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Hilde in Italy

Art and life in the work of Hilde Lotz-Bauer, a pioneering photographer of the 1930s

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Unique images of people, places and artistic treasures in Italy captured by a pioneering woman photographer are to go on show at the Museo di Roma Trastevere in January 2024.

Hildegard Karoline Helene Clairry Bauer (1907-1999), later Degenhart and then Lotz, developed a skilled and complex approach to her subjects during her first stay in Italy between 1933 and 1943.

Around two hundred photographs drawn from the Lotz family archive in London, two Max Planck institutes – the Hertziana Photographic Collection in Rome and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence – and Franz Schlegel's collection in Heidelberg, will be shown together for the first time.

The New Woman spirit of Weimar Germany inspired Hilde Bauer to train in two professions in her hometown of Munich: art history and then photography. Arriving around 1933, just as the Nazis took power in her homeland, she went on to travel the length and breadth of Italy. As an ensemble, her images are the first photographic record of these places created by a woman at the time.

For large-scale commissions she tended to use a bulky glass plate camera, but moving amongst local people, her small hand-held Leica lent her an anonymity with which to tell the stories of town dwellers, as well as farmers and shepherds in isolated rural areas.

Daily as well as festive occasions in Abruzzo – Avezzano, L'Aquila, Pescocostanzo – feature powerfully in Lotz-Bauer's work. The women of Scanno, silhouetted in their handmade costumes, appear as living artworks, as she drew on her understanding of painterly and sculptural form. Her eye for aesthetic composition and detail transforms this early form of reportage into a unique artistic as well as social record, full of individual and personal insights.

Travelling widely with her first husband Bernhard Degenhart and other art historians, but also alone, she was the only professional woman photographer working at the Rome and Florence institutes, producing impeccable images of sculpture, drawings, architecture and urbanism. Her response to commissions won her recognition as *la bravissima fotografa*.

Her early morning campaigns in war-time Florence invoked the nickname *la bella spia* as she trained her lens on palaces, churches, streets, walls, gardens and courtyards. Waiting patiently for the exact light conditions and an absence of people and vehicles, her camera caught the Florentine borgo and Ammanati's Ponte Santa Trinità before the retreating Nazi army destroyed them.

The exhibition is curated by Federica Kappler and Corinna Lotz, Lotz-Bauer's daughter. A book to mark the exhibition in Italian and English, published by Gangemi Editore, features specially commissioned essays by German and Italian art historians: Ute Dercks, Federica Kappler, Johannes Röhl and Regine Schallert. Corinna Lotz contributes a memoir which is accompanied by an homage by one of Italy's greatest photographers Gianni Berengo Gardin and an essay by Alessio De Stefano of the Piccola Biblioteca Marsicana.

The exhibition is at the Museo di Roma Trastevere, 16 January – 5 May 2024

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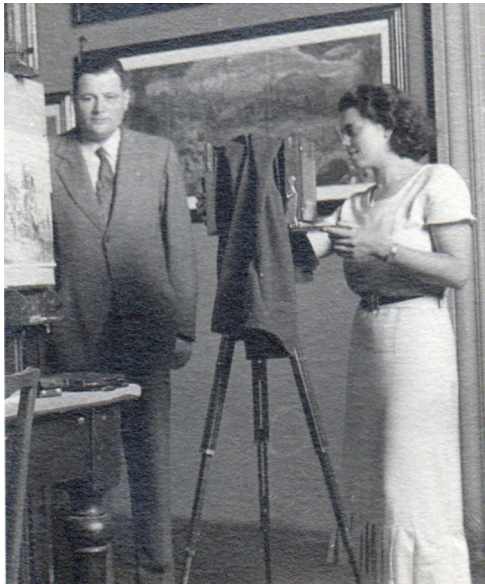
For further information please visit website (hildelotzbauer.net)

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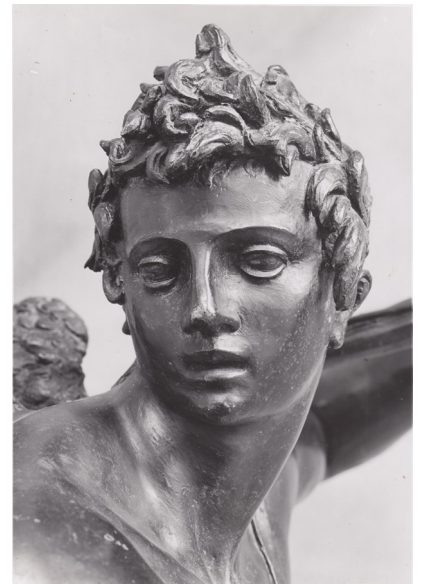
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Museo di Roma Trastevere, January-March 2024

Hilde at work



Sculpture



Scanno



Land und Leute



Rome



Florence

