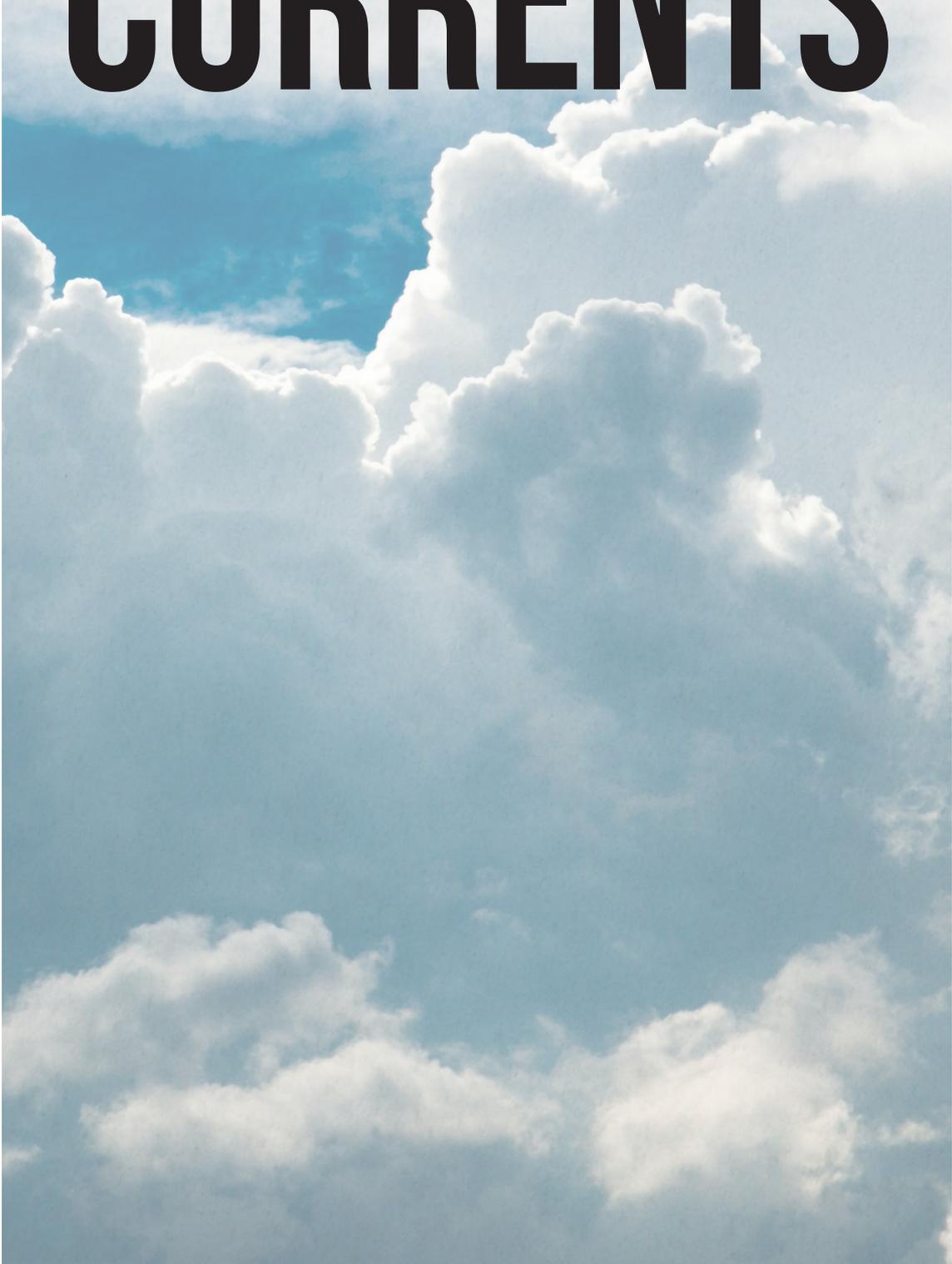


AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB OF HAMBURG, e.V.

# CURRENTS



Spring 2023 | Vol. 39, No. 1

THE SILVER LINING



# EDITORIAL



PHOTO BY MASON JANE MILAM

## MILLS TAKES IN THE WONDERS OF JENISCHPARK

Dear Readers,

Not surprisingly, I got a bit of blow-back when I suggested “silver linings” as the topic for this issue. For many, there was no upside to the pandemic. So many lost so much: loved ones, livelihoods, and homes. The toll in lost potential and opportunity is immeasurable. This topic was never meant to make light of the pain that still reverberates from the global nightmare of COVID-19.

And yet...my family was very, very lucky. Jobs and schooling could be done from home, and home is comfortable and spacious. We weren't profoundly stressed; we weren't at each other's throats. We all got sick at some point but, vaccine-enhanced, we weathered it with minor discomfort, considering.

And yet...my father died in January of 2020, and no one could gather to mourn as we needed to. My daughter's grades plummeted. My mother, who lives alone and far off the beaten path, grew deeply sad, her health suffered, and there was little we could do. My father-in-law got sick and will never be the same. An old friend died, and then another.

And yet...because of home-officing, my husband started walking the dog with me in the morning. These walks turned into a daily briefing, a home/work/life inventory-taking + bonding time, and grew long enough to qualify as exercise. We're still doing it! No matter the weather, these morning walks can be the best part of our day. It's a small thing, I guess, but it's huge for us.

My daughter jumped on the pandemic cooking craze with both feet, and that hasn't let up (her grades rebounded for the better, too). I started painting again and am now working on a watercolor series based on the creatures of the Burgess Shale (look them up; they're awesome).

So here we are. Shaken but still standing, blessings lost and found, so there's reason to count them. Which is what life is. In a way, the pandemic was a lot of life smashed into a very short wedge of time, a lot more than most of us are accustomed to handling. Silver linings are our light at the end of the tunnel. Pardon the mixed metaphor, but I think it works.

Optimistically,

Mason Jane Milam  
Executive Editor

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**EXECUTIVE EDITOR** Mason Jane Milam

**ART DIRECTOR** Amanda Hoefling

**CONTRIBUTORS** Michaela Anchan, Brenda Benthien, Jo Dahms, Rose Finlay, Pat Frickey, Vivian Goff, Carol Harbers, Marinell Haegelin, Venita Kaleps, Ulrika Lemke, Regina List, Frances Livings, Stephanie Matlock Allen, Mason Jane Milam, Tracy Moede, Frauke Rademacher-Heidemann, Elizabeth Reifke, Anna Sizorina, Diana Perry Schnelle, Shelly Schoeneschoefer, Susan Stanley-Witt, Carol Strametz, Becky Tan, Holly Todd

**COPY EDITORS** Carol Harbers, Mason Jane Milam, Birgit Schrumpf, Becky Tan

**PHOTOGRAPHY** Micheala Anchan, Stefan Kock, Stephanie Matlock Allen, Mason Jane Milam, Elizabeth Reifke, Paul Schimweg, Shelly Schoeneschoefer, Carol Strametz, Marc Wieland

**BEHIND THE SCENES** Carol Harbers, Stephanie Matlock Allen, Becky Tan

# KEEPING CURRENT

## A Note from the President

Hello from Bratislava, Slovakia!

I am writing this note at the end of March from my first FAWCO conference. It's been eye-opening and informative and a lot of fun. (Read on for some exciting news!)

I have been delighted—but not surprised—by the reverent reaction I often get when I tell people here that I am with AWCH: “Hamburg! They do so much for FAWCO!” It's true! I am attending the conference with Tracy Moede and Christine Riney, who both serve on the FAWCO Foundation board; Shelly Schoeneshoefer, who has administered the Education Awards for five years; and Susan Stanley-Witt, who has attended several previous conferences. And many attendees from all over the world are sending their warm regards to other AWCH members who have made an impact in FAWCO, such as Jordan Wagner, Carol Strametz, Carol Battenfeld, and Becky Tan.

Tracy has written an article to tell you more about FAWCO, which is an umbrella organization for womens' clubs worldwide. AWCH membership offers a lot of benefits to each of us in Hamburg, and our club has long been active in its operation.

On that note, the AWCH board is happy to announce that we will host the next FAWCO Region 5 meeting in November! This annual gathering will be a great opportunity to spotlight our club, our accomplishments, beautiful Hamburg, and most of all you—our incredible members. We'll share more information soon about how you can participate as we welcome our sister clubs from Germany, Austria,

and Moldova.

A couple of months ago, many of you voted for FAWCO's “Target Project: Environment.” They announced that the winner is Awesome Blossoms, a school garden project in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya. We are looking forward to some garden-themed fundraising activities from AWCH.

Here's an item from this year's conference that might be really helpful to some of our members who are US citizens: Because you are a FAWCO member, you are now eligible to apply for a US bank account through the State Department Federal Credit Union. This bank does not require you to have a US address, phone number, or driver's license. So if you've had trouble with banking in the US, this could be a great solution! Send a note to Jordan if you want more information ([fawcorep@awchamburg.org](mailto:fawcorep@awchamburg.org)).

Join me for a cup of tea? Send a note any time to [pres@awchamburg.org](mailto:pres@awchamburg.org).

May you have a wonderful spring,



Stephanie Matlock Allen  
AWCH PRESIDENT

# RENT





CHRISTINE RINEY AND TRACY MOEDE



AWCH DELEGATION 2023



VINTAGE OUTFITS FOR FAWCO FOUNDATION NIGHT



# BRATISLAVA 2023



# FAWCO TARGET PROJECT



Awesome Blossoms, Edible Fresh Fields for Sustainable Life in the Slums, an Urban Farming Project, is an initiative taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the negative impacts of climate change in the Mathare slums of Nairobi, Kenya.

Safe, sustainable food sources are critical, especially in the slums with its multitude of challenges.

Awesome Blossoms positively impacts the entire community giving access to healthy food. Climate-friendly farming practices are taught, resulting in increased productivity. Additionally, growing within the communities decreases harvest losses due to transport issues.

[HTTPS://WWW.FAWCOFOUNDATION.ORG/PROGRAMS/TARGET-PROJECT](https://www.fawcofoundation.org/programs/target-project)

# ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEE



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE MATLOCK ALLEN

# TING RETURNS IN STYLE

by Stephanie Matlock Allen



At the beginning of each year, AWCH holds its annual general meeting (AGM) to complete club business, such as electing a new board, auditing the finances, and reporting on activities. After three years of meeting online, we gathered in person at DESY on January 22, 2023.

With about fifty people in attendance, members elected a new board (thank you!), chose a new logo, and confirmed the club's featured charity for the next two years.

And what would an AWCH gathering be without amazing food? A finger-food potluck inspired creativity, and we celebrated Carol Harbers's birthday with a beautiful California-poppy themed cake!

Two terms came to a close: Carol Harbers as president and Diana Schnelle as vice president. To fill those positions, Stephanie Matlock Allen was elected president and Sara Naumann vice president. Stephanie served as communications chair last year, and Sara was secretary in 2021. Amanda Hoefling was elected the new communications chair.

Thanks to talented member Julia Neubauer, the club is kicking off 2023 with a fresh new look! She joined the long-running effort in July, and after dozens of ideas, drafts, and revisions, a final logo was voted on in January.

Every two years, AWCH chooses a new local charity to support. This time we are continuing our support of Hanseatic Help, an organization first chosen in 2021. Over the past year, it has provided incredible assistance to Ukrainians and is now also assisting the earthquake victims of Turkey and Syria.



PHOTO BY CAROL STRAMETZ



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE MATLOCK ALLEN

# AWCH BOARD 2023

AWCH HAS  
AN ALL-  
VOLUNTEER  
BOARD THAT  
IS ELECTED  
EVERY  
YEAR.



PRESIDENT  
**STEPHANIE MATLOCK ALLEN**



VICE PRESIDENT  
**SARA NAUMANN**



TREASURER  
**CHRIS LORENZEN**



SECRETARY  
**MELISSA AZIZ**



MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
**ADRIENNE WRIGHT BULOW**



FAWCO REPRESENTATIVE  
**JORDAN BECK WAGNER**



COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR  
**AMANDA HOEFLING**



EVENTS CHAIR  
**NANCI SCHMIDT**



ACTIVITIES CHAIR  
**SARA BORNEMANN**

# SAY HELLO TO THE NEW AWCH ANCHOR!

by Stephanie Matlock Allen

The American Women's Club of Hamburg is launching a new logo to represent the group in 2023 and beyond.

Our talented member Julia Neubauer worked on a variety of themes, designs, and variations over the past seven months. She took into careful consideration the advice and wishes of our members, the Communications Committee, a logo review panel, and the AWCH board. We are thrilled with the final version and hope it provides the club with a fresh, new look.

The AWCH board has been working on redesigning the logo over many years. We kick-started the process again in 2022 with a survey in July asking members how they perceive the club. Over and over again, they used these three words in their answers: welcoming, connection, and community.

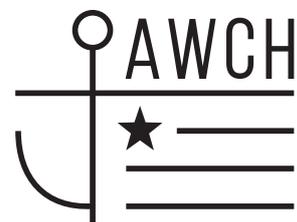
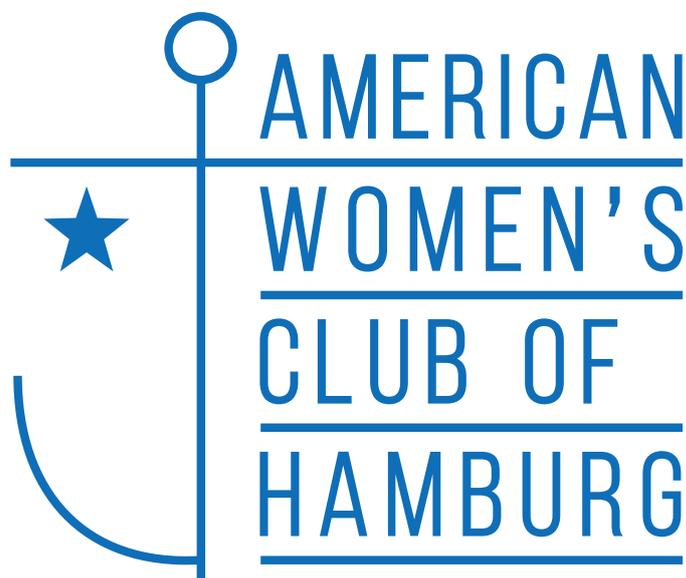
We set out to create a new logo that spoke to those shared values, and "the anchor" fulfills it in the following ways:

**Welcoming:** The delicate lines, the smooth uplifted curve, and the open sides of the shape are inviting and welcoming to all.

**Connection:** The anchor provides a sense of strength and permanence, safety and support in unfamiliar waters.

**Community:** The anchor symbolizes Hamburg, and the stripes symbolize the US and harken back to the club's previous logo and its history as our logo since 1992.

You will see the new logo on all our digital and printed materials, including the website, newsletter, magazine, and brochures. The board sends a huge thank you to Julia for volunteering her time and consideration to this project!



# WELCOME TO THE NEW AWCHAMBURG.ORG!

by Stephanie Matlock Allen

We are thrilled to announce the launch of the newly redesigned website for the American Women's Club of Hamburg. It should come online before summer.

The previous version has served the club faithfully for many, many years. The new version is optimized for 2023, with a clean look, colorful photos, and content that is easily viewed on a phone or tablet.

Thank you to Cat Conner, who built the original website and has continued to volunteer her professional skills as our IT goddess for more than a decade. She worked carefully to preserve the content of the old website while moving all the data and technology over to the new one. The club is very lucky to have her!

Jordan Wagner, Diana Schnelle, and Carol Harbers were responsible for design and content, and the launch was coordinated by Amanda Hoefling and the Communications Committee.

While the new website may look different, it will function similarly. Your login information remains the same, and the RSVP event system has not changed. When you go to [www.awchamburg.org](http://www.awchamburg.org), you will see a blue button on the main photo that says "Member Login." Click that, and you can register for events just as always.

We will continue to spruce up the new website over the next few months, adding content and fixing bugs. Take a look around and let us know if you see something missing or that needs improvement by sending an email to [pres@awchamburg.org](mailto:pres@awchamburg.org).



FAWCO CONFERENCE 2021: AWCH MEMBERS. FROM LEFT: CAROL HARBERS, JORDAN WAGNER, SUSAN STANLEY-WITT, TRACY MOEDE, AND A



Carol Harbers accepts the “Hope through Education” grant award at a FAWCO conference in 2022.

AWCH submitted a grant application for the Nandanvan Trust project “I Will Learn.”



NNA SIZORINA

# WHAT IN THE HECK IS FAWCO?

by Tracy Moede

Okay, so it isn't a secret that I am a big fan of FAWCO. I caught the fever at the conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2009. Since then I have tried to bring my enthusiasm for this organization to the members of the AWCH. It hasn't been an easy job. If you have never been exposed to a conference or a regional meeting, it is hard to understand what FAWCO is, what they do, and how they do it.

For those of you who have never heard of FAWCO before, it is the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas and is our "mother" organization. Your membership is automatic when you join the AWCH. This 15,000-member, 100% volunteer organization comprises fifty-six clubs in twenty-eight countries on six continents. It is the oldest and largest organization representing the needs of Americans living overseas and keeps Americans abroad up to date on their rights and responsibilities, including voting rights, equitable taxation, and citizenship for children born and/or adopted abroad. You might be interested to know that FAWCO addresses public, social, and health policies and issues throughout the world. FAWCO also promotes a wide-range of philanthropic efforts by donating over \$100,000 per year to various global charities via the FAWCO Foundation.

Whew! That is a lot of information to take in and process. Not to worry, former FAWCO representatives Carol Strametz and Christine Riney and acting representative Jordan Wagner and I have had the chance to introduce the AWCH to FAWCO in a variety of ways, such as through fundraising events like the many BUNCO game nights and the silent auction at the AGM. I have motivated friends to donate quilt squares to the FAWCO quilt and sold raffle tickets for the quilt fundraiser at the yearly conferences. There have been informational reports (and quizzes!) at the AWCH annual general meetings.

You don't have to be as big a fan as I am. Really, you don't. However, if you are looking for a way to do something for yourself, to find a place where you are not seen as a wife, mother, or employee, or to get active in projects that make a difference, FAWCO just might be the place for you. All you have to do is to find something that interests you and take action! Check out the FAWCO website and log in for additional information at [www.fawco.org](http://www.fawco.org). It really is very user-friendly. We often think that one person cannot make a difference in the world, but through FAWCO, an organization of like-minded women, we can.

# AWCH & FAWCO

compiled by Tracy Moede

The AWCH has been a big FAWCO member club since 1976, twenty years after the club's second start in 1956. Many members have served in board positions in the past and continue to do so. Members and their children have been awarded the FAWCO Foundation Education Awards, and many charities dear to the AWCH have received Foundation Development Grants to further the good works that benefit so many.

The following are lists of our involvement in FAWCO



AWCH members attending the Region 5 meeting in Leipzig in 2019

## FAWCO FOUNDATION DEVELOPMENT GRANT RECIPIENTS

- 2002 \$5,000 Children of Cali, Colombia  
2018 \$4,500 Hazarwadi Open Well, Maharashtra, India, Nurturing Our Planet Grant  
2019 \$5,500 A Kindergarten for Tribal children in Maharashtra, India,  
AW Surrey Hope for Education Grant  
2020 \$5,000 Trees for Sustainability, Maharashtra, India,  
Nurturing Our Planet Grant  
2021 \$4,000 Harvesting & Storing for a Better Living, Maharashtra, India,  
Nurturing Our Planet Grant  
2021 \$4,000 Empowering Refugee Women in Hamburg, Germany,  
Close to Home Grant  
2021 \$4,000 “I Will Learn”-Keeping Tribal Children in School, Maharashtra, India,  
AW Surrey Hope for Education Grant  
2022 \$4,000 Regreening Degraded Land in Maharashtra, India,  
Trees Glorious Trees Grant

## FAWCO BOARD

- 1983-1985 Kathy Buster, Third Vice President  
1987-1989 Carol Battenfeld, Conference Secretary  
1989-1991 Carol Battenfeld, Second Vice President  
1993-1995 Carol Battenfeld, Second Vice President  
1995-1997 Rebecca Tan, President; Carol Battenfeld, Secretary  
1997-2001 Sharon Lochocki, Treasurer

## THE FAWCO FOUNDATION BOARD

- 1992 Carol Battenfeld, Deputy Awards  
1994 Carol Battenfeld, Deputy Vice President  
2015-2017 Tracy Moede, Vice President Programs  
2017-2019 Tracy Moede, Vice President Programs  
2019-2021 Tracy Moede, Vice President Communications  
2021-2023 Tracy Moede, Vice President Communications  
2022-2023 Christine Riney, Secretary

## YOUTH CULTURAL VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

- 2014 Allison Moede, daughter of Tracy Moede, Shanghai, China  
2016 Harriet Käte Ludolph, daughter of Mary Frances Ludolph, UN Youth Volunteer  
2017 Sammy Witt, son of Susan Stanley-Witt, UN Headquarters, New York

## FAWCO FOUNDATION EDUCATION AWARDS RECIPIENTS

- 1984 Kirstin Fischer, daughter of Nancy Fischer  
1990 Chantal Doerries, \$3,000 Gertrude de Gaillaix Achievement Award  
1994 Kyra Dailchick, \$4,000 Second Achievement Award  
1997 Sandra Santos, \$4,000 Frieda Bacigalupo Natali Memorial Award  
2001 Benjamin Hinze, son of Marcia F. Hinze, \$3,000 Gertrude de Gallaix  
Achievement Award  
2013 Rebecca Moede, daughter of Tracy Moede, \$1,500 Dual Culture Award  
2015 Allison Moede, daughter of Tracy Moede, \$3,000 Dual Culture Award  
2019 Mary Wienke, \$5,000 FAUSA Skills Enhancement Award  
2020 Makia Motton Matheis, \$4,000 FAUSA Skills Enhancement Award  
2022 Brook Viertel, \$4,000 FAUSA Skills Enhancement Award

# VOICES FROM THE

The more things change, the more they s

compiled by Becky Tan

## NEWCOMERS TO HAMBURG—A PARADOX OF EMOTIONS!

by Vivian Goff

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE AWCH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY, 1989

If you're relatively new to the Hamburg area—a year or less—you have probably experienced the following unpleasant feelings at times. Frustrated, disoriented, fearful, stupid, lonely, angry, confused, disappointed, unhappy, bored. (Oldtimers here have told me they still have these feelings occasionally.) But how about other times when a few good things have happened to interrupt the difficulties encountered in settling into this city and environs? Times when you've felt grateful to be having this experience, excited about meeting new friends, thrilled that you actually communicated with natives *auf Deutsch* or that you successfully drove or took public transportation somewhere by yourself in the Hamburg area and didn't get lost, happy to be able to travel around in Germany and other European countries on breaks and vacations.

I've discovered in my four months here that we newcomers seem to experience a mixed bag of emotions at first, which get continually tossed around and keep coming up like the numbers on dice that are rolled again and again. Some of us adjust more easily to this new culture. Others take much longer. But to some extent, it appears that all go through some type of mourning process for what we feel we have lost or left behind. For some, contact has diminished tremendously with parents, children, and other relatives, as well as friends. Others have left behind or given up meaningful jobs and careers. Still others miss their pets, their homes, or even their furniture which they weren't able to bring with them. It's really difficult if you fit into all the categories above!

This feeling of loss can be so strong and so painful at times that the comforting words of others or even one's

# E PAST

stay the same...

own positive thinking cannot seem to overcome the pain and frustration. It does seem inevitable then that we will go through a normal and natural mourning process, experiencing the initial shock of settling into a new culture, the anger and frustration at feeling trapped and confused in a strange new place, and the sadness and depression related to the loss of previous supports and stable routines. Then eventually and usually comes the personal acceptance that one can adjust to the new culture, new friends, new home, etc. How long or difficult this process takes seems to differ for all of us and probably is related to how much we feel we gave up or lost in coming here, whether this is a first experience in a foreign country for us, whether we wanted to come here or not, and how much effort we are expending to try to settle into a new life. And, sometimes, even when you are trying very hard to readjust here and to keep hold of positive thoughts, the various stages of the mourning process may interrupt your efforts and take over. Suddenly you are in tears or throwing a few things around the room.

“It will get better” is what old-timers and “old” newcomers say to us. And we do want to believe them, but we just can’t feel it much of the time yet. I’m finding that when I do persevere in trying to focus more and more on positive thoughts, feelings and experiences each day, things are getting better and better. Trying to remember the good things that happen to you or the good thoughts you have each day—writing them down is helpful—to review later when things seem horrible again is a beneficial process. And whenever you’re feeling able to do so, reach out and call someone. I’ve found that people will respond positively when one reaches out and says, “Could you please help me—I’m finding it difficult right now to get adjusted here.” Or just ask someone out to lunch or over to your place for coffee. It feels better to be able to just talk with others sometimes.

## NO FOOLS ARE WE!

by Jo Dahms

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE AWCH NEWSLETTER APRIL, 1992

April Fool’s Day, also known as All Fools’ Day, is the first day of April, on which playing practical jokes is common. April-fooling became customary in France after the adoption of the Gregorian calendar. It had been common to exchange New Year’s gifts and make calls on April 1 under the Julian calendar, and pranksters continued to send mock gifts and make calls on that date (The American People’s Encyclopedia).

So, believe it or not, in the next weeks, some of Hamburg’s streets will be closed to regular traffic for the migration of toads. Carol Nova says that her street is blocked off with a sign saying “Toad X-ing.” Pedestrians and cyclists may pass, and all vehicles must take the long way round to the city.

How about this one? Hamburg houses the only German museum exhibiting objects found in Hamburg’s sewer system, such as ladies’ frilly underwear, jewelry, and false teeth. Visitors are welcome but must book in advance by calling 38 07 33 41. If your car keys ever fell through the grate on a dark morning, they may be on display.

# LFR AWARDS PROFESSOR DANA-SOPHIA VALENTINER THE “HAMMONIA 2022”

by Carol Harbers

On January 9, 2023, the LFR presented the 2022 Hammonia award to Professor Dana-Sophia Valentiner, vice president and regional chair of the German Women Lawyers Association (DJB), for her unwavering efforts “to keep gender equality on the agenda during the study and practice of law.”

Dr. Valentiner studied law and gender studies at the University of Hamburg and received her doctorate with a thesis on the fundamental right to sexual self-determination. After legal clerkships at regional and federal courts, she served as a research assistant and post-doctoral fellow at Helmut Schmidt University. Since September 2022, she is a junior professor at the University of Rostock.

During the award ceremony, LFR Chairwoman Annika Husianga highlighted the impact of the podcast “Justitias Töchter“ that addresses feminist

judicial policies. Created by Dana-Sophia and her DJB colleague Selma Gather, the podcast “classifies, explains, and analyzes legal policies and legislation addressing gender equality ... and is directed to all those interested in feminism and legal policy—explicitly also for non-lawyers!”

Every year since 2008, the LFR awards the “Hammonia” to a woman in Hamburg to recognize her commitment and contribution to gender equality. The Hammonia is named after Hamburg’s allegorical goddess, who slowly replaced the Virgin Mary as the city’s patroness after the Protestant Reformation. She can be found in many places in Hamburg, depicted as a beautiful woman wearing a crown in the form of a city wall and often holding a ship anchor or wheel. She represents the hanseatic values of freedom, peace, prosperity, welfare, and trade.

The Landesfrauenrat Hamburg (LFR), best translated as the Hamburg Women’s Council, lobbies for women’s political and socioeconomic rights at the local level. It is an independent umbrella association representing sixty women’s group and a total of 300,000 women in the city and surrounding area—by far the largest women’s lobby in Hamburg. The AWCH has been a member since 1986. Joana O’Neil and Carol Harbers represent AWCH at their monthly meetings.



MOSAIC OF HAMMONIA OVER THE PORTAL OF THE HAMBURG RATHAUS | CC-BY-SA-3.0



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A. HUISINGA (LFR), S. MARTINI (LFR), DEPUTY MAYOR KATHARINA FEGBANK, AWARD WINNER DANA SOPHIA VALENTINER, P. ACKMANN (LFR), DR. C.M. HUBER (LFR), E. BURGDORF (LFR) | PHOTO BY LFR

# BOOK SALE AND FUNDRAISER

by Stephanie Matlock Allen

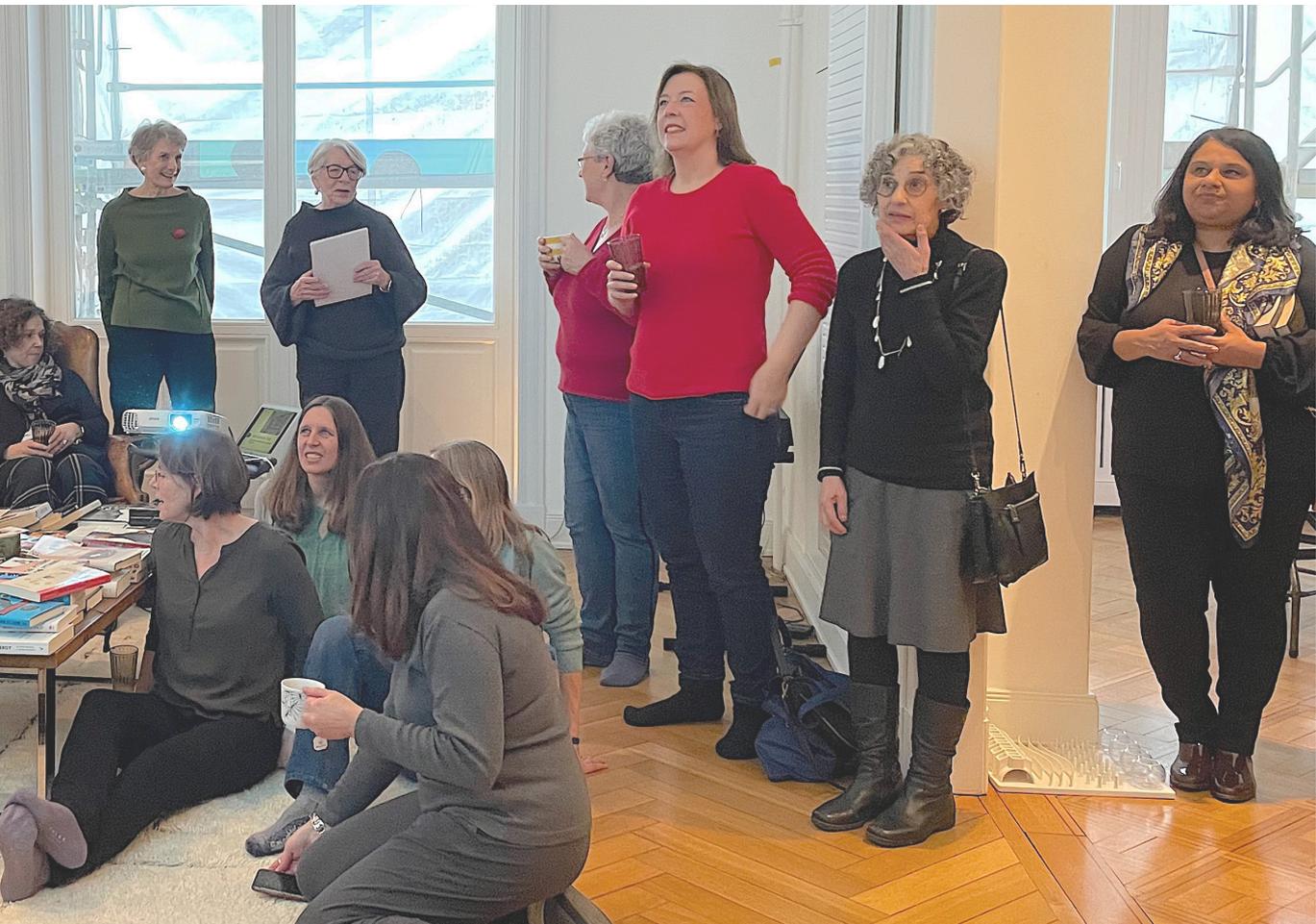
On a sunny Sunday afternoon in February, Michaela Anchan hosted our second AWCH book sale and fundraiser at her home. There were hundreds of used English books from every genre, and everyone got a stack of great titles to take home.

Attendees donated more than €750 at the event! This money will support the ongoing project “I Will Learn—Keeping Tribal Children in School,” facilitated by the Nandanvan Trust in Maharashtra, India. The AWCH has been raising funds for Nandanvan Trust projects for many years. Ulrike Henn joined us virtually to share her experiences with the project.

Thank you to Michaela, Diana Schnelle, Carol Strametz, and Carol Harbers for organizing the event, to Michaela for opening her home, and to everyone who donated books and money for this wonderful gathering!

PHOTOS BY MICHAELA ANCHAN







DR. HOLLAND GIVES PRESENTATION IN THE GORGEOUS MK&G SPIEGELSAAL

# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

# PUTTING WOMEN BACK INTO HISTORY

by Stephanie Matlock Allen

AWCH co-hosted a beautiful event on March 22 in celebration of Women's History Month. Our featured speaker, Dr. Ailsa Holland, flew in from the UK and was the ideal guest for the national theme of Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories.

Dr. Holland runs a daily Twitter feed and co-wrote a book called *On This Day She*, which offers a short story every day about a significant woman in history. Her talk was inspiring, insightful, and often surprising. She highlighted the various reasons why women have often been eliminated, forgotten, or brushed aside in our history books, and traced a line of female journalists through the ages whose voices are imperative in keeping women in the collective memory. Dr. Merike Blofeld moderated a lively discussion after the presentation, highlighting cultural hurdles and social policies that continue to hamper gender equality.

In his introductory remarks, US Consul General Jason Chue stressed the importance of Women's History Month, as it not only recognizes the contributions of women in shaping our democracies but the longstanding struggle to obtain this recognition, drawing similarities with the situations of several minorities. He was accompanied by new Deputy US General Mahvash Siddiqu.

More than 100 people joined us in the glittering Spiegelsaal at the MK&G, including AWCH members and guests, members of the German-American Club, the American Club of Hamburg, and the International Women's Club of Hamburg.

After the presentation, the audience members engaged in spirited conversations during the reception, and they purchased every copy of *On This Day She*-including the personal copy Dr. Holland had in her bag!

This signature event was carefully planned in collaboration with Amerikazentrum. The AWCH team included Michaela Anchan, Brigitte Bernard-Rau, Merike Blofield, Carol Harbers, Tine Hestbaek, Sara Naumann, Diana Schnelle, Carol Strametz, and Stephanie Matlock Allen.



THREE ATTENDEES POSE WITH CO-ORGANIZER CAROL STRAMETZ



FROM LEFT: DEPUTY US CONSUL GENERAL MAHVASH SIDDIQU, AMERIKAZENTRUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR SARAH ALTMAN, US CONSUL GENERAL JASON CHUE, SPEAKER DR. AILSA HOLLAND, AWCH PRESIDENT STEPHANIE MATLOCK ALLEN, EVENT COMMITTEE CHAIR CAROL HARBERS, AMERIKAZENTRUM VICE-CHAIRMAN SUZANA ZHUTA, AND MODERATOR PROF. DR. MERIKE BLOFIELD.



AUTHOR AILSA HOLLAND WITH MODERATOR MERIKE BLOFIELD

# OUR PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES

by Holly Todd



PHOTO BY JUDY WUEST



PHOTO BY SHELLY SCHOENESHOEFER



## HANSEATIC HELP LIAISON

At the AGM in January, AWCH members reelected Hanseatic Help e.V. as the local non-profit organization on which we will focus our support for the next two years. For those of you new to the club and to Hamburg, Hanseatic Help was founded in 2015 in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Drawing on our port city's excellent logistics infrastructure, the organization collects and delivers donations of basic necessities (warm clothes, shoes, hygiene articles, and school supplies) to over 200 facilities and shelters supporting the needy in Hamburg and its environs. They have also transported donations of goods to crisis areas, including Turkey, Greece, Iraq, Syria, Kenya, Lebanon, and Haiti. They are now preparing their ninth aid shipment for Kyev and, in cooperation with other organizations, have helped

organize 35 aid shipments of food, medical supplies, and other basic necessities to other Ukrainian destinations, including a neonatal clinic.

Hanseatic Help has only a small paid staff and depends on volunteer support and donations. We've had fun sorting clothing donations in groups at the main warehouse in Altona and look forward to volunteering at the "Help Stores" founded by Hanseatic Help this past year in response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees. Here, people in need can directly access the clothing and hygiene articles they require. Interested in volunteering with other AWCH members or organizing a fund-raising event to support Hanseatic Help? Contact Holly Todd or Shelly Schoeneshoefer at [hanseatichelp@awchamburg.org](mailto:hanseatichelp@awchamburg.org).

## EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

Supporting AWCH's local charity, Hanseatic Help e.V., is an effective way of helping Turkey and Syria. With extensive experience transporting goods to crisis areas, Hanseatic Help has developed strong contacts with suppliers and international aid organizations. They know moment to moment which relief supplies are needed and where they can get them in bulk for good prices, and how best to get them into the affected regions

in northern Syria and Turkey. Customs regulations currently prevent bringing used clothing into the affected areas, so instead of donating items, please consider making a donation to: Hanseatic Help e.V. IBAN: DE61 2005 0550 1241 1552 56, BIC: HASPDEHHXXX, Verwendungszweck: Erdbebenhilfe or <https://www.betterplace.org/de/discover/67-erdbebenhilfe-tuerkei-syrien>

# THE SILVER LINING





PHOTO BY PATRICIA FRICKEY

# WHAT PANDEMIC?

by Pat Frickey

When the pandemic seriously hit, I had just wrapped up a six-week session of substitute teaching in a fourth-grade class at the International School Hamburg. Though long past retirement age, I had been subbing nine years at the school after a previous forty-year teaching career in the US and Germany.

Then came two months of isolation. That was a long two months.

In bounced my four-year-old grandson, James. He and his parents, my son and daughter-in-law, had been cooped up in their apartment (with no garden) in Hamburg. The kita was closed. Like everyone else, if they even dared to go outside, they religiously scrubbed their hands in sanitizer afterwards (a hot commodity). Playgrounds were off limits. Before that, James was that kid at the top of the jungle gym or racing to the highest slide the minute he hit a playground. After a couple of months of lockdown, they joined me in my house (with a large garden) here in Stade.

My grandson is a mover, a shaker, a jumper, a climber, and a somersaulter. This was quite a revelation to me. My son at age four had spent most of his time looking at books, happily playing on his own with his toys, but mostly drawing pictures. Not James. Luckily, with three adults in tow, we kept him, or he kept us, pretty well occupied the ten weeks they were here. He adored the garden equipped by my daughter-in-law with a wooden playhouse (that she had constructed a year earlier), a swing, a climbing rope, and the garden hose to spray everything in sight. Down came the books, Playmobil, Strax, Lego, and the Masters of the Universe figures/castles I had tucked away up in the attic. Thanks to Amazon, we could load up on arts-and-crafts supplies. They are a NO TV family. So he and I did yoga online with Jaime and Cosmic Kids. Sendung mit der Maus ramped up their shows, also online, to help young children and their parents get through the endless days.

We had a lovely time, exhausting but lovely. James's English improved by leaps and bounds. My son had always spoken only English to him, but as James would boast: "Daddy spricht Englisch mit mir, aber ich antworte auf Deutsch." Now he was rattling off in English without even noticing it.

It worked out so well they returned for another three-month stay around Christmas time into the next year; we even had snow in January for a snowman, sledding, and snowball fights. By then, my son had finally relented, and the last box came down from the attic: they bonded over his nearly 100 precious Star Wars figures, including the Millennium Falcon and an AT-AT Walker. I think I know who enjoyed that the most.

Whenever James comes to visit now, he greets me quickly in fluent English, then makes a beeline to the garden or his favorite toys. What pandemic? Oh, you mean the glorious times James and his family came to stay.

# TOUGH TIMES

by Susan Stanley-Witt

The last three years have been tough. Not being able to visit family abroad. Friends whose parents were sick and whom they couldn't visit. People dying. A lot was terrible, but there were also reasons to be grateful.

I am grateful that we live in Hamburg, where we could always go out for walks whenever we wanted, unlike other places like Paris or Madrid. I am so very grateful that my children had graduated from secondary school and I didn't have to do home-schooling with them. I would have failed miserably at math! I am grateful that my family had an income and we didn't suffer financially. I am grateful that our home is big enough that we could spend time at home in separate rooms. I am grateful that I don't live alone and I always had a family member to hug

or just touch. Human contact became so incredibly important during the weeks and months of just seeing friends on a small computer screen. One suddenly had time to contemplate life, due to churches, theaters, restaurants, etc., being closed. I learned how much I love and cherish my family and friends. We were all pretty much in the same boat and could, through our own experience, understand how the others were feeling. We sent each other jokes and funny stories, cheered each

other up when needed, commiserated when the cheering up didn't help.

I remember sitting at home wondering when I would catch COVID and praying I didn't infect anyone else when it happened and that I wouldn't have lasting symptoms. Exchanging stories of people we knew who had caught the disease, the fear and uncertainty, was terrible. I'm surprised

more people didn't get stomach ulcers. I had times when I went to the supermarket every single day because I couldn't stand staring at my four walls anymore and the supermarket was the only place open. It felt normal in a time full of uncertainty. I started cooking a roast chicken every week. I called it corona chicken. What's for dinner? Corona chicken. Food is comforting. I unfortunately ate too much comfort food sitting on the sofa those months

and now have to rid myself of those corona kilos. Sigh.

There is so much to be grateful for in life, and I really did make an effort to concentrate on that. What stood out most was relationships. Having people who I love and care for and who love and care for me. Friendship. My oldest son got married. These are things that a pandemic cannot take away from you.



PHOTO BY SUSAN STANLEY-WITT

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# WHAT IS A SILVER LINING?

by Anna Sizorina

The best thing that could have happened to me during the COVID-19 pandemic was to join a wonderful group of FAWCO members to pursue happiness and well-being. In the spring of 2020, Christine Riney, the initiator of the Women's Circle in Hamburg, invited me to participate in a positive psychology course—the Happiness Project. The project was called to life by Christine and Danielle Kuznetsov (AWO Moscow), FAWCO health co-chairs at the time.

The online course was offered by Professor Laurie Santos, who teaches at Yale University. She explained different misconceptions about happiness, expectations, and features of the mind that hinder us just being happy. We watched videos, read, and did tests. We discovered that happiness is grounded in PERMA: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments. These five elements constitute the model of happiness developed by Martin Seligman, who postulated that active development of one's own PERMA elements would increase mental health, subjective well-being, and vitality.

We practiced PERMA, meeting once a week with wonderful FAWCO friends connecting from the US, South Africa, Finland, Germany, and Russia. At this point, I must admit I was new to this group, I knew only Christine, and it took some time to feel at home in the virtual environment. With Danielle and her fine leadership, we discussed what we learned and how we felt during the first summer of the pandemic, being physically separated from each other and our friends and relatives worldwide. The spirit of connection created positive emotions; sharing our accomplishments and realizing individual growth motivated us to follow the pathway of happiness and created new shared meaning. I realized that happiness could be learned.

Happiness expanded my curiosity and creativity. In the spring of 2021, as part of the Women's Circle project, I offered the online workshop “March into Happiness.” Together with AWCH members, we learned that happiness might mean different things to different people. It is rooted in experience and our capacity to feel happy. Happiness does not require stability; it is a transient state, and while for some it may be a goal, for others it is one of the stops on the road called life. We are happy when people who are important to us are around and when we feel valued and understood. We are happy when we belong.

Happiness is about reconnection. In November 2021, at the FAWCO Regional Meeting in Vienna, I stood at a booth with gifts, talking to my neighbor ... when somebody said, “I know your voice. Are you Anna? We were in the happiness course!” I looked up and saw Lauren Mescon (AWC Amsterdam) standing in front of me. We smiled and hugged

# A sign of hope in an fortunate or gloomy situation.”

WWW.DICTIONARY.COM

each other, and a wave of excitement spread through my body, elevating my spirit. Later, at the 2022 conference in Luxemburg, I had the chance to meet Danielle and Annelize Smith in person. And I hope that one day, I will have the opportunity to meet all of them.

I thank my friend and Women’s Circle partner, Christine, for inviting me on the happiness journey. Together, we promise to continue our pursuit of happiness with other AWCH members. Interested? Stay tuned or contact us at [womenscircle@awchamburg.org](mailto:womenscircle@awchamburg.org)

## WORKSHOPS

Join us for a series of free online workshops for AWCH members. Register at [awchamburg.org](http://awchamburg.org).

May 24, 10:00  
June 21, 10:00

Happiness and Me: Happiness, Emotions & Body Sensations  
Happiness through Connection: How Relationships Support  
Happiness, Subjective Well-Being and Health



Lauren Mescon of AWC Amsterdam, Annelize Smith, Danielle Kuznetsow, Anna Sizorina, and Christine Riney

PHOTO BY THARIEN VAN ECK

# MAHJONG CLUB

The Mahjong Club is always looking for new “converts” to this fun and fascinating game, just made for socializing!



PHOTOS BY SHELLY SCHOENESCHOEFER



# BOOK CLUB



## THE COPENHAGEN TRILOGY

by Tove Ditlevsen

review by Michaela Anchan

On a chilly Wednesday at the end of November last year, we had a cozy, festive Book Club gathering in Holly's beautiful apartment with some freshly made eggnog to sip on. Our book for the month, *The Copenhagen Trilogy* by Tove Ditlevsen, was a unanimous hit with the group.

The book is a new release in her series of short memoirs originally published 1967-71, *Childhood, Youth and Dependency*. In 2021 they were collected together under the new title *The Copenhagen Trilogy*, and its re-release has sparked a new outpouring of praise for her work. Both the New York Times and the Guardian called it a "masterpiece"—and our group of readers could only absolutely agree. The writing is so fresh and clear—though she was writing of her childhood and teens many years later. The language itself—sentence by sentence—is just beautiful. I read the book after reading a particularly awful crime novel, and it was like going from a piece of stale bread to eating a fine chocolate—melt-in-your-mouth perfection.



PHOTO BY TOM TODD

We marveled at how the language and tone of the book shifted as she aged. In *Childhood*, as a kid growing up in Vesterbro, Copenhagen, she notes, “Childhood is long and narrow like a coffin, and you can’t get out of it on your own,” and “I always dream about meeting some mysterious person who will listen to me and understand me. I know from books that such people exist, but you can’t find any of them on my childhood street.”

In *Youth*, she moves to Copenhagen, publishes her first poems, and gets married: “He kisses me on the mouth when he says goodbye, and I walk through the mild summer night and recall all of his words and movements. I am not alone anymore.” In *Dependency*, she falls into horrifying, tragic addiction: “Demerol...the name sounds like birdsong.”

The memoirs touch on a lot of issues that are still current today—despite being set from the 1920s through the 1950s in Denmark: abortion, childcare, a women’s right to work. We found it fascinating to read her depiction of class issues in the country during these decades: how she moved up through the classes and how she often felt like an outsider. There was a resounding anger in our group at the men in her life, especially her third husband, who started, enabled, and encouraged her addiction.

We all agreed that the translators (Tiina Nunnally and Michael Favala Goldman) did a wonderful job for a work that is so language-focused, and we also discussed Ditlevsen’s 1968 novel *The Faces*. The novel is what we



would now define as autofiction, and, as it is set in time after *Dependency* finishes, it can be read as a kind of sequel to *The Copenhagen Trilogy*. I managed to read this short work over the Christmas break, and I found it excellent, though a little more abstract in places. It charts her vivid descent into mental illness, paranoia, and institutionalization, and blurs the line between reality and madness.

## TAKES ON THE YEARS

**take by Venita Kaleps**

Since her Nobel Prize, I was curious about reading through “the years” as they were lived by Annie Ernaux. No doubt, her literary form was especially unique—changing from an abstract “she” to a chorus of collective experience that shifts to “we.” Hardly a simple domestic memoir, it made me reflect on how we would look back on our lives, on our generation, and express how we lived this dimension of history.

**take by Regina List**

Her observations of social issues are spot-on.

**take by Diana Perry Schnelle**

I very much enjoyed *The Years*, although I found the first half of the book hard to engage with because of how Ernaux intentionally creates distance from her personal experience by making it part of the collective French experience. It really picked up for me about halfway through, at which point I was endlessly impressed by her ability to weave her own life into that same collective and to make such insightful comments about French society and women’s lives in particular.

**take by Carol Harbers**

The author’s talent for expressing memories in short and succinct prose is to be commended but the emotional impact was often lost on me.

# THE YEARS

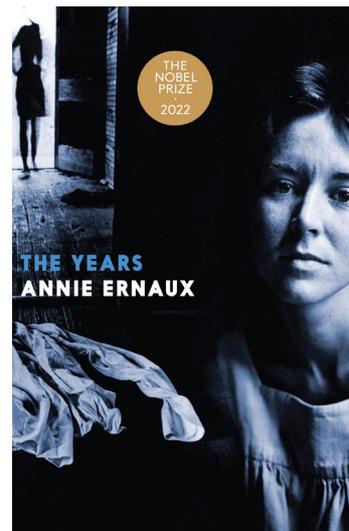
by Annie Ernaux review by Carol Strametz

In February the Book Club met in-person to discuss *The Years* by Annie Ernaux, translated by Alison L. Strayer. We were graciously hosted by Carol Harbers in her lovely and welcoming home. Giving our first impression of the book, most of us found it an amazing read but not all of us.

Annie Ernaux was awarded the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature, and we felt this was an excellent reason to acquaint ourselves with her work. *The Years* (*Les Années*) is an award-winning autobiographical book published in French in 2008 and considered a defining work. The highly praised English translation by Alison L. Strayer appeared in US and British editions in 2017. The first pages, with endless snippets and references to the unfamiliar and raw, tested our patience, but we overcame them to enjoy the flow of the book.

*The Years* spans the time from the author's birth in 1940 to 2006, from her working-class background in Normandy to her adult life. This is not a typical autobiography about "me," but rather a collective biography about "we" and "she," the author. Her personal memories and dreams are blended with historical events and popular culture. She follows, among other things, the rise of women's rights and sexual freedom, historical events, the changing views of the political left, and the rise of consumerism. Her opinions are the opinions of the collective. Her brilliant descriptions of events and their consequences are astute and precisely written with a strong emotional component.

It's a beautifully written book that captivates the reader and gives pause to think from the beginning of the first sentence: "All the images will disappear..." to the last "... to save something from the time where we will never be again."



“READING THE REPORT ON THE SACKLER DYNASTY, I WAS STUNNED THAT THIS GRUESOME, APPALLING, DEVASTATING, INHUMAN, AND MERCENARY APPROACH COULD BE THE BASE FOR BUILDING A FAMILY FORTUNE. BUT MORE, THAT “THE WORLD” TOOK SO LONG TO UNCOVER AND PROHIBIT THE LAUNCH OF A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN WHICH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WOULD DIE. OBVIOUSLY “THE WORLD” WAS BEDAZZLED AND DISTRACTED BY THE LAVISH DONATIONS TO THE ARTS AND THE SCIENCES. THE AUTHOR, PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE, CREATED A MASTERPIECE OF REPORTING, WORTH READING.”

take by Frauke Rademacher-Heidemann

# EMPIRE OF PAIN

## THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE SACKLER DYNASTY

by Patrick Radden Keefe

review by Carol Strametz

“A padding between you and the world.” Quoting Nan Goldin, a prominent photographer and activist, the author of *Empire of Pain* neatly conveys the addictive nature of the controversial drug Oxycontin. For me, it also reverberated the feeling expressed in *The Copenhagen Trilogy*, in which, after a shot of Demerol, the protagonist asks, “Can I have that every night?”

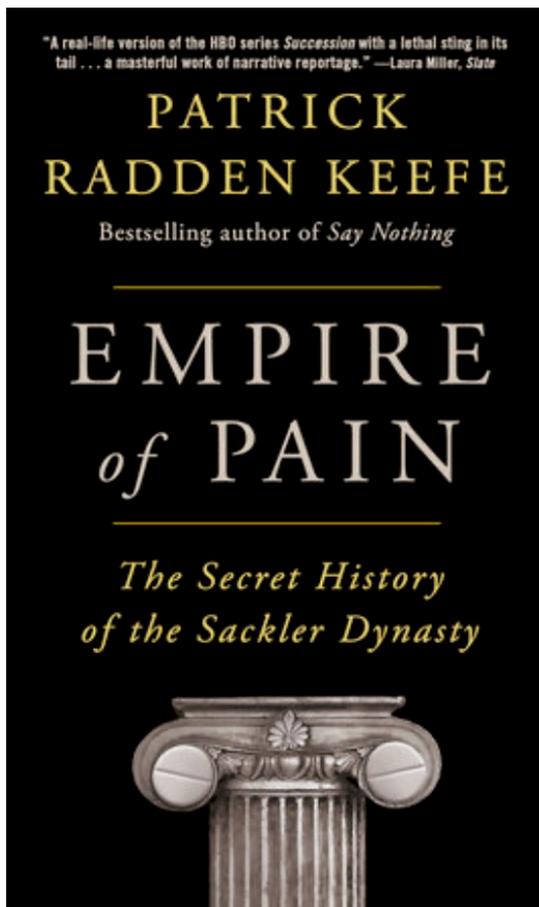
We were a small but enthusiastic group that read through the 560 pages of *Empire of Pain* over the holidays. It is a masterfully told story of the Sackler family and its connection to the opioid epidemic in the United States. The Sackler-owned Purdue Pharma developed and patented Oxycontin, a drug twice as powerful as morphine but without its stigma. The company marketed it for anyone who suffered from pain and claimed that the slow-release formulation was less addictive than existing opiates—a claim never tested, despite the drug’s approval by the Food and Drug Administration in 1996. Since then, more than 500,000 Americans have died from opioid-related overdoses. What began in the late 1990s as an epidemic of prescription pain-pill abuse has evolved into a worse one.

Patrick Radden Keefe’s *Empire of Pain* is a work of nonfiction that reads like a novel. Keefe begins his story with Arthur Sackler, the eldest of three brothers. Arthur was a genius, intertwining his work as a psychiatrist, owner of a medical advertising agency, and as a prominent medical publisher. Aggressively marketing the tranquilizer Valium directly to physicians with misleading and false

information, Arthur made a fortune in the ‘70s. He kept the source of his money quiet, but made sure his large philanthropic donations were recognized with his name emblazoned on the entrances to art galleries, museum walls, and medical school buildings.

Keefe is unforgiving in blaming Arthur Sackler for the opioid crisis, although Arthur died almost a decade before Purdue Pharma, owned by his two brothers, began selling Oxycontin. Arthur clearly was a pioneer of modern drug marketing, blurring the lines between medicine and business. But would he have been so aggressive in pushing a drug that was clearly spearheading an opioid crisis? His nephew, Richard Sackler, who was president of Purdue Pharma from 1999 to 2003, clearly found this permissible, making an even bigger fortune for the families of Arthur’s brothers, Mortimer and Raymond. The author uses confiscated company emails and memos coupled with personal interviews to paint a picture of the ruthless family and its coercive strategy to keep the money flowing and the lawsuits at bay. It is a gripping tale of capitalism gone wrong, an addicting read in which facts are peppered with personal dramas.

There are many “checks and balances” built into the US system to protect the consumer (or patient.) How and when did these regulations break down? Although efforts to stop the flood of Oxycontin into communities are fleetingly mentioned in *Empire of Pain*, I found that *American Cartel* by Scott Higham and Sari Horwitz more clearly outlines what went wrong,



putting the blame on a large cartel of “drug dealers” (represented by pharma companies, distributors, and drug stores). Regardless of where the break in the regulation link occurred, a common denominator was often money—also an excellent “padding between you and the world.”

take by Frauke’s friend in Chicago

One particular line in the book stands out for me—during the Depression, Isaac Sackler, the father of the dynasty, said to his three sons, “If you lose a fortune, you can always earn another one, but if you lose your good name, you can never recover it.” Truer words have never been spoken.

# GERMAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

By Michaela Anchan

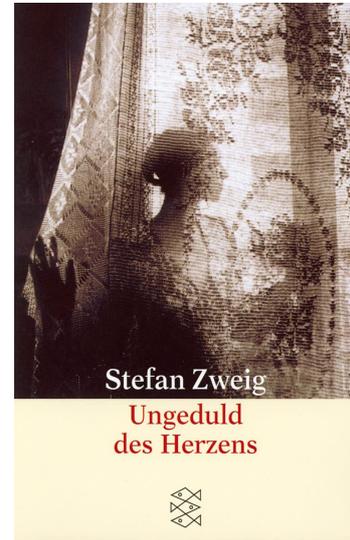
I'm reading my way through the *Deutsche Welle* list of the top 100 German books in translation as a way to learn more about Germany (and all the European history I didn't learn at school in Wellington, New Zealand).

Reading *Beware of Pity* (1939), by Stefan Zweig sent me off in a few unexpected, serendipitous directions. I thoroughly enjoyed the novel itself, which I read in a mix of paperback and audiobook. It's an entertaining if somewhat melodramatic story of a young Austrian soldier, Anton Hofmiller, who befriends a wealthy local family in the years leading up to World War II. The story is a framed narrative: the soldier tells us the story from 1938 to an unnamed character in a Viennese café. The soldier has a terrible habit of misreading signals, overcommitting himself when feeling sorry for people, and generally putting his foot in his mouth, often. One particular instance leads him down a path of no return—hence the title of the novel. Within the story there is even another long story, of how the wealthy landowner came into his money. Behind all the digressions, side stories, the dramatic quivering of lips and the trembling of bosoms, Zweig has created a fascinating, psychological study of his characters and the social hierarchies of the time.

After enjoying this novel (Zweig's only full-length fiction work), I also read his novella *Chess* (1941), which is another excellent example of his grasp of psychological realism—a chess challenge on a ship journey leads us into the side story of one passenger who narrates how he memorized chess games while imprisoned by the Nazis.

I then went on to read Zweig's memoir *The World of Yesterday*, published in 1943 after Zweig and his wife committed suicide in Brazil. I also read this as a mix of paperback and audiobook—the narrator on Audible is excellent. The memoir was, by chance, an excellent accompaniment to my first-ever trip to Vienna on a long weekend in January; the first chapter, titled "The World of Security," is a beautiful depiction of the city in the late 1800s—the music, the people, the buildings—and also how many of the Jewish population found their place within the thriving arts scene.

It certainly gave me a different level of appreciation during our weekend of eating sachertorte and schnitzel and visiting the opera house and Belvedere Castle! It was fascinating to learn of his travels in Paris, Berlin, and London, his relationships with Goethe, Strauss, Freud, and Joyce, among others, and very chilling to read an account of the growth of Nazism in the 1930s from an Austrian Jew.



# OPERA CLUB

## LUNCH WITH AMERICAN STARS

by Elizabeth Reifke

The Opera Club has been honored to break bread with two talented American singers at a pair of special lunch events this spring.

First, in February, we dined with soprano Olivia Boen, a native of the Chicago area. Olivia is currently making a huge splash as a member of the Staatsoper Hamburg's International Opera Studio, a two-year program for young singers who have completed their musical studies and are on the brink of an international career. We were fascinated to talk with this marvelous young singer about her path to the big stage, her musical philosophy, and her hopes and dreams for the future. Olivia is not only a vibrant and eloquent speaker, but she is also an appreciative listener, which made for a highly enjoyable back-and-forth discussion at our lunch

gathering.

We Opera Club members particularly enjoyed hearing about the world of the opera house from the perspective of a younger singer who is still in the early stages of her career. Olivia's wonderful metaphors about sound, color, and light as well as her stories about her music-infused life were quite unforgettable. We can hardly wait to follow her career in opera and art songs in the months and years to come.

In March, we were joined by the internationally renowned American tenor Matthew Polenzani, who was in Hamburg to sing the role of the Duca di Mantova in *Rigoletto*. His perspective as a professional singer with a career spanning nearly three decades made



In March, we had lunch at Tarantella with tenor Matthew Polenzani.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH REIFKE

In February, our Opera Club members had lunch with Olivia Boen (center, in black suit) at Tarantella, near the Staatsoper Hamburg.

for a fascinating contrast to Olivia's observations as a newcomer. Candid about the changes he's seen in the opera industry over the years, Matthew shared many fascinating stories with us about his craft and his experiences. In particular, his impressions and insights into his role as the Duca made his performance a few days later that much more engrossing for us attendees.

Matthew's wit, charm, and friendliness left us feeling as if we'd known him for a long time. As he will be coming back to Hamburg in May to sing the eponymous role in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (the Opera Club's current focus), this lunch event was also the perfect kickoff for our brand-new opera project. We are excited for his return and looking forward to seeing and hearing him again.

## NEW PROJECT THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

by Elizabeth Reifke

The Staatsoper Hamburg's jaw-droppingly gorgeous staging of Jacques Offenbach's masterwork *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) makes its return to Hamburg's Staatsoper in June, and the Opera Club will certainly not be missing out. First, however, as always, we will be getting together to find out all about this fantastic work. Our new project will feature a set of three regular morning meetings on the last Friday of March, April, and May. In addition, for the first time, we'll be holding a single meeting on Wednesday, May 31, for AWC members who would prefer an evening gathering in the city. We are excited to get more members involved with the Opera Club in this way. Join us to open the door to this brilliant opera—once you get to know *Hoffmann*, you will not be able to resist its musical charms! Come join us!

- Regular morning group: March 31, April 28, May 26—all Friday mornings, 10:00 in Hamburg-Poppenbüttel
- Single evening meeting: May 31, 19:30 (7:30) in central Hamburg, TBA
- Performance outing: June 7 (tentative)

For more information, contact Elizabeth Reifke at [opera@awchamburg.org](mailto:opera@awchamburg.org)

If the plot of *Nebenan* (*Next Door*) sounds familiar to you, it is because it is based on a film by the same name, whose script was written by **Daniel Kehlmann** and **Daniel Brühl** (who in the film also plays the role of Oliver), and which was released in 2021. **Daniel Kehlmann** is an internationally acclaimed German-Austrian novelist and playwright whose most famous books include *Me and Kaminski*, *Measuring the World*, and *Fame*. His 2017 novel *Tyll* is currently being adapted into a Netflix series.

Labelled a Theaterkrimi, director **Ulrich Waller** sets the scene in a neighborhood bar in a part of Berlin that before reunification was in the former GDR. Now the neighborhood has been gentrified, and only the bar seems to remind people of the past. Oliver (**Oliver Mommsen**) is a well-known TV actor who has moved into the renovated loft he bought at the end of the 1990s in the same building that houses the pub. He is on his way to the airport for an important casting call in London and just stops for a coffee and some phone calls. In the pub, he meets Bruno (**Stephan Grossmann**), who has grown up in the house and is now living in the rear building. Oliver has never noticed Bruno before. Bruno, on the other hand, seems to know just about everything about Oliver. Here the “Krimi” develops, as it turns into a psychological cat-and-mouse game. At first Bruno asks for an autograph, then starts telling Oliver his opinion of the films he has made and does not hold back his criticism for how the people of the former GDR (Ossis) are misrepresented by the West Germans (Wessis). Oliver is clearly irritated by Bruno’s behavior and even more by the knowledge Bruno has about private details of Oliver’s life. Very cleverly, the theater scene with the bar setting turns whenever a new aspect is introduced, so that the audience gets another view of the protagonists. As Oliver is more and more baffled, we learn that Bruno works for a credit card company and thus knows a whole lot more about Oliver and his family than Oliver could ever have imagined. Whenever Oliver has heard enough and just wants to get a taxi to escape this neighbor of his, Bruno comes up with another piece of information about Oliver’s life, such as the fact of Oliver’s wife Clara’s infidelity (**Anne Weber**, alternating with **Isabelle Giebeler** and **Johanna C. Gehlen** in other performances).

Eventually it dawns on Oliver that this encounter was not accidental, but that Bruno has waited for this opportunity to hold a mirror up to Oliver’s seemingly happy and successful life. This is Bruno’s revenge for being on the other side, the eternal Ossi loser who had to move to the back of the building to make space for people like Oliver.

Both Grossmann and Mommsen are superbly cast as the opponents in this play about a complicated part of German history. The rest of the cast, especially the bartender (**Nadja Petri**) and Micha the “regular” (**Torsten Hammann**), are wonderful additions to the setting of this East-West reckoning. A thoroughly entertaining play full of clever dialogue and food for thought.

# NEBENAN

A NEW PLAY  
BY DANIEL  
KEHLMANN AT  
THE ST. PAULI  
THEATER

Directed by Ulrich Waller

BY ULRIKE LEMKE

# OFF TO THE THEATER

PHOTOS BY ©STEFAN KOCK



# THE PRIDE

presented by the English Theatre of Hamburg

Directed by Paul Glaser

MAT BETTERIDGE, LEFT, AS PHILIP & DANIEL CANE AS OLIVER



LISA O'CONNOR AS SYLVIA AND MAT BETTERIDGE AS PHILIP



LISA O'CONNOR AS SYLVIA AND DANIEL CANE AS OLIVER



MAT BETTERIDGE AS PHILIP AND MATT HASTINGS, STANDING, AS THE DOCTOR

# WHAT A DIFFERENCE FIFTY YEARS CAN MAKE

by Marinell Haegelin

The English Theatre's proclivity for bringing intense, moving, and inspiring theatrical productions to Hamburg audiences is evident in director **Paul Glaser's** staging of the relevant, cutting edge *The Pride*, **Alexi Kaye Campbell's** 2008 award-winning debut play. The characters exhibit experiences the Greek-born playwright gained from waiting tables in New York City for over a decade of theater and television roles in London. In this two-act play, Kaye Campbell explores the fundamental relationship among three individuals entwined in a homosexual entanglement.

Philip is the quintessential 1950s male—staid, pompous, and self-satisfied. Job security (selling London real estate) and marriage to the lovely, lively Sylvia stave off his mundaneness. Philip is waiting for Oliver, Sylvia's friend and source of income, to arrive; she's always singing Oliver's praises. They've invited him to dine at a nearby restaurant, and, per 1958 custom, cocktails are first served at home. Upon meeting, the men feel they've met before. Oliver, a children's book author, is explaining how his imagination runs free while writing and his delight with Sylvia's illustrations, when she joins them. Conversation turns to travel and, with Sylvia's encouragement, Oliver tells Philip about his epiphany at Delphi: "(F)ears we now hold onto and the sleepless nights we now have seem almost worthwhile ... be it fifty or five-hundred years from now..." Sylvia goes to get her hat, giving Philip time to tell Oliver about her illness, and to inquire about his manifestation. Leaving for the restaurant, they neither see nor hear the costumed Man entering the apartment.

In his 2008 lifestyle version, Oliver likes roleplaying, particularly sexual adventures, and tonight his "torture" is rough humiliation. His mood snaps: instead of kinky sex, Oliver offers Man a cocktail and conversation, complimenting his acting skills. He then cries on Man's shoulder about his boyfriend leaving him, and how he's afraid this time it's for real. Unexpectedly, Philip arrives and quickly picks up on Man's costume and posturing, thus ignoring Oliver's blathering—Oliver thought

Philip was out of town. Philip coldly responds he came for his books; Oliver shoves the poor Man (?) out. Starting afresh, Oliver defends his arbitrary sex drive while professing love for Philip who condemns Oliver's addiction, albeit admitting he'll always care for Oliver. Philip storms out. The 2008 Oliver exits while 1958 Sylvia enters the semi-darkened room.

Juxtaposing parallel universes allows Kaye Campbell to develop and illustrate contrasts over fifty years of societal evolution. Each time-transition positions the characters' interactions to specific topics: addiction, rape, denial, courage, and understanding and acceptance.

The talented London thespians mastered the dialogue-intensive script and the play's time-shifts. **Daniel Cane**, as the wordsmith Oliver, carefully committed his many-adjectival part to memory, while **Lisa O'Connor** focused on maintaining the physical characteristics that differentiate between epochs. A scene in the first act tested **Mat Betteridge**, just as **Matt Hastings's** three distinct personalities—Man/Roleplayer, Doctor, and Peter/Publisher—demanded concentration.

True to Glaser's stagecraft, he worked assiduously with the actors to distinguish the time-shifts and technical difficulties involved. He re-creates his vision onstage in collaboration with **Mathias Wardeck**, set designer, **Heiko Böttner**, lighting/sound, and **Patricia Royo**, costumes. Meeting the challenges a small stage presents head-on, Glaser concentrated on lighting to create multiple locations/time-shifts and set/costume detailing. He composed the music to seamlessly transition between scenes/time periods. Glaser implemented set techniques developed in *Great Expectations* (2022) using present-day technological developments to create magic behind the actors.

The bewilderingly complex cultural achievements of 2008 almost pale when compared with 2023. Yet at its heart, Kaye Campbell's message is timeless: Live your truth. And that is a message well worth seeing and hearing.

PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT AYAD AKHTAR'S *THE WHO & THE WHAT* PREMIERS APRIL 6 AND RUNS THROUGH JUNE 3. JUNE 6-18, ETH'S SECOND MIDSUMMER MADNESS: ENTERTAINMENT, THEATER, AND IMPROV WORKSHOPS. DO BOOK EARLY.

# MARKK

## ART IN THE CITY & ONLINE

by Brenda Benthien

The Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt, otherwise known as MARKK, held its yearly press conference on January 19. A theme running through the presentation was the aspiration of modern museums—even “ethnographic” ones like MARKK—to rethink exhibit presentations and to experiment with fresh formats for a contemporary audience.

Museum director Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner and Chief Financial Officer Marc von Itter were delighted to let the local press know that the museum has secured €123 million for building modernization. Construction will begin after

a competition to determine which architectural team best suits the project. MARKK had about 50,000 visitors in 2022 and, once construction is completed, expects to be back to the 80,000 to 90,000 it had prior to the pandemic. The goal is to make the 100-year-old building with its many stairs more visitor-friendly.

A hallmark of Dr. Plankensteiner’s work has been her development of the online platform “Digital Benin” in collaboration with international museums. The platform lists 131 institutions from twenty countries that hold cultural heritage objects from Benin in their collections. This new

online platform allows viewers to inform themselves about the characteristics, location, and origin of more than 5,000 African artworks. Following the April 2021 decision by German museum experts to return the Benin bronzes in their holdings, Dr. Plankensteiner was called on to work with the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Hermann Parzinger, to coordinate the return process with the twenty German museums involved. She traveled to Nigeria in 2022 with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Culture Minister Claudia Roth, where they met with members of the foreign ministry in Abuja to begin the return of looted objects.



PHOTO BY PAUL SCHIMWEG ©MARKK

MARKK hopes to continue its partnership with the RESOLVE Collective, a London-based interdisciplinary design group that combines architecture, engineering, technology, and art to address social challenges. In November, the group teamed up with MARKK in a workshop in Hamburg to co-design the Water Messages exhibition that opened on February 25. The exhibition tells water stories from different cultures: Incorporating dialogue with contemporary artists from places as widespread as the Amazon and northern Europe, it is meant to prompt viewers to think about water and climate protection on a global scale.

# ART GROUP

Other exhibitions in 2023 will include:

- *Loose Ends*, weaving from the Marshall Islands
- *Speaking Back: Decolonising Nordic Narratives*
- *Kent Monkman: Being Legendary*. Monkman, a member of the Fisher River Cree nation in Canada, will present his first self-curated solo show in Europe.

The museum is also involved in the pilot phase of a “citizen science project” called “Tell Me,” an interactive platform to begin in February. The digital tool displays 3D models and stories of museum objects. With a click, users and museum visitors can provide comments and share information.

MARKK’s additional outreach programs included participation in the “Long Night of Museums” on April 22 and its ongoing range of activities for young people. For more information, see <https://markk-hamburg.de/en/>



THE ART GROUP IS FASCINATED BY AWCH MEMBER FRANCES LIVING'S FABULOUS TOUR OF THE AMBITIOUS FEMME FATALE EXHIBITION AT



THE HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE.

# FEMME FATALE

by Frances Livings

*Femme Fatale. Gaze - Power - Gender* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle is an impressive exhibition comprising over 200 artworks from the early 1800s until the present day. On show are oil paintings, photographs, video installations, and graphic designs. Many are from prestigious collections like the Musée d'Orsay (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Städel Museum (Frankfurt), or from the Kunsthalle itself.

These depictions of the femme fatale are hung in loose chronological order and grouped into subgenres of art movements, mythological and biblical motifs, and iconic elements of the modern day. The exhibition covers an entire floor of the Galerie der Gegenwart. The partition walls and partially dim lighting, mainly in shades of gray, create an intimacy the vast space wouldn't necessarily otherwise provide. Whether this can be seen merely as a means of setting off gilt frames of exquisite nineteenth century paintings or as an allusion to *50 Shades of Grey*, in which control and power are the primary themes, is open to interpretation.

What becomes so apparent in the exhibition in its entirety is that the figure of the femme fatale is as seductive as it is problematic as a concept. She is "a myth, a projection, a fiction," Markus Bertsch, the curator and head of the department of nineteenth century paintings, states. Subjecting this myth to a more politicized and contemporary spotlight, the objective of the exhibition is to question and investigate the traditional, systemic narrative of gaze, power, and gender.

Evolving from Clemens Brentano's literary figure from 1801, the beautiful young siren who lures men to their deaths on the cliffs of the Rhine River in Carl Joseph Begas's oil painting *The Lorelei* from 1835 is alluring and deadly but isn't yet utilizing her seductive powers consciously. The fact that these men fall to their deaths is depicted as a coincidence.

In contrast, artists of the mid-nineteenth century, Pre-Raphaelites like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John William Waterhouse and Symbolists such as Fernand Khnopff and Gustave Moreau, derived the "classical" image of the femmes fatale from biblical and mythological female

# GAZE – POWER – GENDER

figures, whose actions entail disastrous outcomes. Between 1860 and 1920, characters like Judith, Lilith, Medusa, or the Sirens become overly popular motifs in the arts, as does Salome, most famously dramatized in the 1891 play by Oscar Wilde.

Typical for the mid-nineteenth century, Rossetti's femme fatales, such as Helen of Troy from 1863, poster child of the exhibition, are alluring but always ambiguous and ambivalent. This changes dramatically at the turn of the century, coinciding with the first feminist movements. The more that powerful groups like the Suffragettes got, the more misogynistic these images became.

Franz von Stuck, Gustav Klimt, and Edvard Munch leave no room for ambiguity: the women they depict are dangerous temptresses and the demonization of female sexuality is overt. Stylized as cold-blooded murderesses, they are bound to a repetitive repertoire of attributes such as snakes. This period constitutes the zenith of misogyny, supported even by prominent intellectuals like the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.

Around 1900, the femme fatale image is projected onto real life people: actors, dancers, or artists, such as the famous Sarah Bernhardt, Alma Mahler, or Anita Berber. In the 1920s, the so-called New Woman picks up on aspects of the femme fatale in a more playful way. As more female artists try to establish themselves and photography becomes an important medium, women also start to take charge of their own image. A strictly binary gaze, i.e., the male gaze, is challenged, and androgynous styles in fashion, like the bob, take a foothold.

It is not until the 1960s, however, that feminist artists initiate a more drastic turning point. Not only are old pictorial traditions questioned but also gender-related viewing habits. Sylvia Sleigh's interpretation of Lilith, 1976, goes beyond binary gender boundaries, which in the form of an over-life-sized nude, can appear initially quite disturbing. Also shown are important early works of the feminist avant-garde by Valie Export (best known for provocative public performances), Maria Lassnig, Betty Tompkins, and others.

Contemporary artists exploring queer and intersectional feminist perspectives include Mickalene Thomas and Nan Goldin, whose photos of the New York drag scene, Madonna, Greta Garbo, or Marilyn Monroe, show how highly stylized these female icons have become and that gender can even be as much or as little as a performance.

Few of the artworks are by and about black women, who in these depictions are—most importantly—portrayed without being reduced to their suffering or racial trauma. These are rarely shown images, like a large painting, *Lounging I: G fabulous* by Zandile Tshabalala. Depicted is an unmistakably black and nude woman who is not shown in a marginalized, voyeuristic, or sexist manner. Here, the power of the gaze no longer lies with a voyeur but emanates from the sitter.

As the Canadian author Margaret Atwood in *The Robber Bride* (1993) provocatively concludes: "You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur."

Are you?

“MALE FANTASIES, MALE FANTASIES,  
IS EVERYTHING RUN BY MALE  
FANTASIES? UP ON A PEDESTAL OR  
DOWN ON YOUR KNEES, IT’S ALL  
A MALE FANTASY: THAT YOU’RE  
STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE WHAT  
THEY DISH OUT, OR ELSE TOO  
WEAK TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT  
IT. EVEN PRETENDING YOU AREN’T  
CATERING TO MALE FANTASIES IS A  
MALE FANTASY: PRETENDING YOU’RE  
UNSEEN, PRETENDING YOU HAVE  
A LIFE OF YOUR OWN, THAT YOU  
CAN WASH YOUR FEET AND COMB  
YOUR HAIR UNCONSCIOUS OF THE  
EVER-PRESENT WATCHER PEERING  
THROUGH THE KEYHOLE, PEERING  
THROUGH THE KEYHOLE IN YOUR  
OWN HEAD, IF NOWHERE ELSE. YOU  
ARE A WOMAN WITH A MAN INSIDE  
WATCHING A WOMAN. YOU ARE YOUR  
OWN VOYEUR.”

# A SLOW PATH FOR RESTITUTION OF LOOTED ART OBJECTS

by Shelly Schoeneshoefer

As children, our history lessons were filled with exciting tales of bravery where kings and queens would win wars and obtain lands while retrieving treasures to add to their already existing collections. It seemed the only villains in the history books were those coming from other countries, colonies, or tribes that were responsible for instigating acts of violence. It wasn't until I became a teenager that I started asking questions that the teachers couldn't answer, and I soon realized that something was terribly amiss with our history lessons.

Isn't the general consensus that we ask questions and learn from history so we don't repeat it? What seems valid is to look at who wrote a history book and from what perspective it was written. Are we really willing to take a hard look at the truth and accept responsibility for the damage our ancestors might have done and try to correct it so we can move forward? It is not only challenging, but also a confrontation with a reality that carries a lot of responsibility, as it begins with the repatriation of stolen or looted cultural materials to their countries of origins.

I have to admit that I loved visiting the archaeological sections of museums scattered through the US and in Europe, never giving a thought as to how all these artifacts came into the inventory of the museums. I just assumed that they all were donations and not actually looted artifacts or acquisitions through illegal transactions. The MARKK Museum am Rothenbaum certainly is one of those

museums that has an incredible inventory of acquired artifacts, but it wasn't until recently that they started looking at that inventory to decide which of those objects should be returned to their rightful owners, especially if they are related to the cultural or religious beliefs of that country.

The recent activities with the Benin bronzes are a good example of moving forward in this process of coming to terms with decolonization. A free panel discussion on March 7, 2023, with the title "Benin: What Future after the Returns" discussed the future of Benin art in Nigeria. This was just the beginning of many discussions and exchanges that this museum, as well as many others, will have as petitions come forward demanding recognition for legal, rightful owners, whether a country or a tribe or an individual.

Another form of repatriation request is for the return of cultural objects and burial remains stolen from indigenous populations, largely in North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania, by European invaders. What distinguishes these claims is the enduring living memory of contemporary tribal communities for specific objects and sites which were looted and desecrated, and the acute spiritual need for their return and restoration.

This was recently addressed on September 25, 2022, when a Maori congregation from New Zealand agreed to a cultural exchange at the MARKK, where they taught us how to dance, weave hats,

and carve wooden sculptures. There was also an explanation of how their meeting houses function and how to care for them. They have asked for the return of their “O Tatau Whare” (a meeting house), which is currently in England and is decaying due to rainy weather conditions, and they have also requested the return of some wooden carvings from the MARKK that are part of this meeting house.

Requesting repatriation of the house and carved figures presented a dilemma for the tribe. On the one hand, the house belongs to the tribal community, but over the years many Maori have come to live in England and have had use of this house there. So where will they hold their religious ceremonies now?

The solution is a wonderful example of how everyone can win. The tribespeople are planning to carve a new house as well as new figures to leave in place of the original artifacts that they will take home with them. Thus, the carvers have work to do, historic artifacts are returned, and a new legacy can begin. It will be interesting to see how all museums approach these requests or even acknowledge them, and to see what happens to that art after it returns to its place of origin.





GABRIELE MÜNTER: DAME IM SESSEL, SCHREIBEND | STENOGRAPHIE, SCHWEIZERIN IN PYJAMA 1929 | STÄDTISCHE GALERIE IM LENBACHHAUS UND KUNSTBAU MÜNCHEN, DAUERLEIHGABE DER GABRIELE MÜNTER- UND JOHANNES EICHNER-STIFTUNG, MÜNCHEN ©VG BILD-KUNST, BONN 2023

# GABRIELE MÜNTER

## THE HUMAN IMAGE

# EXPRESSING AN ESSENCE

by Holly Todd

Many people think of Gabriele Münter (1877-1962) as the most famous pupil and jilted lover of Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky. Thankfully, the current exhibition at the Bucerius Kunst Forum steers clear of Münter's biography, though it begins with several of her rare self-portraits. The artist's critical treatment of her own features and direct gaze hint at the determination of this extraordinarily audacious artist who stood at the forefront of avant-garde art in the years before World War I. She left a women's art academy to take lessons at Kandinsky's experimental Phalanx School and traveled frequently as far as Tunis and the United States, lived in France and Scandinavia, and throughout her life exhibited internationally, including at the Venice Biennale and the Kassel Documenta. Clearly an artist to be reckoned with on her own terms.

Münter later remembered that, as a child, while other children drew stories and did activities, she was captivated by the human image itself, trying again and again to distill its form to an essence expressing individual character. Her portraits, the focus of the show, attest to the success of this endeavor and the longevity of her fascination. They are executed in a wide range of media—playfully terse line drawings, linoleum and woodcut prints, paintings and photographs.

The photographs stem from a two-year trip with her sister Emmy to the United States in 1898. While there, Emmy bought Gabriele a handheld Kodak camera, which quickly replaced her sketchbook. In America, photography was considered an acceptable profession for women, who were exhibiting and publishing photographs of newsworthy incidents and prominent individuals, as well as scenes from their own private lives. Inspired, Münter created a series of remarkable photographic portraits of her relatives and the inhabitants of small towns in Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, focusing on characteristic features, postures, and activities.

In one of Münter's best known works of 1909, she painted fellow artist Marianne von Werefkin, who belonged with Münter at the core of the Munich avant-garde. Later, after Münter, Kandinsky and Franz Marc founded the Blaue Reiter, and Werefkin joined them to paint in Murnau in the Bavarian lake country. There, Münter had taken lessons from a villager in reverse glass painting (*Hinterglasmalerei*), drawn to the naïve directness and deep feeling expressed in this folk art form. Adapted from the technique in Werefkin's portrait are the simplified geometries of the sitter's steep triangular torso and almond eyes, as well as the flat areas of light-filled color framed by thick, black contours. While she later explored a tighter realism influenced by the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, Münter always used unmixed color, producing vibrant works beautifully set off against the Prussian blue walls of the Bucerius show.

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# FILM GROUP

# INFINITY POOL

review by Rose Finlay

James (Alexander Skarsgård), a failed writer, and his wife Em (Cleopatra Coleman), the wealthy daughter of a publisher, are on the island of Li Tolqa to enjoy an all-inclusive resort vacation. When James meets Gabi (Mia Goth) and Alban (Jalil Lespert), fans of his failed book, he is excited for some change, and the two couples escape the resort to go on an unauthorized excursion on the island. The only problem is that Li Tolqa has some rather brutal laws where any form of violence is met with a death sentence. When an accident occurs, James is drawn into the dark subculture of hedonism that exists amongst certain tourists on the resort, and things quickly get out of hand.

*Infinity Pool* is one of those types of horror movies that are almost hilariously over-the-top. There are drug-fueled orgies, explicit deaths, casual violence, and everything in between. All of this is used to highlight how the wealthy tend to use their money to get away with crimes and how by doing so they quickly descend into the kind of inhumanity where they are bound by no ethics or laws. Now whether this point needed to be made with extended psychedelic orgy scenes and brutality, which culminate in Alexander Skarsgård sucking blood off of someone's breast is, I suppose, a matter of personal taste. Some will undoubtedly revel in the craziness of *Infinity Pool*, while others will see it as an example of unsubtle schlock. Regardless, one thing is abundantly true: this is a film that you aren't likely to forget any time soon, whether you want to or not. 117 minutes



©UNIVERSAL PICTURES GERMANY

## INFINITY POOL

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USA 2023  
OPENING APRIL 20, 2023  
DIRECTED BY: BRANDON  
CRONENBERG

WRITING CREDITS: BRANDON  
CRONENBERG

PRINCIPAL ACTORS: ALEXANDER  
SKARSGÅRD, MIA GOTH,  
CLEOPATRA COLEMAN, JALIL  
LESPERT, THOMAS KRETSCHMANN

# OINK

review by Becky Tan



©KINOSTAR

## OINK (KNOR)

\*\*\*\*

NETHERLANDS 2022  
OPENING MAY 4, 2023  
DIRECTED BY: MASCHA  
HALBERSTAD

WRITING CREDITS: FIONA  
VAN HEEMSTRA

PRINCIPAL ACTORS: HIBA  
GHAFRY, KEES PRINS, JELKA  
CON HOUTEN, JOHNNY  
KRAALJKAMP, MATSEN  
MONTSMA

Oink is a small pig given to Babs (**Hiba Ghafry**) by her grandfather, Tuitjes (**Kees Prins**), who has returned from the US after a long absence. Perhaps a pig is not a traditional house pet, but nine-year-old Babs enjoys playing with Oink during school holidays. Her mother, Margreet (**Jelka von Houten**), is skeptical: Oink regularly poops all over her garden. Also, why did her father chose this time to return after twenty-five years of leaving her alone? What is his relationship with Smak, the local butcher (**Johnny Kraaljkamp**)? Oink is quite happy, eating, sleeping, playing, and pooping. This doesn't always concur with family regulations; perhaps Oink needs some stricter upbringing. Babs signs him up for puppy school, where he can learn to come, sit, wait, etc. Soon we learn that Grandfather Tuitjes has returned for the upcoming King Sausage Contest. Why not, since making sausages is his talent, but wait!—what source will provide the ingredients?

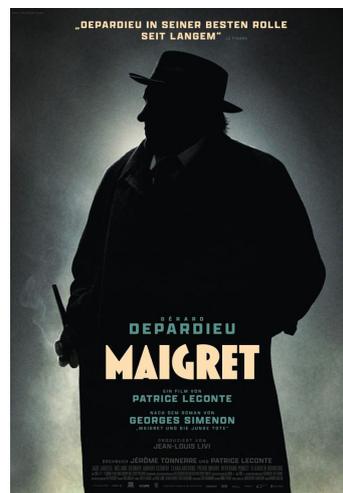
In the original Dutch version, Oink's name is Knor. Pooping is a main topic, with frequent poops and actual big piles of excrement. Babs busily takes care of Oink, but she also loves to skateboard around the village with her friend Tjin (**Matsen Montsma**). There is an Aunt Christine (**Loes Luca**) who has her own opinions. My colleague, Amber, age ten, says, "Grandpa had so many secrets. He was bad." Luckily, Babs and Tjin are able to reveal Grandpa's secrets, including why he originally left the family. This is a wonderfully animated film for all ages, with lessons on protection of animals, vegetarianism, healthy nutrition, safeguarding your surroundings, and more.

# MAIGRET

review by Marinell Haegelin

Commissioner Jules Maigret (**Gérard Depardieu**) of Paris's mobile crime unit is called in to investigate a young female victim (**Clara Antoons**). Although fashionably dressed and found in the elegant ninth arrondissement, she carries no identity papers, and no one knows her. Maigret, swathed in a great dark coat and wide-brimmed hat, and his team steadfastly move from clue to clue determined to learn her identity. Dr. Paul's (**Hervé Pierre**) autopsy sets up a timeline; doggedly following a thread to unravel the gown's secret, Maigret is rewarded with particularly fruitful results from the proprietor (**Moanna Ferré**) at a nearby salon; she directs him to Betty (**Jade Labeste**) whose resemblance to the deceased is uncanny. Eventually Maigret will ask, and Betty indulges a reconstruction. Making Jeanine's (**Mélanie Bernier**) acquaintance, and with admirable perseverance and a taxi driver's (**Alain Gueneau**) lead, a link is established to Mme Clermont-Valois (**Aurore Clément**) and son Laurent (**Pierre Moure**). They knew the twenty-year-old fatality. Mme Maigret (**Anne Loiret**) soothes her quietly grim, focused husband as he probes and prods into the why/what, delving deeper into unraveling the enigmatical quandary.

Director **Patrice Leconte's** interpretation of the prolific Belgian author **Georges Simenon's** renowned sleuth Jules Maigret is very atmospheric and enticing. It was Simenon's 1930 *Pietr-le-Letton* (*Pietr the Latvian*) where Maigret emerged fully. Leconte's adaptation, co-written with Jérôme Tonnerre, is based on the 1954 novel *Maigret et la jeune morte*. Depardieu, with his bulk, slow movements, and nuanced head and facial movements is the embodiment of Maigret, the detective whose power to snag suspects lies in his mind, rather than movements, because of his ability to psychologically outthink and outmaneuver even the cleverest criminal. Cloaked in **Bruno Coulais's** music, cinematographer **Yves Angelo**, editor **Joëlle Hache**, and **Loïc Chavanon's** production design create the evocative vividness of Paris during that era. For a refreshing noirish encounter, treat yourself to the experience of solving a case with the great Maigret. 88 minutes



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## MAIGRET \*\*\*\*

FRANCE | BELGIUM 2022  
OPENED MARCH 30, 2023  
DIRECTED BY: PATRICE LECONTE

WRITING CREDITS: GEORGES  
SIMENON, PATRICE LECONTE,  
JÉRÔME TONNERRE

PRINCIPAL ACTORS: GÉRARD  
DEPARDIEU, JADE LABESTE,  
MÉLANIE BERNIER, AURORE  
CLÉMENT, PIERRE MOURE

# LUFTKRIEGE

review by Brenda Benthien



## LUFTKRIEG: DIE NATURGESCHICHTE DER ZERSTÖRUNG (THE NATURAL HISTORY OF DESTRUCTION)

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GERMANY | NETHERLANDS |  
LITHUANIA 2022  
DIRECTED BY: SERGEY LOZNITSA  
WRITING CREDITS: W.G. SEBALD

GENRE: DOCUMENTARY  
OPENED MARCH 16, 2023

Based on the 1999 book *Luftkrieg und Literatur* by German writer **W.G. Sebald**, *The Natural History of Destruction* is an extraordinarily harrowing work that bears cultural witness to the Allied carpet bombing of German cities during World War II. To this day, the horrific suffering of large portions of the population has remained largely unexplored in the public mind. Author Sebald described the reason: “There was a tacit agreement, equally binding on everyone, that the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself was not to be described. The darkest aspects of the final act of destruction, as experienced by the great majority of the German population, remained under a kind of taboo like a shameful family secret ... that perhaps could not even be privately acknowledged.”

Ukrainian filmmaker **Sergey Loznitsa** visualizes Sebald's ideas in this astonishing experimental documentary. Reinvented “ambient” sound (kudos to sound designer **Vladimir Golovnitski**) accompanies archival footage of regular people going about their daily lives: engaging in peaceful pre-war activities, manufacturing weapons, dropping bombs, and suffering unspeakable horrors as their cities are annihilated. Dedicated munitions workers in Britain and Germany use precisely engineered technology to shape devastating weapons of mass destruction. Flak and tracers form lovely spirals in the sky as bombers drop them on the population below.

Once the aerial bombing of civilians has stopped and the war is over, Göring, Churchill, and King George VI can variously be seen visiting the ruins. Meanwhile, the populace search for loved ones among long lines of bodies laid out on the sidewalks, handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths against the stench. Barefoot survivors leave the bombed-out cities, pulling makeshift carts across cobblestones and holding their few remaining possessions. *Trummerfrauen* get to work, clearing rubble in the aftermath. There is striking footage of Hamburg's Landungsbrücken and main train station.

*The Natural History of Destruction* is a fierce protest against the deception and moral evasiveness of our time. The film, which premiered at Cannes in 2022, takes on a new dimension today in view of the political urgency of its subject. How is it possible that killing other people is still seen as a universal means of reaching political or economic goals? The film makes the absurdity of mass extermination excruciatingly clear—and once seen, such destruction can never remain unseen. 112 minutes

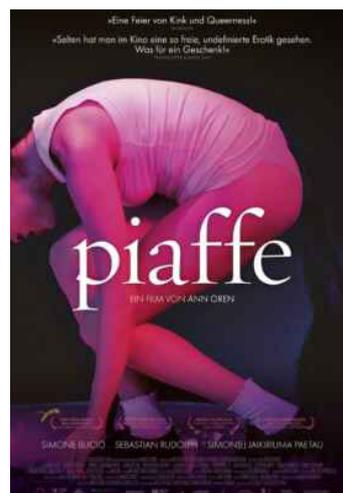
# PIAFFE

review by Shelly Schoeneshoefer

The introverted Eva (**Simone Bucio**) hangs heavily on her sibling Zara (**Simon Jaikiriuma Paetau**) who suffers from a nervous breakdown. Her attempts to make contact are completely blocked. She's forced to take on Zara's job as a foley studio artist in order to survive. So, what is a foley studio? Foley studios were created to add sounds to live broadcasts of radio dramas in 1928. Nowadays, reproductions of everyday sound effects are added to films and videos to enhance the audio quality; therefore, sound plays a strong role. German director **Ann Oren** has created a surrealistic atmosphere. Sounds include a range of experimental sounds such as clapping coconut husks or a massive chain clenching against Eva's teeth. This reminded me of the 2012 British psychological horror film *Berberian Sound Studio* by Peter Strickland, which is one of the rare films that included a foley studio.

*Piaffe* switches from color to black and white, adding another layer to this fantasy world. Eva grows a horse's tail while working intensely on a film clip of a horse performing a piaffe. Piaffe is a dressage movement in which a horse is in a highly collected and cadenced in-place trot. The movement is elegant and controlled on film, except Eva just can't get it right. Her inexperience takes her on a journey where she learns empowerment, self-confidence, and control. Our journey crosses a fantasy line where we are confronted with irrational, submissive, and sexual dreamlike sequences, including slow-motion film footage of ferns' growth patterns relating to fetishes, obsessions, and gender.

At Q&A (question and answer), Oren confirmed *Piaffe* has been selected for both European and American distribution. She pitched a difficult sale, since the script was only fifty pages in length and was seen as an art project and not an art house film. 86 minutes



©SALZGEBER & COMPANY MEDIEN

**PIAFFE**  
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GERMANY 2022  
OPENING MAY 4, 2023

DIRECTED BY: ANN OREN  
WRITING CREDITS: THAIS  
GUISASOLA, ANN OREN

PRINCIPAL ACTORS: SIMONE  
BUCIO, SIMON JAIKIRIUMA PAETAU,  
SEBASTIAN RUDOLPH, BJÖRN  
MELHUS

# DER FUCHS

review by Marinell Haegelin



©ALAMODE FILM

## DER FUCHS (THE FOX)

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GERMANY | AUSTRIA 2021  
OPENING APRIL 13, 2023

DIRECTED BY: ADRIAN GOINGER

WRITING CREDITS: ADRIAN  
GOINGER

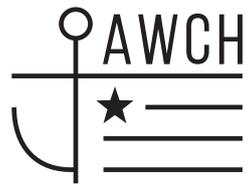
PRINCIPAL ACTORS: SIMON  
MORZÉ, KARL MARKOVICS,  
KAROLA NIEDERHUBER, ADRIANE  
GRADZIEL, ALEXANDER BEYER

*The Fox* is a true, bittersweet story about Franz Streitberger's journey into manhood. In 1927, the large Streitberger family eke out a living farming in Austria's mountainous Pinzgau Region. The youngest, Franz (**Maximilian Reinwald**), and Mutti (**Karola Maria Niederhuber**), worn out from childbearing and meagerness, share the last bits of supper nightly. Franz falls ill pressing his father's (**Karl Markovics**) decision to reduce the strain on the family. The last glimpse of home by the distraught six-year-old, carried by the rich neighbor (**Alex Stein**), is of Mutti firmly closing the door.

Ten years later, with Austria's annexation, the Austrian Army motorcycle courier, Franz (**Simon Morzé**), is drafted into the German Wehrmacht. Quiet and withdrawn, Franz hovers outside the soldiers' natural comradery until his embarrassing, nugatory attempt to join in sends the quick-tempered Franz dashing into the woods. There he finds an orphaned fox kit; feeling a kindred spirit, he takes it under protection. Because of his unobtrusiveness and work, the kit is concealable. There is an analogy between its natural growth and their relationship. When his battalion enters France, few are aware of Franz's adoptee; the French Marie (**Adriane Gradziel**) marvels at their bond. Prior to a major offensive, the reality of Franz's past comes to bear on the present dilemma, opening a window into his suppressed anger, and the possibility for healing.

Austrian writer-director **Adrian Goinger** serendipitously taped his nonagenarian great-grandfather's stories, then arduously whittled down the 200-plus-page screenplay to create *Der Fuchs*. Told in the first person, Goinger casts Morzé who "amazingly" committed to the two years needed for learning the now obsolete Salzburg dialect and raising four wild foxes from birth. Goinger laughingly says, "Never again!" He attributes the fox kit to mentally saving his great-grandfather and keeping him safe. The "crazy, horrible time" of World War II and someone's personal revival is personified by **Yoshi Heimrath's** cinematography, **Simon Blasi's** realistic editing, and the sound department's omnipresent inconspicuous soundscape accompanied by **Arash Safaian's** music. More important than the destruction and vulgarities of war is the humanity and salvation of these two creatures' salvation. 118 minutes





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POSTFACH 13 04 05, 20104 HAMBURG

BANK INFORMATION:  
AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB OF HAMBURG E.V.  
SPARDA BANK HAMBURG  
IBAN: DE47 2005 0550 1502 5597 41

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