

## A view from the 21<sup>st</sup> century

A reflection by her great-granddaughter Elinne Lotz

Marcus Aurelius wrote in his *Meditations*, that the written language connects people through the barriers of time. I think photographs have similar qualities.

Hilde photographed Italy and a way of life that is now lost, but I guess what she saw would, for her, have been scenes from everyday life. It makes me wonder how she decided what she was going to photograph, And the light which is just fantastic. She must have thought it through carefully.

I would like to know what Hilde was thinking. Her photographs are so incredible in their composition and lighting. She was very skilled. I think many of her photos capture life in quite ordinary places but she makes them seem so priceless beautiful.

When looking at this motif it feels so special, as though nothing could be more valuable than portraying that moment with the oxen, man and children. It's a feeling I cannot really explain.



Palazzo Grilli Pescocostanzo

***“With her Leica hanging around her neck, Hilde Lotz-Bauer was a pioneer of reportage photography: not only do her photos of Scanno but many others shot in Italy reveal a personal gaze, which portrays quotidian life with an attentive and sensitive eye.”***

Gianni Berengo Gardin, Italy's most distinguished contemporary photographer

# HILDE IN ITALY

## Art and Life in the Photographs of Hilde Lotz-Bauer

Museo di Roma Trastevere  
17 January - 5 May 2024  
Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 - 20.00  
Closed: Mondays & 1 May

Supported by Roma Capitale, Assessorato alla Cultura, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali

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In collaboration with Officine Fotografiche Roma and Goethe-Institut Rom

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Museum: [museodiromaintrastevere.it](http://museodiromaintrastevere.it)  
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Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz



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**HILDE LOTZ-BAUER, born in Munich in 1907, was a German art historian and photographer who lived and worked in Italy between 1934 and 1943. During these years she created thousands of images that brought together her art historical education and her photographic training. Her photos reveal a rich complexity and contrasting themes.**

Hilde's images of sculpture, drawings, architecture and urbanism illustrated the research of art historians at the Max Planck art historical institutes in Florence and Rome. Her sensitivity to light, mass and composition turned forbidding fortresses into objects of beauty. Under instruction from art historian Friedrich Kriegbaum she used her glass plate camera to document architecture, not people, transforming the city of Florence into a stage, its buildings becoming dramatic protagonists in a play of light and dark.

Forced to leave Italy in 1943 due to the war, she returned to Rome in 1962, remaining there until 1986. She always regarded Italy as her true home. Her ashes lie in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome.



## Swabian castles in southern Italy, 1936/37

Hilde carried out a major campaign photographing Frederick II's Swabian castles in Apulia, Sicily and Tuscany in 1936/1937 alongside Bibliotheca Hertziana, director Leo Bruhns for his book *Hohenstaufenschlösser*. While plates were produced from her negatives for printing the publication, the original prints were mounted on cardboard, labelled and sorted in the Hertziana photo library for research purposes. They were immediately in great demand and remain an important visual basis for research today.



## Ponte Santa Trinità

Hilde's favourite bridge, taken during the war before it was blown up on 4 August 1944 by the retreating Nazi troops in order to slow down the advance of the allies.



## The Florentine war-time years

From 1912 onwards, the Kunsthistorische Institut in Florenz was based in Palazzo Guadagni with its top floor pensione. Hilde rented a room here during her stay in Florence. The photograph taken from the loggia looks across the Piazza and the Campanile di Santo Spirito to the north, extending over the city to the Mugello hills. Hilde's composition plays with multiple layers of space and light, where the foreground acts as a framing element.



Girl in Capri c. 1936

## People and place

Travelling to over 100 locations in Italy, Hilde used her small Leica to take shots of countryside people in isolated towns and villages spontaneously for herself, building up a unique social history of people and daily life.

The images reveal a personal gaze. People are shown in everyday activity and social interaction. As a pioneer of reportage, Hilde portrayed a harsh rural and pastoral way of life unchanged for centuries, at odds with the modernising agenda of the Mussolini regime. These pictures were never commissioned or seen in public until 1993 when she collaborated with Franz Schlechter for *Italy in the 1930s*, a show at Mannheim's Reiss Museum, to critical acclaim.

*"Through her observant participation, the photographer has created work of an uncommonly high quality, which refuses to gloss over or glorify the reality of a disappearing world. Her work reveals 1930s Italy. It does not lay claim to social criticism, but simply shows the situation of those times."*

Milan Chlumsky, *Rhein-Neckar Zeitung*, May 1993