

Lentos Kunstmuseum

The World as Drawn by Emmy Haesele

25 June – 3 October 2021

The exhibition at the Lentos presents a comprehensive retrospective of the artist Emmy Haesele (1894–1987). Inspired by her visions, she creates expressive, fairy-tale-like and occasionally sharply disquieting images. Her choice of themes keeps expanding outward from her own lovesickness, the death of close relatives and religious motifs to the critique of patriarchal structures and consumerism.

Emmy Haesele (1894–1987), née Emma Helene Göhring, grew up in a solidly middle class family in Vienna. After World War I she and her husband, Hans Haesele, moved to Unken near Lofer, a small municipality in Salzburg, where Hans practised as a physician. Keenly interested in philosophy and theosophy, she began at the age of 36 to make her dreams and scenes reflecting her subconscious the subjects of drawings. Shortly afterwards, a friend of the family, the German writer Oscar A. H. Schmitz, arranged for her to meet Alfred Kubin. This marked the beginning of her intensive relationship with the “magician of Zwickledt”, which lasted several years and was to have a profound effect on her style of drawing. Highly sensitive, Haesele introduced into her drawings coded figures reminiscent of fairy tales to grapple with the gender specific conflicts that preoccupied her. Animus and Anima are given key roles in the depiction of the anxieties and hardships she was experiencing. With help from C. G. Jung’s philosophy of archetypes she sought to come to terms in her work with tragic twists of fate that happened to her during World War II. In the 1950s and ’60s the figure of the genial harlequin strikes a conciliatory note in her work. The story of Haesele’s fifty years of creativity can be read as an exciting tale of ongoing development – from initial themes of self-portrayal and self-assertion, the deprivation of the war years and the postwar period, a time when she is revealed to have been a fellow-traveller of the Nazi regime, to reflections on socially sensitive issues in her later life. Frequently, she revisits themes that are part of the collective subconscious. All in all, the artist’s oeuvre has been estimated to comprise 700 drawings.

“The exhibition”, according to Lentos Director Hemma Schmutz, “is remarkable for the care and empathy with which it has been curated by Brigitte Reutner-Doneus. With her shows of Elfriede Trautner (2011), Fanny Newald (2014) and Auguste Kronheim (2017), Reutner-Doneus has already made an important contribution to the scientific research on women whose artistic work has been denied recognition for far too long. Given that in 1948 Wolfgang Gurlitt organised the first exhibition of Emmy Haesele at the Lentos’s predecessor institution, the Neue Galerie, the Lentos is in a favourable position to cast new light on the oeuvre of this artist.”

“As far as her place in art history is concerned, Emmy Haesele is a chief representative of late expressionism in Austria, alongside Margret Bilger, Hans Fronius, Hilde Goldschmidt, Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin and Wilhelm Thöny.“ This is how curator Brigitte Reutner-Doneus assesses Haesele’s position in the context of Austrian art.

The exhibition is subdivided into seven chapters that collectively illustrate Haesele’s multifaceted oeuvre. In 2020 the Lentos received a donation from her estate, comprising letters, photographs, diaries, sketches, and drawings. These are made accessible to the public for the first time. The 130 or so drawings on display at the Lentos are so many windows that allow insight into the artist’s development, who after long, fateful trials and tribulations finally succeeded in making peace with her life.

Curriculum vitae

1894

Emmy Haesele is born in Moedling as the second of four children of the Viennese medical doctor Leon Göhring and his wife Bertha. The children are given a liberal upbringing in an upper-middle-class environment. In her youth Emmy shows a marked tendency to put her physical and mental talents to the test: hiking, mountaineering in extreme conditions, and riding her motor bike are part of a high-risk regime alongside her engagement with works of philosophy, existentialist queries, and attempts at the interpretation of dreams. She serves as a Red Cross nurse in World War I.

1916

She marries childhood sweetheart Hans Haesele, with whom she shares the Protestant background.

1917 / 1918

She gives birth to Heinz and, one year later, to Lieselotte (Mesi).

1919

Hans Haesele takes up the position of a district general practitioner in Unken. Emmy runs the GP household. Hans and Emmy Haesele put on evenings of piano music at what is known locally as the "Doktorhaus". Intellectual friends are drawn to vacation near them. In the mid-1920s Hans and Emmy Haesele twice attend Hermann Graf Keyserling's Schule der Weisheit [School of Wisdom] in Darmstadt, where they become acquainted with the philosophical teachings of theosophist Helena Blavatsky. Their circle of friends in Salzburg includes the Director of the Salzburger Museum Carolino Augusteum Julius Leisching and the writer Oscar A. H. Schmitz.

1931

Schmitz tells Haesele about the attempts at drawing he made during a psychoanalysis overseen by C. G. Jung and encourages her to try her hand at art. First drawings with crayons on theosophically inspired themes. Schmitz shows Haesele's drawings to his brother-in-law, Alfred Kubin.

1932

On 20 May a first encounter takes place in Zwickledt between Alfred and Hedwig Kubin and Hans und Emmy Haesele.

1933

Alfred and Hedwig Kubin vacation in Unken in August. Emmy Haesele photographs Kubin at work. A love relationship develops between Emmy and Alfred Kubin, which will last until February 1936. In December, Emmy spends a week in Zwickledt, during which she intensively studies Kubin's drawings, his art collection, and his library. Their conversations range on topics of art, philosophy, and literature.

1934

In April, June and October Emmy is again in Zwickledt. In August she and Alfred Kubin spend time together in Tusset (Stožec) in the Bohemian Woods.

1935

In February and May Emmy again stays with Kubin in Zwickledt. During her affair with Kubin Emmy hardly makes any drawings.

1936

In mid-February Emmy stays in Zwickledt for the last time. After the separation from Kubin she takes up drawing again. Like her mentor, she uses the pen-and-ink technique. Start of an intensive correspondence with Kubin, which will continue until 1952.

1938

Kubin spends his summer vacation in Goldegg in Pongau, where Emmy pays him a visit. Emmy Haesele and her family support the Anschluss and have become members of the National Socialist Party. Hans and Heinz Haesele report for duty immediately after the outbreak of the war. They are at first stationed in different places in France.

1939

In December Emmy makes a drawing in which she envisions the death of her son.

1940

The Gestapo arrest her son-in-law Kurt Ludwiczek. Her son Heinz is killed on 5 June on the Somme in northern France. Emmy's last letter to her son, in which she expresses her hope that he will be able to take part in the victorious occupation of Paris, which was sent on 10 June, is returned to Unken unopened; Heinz had been killed in the meantime.

1943

Emmy Haesele volunteers for service at the front in October. She receives training as a flak assistant and is active in northern Germany until September 1944.

1944

She visits Kurt Otte, the Director of the Kubin-Archiv in Hamburg, to whom, beginning in October 1943, she has been forwarding the letters Alfred Kubin writes her. Her son-in-law Kurt Ludwiczek is killed at the Black Sea front. Emmy demobilises on 1 October 1944 and returns to her widowed daughter Mesi and grandson Herbert in Unken. Hans Haesele has been missing in action since 10 October. His last known whereabouts is south of Belgrade near Čuprija and Kragujevac.

1945

Emmy Haesele is reported to the police shortly after the end of the war and is charged with the unlawful possession of a firearm and support for an SS man. She is sentenced to a year in prison, her daughter to half a year. In prison, Emmy writes her memoirs.

1947

She stays with her sister Marie Zelenka in Bad Aussee. She meets the Munich art dealer Wolfgang Gurlitt, who encourages her to resume her drawing and promises her an exhibition at the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, which he has founded.

1948

Exhibition in the library of the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz with thirty-two drawings and four illustrations of a work by Oscar Wilde. She moves to Bad Aussee, where she adapts a loft in her sister's house for her needs with money she has inherited. Especially intensive phase of creative activity. Her circle of friends includes Secondary School Headmaster Hans Vlasics, journalist Gerhard Stenzel, Wolfgang Gurlitt, and artist Erich Landgrebe and his wife Margret.

1949

Exhibition *Aquarelle – Zeichnungen – Graphik* by contemporary Austrian artists in Bad Aussee, with drawings by Haesele and Kubin. Decoration of a wine cellar in Bad Aussee.

1950

Late in 1950 Emmy converts to the Catholic faith.

1951–1953

Takes part in the Salzburger Hochschulwochen

1951

Exhibition at the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz.

1952

Emmy puts an end to the correspondence with Alfred Kubin that has been going on for twenty years.

1953

Emmy enters into a lively intellectual exchange with Benedictine monk Ildefons Betschart, Rector of the Kolleg St. Benedikt in Salzburg. She plans to donate her entire oeuvre to the Catholic church in Salzburg. The unexpected death of Father Betschart renders these plans impracticable.

1956

At the instigation of her family Emmy moves to Vienna to be near her ailing mother.

1959

Alfred Kubin dies.

1961

Visit of the commemorative exhibition of Alfred Kubin at the Albertina.

1963

Emmy's mother Bertha Göhring dies. Emmy is now free to devote more of her time to drawing. She has several exhibition successes and eagerly cultivates the contact with Vienna's art scene around Ernst Fuchs.

1967

An exhibition at the Galerie Fuchs-Fischhof in Vienna sparks a TV portrait of the artist.

1969

The Albertina purchases two drawings – *Labyrinth* and *Der Maulwurf* [*The mole*] for its collection.

1979

Emmy hurts her right hand in an accident and is permanently handicapped so that she can neither draw nor put pen to paper easily. She is forced to reduce her correspondence to a minimum. A drastic rent hike forces her to move in with her daughter Mesi in Bad Leonfelden. The following years are marked by exhibitions in Vienna, Bad Leonfelden and Salzburg.

1987

Emmy Haesele dies unexpectedly in Bad Leonfelden after another accident.

Program

Opening

Thu 24.6, 7 pm

With welcome by Hemma Schmutz (Lentos Director), introduction by Brigitte Reutner-Doneus (Curator). Admission to the exhibition free from 6pm. Due to the current Covid 19 event conditions, unfortunately only a limited number of people can attend the opening. Therefore, participation is only possible by registration at info@lentos.at or 0732 7070 3601 (first-come, first-served). We ask for your understanding and look forward to seeing you there.

Emmy Haesele in a contemporary historical context

Thu 1.7. 6.30-7.30 pm

Talk with contemporary historian Karin Schneider about the contemporary historical and ideological context based on various text quotations and sources.

Guided tour ticket: € 3 plus admission, German only

Of Magicians, Harlequins and Mermaids

Sun 4.7. 2-3 pm

A voyage of discovery for the whole family through the exhibition. Info: karin.schneider@lentos.at

Cost: Museum admission, max. 10 persons

Registration required

Emmy Haesele - The Making of

Thu 8.7. 6.30-7.30

A look behind the scenes of the exhibition with curator Brigitte Reutner-Doneus

Guided tour ticket: € 3 plus admission

Emmy Haesele alias Miss Constanze Drexl

Sun 22.8. 11.00-12.00 am

Actress Lisa Furtner reads from Emmy Haesele's memoirs, letters and diaries.

Introduction: Brigitte Reutner-Doneus

Guided tour ticket: € 3 plus admission

Registration required

Facts & Figures

Exhibition title	The World as Drawn by Emmy Haesele
Exhibition period	25.6.–3.10.2021
Curator	Brigitte Reutner-Doneus
Exhibition venue	Basement
Exhibits	About 130 drawings as well as books, photos, letters and diaries of the artist
Publication	The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalog book with a foreword by Hemma Schmutz and text contributions by Barbara Wally, Ferdinand Altnöder and Brigitte Reutner-Doneus. 120 pages, € 22.
Opening hours	Tue–Sun 10 am to 6 pm, Thur 10 am to 7 pm, Mon closed For any change in opening times, and special opening hours please check our website www.lentos.at .
Admission fee	€ 8, reduced € 6 / € 4,50
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