balanced compositions. What initially appears calm and familiar often proves enigmatic and unexpectedly surreal on closer inspection: objects float, fragment, or dissolve into ornamental structures.

At the heart of the retrospective is a gift of 50 tempera paintings from the estate of the artist, who died in 1977, made in 1979 to the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, the predecessor of Lentos. Works from the collection are complemented by private loans from her long-lost early Œuvre of the Nazi era, presented here for the first time. Selected works by her husband, Karl Rössing, a leading Austrian printmaker of the twentieth century, also illuminate the couple's lifelong artistic dialogue.

"erika roessing's largely unknown Œuvre reveals a remarkable brilliance in her first retrospective since 1980. She consistently developed her artistic voice within a single genre: still life. Representational and abstract elements are held in balance; the images remain enigmatic and imbued with quiet poetry. With this exhibition, we continue our work to bring visibility to significant yet underrepresented women artists in our collection and to examine their biographies in all their complexities."

Hemma Schmutz, Director, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

"With this exhibition, Lentos brings renewed public attention to erika roessing, an artist whose work is closely linked to the history of our municipal collection. Karl Rössing's gift in 1979 makes it possible to present around 100 paintings today. This rediscovery demonstrates the importance of highlighting the work of women artists in our own holdings and addressing difficult chapters of their biographies transparently."

Doris Lang-Mayerhofer, City Councilor for Culture, Linz

10.02.26 to 01.24.27



A Life Devoted to Still Life

Born in Nisko, Galicia, in 1903, Erika Glöckner grew up in Sarajevo and Vienna. She began her artistic training with Irma Necker, continuing in Georg Schmidhammer's studio in Linz and at the ceramics school in Gmunden. Franz von Zülow was particularly influential in shaping her understanding of surface, rhythm, and ornament.

In Gmunden, she met the printmaker Karl Rössing, whom she married in 1922. Their artistic symbiosis was marked by mutual influence, but also by constraints on Erika Rössing's own practice.

A study trip to Rome in 1932 and subsequent visits to Italy had a lasting impact on her visual language. She combined ancient wall paintings and ornament with inspiration from Giorgio Morandi and Mario Sironi. From 1949 onward, she developed an independent body of work devoted exclusively to still life, which she documented continuously until her death.

Early Success during the Nazi Era

For the first time, the Lentos exhibition examines a problematic chapter in Rössing's biography in depth. In the 1930s and early 1940s, she painted mainly large-scale floral still lifes recalling the Old Masters. Their detailed naturalism and rejection of abstraction conformed to the aesthetic dictates of Nazi art policy.

In 1937, Rössing joined the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, membership in which was required to practice publicly as an artist. There is no documented evidence that she joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP). Her husband, Karl Rössing, however, had been a party member since 1933/38. Between 1941 and 1943, five of her floral still lifes appeared in the propagandistic Great German Art Exhibition in Munich. In 1941, the senior Nazi official Hartmann Lauterbacher purchased her painting *Blumenstück* (Flower Piece), shown there, for 1,600 Reichsmarks. She also received commissions from the Hamburg Air District Command.

A bombing raid in February 1944 destroyed the couple's Berlin apartment and studio, along with most of their work. After the war, the painter distanced herself from her involvement in the Nazi art establishment; later exhibitions omitted this part of her biography. The current retrospective presents private loans from her long-lost early work and places them within the historical context in which they were created.

The Magic of Things

Despite its limited repertoire of motifs, still life offered Rössing a broad field for experimentation. Her paintings draw on the genre's long tradition while increasingly departing from naturalism. Vases, apples, doves, baskets, and citrus fruit become bearers of cultural and personal meaning. These objects appear familiar yet resist any definitive interpretation.

10.02.26 to 01.24.27



Vases and baskets became central motifs in the 1950s and 1960s. roessing initially depicted vessels in a New Objectivity style, later treating them in an increasingly planar and abstract manner. Doves populate her early still lifes in particular. They symbolize peace, love, and fidelity, but may also express a longing for freedom. The 1970 series *Gefangener Vogel* (Captive Bird) depicts a bird confined in a vessel. Recurring grids and fences can be read both as protection and as signs of confinement. These images also touch on roessing's position as a woman artist who often subordinated her own work to that of her respected husband. Apples appear whole, halved, or floating in space, linking beauty and fertility with temptation, knowledge, and transience. For roessing, however, the apple primarily expressed the idea of an enduring present. Empty or damaged baskets become surreal pictorial objects. Oranges and lemons evoke the couple's regular visits to Italy and introduce vivid accents into the muted palette. Especially from the 1970s onward, geometric grids, honeycombs, and crystalline forms came to the fore. Drawing on Franz von Zülow's influence, she developed a distinctive visual language that balances representation and abstraction.

A Dialogue with Karl Rössing

Karl Rössing ranks among the leading Austrian printmakers of the twentieth century. His wood engravings and linocuts combine social criticism, humanism, an engagement with nature, and an exploration of classical antiquity. The exhibition juxtaposes selected works by the printmaker with roessing's still lifes, revealing how the couple shared motifs, formal concerns, and artistic judgments over decades while developing very different artistic trajectories.

Following erika roessing's death in 1977, Karl Rössing donated 50 of her tempera paintings and 164 of his own works to the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz in 1979. This gift forms the core of her work in the Lentos collection and provides the basis for the current rediscovery.

Public Programs and Publication

The accompanying program includes a visit to Karl Rössing's studio in Marchtrenk on October 24 and a two-day painting workshop for adults on November 28 and 29, offering further ways to explore erika roessing's quietly poetic imagery. An exhibition publication issued by the museum features texts by Peter Baum, Sofie Hagenlocher, Roswitha Mair, and Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller, with a foreword by Hemma Schmutz. It is available in the museum shop and online (shop.museenderstadtlinz.at) for €18. The exhibition at Lentos remains on view through January 24, 2027.

10.02.26 to 01.24.27



Biography

1903

Erika Rössing (erika roessing) is born Erika Glöckner on July 29 in Nisko, Galicia, Austria-Hungary (now Poland). She is the first daughter of Austro-Hungarian officer Friedrich Josef Karl Glöckner (1871–1938) and his wife, Philippine von Rüling (1878–1965). Her father's profession entails frequent moves: she spends her early childhood in Sarajevo and her school years in Vienna.

1919–1921

At sixteen, she begins her artistic training in Irma Necker's applied arts studio in Vienna. This is followed by a year in the studio of architect Georg Schmidhammer in Linz, where her fellow students include Herbert Bayer, later associated with the Bauhaus.

1921–1922

In 1921, she begins a year of training with painter, printmaker, and ceramic artist Franz von Zülow at the ceramics school of the Vereinigte Wiener und Gmundner Keramik und Gmundner Tonwarenfabrik Schleiss in Gmunden, founded in 1917. She later credits this formative period with Zülow for her interest in ornament, evident in her later still lifes, and her ability to "work with the picture plane and bring it to life through rhythm."

1922

In Gmunden, the young artist also meets printmaker Karl Rössing (1897–1987). They marry on September 19, 1922. Throughout their lives, both regard their relationship as an artistic symbiosis. Working in different media, they influence each other stylistically and assess each other's work. Karl even advises his wife to destroy some of her paintings, a decision he later deeply regrets in certain cases after her death.

1922–1942

The Rössings move frequently in the following years. They first leave Gmunden for Essen, where Karl takes up a teaching position at the prestigious Folkwangschule. From 1931, they live in Berlin, periodically staying with Erika's parents in Linz, who by then own a house at Heilham 5. Her father retires to Linz with the rank of general.

1932

A visiting fellowship takes the couple to the Villa Massimo in Rome, where the artist studies masterpieces of antiquity intensively. Italy remains a formative influence: she returns many times and also translates Italian authors into German. In 1957, one of her paintings is included in Arte tedesca at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome.

1937

After the Nazis seize power in Germany in 1933, artists can practice publicly only as members of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts. erika roessing joins in 1937 (membership no. M 16 643). Karl, a professor at the State Art School in Berlin since 1934, has already joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1933, unlike his wife.

1941–1943

erika roessing's career gains momentum under National Socialism. Five of her floral still lifes appear in the propaganda exhibitions known as the Great German Art Exhibition at Munich's then Haus der Deutschen Kunst in 1941, 1942, and 1943. In 1941, senior Nazi official Hartmann Lauterbacher (Gauleiter of Southern Hanover and Oberpräsident of Hanover) buys Blumenstück (Flower Piece) for 1,600 Reichsmarks. Another client is the Hamburg Air District Command, for whose premises she makes floral still lifes and two large tapestries, now lost.



Biography

1944–1947

On February 15, 1944, a bombing raid destroys the Berlin apartment and many works. The couple initially moves to stay with their brother-in-law Wilhelm in Blankenburg in the Harz Mountains. Erika also spends periods with her family in Linz.

1948–1960

On March 18, 1948, the couple moves to Stuttgart and resumes working together. In 1951, Karl is appointed to a lifetime professorship in fine art printmaking and illustration at the State Academy of Fine Arts there. Around this time, the artist begins using the name "erika roessing."

1949

She begins a new, independent body of work devoted exclusively to still life, accompanied by a catalogue of works that she continues to update until her death. Painting no. 1, Tauben und Mais (Doves and Corn), is dated 1949.

1960–1977

On July 19, 1960, the couple makes its final move, to Gauting near Munich.

1969

She joins the MAERZ artists' association in Linz.

1977

Erika Rössing dies of a heart attack in Vienna on February 22 and is buried in Gmunden.

1979

The Erika and Karl Rössing gift is made to the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz.

1984–1987

Exhibitions include the Neue Galerie Wien, Rupertinum Salzburg, Städtische Galerie Albstadt, and Neue Galerie Graz (all 1984/85); the Upper Austrian State Museum and Kammerhofgalerie Gmunden (1986); and the Munich Residenz / Academy of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts (1987). Honors include the Heinrich Gleißner Cultural Prize in Linz (1985) and the Golden Decoration of Honor of the State of Salzburg (1987).

1987

Ten years after his wife's death, Karl Rössing dies on August 19 at Wels Hospital and is buried beside her in the family grave in Gmunden's Protestant cemetery. A large part of his estate goes to the Rupertinum Salzburg, whose director, Otto Breicha, is among his last friends.

1997/98

A retrospective at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna marks the centenary of the artist's birth.



Program

Thu, Oct 1	Opening Welcome: Hemma Schmutz, Director, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz Introduction: Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller, Curator	7:00 p.m.	Free admission
Thu, Oct 15	Curator's Tour Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller leads a tour of the exhibition she curated. Please register via the online contact form or call +43 732 7030 3614.	7:00–8:00 p.m.	€4 tour fee plus admission
Tue, Oct 20	Baby Tour A relaxed exhibition tour tailored to the needs of visitors with babies.	10:30–11:30 a.m.	Admission fee
Sat, Oct 24	Studio Visit Visit Karl Rössing's studio in Marchtrenk with Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller and Roswitha Mair, a specialist on Karl Rössing. Meet on site; travel independently (address provided with ticket purchase). Tickets available exclusively at kupfticket.com .	11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	€7 plus admission
Sat, Nov 28 Sun, Nov 29	Art Studio for Adults Explore a visual language of magical, lyrical, sometimes melancholic works, with carefully structured compositions and a muted palette. Unusual still-life arrangements provide inspiration for participants. Tickets available exclusively at kupfticket.com .	10 a.m.–2 p.m. 10 a.m.–3 p.m.	€90 for both days
Sat, Dec 5	Tour with Sign Language Interpretation Guided tour with interpretation in Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS). No registration required.	4:00–5:00 p.m.	Free admission



Facts & Figures

Exhibition Title	erika roessing (1903–1977) The Solitude of Objects
Dates	October 2, 2026 - January 24, 2027
Venue	Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz Lower Level
Credits	Curator: Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller Curatorial Assistant: Sofie Hagenlocher Exhibition Design: Magnus Hofmüller
Publication	Published by the museum, with German-language texts by Peter Baum, Sofie Hagenlocher, Roswitha Mair, and Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller, and a foreword by Hemma Schmutz. 96 pages, €18
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Press Images

Press Images Press images and installation views are available for the duration of the exhibition on our website:
<https://www.lentos.at/museum/presse/pressekit-erika-roessing-1903---1977-die-einsamkeit-der-dinge>
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