

Barbara Fröhlich | Petra M. Springer (Eds.)



„Days are brighter when you love“

RUTH MAIER

Vienna – Oslo – Auschwitz





Wien

Krieg

Diese Briefe von deutschen Soldaten
wenden sich an alle Vaterlandsfreunde
die auf die Rechtigen Taten unseres Heeres
Holz sind

Wien 11. VIII. 36

Ich habe jetzt meine 2 ersten Tagebücher gelesen. Das
ist oberst Kitschig und mir graust. Ich glaube daß
sich wenn das ausgehrieben ist keine neues begin-
ne. Höchstens es ist in das ich nur Beobachtungen

ANTIFASCIST COMMITTEE OF THE
HOMOSEXUAL INITIATIVE (HOSI) VIENNA

Barbara Fröhlich | Petra M. Springer (Eds.)

„Days are brighter when you love“

RUTH MAIER

Vienna – Oslo – Auschwitz

Ruth Maier Library Naming: 24th of October 2023

Exhibition: The Gugg – Café and Association Centre of the HOSI Vienna
Heumühlgasse 14, 1040 Wien

25th of October - 1st of December 2023

Printing of the German issue supported by



ZukunftsFonds
der Republik Österreich

Bücher

1941

Handwritten text from a diary, including names like 'Anni Bruni', 'Koralsandl', and 'Foma Jorda'.

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Barbara Fröhlich

Studies of Japaneseology with a focus on minorities (Ainu, Burakumin)
Worked as coordinator, interpreter and research for various Japanese print media and television stations.

Since 1991 at HOSI Vienna. From 1994 to 2015 lecturer of the lesbian group. Between 1998 and 2008 she organized a monthly radio program of the HOSI-Vienna-Lesben-gruppe on *Radio Orange*. Together with Petra M. Springer editing of the publication *SICHTBAR. 40 Jahre HOSI-Wien-Lesben*gruppe*. Edition Regenbogen, Wien 2021. Currently serving as secretary on the board.

Mag.^a Petra M. Springer

Studied at the University of Vienna, art historian, exhibition curator (eigenART I-III, STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, VISIBILITY, OUT AND PROUD, THE WORLD BELONGS TO US, STOPP FEMIZIDE).

Journalist and science journalist, works for *Illustrierte Neue Welt*, wrote and writes for i.a. *sic! Fom für Feministische GangArten*, *WeiberDiwan*, *LAMBDA-Nachrichten*, *Stimme. Zeitschrift der Initiative Minderheiten*.

Lecture activity: *Ein feministischer Blick auf die Menstruation bei gaunz grausliche gschichtn*, a Symposium of the *Österreichischen DialektautorInnen* and the *Grazer AutorInnenversammlung 2005; Jenseits der Heteronormativität. Visuelle Inszenierungen von maskulinen Frauen und effeminierten Männern* at the Symposium *Heteronormativität und Homosexualitäten. Forschungen in Anknüpfung an Michael Pollak* 2006. Together with Gudrun Hauer: *Wenn Blicke töten könnten... Das Eindringen von Butch und Femme in den öffentlichen Raum*, Symposium at the University of Vienna, published in: *Feministisches Kollektiv* (Hg.): *Street Harassment. Machtprozesse und Raumproduktion*. mandelbaum verlag, Wien 2008.

Together with Barbara Fröhlich editing of the publication *SICHTBAR. 40 Jahre HOSI-Wien-Lesben*gruppe*. Edition Regenbogen, Wien 2021. Im Vorstand von *OBRA – One Billion Rising Austria*.

Barbara Fröhlich | Petra M. Springer: Preface

“The days are brighter when you love”, Ruth Maier wrote in her diary on the 9th of January 1941, and continued: “When Gunvor is not there, something in me is missing. It is not until she reappears, far away in my field of vision, that I can let out a sigh of relief: she’s back.”¹

A library naming in the premises of the HOSI Vienna is important to the memory of Ruth Maier for two reasons:

– On the one hand, because Ruth Maier had a lesbian love affair with the writer Gunvor Hofmo, whom she met in 1940. Gunvor Hofmo kept diaries, letters and art of her friend Ruth Maier until her own death in 1995, these were found among her own writings by Hofmo biographer Jan Erik Vold. The HOSI Vienna, founded in 1979/1981 the lesbian group, “is committed to a society and a world in which human rights of all are respected and all can live equally and free from discrimination based on, among other things, their sexual orientation and gender identity”.

Furthermore, the Antifascist Committee of the HOSI Vienna has been involved in the field of remembrance culture for many years and deals with non-normative sexualities and gender identities under National Socialism.

– On the other hand, because a library refers to written things through books, thus also to published diaries and letters of e.g. Ruth Maier, which have meanwhile been published in 13 languages. The HOSI Vienna will stock the library with copies in the published languages (Norwegian, German, English, Spanish, French, Italian, Hebrew, Danish, Estonian, Dutch, Czech, Russian and Swedish), thus making Ruth Maier’s autobiographical writings multilingually accessible.

Special thanks to all contributors who participated in the creation or made this brochure possible through their contributions. Thanks to Troels Rue Timmermann, Hanne Steien and Jakob Berg Olsen from the *Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and*

Minority Studies for their support, to the *Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance*, DÖW, Vienna for making the exhibition *The Short Life of Ruth Maier* and to Robert Gokl for making the film *Ruth Maier - the Anne Frank of Austria* available. Thanks for proofreading the German text to Peter Funk and Astrid Ruberl and to Patricia Bell for the texts translated into English by Barbara for the brochure online. Big thanks also to Petra Röbl for her permanent support of our projects. Special thanks also go to the National Fund of the Republic of Austria and the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria for their funding of the issue printed in German.

¹ Ruth Maier’s Diary. A young girls life under Nazism, Edited by Jan Erik Vold, Translated from the German by Jamie Bulloch, Harvill Secker, London 2009, p.265. The German title of the brochure and the exhibition “Die Tage sind heller, wenn man liebt” has been retranslated into: “Days are brighter when you love” (“The days are longer when you love somebody” in the translation in the book mentioned before). Most of the quotes without precise references to the source were translated newly, the others were mostly taken from the English translation of the diaries.

„Die Tage sind heller, wenn man liebt“

RUTH MAIER

Wien – Oslo – Auschwitz

24. Oktober 2023, 19:30 Uhr

Benennung der HOSI-Wien-Bibliothek nach Ruth Maier und Eröffnung der Ausstellungen

Wien – Oslo – Auschwitz
Das kurze Leben der Ruth Maier
Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, DÖW, Wien

Künstlerische Auseinandersetzung mit Ruth Maier
Norma del Camino • Barbara Fröhlich • Sophie Krüger • Petra Paul • Petra Röbl • Sabine Schwaighofer • Marie Thur • Brigitte Zika

Eröffnung

Ann-Sophie Otte Obfrau der HOSI Wien
Lisa Hermanns LesBiFem-Referentin
Barbara Fröhlich ehem. Lesben*referentin

Prof.ⁱⁿ Mag.^a Hannah Lessing
Nationalfonds der Republik Österreich für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus

Dr. Winfried R. Garscha
Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, DÖW, Wien

Mag.^a Petra M. Springer Kunsthistorikerin und Kuratorin

Ausstellungsdauer 25.10.-01.12.2023

14. November 2023, 19:30 Uhr

Filmscreening: Ruth Maier – die Anne Frank von Österreich
Ein Film von Robert Gokl

„Die Tage sind heller, wenn man liebt“ eine kreative Schreibwerkstatt, geleitet von der Schreibpädagogin und Autorin Norma del Camino

25. und 26. November 2023, zwischen 13:00 und 18:00 Uhr
Anmeldung bis 14. November 2023 an barbara.froehlich@hosiwien.at
UKB: freiwillige Spenden

Präsentation: 28. November, 19:30 Uhr

HOSI Wien • Heumühlgasse 14 • 1040 Wien • Infos unter: <https://www.hosiwien.at>



Zur Ausstellung wird eine Broschüre auf Deutsch zur freien Entnahme auflegen und eine englische Version auf <https://www.hosiwien.at> online gestellt, ebenso die Ergebnisse der Schreibwerkstatt.



Ann-Sophie Otte
Chairwoman of the HOSI Vienna

Lisa Hermanns
Secretary General and Secretary of the LesBiFem-Group of HOSI Vienna

Ruth Maier Library of the HOSI Vienna

The fact that the library of the HOSI Vienna offers a large stock of books on the women's movement and National Socialism is due to the estate of the HOSI Vienna activist and editor-in-chief of *Lambda Nachrichten*, Gudrun Hauer, who died in 2015. Gudrun Hauer, born in Linz in 1953, studied political science, German language and literature, history and psychology in Salzburg. Her work focused, among other things, on the women's movement and National Socialism. We believe that it is in the spirit of Gudrun, who was an uncompromising activist of the HOSI Vienna and a clear anti-fascist throughout her life, to name the library after Ruth Maier. With the Ruth Maier Library, the premises of the HOSI Vienna set another important sign:

In addition to Gio's Room, on the one hand a tribute to Giovanni, who made the HOSI Vienna premises usable in the first place through his tireless voluntary work, and on the other hand an allusion to Giovanni's Room, an important novel by James Baldwin, and Salon Helga, named after the co-founder of the lesbian and youth group of the HOSI Vienna, Helga Pankratz, the Ruth Maier Library in Salon Helga now refers to an important chapter of lesbian history. Ruth Maier's life story as a Jewish

and lesbian woman, which has been partly forgotten and partly deliberately ignored until now, as well as her diaries, which have been translated into 13 languages, are an important testimony to the fact that lesbian women were also persecuted under the Nazi regime.

In addition to numerous feminist works and literature on Nazi homosexual persecution, the library also includes publications published by HOSI Vienna in its own publishing house *Edition Regenbogen*, such as *Homosexualität in Österreich (Homosexuality in Austria)*, 1989), *Das Lambda Lesebuch – Journalismus andersrum (The Lambda Reader – Journalism the Other Way Round)*, 1996), or the translation of *Carl Værnet – Der dänische SS-Arzt im KZ Buchenwald* from 2004. We are particularly pleased that, in the course of the naming, all the translations of the Ruth Maier diaries that can be found will find their place on the shelves of our library and would like to take this opportunity to thank the great team at the *Löwenherz* bookshop, who put a lot of heart and soul into finding the translations. Creating low-threshold access to these special books, especially for young queer people, is a core task of the Ruth Maier Library. We

are fortunate to be able to call many very specific specialist books, which can often be consulted as reference works by people, part of our library. We are all the more pleased to be able to name this educational centre in our association premises after a person as important to our own history as Ruth Maier. Especially as lesbian women, it is important to us to create space for an encounter with a piece of lesbian history. For the naming of the Ruth Maier Library, the HOSI Vienna has decided to expand the library with numerous new acquisitions from a wide range of subject areas and we recommend, in addition to the relevant specialist literature, the classics of queer fiction on our shelves.

Barbara Fröhlich and Petra M. Springer have revived the self-publishing of the HOSI Vienna in 2021 with the book *SICHTBAR – 40 Jahre HOSI-Wien-Lesben*gruppe (VISIBLE - 40 Years of the HOSI Vienna Lesbian* Group)* and add another great work with this brochure about Ruth Maier. We would like to thank Barbara and Petra for their tireless work in HOSI Vienna and especially on this project and emphasise what an important contribution they make to keeping lesbian visibility high within and outside our community!

Hannah M. Lessing

Secretary General of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism

Ruth Maier probably never imagined that her name would one day become so well known.

That her diaries and letters would be published, that millions of people would read her thoughts and want to learn more about her. That there would be a play about her, a musical, an opera, a film. And that an exhibition dedicated entirely to her would be shown in her home country.

Ruth Maier was a girl from Vienna. Despite the early death of her beloved father, she no doubt had a happy childhood with her mother and younger sister Judith in the municipal housing at Gersthofer Strasse. After the Annexation of Austria, her world collapsed like a house of cards. It did not matter that she had not been raised in the Jewish faith - because of her Jewish heritage, she suffered the same fate as millions of others who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis. She experienced the horrors after the Anschluss; in her diary afterwards, she wrote the words: "Just get away!!" She had to go into exile alone. She lost everything; her home, her family, her homeland - and finally her life.

Ruth lived to be only 22 years old. In these few years she had to grow up quickly: "I could cry now for the Jews, for my childish dreams of humanity and its redemption."

Ruth's diaries and letters tell very personal stories, of her coming of age, of the exploration of her identity, and they give an insight into a world that we, born and raised in freedom, can hardly imagine today.

Ruth's observations and reflections enable following generations to understand how political developments can, within a very short time, shake a person's life to its foundations; how a person's dreams, hopes and plans are taken away; what people can do to each other and how fragile life, which we like to think of as safe and predictable, is.

At the National Fund, we have spoken to thousands of people over the past 28 years who, like Ruth Maier, have experienced themselves this collapse of their familiar world. Unlike Ruth, they survived and were able to bear witness. This term 'contemporary witness' [Zeitzeugen], which is used so naturally today, was coined for the survivors of the Holocaust. They became witnesses to one of the greatest crimes against humanity; their accounts are a central contribution to the lessons of history. Today, almost 80 years after the end of National Socialism, there are hardly any people left who can speak about it.

And the more these warning voices fall silent, the more valuable testimonies like Ruth Maier's become. Her diaries and letters contain a message that makes an im-

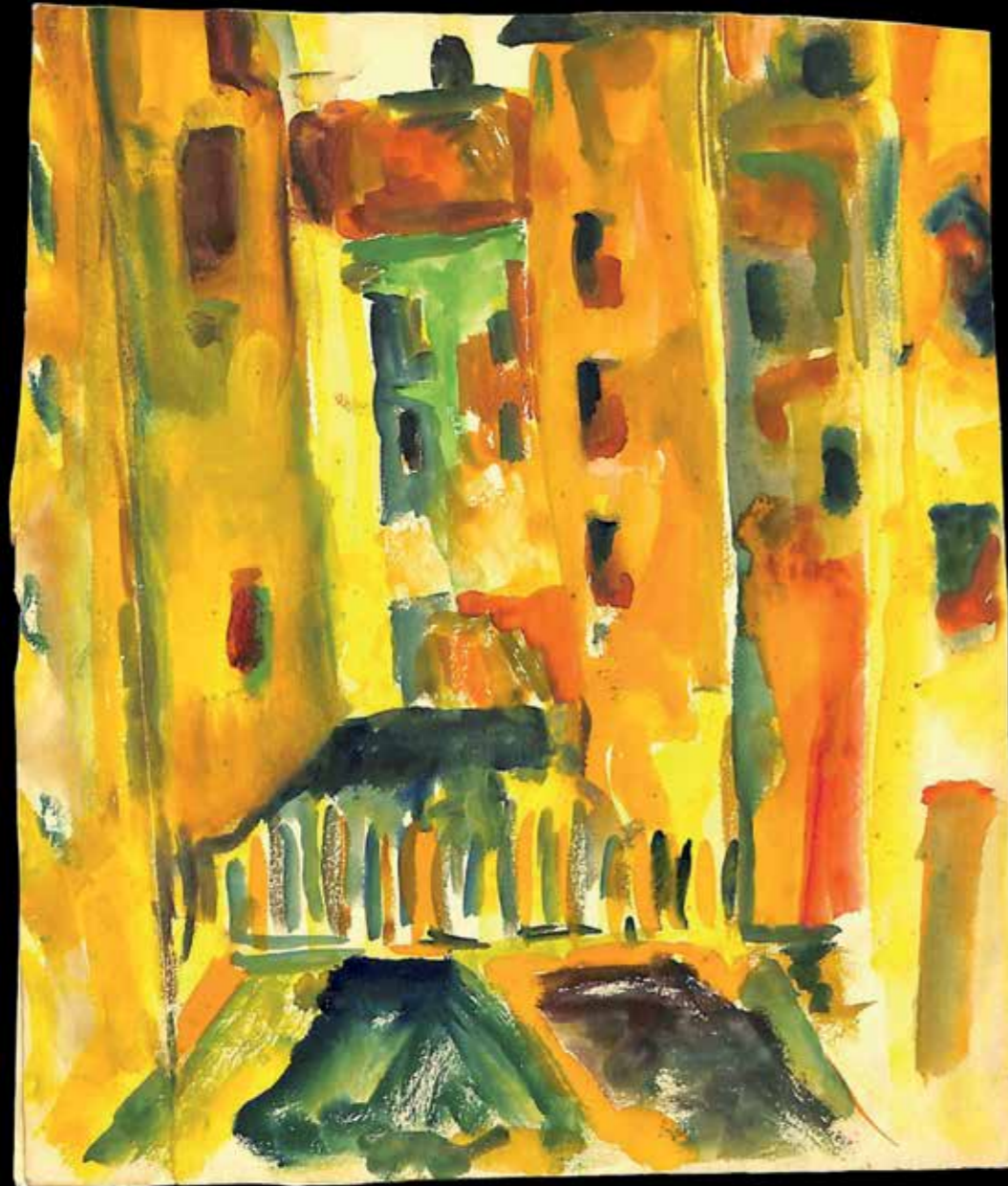
pression today. Their fate makes us aware of the responsibility we bear as citizens. For me, this idea of responsibility is particularly expressed in a diary entry in which Ruth recorded a scene shortly before the November pogrom:

"It's early, nobody on the streets. A Jewish man, young, well-dressed, comes round the corner. Two SS men appear. Both of them hit the Jew, he stragglers ... hods his head, moves on. I, Ruth Maier, eighteen years old, now pose the following question as a human being. As a human being I ask the world whether it should be like this ... [...] And I want to tell you, all of you, you Aryans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, who condone this: all of you must bear responsibility for this punch, for you have allowed it to happen."

I hope that many people will hear and understand her message.

When Ruth Maier was picked up for deportation to Auschwitz, she said, "I'm not coming back, ever." But every time we remember her, every time people read her diaries or learn about her story in this exhibition and feel for her, something of her comes back.

Ruth Maier is not forgotten - she has become a symbol.



Ruth Maier: O. T., watercolour, 1942. Probably the view from the pension window, Dalsbergstien 3 in Oslo.

Doris Hermanns: Ruth Maier

Ruth Maier was not allowed a long life, but left a great, beautiful oeuvre: her diary preserved in 8 volumes provides us even today a comprehensive insight into her much too short life.

Vienna

Born 1920 in Vienna, Ruth Maier grew up in a middle-class Jewish family with her parents and her 18-month younger sister Judith. Her childhood was happy; the family undertook numerous trips. However, two upheavals changed her life profoundly: For one thing the death of her father, to whom she was very close, when she was 13. Secondly Austrian annexation in March 1938.

At the age of 12 she started her diary entries, which didn't much differ from those of other young girls her age. Her first entries are about being in love; partly in girlfriends, later in boys and older men; about dancing lessons and career choices. The latter switching from poetess „poet, that's what I'm hotly craving for" to medical doctor (yet realizing she is attracted to ill and helpless people but in the long run she finds them repulsive), actress „if I cannot be a capable human, I want to play them". But first and foremost she wanted to write. She began writing prose texts. Later she also took up drawing. However, out of the question were professions, in which she couldn't become something significant. Quite early she took an interest in current affairs, from court cases to the Spanish civil war, and she criticized history education which didn't reflect the daily political issues. She considered herself a communist who wanted to fight for a better world.

At school she frequently performed the leading role in stage plays and frequented the Burgtheater.

Following Austria's annexation her sister Judith succeeded in getting a Kindertransport to England. A year later her mother, having gained a position as a cook, joined her together with her grandmother. They already held affidavits to the USA for the following year. At their parting, the sisters assumed they would see each other again the following year.

Already on the 16th of October 1938 Ruth Maier recorded: „These are pogroms! They beat the Jews and want to hang them from lanterns. They shout 'hepp hepp' [anti-Jewish jeer]. The rescue societies are busy. They destroy the temples. They pull the old Jews' beards; they beat the women. They smash windows" and concluded: "In 1938 the world was very dark". It was obvious to her that she would have to leave the country because „since I am a Jew, they want to kill me".

The prospect of only being allowed the job of maid in England, kept her from following her family into exile there. From autumn 1938 she attended a Jewish school, the Chajes-Gymnasium which she experienced as „nationalist up to the point of unconsciousness". "Initially, my community was humanity and now, all of a sudden, Judaism is supposed to replace humanity for me?". Only now did she become, as she writes, a „conscious Jew".



Ruth Maier, 18 years

Norway

In January 1939 Ruth got a 3-month visa for Norway. There she could stay in Lillestrøm with the family of an acquaintance of her father, who was willing to be her host and acted as guarantor for her. She arrived on the 30th of January. Even though she received a friendly welcome from the family she was troubled by fears about the future. As a start she learned Norwegian and graduated from high school the same year. It was planned that she should then go to Great Britain, but her visa had expired in the meantime. Besides she didn't want to work there as a nurse in a hospital.

She was still politically interested, read newspapers and considered herself a socialist. She still assumed there would be war and she didn't want to be in Norway when this happened. "I cannot and will not stay here any longer. Under no circumstances can I remain until the war is over".

But the initially attractive situation deteriorated; her host became intrusive, and

she lived her life on the edge of the family. She felt lonely and hid herself in the library.

After the outbreak of war, which she nonetheless had to experience in Norway, antisemitism increased, and she suffered many insults. The country was now also hostile to Germany. Due to the war, there was no possibility to leave for Great Britain after her high school graduation in the spring of 1940. There were also hardly any opportunities to stay in touch with her family. By this time, she considered the move to Norway to have been a mistake.

To top it all, Norway was occupied by the Germans on the 9th of April 1940 which brought back memories of the pogroms in Vienna. “I don’t want to be aware about what’s happening. I won’t believe it is dire, as if I were in Austria. No...I hope. Not knowing what for.” She continued to keep an eye on political developments, such as the occupation of the Netherlands and Belgium. When encountering German soldiers, she noticed how she felt torn. “They speak German and that hurts, because I love the German language, the language in which Heine wrote his poetry. But I hate the Germans.”

Her loneliness deepened; she couldn’t talk to anybody. She therefore read a lot, from German to Norwegian literature. Also, historical works such as Trotsky’s history of the Russian Revolution which she considered to be her biggest and most beautiful experience at the time. She also asked herself how she, as an immigrant, could fight. She decided to become a member of A. U. F. (Worker’s Youth Federation of the International Peace League), a socialist association. She later turned away from the Peace League – as it was too pacifist for her.

She was urgently looking for work, which was difficult as she didn’t have a

work permit for Norway. In the summer of 1940 she found work on a farm. She then applied for the voluntary women’s work service (farm and welfare work) and she was in at least three labour service camps. In one of them she got to know Gunvor Hofmo, later known as a poet „the days are brighter when you love“. She found that “everybody should find someone whom they love as I love you - whether it’s a woman or a man”, for her both were conceivable. Furthermore, she continued to write poetry, drew a lot and she discovered for herself the music of Mozart and Beethoven.

In February 1941 after having a nervous breakdown she referred herself to the psychiatric ward of Ullevål Hospital in Oslo for almost two months. Even there she painted and read a lot and devoted herself to watercolours; she felt she had found her own style, influenced by Edvard Munch.

She was, however, often in despair and her thoughts returned to her girlfriend “strange, wherever I start, I return to Gunvor ..(..); she is the bright point towards which I live”. Gunvor often visited her: “without Gunvor I couldn’t stand this life at all. I feel as if she keeps me alive.”

But she continued to consider her situation as hopeless since there was no prospect of employment, to earn money and fend for herself.

Again and again, she returned to the importance of diary writing: “I don’t write a diary to write down reflections or immortalize witty thoughts, I write in order to trigger feelings that otherwise would suffocate me; to dig in wounds so that they stay open.” And what it meant to her: “Yes the diary has served its purpose. Because I can write about Gunvor and her letters I feel lighter.” Later that same year she

wrote: “How strange it is, the heart feels easier when you scribble words with ink and pen. When I sit like this writing, my longing bends over the lines, dwells and I don’t feel that it hurts”.

Ruth Maier spent the summer of 1941 in Stavanger at a working camp together with her girlfriend Gunvor Hofmo and others. To leave Lillestrøm was an enormously liberating feeling for her. Afterwards she worked for a while, together with her girlfriend Gunvor, in a flower shop and plant nursery. They also lived together. Thereafter, again together, they found work on a farm. In autumn they returned to Lillestrøm, where both attended a commercial college.

In order to earn money Ruth Maier began modelling for the painter Aasmund Esva, later on for the sculptor Gustav Vigeland as well.

When the Jews in Norway were registered in March 1942, she stated on her questionnaire that she had left the Mosai-cal religious community. As late as the 15th of November that year she was not on her district police’s “Jews list”. The threat was clearly getting closer, and she wondered how to deal with it. When it came to the war, she found herself growing numb: “feelings get lost, you just think a thought now and then like, they are killing each other, yes and when will it end...nothing else”. What happened in Norway was closer to her but didn’t make an impression on her “for more than an hour”. She felt that what was in the newspapers was no longer any of her business and resisted thinking about it, since it was of no use and only doubled her feelings of powerlessness.

„At the age of 21 we all resigned. Resigned to life as it is, resigned to violence, injustice, war”. Her life now consisted of school, modeling for artists, and Gunvor.

She wanted to paint and live for art, then her life would not be in vain. She painted watercolours, city motifs, often they were cemeteries, and wrote prose poems.

In the autumn she moved into her own small room in a boarding house for young women Englehjemmet in Oslo. She earned money painting souvenirs while taking drawing classes at the school of Arts and Crafts.

Ruth Maier was able to record in her diary the first action, on the 25th of October 1942, in which male Jews were arrested. But she herself was affected by the second action in which Jewish women and children were also arrested. On the 26th of November she was arrested in her room in the boarding house. She knew that she would never return. Together with 188 women, 42 children and 116 older men she was

transported to Auschwitz, where, on 1st of December, they were driven directly into the gas chambers.

Gedenken

„Twin souls and one of the twins died”. This is how Gunvor Hofmo described her connection to Ruth Maier in one of her works which incorporated much of their friendship. We have her to thank for the fact that the diaries of Ruth Maier were preserved. They were found in her estate and together with Ruth Maier’s letters given to the Norwegian Holocaust Center. The „Ruth Maier Archive“, which also contains watercolours, drawings, photo albums and other documents, was inclu-

ded in UNESCO’s Memory of the World program in 2014.

In Norway, the play „Twin Souls“ by Otto Homlung about Ruth Maier and Gunvor Hofmo was performed by the Norwegian Riksteatret in 2013. Furthermore, both a documentary film and a musical about the two women are in preparation.

In front of the former boarding house where Ruth Maier last lived, a „Snublestein“, i.e., a commemorative stumbling stone, was laid for her in August 2020. The Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten called her the „Norwegian Anne Frank“.

In Vienna, there has been a Ruth Maier Park in the Leopoldstadt district since September 2021.

Ruth Maier left a record that shows she was there.

LITERATURE & SOURCES

Literature about Ruth Maier:

Wolfert, Raimund: „Ist das deine oder meine Freundin?“ Ruth Maier (1902-1942). In: Joanna Ostrowska, Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska und Lutz van Dijk (Hg.): *Erinnern in Auschwitz – auch an sexuelle Minderheiten*. Berlin, Querverlag, 2020

Wolfert, Raimund: Eine jüdische Freundin, die sie umgebracht haben. In: *LAMBDA-Nachrichten* 1/2008, S. 30–33

Ruth Maier in der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Ruth Maier in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek

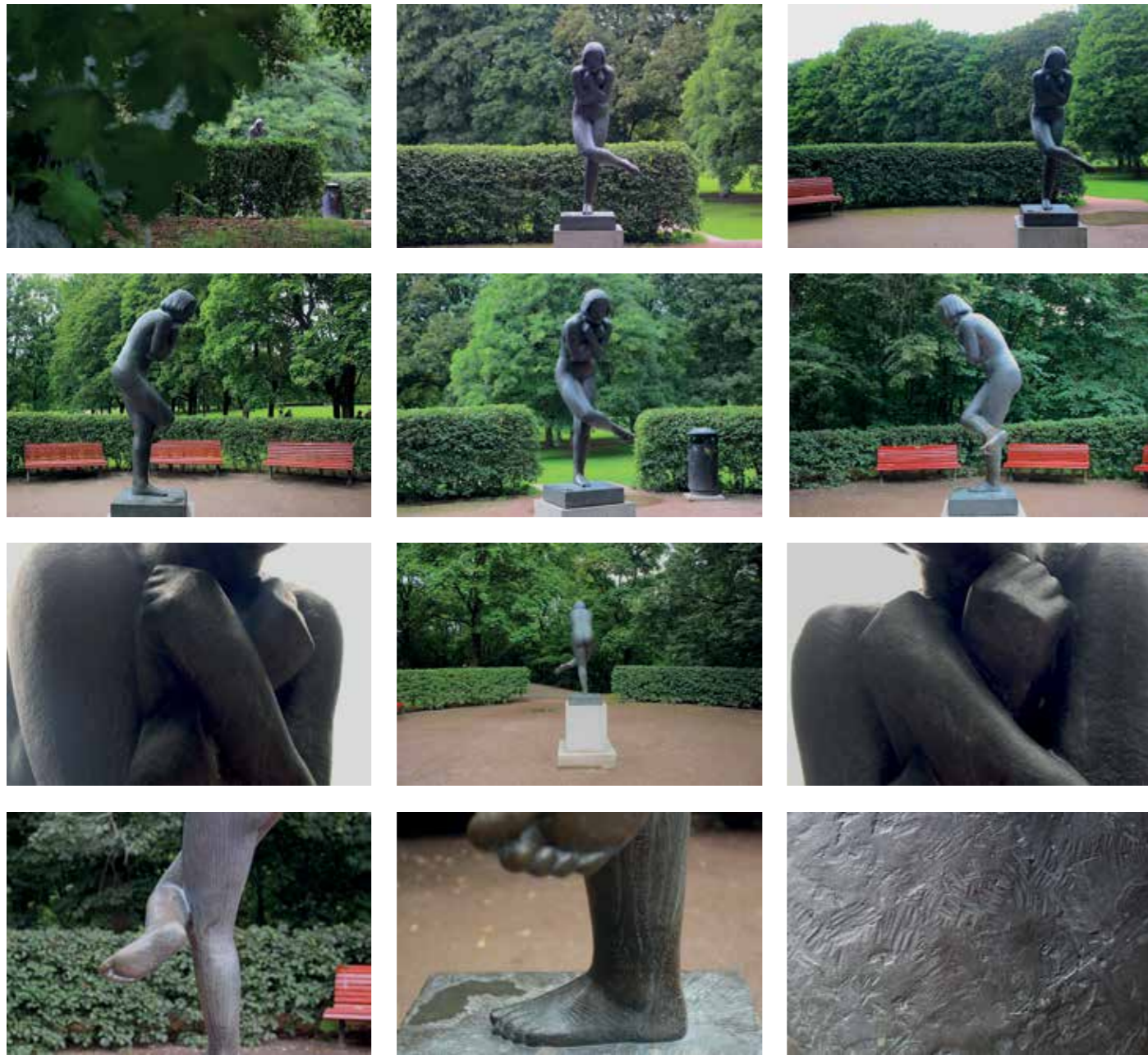
Dairies and Letters by Ruth Maier:

„Das Leben könnte gut sein“: *Tagebücher 1933 bis 1942*. Hg. von Jan Erik Vold. München, DVA, 2008. Neuauflage unter dem Titel: „Es wartet doch so viel auf mich ...“: *Tagebücher und Briefe Wien 1933 – Oslo 1942*. Wien, Mandelbaum, 2020

This text was published to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Ruth Maier’s death on 1st of December 2022 online – FemBio Frauen-Biographieforschung: <https://www.fembio.org/biographie.php/frau/biographie/ruth-maier/>



Gunvor Hofmo and Ruth Maier (right) in Kolsås, November 1941



Photos: Petra Paul

Ruth Maier posed for Gustav Vigeland in 1942, among other things for a work begun in 1904 – supposedly the face part is modelled on Inga Syvertsen, who was the model at the time. The sculpture „Overrasket“ (Surprised) was cast in bronze in 2002 and stands in Vigeland Park in Oslo.

Winfried R. Garscha: Vienna – Oslo – Auschwitz The Short Life of Ruth Maier

Very few people in Austria know Ruth Maier, a native of Vienna, whose diaries and letters have been part of UNESCO's Memory of the World since 2014 due to a Norwegian initiative - only seven years after the Norwegian writer Jan Erik Vold first published them. Since then, the fate of the girl from Vienna, who had hoped to find refuge from persecution in Norway but was handed over to her murderers by police officers of the Quisling government, has become a symbol of the collaboration of parts of the Norwegian population with the German occupiers.

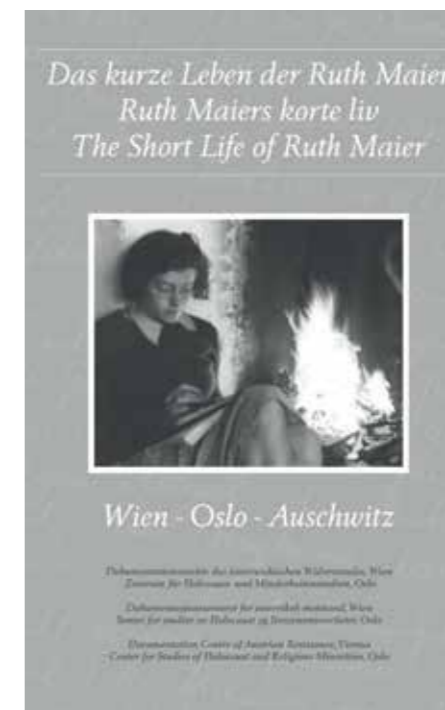
From 2017, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Ruth Maier's murder in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the DÖW is dedicating a special exhibition (German/Norwegian/English) to her, which came about with the support of the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies.

Ruth Maier was born in Vienna on the 10th of November 1920. She and her younger sister Judith spent the first years of their childhood in Vienna-Döbling, in the attic flat of an apartment building (Peter-Jordan-Straße 96). In 1931 the family moved to the recently completed municipal building along Gersthofer Straße 75-77 (staircase 1, door 14; entrance Hockegasse 2). Ruth's father Ludwig, with whom she had a close relationship, had his office on the floor above the flat. On her 18th birthday, she witnessed the violent excesses of the Nazi mob on the streets of Vienna during the November pogrom of 1938. Ruth Maier, who had previously had no relationship to Judaism, then began an argument about her identity in her diary.

Expelled from school, evicted from her communal flat, without any future in Nazi-ruled Austria, she managed to leave for Norway in January 1939. There she met Gunvor Hofmo, a year younger than she, and they became a couple. The poet Hofmo kept Ruth Maier's diaries; a first attempt by her to publish parts of them failed. After Hofmo's death in 1995, Jan Erik Vold discovered the diaries in her estate and contacted

Judith Suschitzky, Ruth Maier's sister living in England, who gave him Ruth's letters and family photos. In 2007 Vold published *Ruth Maiers dagbok. En jødisk flyktning i Norge*, and the following year the German trans-

lation was published, containing the original German-language diary entries. Editions in Danish, English, Estonian, French, Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, Russian, Swedish, Spanish and Czech followed.



Exhibition of the DÖW and the Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies, Oslo.

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Passport photo collection Ruth Maier, 1940

Ludwig Maier, father: Postal unionists with international connections

Ludwig Maier, was born as the third of seven children to Simon and Jenny Maier on the 3rd of August 1882 in Žarošice/Scharoschitz near Brno. Available documentation does not indicate when Ludwig Maier moved to Vienna, nor the question at which university he completed his law studies. It is however, known that he financed his studies by working for the post office. From preserved personnel files of the Postal Administration it is known that he entered postal service in April 1899 at the age of 16 1/2.

In 1919 Ludwig Maier played a leading role in the foundation of the Free Trade

Union Association of Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Employees. The new Austrian postal union took the initiative to establish an international union of postal employees – PTT. Their very first meeting, taking place in Vienna (the 5th & 6th of February 1920) elected an Executive Committee which, on the 8th of February 1920, appointed Ludwig Maier Secretary General of the International Union of Postal Telephone and Telegraph Employees. He held this position until his death in 1933.

In the course of eliminating democratic institutions in 1933 the Dollfuß regime, in autumn that year, also targeted the “privileges” of social democratic trade unionists. On the 24th of October 1933 the postal management revoked Maier’s exemption from regular duties as a member of the Central Committee of the Postal Workers Union, which had been valid since March 1920.

Photo: HL-senteret

Irma, Ruth, Ludwig and Judith Maier, Peter-Jordan-Straße 96



Photo: HL-senteret

From this point Maier was relocated to a small post office in the neighbouring 19th district. As early as 1931 the Christian Social Anti-Semite Leopold Kunschak had railed in the Municipal Council against the allocation of a council apartment to Ludwig Maier. On the “Service Record” in his personnel file there is a note in oversized letters: “de-pragmatized”. Just a few weeks later Ludwig Maier became ill with erysipelas; he died on the 28th of December 1933. His six siblings as well as other relatives were all murdered during Holocaust.

Irma Maier, mother: Fight to save her daughters

After the death of her husband Irma Maier took in her mother Anna Grossmann. Both women tried to make childhood possible for Ruth and Judith. However from March 1938 the family, like the whole Jewish population, was exposed to the hatred of the Viennese anti-Semites. The two girls had no relationship to Judaism whatsoever as, in 1927, Ludwig Maier had formally left the Jewish Community.

In June 1938 the Viennese NSDAP ordered the municipal housing office to terminate, by July 1938, the contracts of around 2,000 Jewish tenants. Irma Maier was among them. She fought the termination in vain. An acquaintance of her husband, Hugo Singer, took her and her relatives in as sub-tenants in his apartments at Obere Donaustraße 43.

The family organised their emigration. First, Irma Maier sent her younger daughter to safety – Judith left Vienna on the 10th of December 1938 with the first of



Photo: HL-senteret

Irma Maier with her daughters Judith and Ruth (right)

ars it would take her to obtain her *eksamen artium* (i.e., her Matura, or school leaving certificate). The Strøms lived with their daughter and a young maid in Lillestrøm (east of Oslo), on the top floor of the post and telegraph office in Storgata 7. On the 30th of January, the Strøms picked up their new roommate from Oslo’s East Station. Ruth was allowed to move into the daughter’s room and began to learn Norwegian with great eagerness. After graduating from high school, she wanted to emigrate to the USA; however, all her efforts in this regard failed.

After bringing her two daughters to safety, Irma Maier tried to obtain entry papers to Great Britain for herself and her mother. After she finally had everything settled, they both left Vienna on the 29th of April, 1939. From Brighton, Irma Maier wrote a letter to the Vienna office of the General Post Office in Austria on the 5th of May, apologizing for not applying in person due to her rapid departure to England that had become necessary at short notice, and re-

the so-called Kindertransporte (children’s transports) to England. There she married Hans Suschitzky – a chemist – whom she had known since childhood. From England, she maintained correspondence with her older sister for almost a year and a half after the German invasion of Norway in April 1940. Judith Suschitzky died on the 14th of April 2020 in a retirement home in Leicester, England.

Ruth was too old for a Kindertransport. Her mother tried to use her late husband’s contacts from his job as secretary general of the International Union of Postal Workers to find a way for Ruth to finish school and get a college degree. Finally, the Norwegian postal unionist Arne Strøm agreed to take care of all the official paperwork and to accommodate Ruth for the two ye-

Anna Grossmann with her granddaughters Ruth (left) and Judith, ca. 1933/34



Photo: HL-senteret

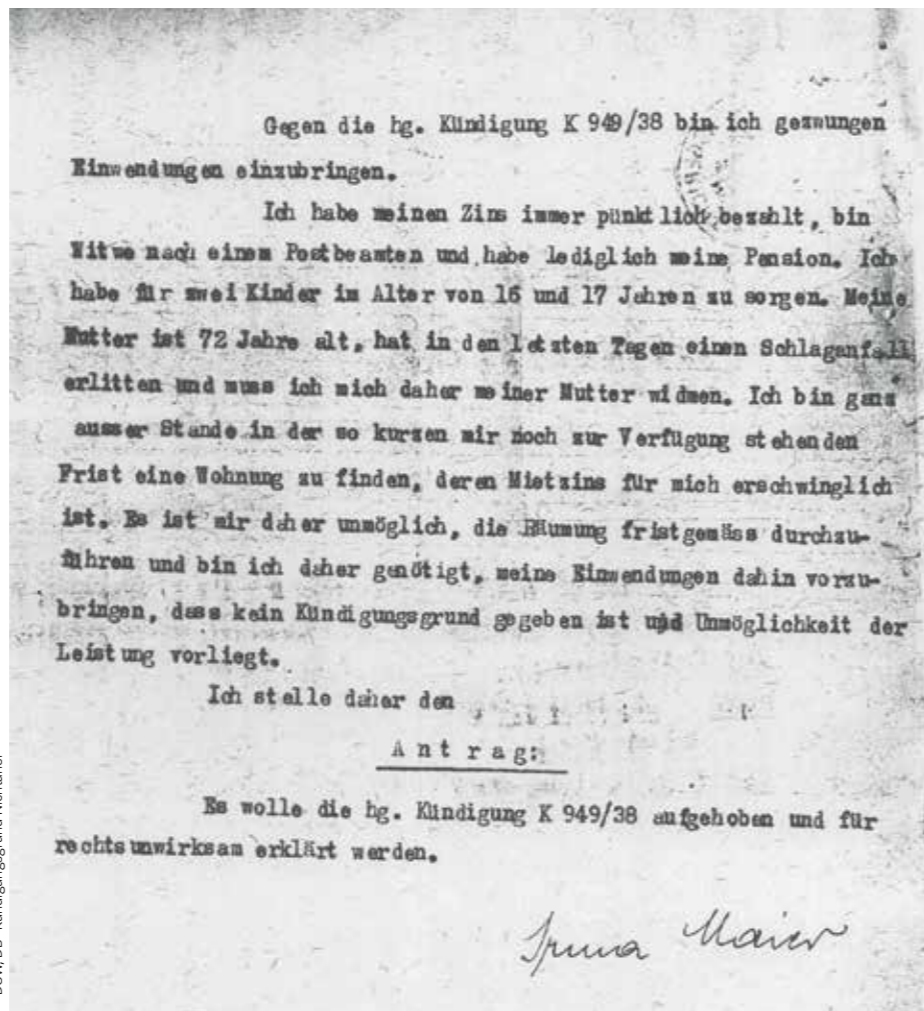
requesting retention of her widow's pension. Up to 1940, the General Post Directorate (Reichspostdirektion) tried to determine whether Irma Maier was "fully Jewish" and when she intended to return to Vienna. In March 1942 the General Post Office finally discontinued pension payments.

In June 1946, Irma Maier identified herself at the Austrian diplomatic mission in London and thus provided the proof of life required for the payment of her pension.

In October, she requested the Finanzlandesdirektion [Financial Directorate] to pay her pension backdated to May 1939, since she had had to leave Austria "under the constraint of circumstances", and offered, in case a transfer abroad was not possible, to accept transfer to an Austrian account yet to be opened. This was out of question for the Austrian authorities, as she continued to live abroad. An order was only possible if the beneficiary could prove that the amounts were needed for the purchase of essential goods or to finance a return to Austria, or if they were used to repay debts to domestic creditors or to pay benefits to dependent relatives.

Reaching stalemate, Irma Maier turned to the Austrian Trades Union Federation (ÖGB). In 1948, the Postal and Telegraph Workers' Union bought the grave of its former chairman in the Döbling cemetery, Vienna. The Central Secretary of the Postal Workers' Union, Edmund Holzfeind, issued an invoice to Irma Maier and sent it to the Postal and Telegraph Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland. The latter maintained that even such payments could only be transferred to a frozen account to be set up by the beneficiary, from which the debt could then be repaid.

In 1949, the legal situation changed. On the 24th of August 1950, Irma Maier received



Irma Maier protested the eviction notice

notification from the General Post Office Directorate that she had been granted a widow's pension backdated to 1st of January 1950, although she had assumed British citizenship on 31st of March 1949. However, a transfer abroad could not take place. The award of compensation for the pension payments observed by the German State was also rejected, but a positive

settlement was left to the discretion of the Federal Government. Mrs. Maier had "moved her residence to England on the 29th of April 1939, without first applying for the necessary authorization" stated in all seriousness the Post and Telegraph Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland on the 18th of March 1953. As a widow, she would not have been threatened with any

disciplinary action by the Nazis. Her claim dated 1946 that she had had to leave the country "under the duress of circumstances" could not be verified. However, the post office directorate conceded that she had to fear for her children, since they had been considered "at least first degree mixed blood".

Irma Maier repeatedly explained to the Austrian authorities that she was completely destitute and lived exclusively on allowances from her daughter Judith. For reasons of "equity", she was finally granted

the actual payment of the widow's pension backdated to 1950 by a resolution of the Federal President of the 27th of October 1954.

The diary

Ruth Maier had been keeping a diary since the 17th of May 1933. She described her feelings, her everyday life, but also documented political events and de-

scribed the persecution of Jews after the "Anschluss" in 1938. Her first diary was a school notebook. The editor of the letters and diaries, Jan Erik Vold, has included only a few of these early records in his publication.

The death of her father in 1933 put her in a state of shock to a certain extent. It was not until the civil war of February 1934 that she took up her pen again. On the 13th of February she noted the dissolution of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, and on the 14th of February she

Ruth Maier diaries at HL-senteret, Oslo



Photo: HL-senteret

9. Okt. 1938 Wenn wir in Ereignis
 wieder gab es ja etwas in d. Geschichte
 das mit dem von m. Schwestern F. und
 u. Mylück, Friederichy Scham u. Berta
 ist ab. Darin es extra gen vündert sein
 das wir trotz dem nicht den Gaskahn
 aufbrechen, in die Donau springen.
 3 Monate vor 3 Tage vor der
 Zeit bindung geht die Frau illegal über
 die Grenze. Die Familie verraten... die
 Frau als Köchin in England, der Mann in
 Belgien illegal, die Mutter noch in Deutsch
 land, der Bruder in Dachau die Schwester...
 Es ist so unglücklich, das wir es selbst
 nicht ermahnen können. Am 11. 17. Besuch
 in die Wohnung empfangen haben die be
 zogen neuer halb 24a mit Koffer europä
 ken, wegzuführen. Man stelle sich die grau
 haften Szenen vor. Nein bitte keine Nest
 9 kisten. Ein paar Menschen den Gaskahn
 aufgedeckt. Bei Ehrlich's waren sie auch bei

Frau Kamill. M'ldog aids Eltern was
 wollten in den Osewald gehen... in
 20. Jhd... Nein bitte, es war ein Witz
 des Kk, --- Im Tempel mussten jüd.
 Frauen, Mädchen den Tempel aufschreiben.
 Zeit unglücklich, bitte schön, nur manchmal
 kommt es zum Bewusstsein... In
 J. A. Häuser kamen in die Wohnungen
 Bücher regimieren, sagen:
 "Ah den Heine leand die Juden"
 Verbrennen "Heine, zwei, Schindler
 "Kombinationals Gemälde!"
 Manche können nicht mehr mit! Die Mutter v.
 Frau Hera hat sich umgebracht!
 Was neig!!
 16. Okt 1938
 Es sind Pogrome!!
 Sie sind gelbe die Juden u. wollen sie auf haken auf
 Kompa. Sie rufen, Nepp, hepp". Die Rettungsgesellschaft
 hat zu tun. Sie zerstören die Tempel. Sie reißendie ab
 von Juden an den Bärten, sie hauen die Frauen. Sie schlo

Diary entry by Ruth Maier from 9th and 16th October 1938

HL-senteret

wrote: "The house is going to be searched. I'm pretty frightened."
 Although she mainly noted everyday occurrences, commented on the changes in her body during puberty, and tried to cope with her first experiences of falling in love and disappointments, she also showed an early interest in politics: "I spoke with Uncle Rudi about the Social Democrats and the communists. He's been a great influence on me! On the other hand I still have my doubts as to what is better", she

wrote on the 20th of November 1935. What particularly bothered her about the Austrian dictatorship was the misery caused by its economic policy and the cynical way it dealt with it. Thus, on the 29th of June 1936, she wrote: "Winter aid, offerings for hungry children, etc. etc. are temporary measures and create a false impression. A government that starts to make such collections doesn't know how to cope any other way, can't create any job opportunities. I am a communist already."

Later, from Norway, she argued in letters to her sister about Trotsky (whose writing style she admired) and Stalin (whom she considered a traitor to socialism). "But the Russian people are behind Stalin, and that's the worst thing. In England you are fed illusions with regard to Russia. Be skeptical." Trotsky, on the other hand, "believes in world revolution ... and you simply have to share his belief." She bought the two volumes of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution and told Judith that she liked

to stroke the spine of the books and leaf through them. "First I wanted to buy a pair of exquisite brown shoes, but then I bought Trotsky" (Letters of the 2nd and 28th of October 1939)
 Beginning in 1938, but especially in Norway, her relationship to Judaism became the central political theme of the diary. At first, there were only stunned descriptions of mistreatment and humiliation. She closed her diary entry of the 9th of October 1938, with the words: "Just get away!!" A week later she drew a first conclusion for herself: "And I'm consciously becoming a Jew, I can feel it. I cannot help it." (16th October 1938).
 She wrote about the riots during the November pogrom: "We slipped into the house like hunted animals like hunted animals, panted up the stairs. Then it started. They hit people, arrested them, smashed up apartments etc. We sat there at home, so pale, and from the streets Jews came to us like corpses." (11th November 1938)
 And on the 27th of November she wrote: "This evening [...] we said goodbye to Uncle Rudi, Papa's friend. [...] Uncle Rudi the socialist also says I ought to think about going to Palestine, because as a Jew it's the only place I'd feel at home. [...] Yes! It is true, Uncle Rudi has fortified my belief in this, he said it, said out loud what until now had been stifled within me: we Jews are only at home 'in Palestine'. To that I'd like to add, 'today'. For tomorrow, tomorrow socialism will come. Then our home will be humanity, the world. Then we'll be able to live as human beings among human beings." But soon after that it stated, "I just know that Zionism is not compatible with socialism. [...] I'm a socialist and I'm striving to conquer, develop this socialism that I feel inside me." (9th December 1938).

Parting from her beloved "Dittl", her sister Judith, was particularly bitter for her. On the 10th of December, Saturday, at eleven o'clock in the evening, the Kindertransport (children's transport) express train departed from Vienna. In her diary Ruth described the scenery: "Out there in Hütteldorf it was dark and black. The Jewish stewards lit the place up with torches. As did children under seventeen. Boys and girls with rucksacks and suitcases. Endless kisses. One more kiss, and a final one. [...] Small, four-year-old children were screaming. Madness! They had to be carried away. And the mothers! The fathers of the young ones are in Dachau. [...] It sounds so lovely when you say: 'There were heartbre-

aking scenes as they said their goodbyes. No, the heart doesn't break so quickly. Mama said: 'If one of them had yelled, just a single one, then all of them would have started. No, nobody yelled, cursed. They just wept. Only tears, all I saw were tears.' Then they found Judith. Mother and daughter wanted to give each other a final kiss: "Their lips were so close when the steward thrust them apart. 'Don't make it any more difficult.'" (11th December 1938)

Ruth and Gunvor

From 1940, Ruth took part in the labour service camps for women set up by the Norwegian National Socialists. In contrast to the compulsory labour service for men, that for women was voluntary. They worked either in welfare institutions or in agriculture. One of the camps was located on the Feiring farm in Birstrand, on the northwest shore of Mjøsa, Norway's largest lake, south of Lillehammer. As Ruth wrote to family in England on the 3rd of January 1941, the young women spend "time here knitting and weaving" and worked "as housemaids on the surrounding farms". Ruth took part in at least three such camps, in Tau near Stavanger and in Svartskog on the Oslofjord as well as Biri.

During her labour service, Ruth met people who were similarly critical. One of these acquaintances introduced her to a tall slender woman – Gunvor Hofmo – in Biri in the late fall of 1940 with the words, "Here is someone whose company you'll enjoy."
 In a letter to the family, Ruth wrote about the first weeks together with Gunvor Hofmo: "I really love one of the girls ... [...] She is so lovely: we chat ... we often upset



Gunvor Hofmo and Ruth Maier (right) in Oslo, April 1942, photographed by Gunvor Hofmo's father, Erling T. Hofmo.

Photo: HL-senteret

each other. Perhaps because we like each other so much.” (3rd January 1941) Also in early January 1941, she noted in her diary, “I cannot describe the warmth between myself and Gunvor. I so love her deep eyes. I love her manner of talking about things.” And on the 9th of January 1941, “Gunvor’s eyes are sky-blue. They are infinite. [...] The days are longer when you love somebody.”

In early February, after her return to Lillestrøm, Ruth had a nervous breakdown and was in psychiatric care until the end of March. Gunvor came from Biri to Oslo regularly to visit her. On the 14th of March Ruth wrote: “What Gunvor has managed to bring to life is the goodness inside me. She’s shown me, reminded me just what *living* should mean. [...] And to ignore her material livelihood when dealing with things you cannot answer for to your inner self. To hear that she thinks like that, too, has given me new courage.”

The labour service had also been a way to escape the oppressive confinement in Lillestrøm, at least for a few weeks. As much as she had been happy at first and grateful for the Strøm family’s welcome, in the long run she could not stand the physical closeness, Mrs. Strøm’s patronising, wanting to teach her the right way to behave, dress, and the like. However, they were the only family to take her in and she was dependent on their hospitality. When she was still going to Oslo to the Frogner School to prepare for her school leaving certificate, she didn’t get home until six or seven in the evening. “I would spend the only pleasant hours of my day with half a dozen sandwiches in the Deichmann or university libraries.” The evenings passed with “reading, or night-time walks picking flowers. My loneliness at school turned me into a leper. I spent break times in the loo, for I was afraid of the looks aimed at me of



Photo: HL-senteret

Gunvor Hofmo (left) and Ruth Maier in Kolsås, November 1941

by people who always saw me alone, alone.” The air in the rooms of the post office in Lillestrøm suffocated her, “because I knew that we were one too many!” (15th March 1941, Ullevål Hospital Oslo).

The best diversion in the hospital was drawing. “In my thoughts all my pictures are dedicated to Gunvor.” (17th March 1941)

For Gunvor she also painted watercolors. And wrote letters in ever stylistically better Norwegian, in which she complained that Gunvor did not write: “Are you worried that my response will upset you, that they might penetrate the armour you surround yourself with?”

In April 1941, Ruth and Gunvor reported for labour service again – this time on a farm in Tau, near Stavanger. In mid-May, Gunvor, whose relatives were active in the Norwegian resistance movement, was ar-

rested on suspicion of trying to escape to England to deliver messages from the Norwegian resistance. After three days in detention in Stavanger, Gunvor was taken to Oslo. She was released just in time to stand protectively by Ruth, who in the labour camp, was insulted as a Jew, and to leave with her.

In the summer of 1941, Ruth and Gunvor hitchhiked north with three other young women to the area around Trondheim, where they worked in a market garden until October. The two best experiences for Ruth: paid work (albeit unofficial, because she did not have a work permit) and the “twosome life” with Gunvor in a room on a farm.

After her return to Lillestrøm, she and Gunvor took a course in typing and German and Norwegian shorthand in Oslo, which she paid for with the summer’s saved wages.

From November 1941, the Hofmo family accepted that Gunvor was with a woman and invited the two of them to family gatherings together. At the same time Ruth began to model, first for the painter Aasmund Esval, and in the spring of 1942 also for the well-known sculptor Gustav Vigeland. Vigeland’s plaster figure *Overrasket* (“Surprised”) with Ruth Maier’s body and the head of another model was cast in bronze in 2002 and placed in Oslo’s Vigeland Park.

Deportation and murder

One of Vidkun Quisling’s first measures as prime minister of the collaboration government formed in 1942 was to register the Jews living in Norway. On the 4th of March 1942, Ruth Maier filled out the



Photos: Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo

26 November 1942: The German troop ship Donau leaves Oslo harbour with over 500 Jewish men, women and children on board. The pictures were taken by the Norwegian resistance fighter Georg W. Fossum.

“Questionnaire for Jews in Norway” sent to her by the police. As her current religious affiliation she stated “none (since 1926)”, and “Mosaic by birth” as her former religious affiliation.

In Autumn 1942, Ruth Maier moved from Lillestrøm to Oslo, to a dormitory at Dalsberg Path. In early October 1942, the arrests began, first of Jewish men. At the end of November, it was the turn of women and children. The raid in which Ruth Maier was arrested took place on the 26th of November. A total of 300 policemen, Gestapo men and members of the *Hirden* (Norwegian paramilitary organization based on the model of the German SA) were involved in the operation. Jan Erik Vold quoted Nunna Moum, an eyewitness, in the diary edition:

“She remembers that the arrest happened quietly. Two Norwegian policemen led the young Austrian woman down the stairs to a car waiting in the street. She was ushered into the back seat of the car, where two other women were in tears on the floor. The girls in the hostel woke each other up and watched the events unfold. Someone said, ‘We’ll look after your gold wristwatch until you come back.’ Ruth replied, ‘I’m not coming back, ever.’”

With 529 Jewish men, women and children on board (earlier sources reported 532

deportees), the German troopship Donau set sail from Akershuskai and left the harbour for Stettin, from where the deportees were taken to Auschwitz. The photographer and resistance fighter Georg W. Fossum from the Hjemmefront (Home Front) was alerted by a police informer, from whom he sometimes received tips, and secretly took two photographs. Both are on display in the DÖW (Archive of the Austrian Resistance) exhibition. With few exceptions (mostly young, strong men), the deportees were murdered in the gas chamber immediately after their arrival in Birkenau. The last survivor, Samuel Steinmann, died in 2015.

Ruth Maier in today's Norway

After the discovery of Ruth Maier's diaries in the estate of Gunvor Hofmo in 1997, Jan Erik Vold worked for ten years on the publication, which is now available in thirteen languages. It formed the basis of the play *Tvillingsjeler* (Soulmates, actually "Twin Souls") by Otto Homlung, with which the Norwegian Riksteatret went on tour in 2013, and was also the basis for a Broadway musical in 2014. Under the title *Letters From Ruth*, Gisle Kverndokk and Akse-Otto Bull, the two authors of the musical, composed an opera. Artists from the New York Opera Society first performed excerpts from it in a staged concert at Washington's National Gallery of Art in September 2017. It was translated into German and performed in the Gmunden City Theater as part of the *Musical Spring* between the end of March and the end of May 2023.

A documentary by Elsa Kvamme was released in 2021 and is based on the rela-



Musical... "Letters from Ruth"
Music: Gisle Kverndokk
Libretto: Akse-Otto Bull & Gisle Kverndokk
German translation: Elisabeth Sikora

tionship between Ruth Maier and Gunvor Hofmo.

Letters and diaries of the "Norwegian Anne Frank" are now in the possession of the Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL-senteret) in Oslo.

When the then Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged the responsibility of the Norwegian state for the crimes against the Jews at the state ceremony for Holocaust Remembrance Day on the 27th of January 2012 at Akershuskai, he mentioned Ruth Maier as a typical example:

"What about the crimes against Ruth Maier and the other Jews? The murders were unquestionably carried out by the Nazis. But it was Norwegians who car-

ried out the arrests. It was Norwegians who drove the trucks. And it happened in Norway. [...] Without relieving the Nazis of their responsibility, it is time for us to acknowledge that Norwegian policemen and other Norwegians took part in the arrest and deportation of Jews."

If not before, Ruth Maier has become a household name in Norwegian political history since this speech, which received much international attention.

*The slightly modified text in German was published in 2017 in the *Mittelungen: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, DÖW, Folge 234, Dezember 2017, Wien 2017, S 1-8 and is online at <https://www.doew.at/cms/download/6kqjj/234.pdf>.*



Film poster of Elsa Kvamme's film *Ingen hverdag mer* (No More Everyday Life. A documentary about Ruth Maier and Gunvor Hofmo and the Norwegian Holocaust).



Henrik Wergeland statue in Oslo. In a photo from 1939, Ruth Maier (standing on the right) is in front of the monument with her class.



Ruth Maier sent the photo to her mother in England and described it on the back: „Musch, I also sent Dittl these photos. You know, in a fit of wastefulness I had far too much paper made. This is our class in front of the Wergeland statue (Wergeland – about the greatest Norwegian poet, he also got Jews allowed to come to Norway)*. [...] The girl in front in the middle is called Solveig.“



Since 1972 homosexuality is no longer a punishable offence in Oslo – 50 years later rainbow benches were erected.



* Article 2 of the constitution (the so-called „Judenparagraf“) of 1814 stated that no more entry permits should be issued for Jews; they were expressly forbidden to stay in Norway. This also applied to visits and to people passing through. In 1831, Henrik Wergeland began to campaign for the rights of Jews and tried to persuade Parliament to abolish Article 2. Wergeland died in 1845, and it was not until 1851 that the ban was removed from the Norwegian constitution.

Memory Gaps ::: Erinnerungslücken

Ruth Maier – „Blue Frozen Sky“ Memorial exhibition on the 75th anniversary of her death

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Ruth Maier's death, Memory Gaps presented a memorial project in remembering the young Jewish writer from Vienna who was murdered in the Auschwitz concentration camp. The project is online at: <https://www.memorygaps.eu/ruth-maier-blaue-froener-himmel/>

One of the numerous de-individualising labels in the concentration camps was the category of the „blue triangle Emigrants“ which cynically referred to as those people who had fled the Nazi sphere of power in time, but who fell again into the hands of the Gestapo or SS due to the military occupation of the country to which they had emigrated.

Blue-yellow angles were superimposed as yellow and blue fabric triangles and attached to concentration camp prisoners' clothing to identify „Jewish emigrants“.

“I, Ruth Maier, eighteen years old, now pose the following question as a human being. As a human being I ask the world whether it should be like this ...”, reads a diary entry of an eighteen-years old, written on October 5, 1938, in Vienna.

“The Jews were downgraded from their existing status – which might not have been one of equality, but was at least tolerable – to that of non-humans, pigs etc. [...] They are playing popular songs on the wireless. It is a funny, ghastly world.”

Ruth Maier, diary entry from 27.09.1938

“The temple is being destroyed. They're tearing off the beards of old Jewish men, they're bashing the women. They're smashing windows. [...] In the small alleys.”

Ruth Maier, diary entry from 16.10.1938

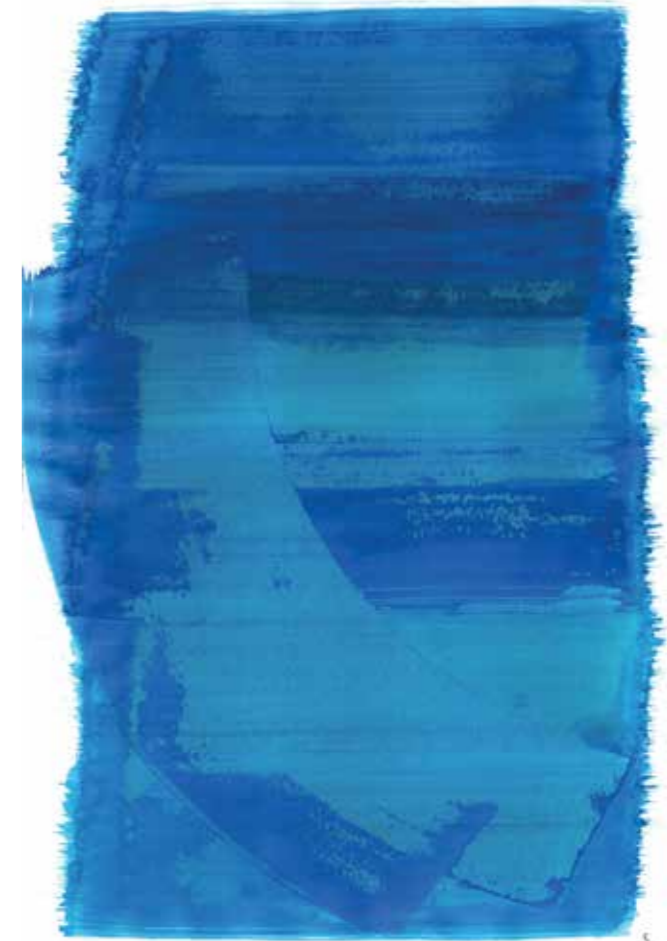
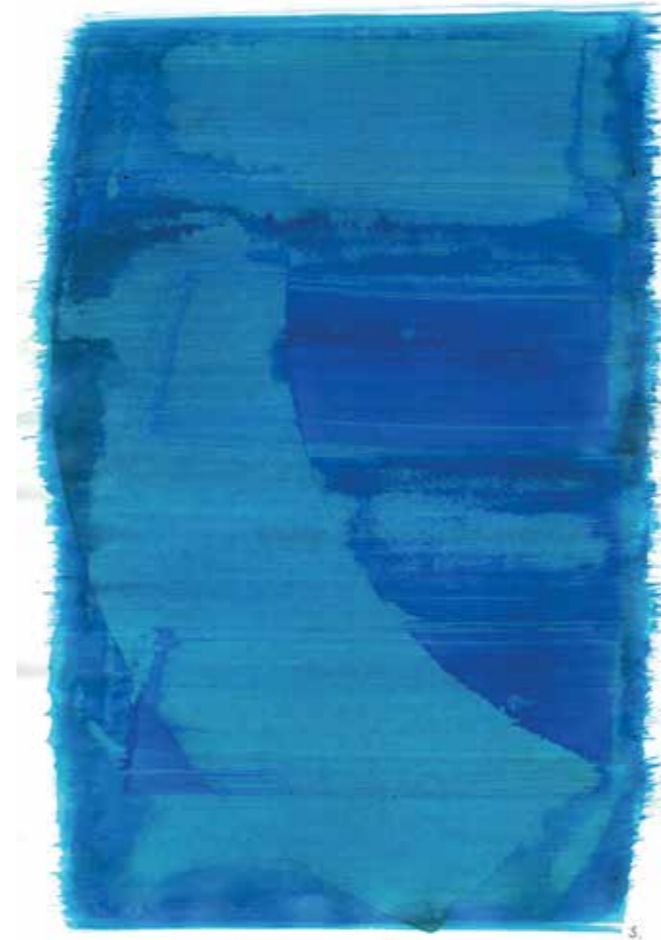
“Yesterday was the most awful day of my life. Now I know what progroms are, I know what human beings are capable of; human beings: made in the likeness of God [...], Jews like livestock on their way to the slaughter ... People stood and stared.”

Ruth Maier, diary entry from 11.11.1938

Since 2021, the Ruth-Maier-Park has existed in Vienna's Leopoldstadt. *Memory Gaps* has been campaigning for street naming since 2015:

“Where is the street in Vienna named after Ruth Maier? She originally had a future in this city, which she wanted to help shape and not just ‘die’. Not just ‘fall off a machine like a screw’, as she put it. She would have categorically ruled out for the rest of her life that she would once be deported in a terrible way, to be murdered in a concentration camp. Yet that was her fate.

To this day, there is no street in Vienna that shares her name. The art platform *Memory Gaps* was founded in 2015 by the painter Konstanze Sailer. Since then, interventions and exhibitions have been used to initiate the renaming of streets, squares and parks that are still named after Nazi accomplices. From Vienna to Salzburg and from Munich to Berlin and Hamburg. *Memory Gaps* was the first art initiative to commemorate all Nazi victim groups and for the first time to bring female Nazi victims permanently into the focus of remembrance culture.”



Links: **Konstanze Sailer: Ruth Maier, Blue Frozen Sky No. 09**, 2016, ink on handmade paper, 42.0 x 29.2 cm

Rechts: **Konstanze Sailer: Ruth Maier, Blue Frozen Sky No. 11**, 2016, ink on handmade paper, 42,0 x 29,2 cm

Places of Residence | Memorials: Vienna – Lillestrøm – Oslo

A Search for Traces by Petra Paul 2023

B/W Photos, postcards, articles: H. Semleret, Colour Photos: Petra Paul



Attic flat
Peter-Jordan-Strasse 96, 1190 Vienna



Today's Rudolf-Sigmund-Hof, Gersthofer Straße 75-77, 1180 Vienna
B/W photo: Upper arrow refers to „Papa's Office“, the one below to „Das flat“. The Maier family lived on staircase 1, door 14: 2 rooms, 1 cabinet, kitchen, anteroom, balcony.

There has been a commemorative plaque on the building since 2022.



Obere Donaustraße 43, 1020 Vienna
Irma, Ruth and Judith Maier lived there in 1938/39 in a sublet room.

Opposite is the Ruth Maier Park since 2021.



Grave of Ruth Maier's parents at the Döblinger Cemetery in Vienna with the inscription: "In memoriam Ruth Maier".



Shoah Wall of Names Memorial to the murdered Jewish children, women and men from Austria in Ostarrichi Park, opened on the 9th of November 2021. Among the 65,000 names is also that of Ruth Maier.





Storgata 7, Lillestrøm

Postcards Ruth Maier sent to her mother and sister in England, noting where she lived.



A rainbow zebra strip runs across Kirkegata parallel to Storgata.



Ruth Maier lived with the Strøm family on the 1st floor of the building.



There is a memorial plaque for Ruth Maier on the wall of the house since 2019.

Ruth Maiers gate, Strømmen/Lillestrøm



Dalsbergstien 3, Oslo



Former boarding house for young women where Ruth Maier lived in autumn 1942.



A stumbling stone in front of it has commemorated Ruth Maier since 2010.



A few metres away is the Ruth Maiers plass since 2020.



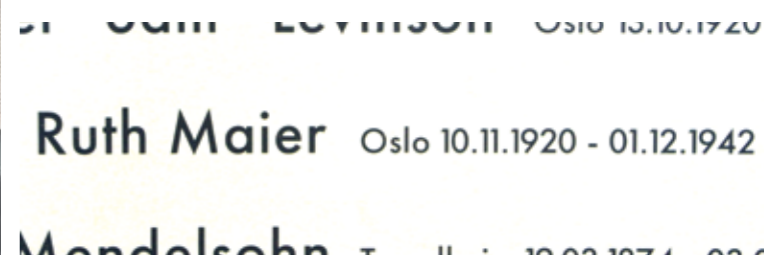
Ruth Maier attended drawing classes at the Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole, Ullevålsveien 5 in 1942. In 2015, the building was rebuilt and reopened as the Edvard Munch School. Ruth Maier's name is inscribed on a plaque in memory of the pupils: De gav sitt liv for Norge (They gave their lives for Norway).



Monument to the victims of the Shoah at the Jewish cemetery at Østre Gravlund in the shape of a Magen David.



Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies, HL-senteret. Names of deported Jews with place of deportation, date of birth and date of death.



People & Powers Ruth Maier – the Anne Frank of Austria

Martina Ebm reads in documentary from Ruth Maier's diaries

Her diaries are part of UNESCO's *Memory of the World* documentary heritage. In her native Austria, however, she is hardly known: Ruth Maier, born into a Jewish family in Vienna in 1920, meticulously wrote diaries – about her private situation, but also about political developments in Austria before and after the invasion of German troops. She also wrote about her flight to Norway in 1939 and her time as a stranger and refugee. The entries end only shortly before her deportation to Auschwitz, where she was gassed on December 1, 1942. These are subtle and analytical observations of an extraordinarily sensitive and gifted young woman. It is no coincidence that Ruth Maier is often called the "Anne Frank of Austria" today.

Robert Gokl, creator of the *Menschen & Mächte* (People and Powers) documentary *Ruth Maier - die Anne Frank von Österreich* (Ruth Maier - the Anne Frank of Austria) followed Ruth Maier's path through Vienna and Norway. He and his camera team were accompanied by the well-known actress Martina Ebm, who reads from Ruth Maier's diaries. Ebm captures with a high level of acting sensitivity those moods that Ruth put down on paper.



Robert Gokl: "Her dedication, her team spirit and her intensive study of Ruth Maier's diaries have made Martina Ebm a stroke of luck for this documentary."

Martina Ebm: "I can easily put myself in Ruth Maier's place as a teenager, because I too was passionate about writing diaries at that age. The deep pain and loneliness as a result of her flight to Norway, which permeate the later diaries, I can only imagine as someone born later. Ruth lost everything that was dear to her in Vienna, while I live in safety. And in the end Ruth lost the most precious thing, her life. Her parting words reveal that she knows what is in store for her. This film gives voice to one who has been silenced. We must not stop dealing with the crimes of the Nazi regime, because they make us realize that we must act courageously where injustice occurs."

„I see the diary as if it were my friend.“

From the age of twelve, Ruth Maier shared everything that concerned her with this friend, privately in her development from schoolgirl to adult woman, politically in her critical view of political and social developments, beginning with the civil war in Austria in February 1934.

Ruth's father was a social democrat and trade union official, so her political stance was left-wing from her youth. Her Jewish background, on the other hand, had no significance in the family, especially not a religious one. Only the invasion of German troops in March 1938 and the subsequent violence against Jews, including a pogrom in November 1938, changed that: "Yesterday was the most horrible day I have ever experienced!" she writes one day after her

18th birthday. It is November 10, 1938, the day of the November pogrom. And: "I am becoming a conscious Jew. I feel it. I can't help it."

Escape to „foreign Norway“ for the time being

Already too old for a place on a Kindertransport, Ruth Maier is lucky enough to be able to flee to a host family in Norway in January 1939. There she wants to take her school-leaving exams and then continue on to her family, which has been able to flee to England. But one month before the Matura, the Wehrmacht marches into Norway. Ruth notes in her diary: "Now again. No difference. I am alone."

As a Jewish refugee, Ruth Maier is able to live without restrictions and self-determined, at least initially, even under German occupation. She does not experience violent and murderous anti-Semitism among the Norwegian population as she did in Vienna.

She secures her livelihood by volunteering for labor service several times. In one of these camps she meets Gunvor Hofmo, whose family has joined the communist resistance. The two young women fall in love and begin a relationship that lasts until Ruth Maier's deportation.

Ruth is arrested at the end of November 1942

In the port of Oslo, Ruth Maier is able to smuggle one last message to Gunvor Hofmo from the deportation ship *Donau*: "I believe that it is good the way it has come. Why should we not suffer when there is so much suffering? Do not worry



Martina Ebm with Martin Gerhartl (camera) filming at the Geiranger-Fjord in Norway

about me. I might not want to change places with you."

After Ruth Maier's murder, her diaries remained with Gunvor Hofmo and unknown to the public for more than half a century. Hofmo did become an important Norwegian writer after World War II, but her attempts to publish the diaries failed.

After Hofmo's death, Norwegian writer Jan Erik Vold found them in 1997 in her estate and published them in 2007, and to date they have been published worldwide in more than ten languages. The impact of Ruth Maier's depiction of Norwegian society between collaboration with and resistance against the Nazi occupation was

so lasting that, on Norwegian initiative, her diaries have been part of the *World Document Heritage* since 2014.

Ruth Maier – the Anne Frank of Austria was produced by ORF and sponsored by VGR (Verwertungsgesellschaft Rundfunk).

Online on Jewish News from Austria, produced by the Austrian Press- and Information Service in the United States Washington, D.C.: <https://www.jewish-news.at/in-the-media/people-amp-powers-ruth-maier-the-anne-frank-of-austria>

German original: <https://tv.orf.at/programm/orf2/menschenma176.html>

Filmscreening

Ruth Maier – the Anne Frank of Austria
A film by Robert Gokl

Tuesday, November 14th, 2023, 7:30 p.m.

The Gugg – Café and HOSI Vienna Headquarters
Heumühlgasse 14, 1040 Vienna



Fig. 1: Rausch Farm



Fig. 2: Cemetery and Field



Fig. 3: Žarošice, 4: Žarošice noon, 5: Žarošice

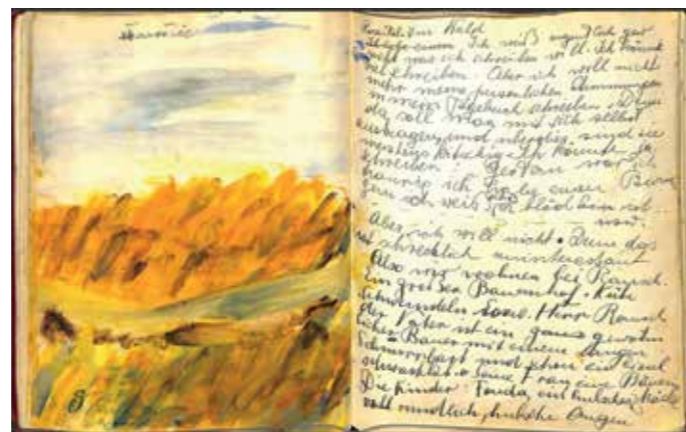


Fig. 6: Žarošice



Fig. 7: Rosenthal, 8: Žarošice, Forest in Autumn



Fig. 9: Žarošice



Fig. 10: View

Petra M. Springer: The Artistic Work of Ruth Maier

Ruth Maier left behind eight diaries – six from the years 1933 to 1938, two written between 1940 and 1942. Unfortunately, as she herself mentioned, not all of them have been preserved¹. Numerous letters survived. Photographs have also been preserved, many pasted on lined sheets and stapled in a binder (some of them almost disintegrated due to water damage). However, there are also numerous drawings and watercolours by a very talented artist Ruth Maier, who is referred to rather casually in the reviews. Although artistic works are depicted in the diaries and letters, which have now been translated into 13 languages and edited by Jan Erik Vold, they are exclusively presented in black and white or as grayscale images. Vold also found a manuscript of Gunvor Hofmo in her papers, published in 1999: *Jeg glemmer ingen*² [I forget no one]. In this publication, 15 poems by Gunvor Hofmo were published and 5 watercolours by Ruth Maier printed in colour (*Kiellands plass, Kirkegård/Vår Freslers, Den røde bro, Slottsparken und Kirkegård bak Deichman*).

Occasionally, publications mention Ruth Maier's chosen motifs, but mostly only that she drew and painted, or that she wanted to become an artist – before that, she wanted to be a doctor, actress or poet/writer. As time went by, the desire to pursue an artistic career became more and more concrete. Thus, on the 12th of December 1941, she wrote: "A childish dream has started to stir inside me again: to draw, paint, live for art. If I could bring this to fruition my life would not be in vain."³ In autumn 1942, she moved from Lillestrøm to the *Englehjemmet* boarding house for young women and girls in Dalsbergstien 3, Oslo. She took evening classes in drawing at the *Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole*.

The estate is housed in the *Ruth Maier Archives* at the *Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies* at *Villa Grande* in Oslo. This analysis uses scanned diary pages⁴, drawings and watercolours that were selected after viewing the original documents on site.

Artistic Work

The artistic work of Ruth Maier consists of pencil or ink drawings, sketches, studies, illustrations, comic-like drawings of daily events during the vacations and watercolours. Some are preserved as separate sheets; others are found in the diaries and letters. A tegneblokk (drawing pad) has also survived.

In the second diary, dated from 13.11.1935 to 28.10.1936, Ruth Maier uses different artistic techniques, it is thus well suited to give an overview of the different forms of expression. Glimpses of the diary show very well how she used it not only for text, but at the same time as a picture medium.

In the summer of 1936 she took a trip to Žarošice (the birthplace of her father, who died in 1933), onward to Brno, and finally to Lake Balaton in Hungary. Referring to her pencil drawings of the *Rausch Farm* (Fig. 1), made in Rosenthal in July of 1936, Ruth Maier wrote in her diary: "So we're staying with the Rausch family. A big farm. Cows, piggies."⁵ Although on one drawing "unfinished" is written, the other shows a view of the farm. She has drawn in detail the arrangement of buildings including the stone slabs laid on the ground and a building with a gut-

ter downpipe among other things. Furthermore, she captured Žarošice in ink drawings and watercolours several times – "It's wonderful. If you want to write something about Rosent[h]al and Žarošice, you can only do it in pictures."⁶: A path tapering to the center of the picture conveys the depth of the space, next to it a flowering field with buildings hinted at, behind this to the right of the path a wall with Žarošice cemetery behind it, framed with black lines and signed, lower left, Ruth Maier (*Cemetery and Field*, Fig. 2). The village, drawn with ink, with church tower and roofs of houses in a landscape with trees, next to it an ink drawing with a tree in the middle of a landscape of fields, below this a picturesque watercolour of a field in yellow, ochre and brown tones (on it also a signature consisting, in part, of the initials R and M) (Figs. 3-5). The sheet in between was torn out, either she gave the picture away, or it was self-censored.

If the colours in the picture *Cemetery and Field* appear gloomy, the colours in the other pictures seem to virtually glow, which is also characteristic of the watercolours on the next pages of the diary (Figs. 6-10). There she captured landscapes with fields and sky. Although she sometimes prepares watercolours, such as *Cemetery and Field*, with pencil, pencil lines appear only sporadically in the watercolour *Rosenthal* (Fig. 7). These pictures display a very picturesque handling of colour. Ruth Maier does not always adhere to her graphic, linear guidelines.⁷

In Brno, she penciled a balcony planted with cacti, seen from inside an apartment through the balcony door and two



Fig. 11: In Brno



Fig. 12: Overwritten Drawing



Fig. 13: Brno (?)



Fig. 14: City



Fig. 15: O. T.



Fig. 16: In the Forest

windows. Curtains to the left and right frame the image, which is placed below written diary entries (Fig. 11). The focus is on the middle image in the picture – the view through the glass door. Not quite in the center is a cord of a blind.

On another page Ruth Maier has overwritten a drawing with text (Fig. 12). On yet another pages already written on in pencil have been overwritten in ink. These „Verwerfungen“ [repudiations] are characteristic – she also reread her diary, crossed out passages, tore out pages and thus censored them herself, texts were also restarted several times in some places.⁸

In another drawing she has apparently captured a detail of Brno (Fig. 13). A watercolour preserved as a single sheet (torn from a sketchbook), which Ruth Maier titled *City*, could also be a view of Brno, with fields in the foreground, buildings or roofs behind them, possibly the cathedral as a brown-black block and mountains or clouds in the background (Fig. 14). On the left of this watercolour is a completely different pencil drawing, which Ruth Maier has painted over, using watercolours. Characteristic of watercolours is that they are, in contrast gouache, opaque (both made of water-soluble pigments and binders), so previously drawn lines shine through. The back of the picture is also painted in watercolour. In the foreground is again a landscape and, in the background, buildings are suggested (Fig. 15). Other individual sheets can be assumed to be from the same drawing pad. The tear-off line and torn-out holes are similar and on the page opposite the rounded corners are the same size. In the watercolour *In the Forest* (Fig. 16), many people lie motionless, dead or asleep, on the ground. Except for one or two people on the left who are moving,

raising hands or feet in the air. The people are indicated by pencil lines and, due to the almost uniform, thin application of paint, merge into one mass of people, lying. Ruth Maier was political and well-read on current affairs. She often talked politics with people around her. For example, she was aware of the Spanish Civil War and reflected on war. She thought about dead soldiers as heroes, which she also wrote in her diary.⁹ It is possible that this picture was created as a result of such discussions.

With pencil and ink

In the drawing *Siesta* (Fig. 17) a young woman is sleeping. She is lying, dressed in a shirt or blouse, skirt, socks and shoes, with a cushion on a couch, or in a field. The lines behind her suggest a cornfield. The objects lying next to her are not clearly identifiable. Above this, hills or mountains are indicated with sweeping strokes.

The word “blue” is written here (for a blue wall, or for a blue sky or mountains, which is more likely). Was the colour written in words intended as a reminder for a later watercolour painting? But, would she have drawn the subject in such detail if she had intended to do it in colour? Probably not. Perhaps Ruth Maier planned the drawing at an earlier stage as a preliminary drawing of a watercolour that she wanted to do in colour? In any case, here a word, as a scriptural element, refers to a colour within the gray pencil drawing – she thus combines different means of communication. Here, as often in the diaries, word and image are brought into connection. Whereas here a word appears in the picture, pictorial elements also appear in the diary text: On one page, Ruth Maier describes scenes on the beach in Keszthely on Lake Balaton (Fig. 18). She has illustrated the words “Wir schaukeln und hutschen [wippen]” [“We swayed and rocked”] with a swing and a seesaw. They fantasize about being by the



Fig. 17: Siesta

sea, and have renamed places, which she has also illustrated, they are now called: Mr. X or Ekland, Beach, Troy, Dalia and Sea with a ship named Wanda. In a letter, Ruth Maier writes that her grandmother should buy her a bicycle – behind the word “bicycle” she draws the vehicle (Fig. 19).

In addition to studies of heads, which often develop into caricatures, she also made studies of nudes and human figures (Figs. 20-23).

On one page, divided by a line, there are various sketched views (Fig. 24), almost surreal in the way they are jumbled together – a pictorial language that is continued on the next page of the book (see background image of the inside front cover).

Ruth Maier wrote in the diary: “4th Sept. 36 (On the ship from Budapest to

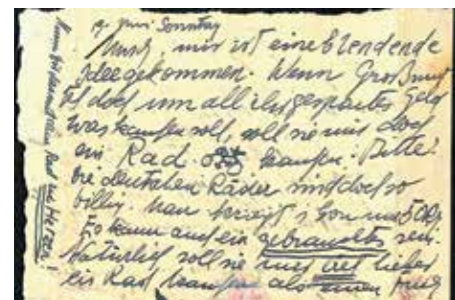


Fig. 18, 19: Illustrations

Vienna). We are travelling by ship. Very nice! Lying on deck chairs. Sunbathing. If I had colours, I would paint.”¹⁰ From the deck, Ruth Maier captured impressions of the ship’s voyage in ink and pencil: Church spires, buildings, landscape, bridges, ship, deck chair,... There were no individual sheets with the sketches, but the images that appeared one after the other on the shore during the trip are condensed here in a drawing, almost like in a dream¹¹, or like in a film, the shots of which appearing all at once in one picture.

In a letter to her sister, Ruth Maier gives a glimpse of the *spisetue* [dining room] in the Strøm family home in Lillestrøm (Fig. 25). Seating and a table are in the foreground. In the background, a door, a sketched tapestry with the description: “woven rug (Fr. Strøm’s eccentricity)”, a window with the descriptive word in it, and, indicated by seven strokes, what she describes as an “old norweg. Box (purpose unclear)”. In another letter to Judith, she sketched her table (Fig. 26): “My table (current state)”. On it she draws and describes



Fig. 20-23: Head, Nude and Body Studies

a mirror, comb and brush, letters, “4 letters to answer (Brrrr!)”, a diary, and “Your letter”, which, placed almost centrally on the table, occupies a special place.

During the summer vacations Ruth made drawings, about which she wrote on the 15th of July 1940: “We’ve been on holiday. We hung around a cabin in Nit-tedal, stuffed ourselves with *syttetøy* [jam], *kaker* [cakes] and *pålegg* [cold cuts], and now we’re back in Lillestrøm. I did a few nice drawings. Frau Strøm burned them. Oh well.”¹²

Ruth Maier also drew during her voluntary labour service and her stay at Ullevål Hospital, where, according to her medical records, she was from the 3rd of February to the 27th of March.¹³

In Biri, *Vaerelset* [The Room] (Fig. 27) was created, in which a person sits on a bed. In detail, it gives a glimpse of the surrounding interior space.

In *På Gangen* [In the Corridor] (Fig. page 45), she captured fellow patients: “I draw: [...] *In the corridor*: Two women walking down the corridor in stri-



Fig. 24: Sketches



Fig. 25: Sketch of the Dining Room

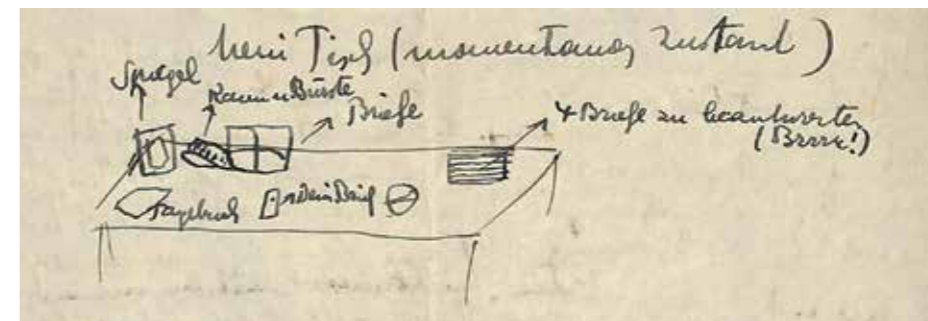


Fig. 26: Sketch of Ruth Maier’s Table

ped clothing, you see them from behind. One girl is standing by the window, the other is in the foreground. (Gunvor has this picture).

I’ve discovered my own ‘style’. It’s influenced by Edward Munch.”¹⁴ In his paintings, Munch gave expression to states of mind – inner, emotional, and mental states – and, in this sense, Ruth Maier could see his influence on her work. The girl in the foreground has crossed her arms in front of her chest and rests her chin on them. With her eyes closed, she seems to be completely absorbed in herself, which Maier converts into drawings.



Fig. 27: Værelset, 19.12.1940

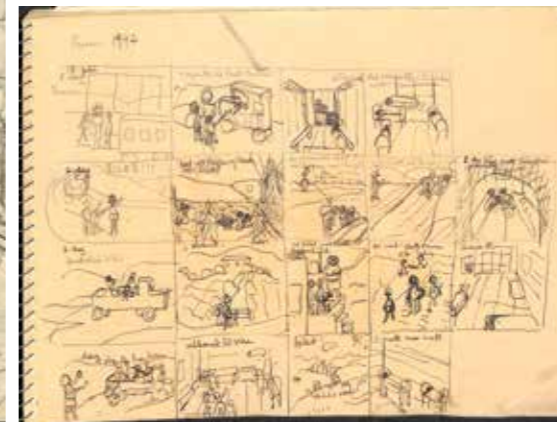


Fig. 28: Holiday 1942

In 1941 and 1942, she created picture stories that depict the events of the day in comic-strips. In the picture *Holiday 1942* (Fig. 28), she strings together 18 individual scenes in pencil and ink. In Norwegian¹⁵ she described the individual experiences, beginning with “15. July, 1. dag [day] Sinsen” (traffic junction in Oslo). Ruth and her friends (Gunvor and Karen) hitchhiked and were given a ride by a vehicle (3 cigarettes to the first truck). Det overnattes i Lillehammer/staying over night in Lillehammer. On the second day, the women stopped cars again. Maier wrote the word *BILER!!!* [CARS!!!] on the first drawing.

En omkvelvet båt! Velkommen.../An overturned boat! Welcome... .. forlatt på flukt/abandoned on the run. Bu låve (naer/ved?) Ringebu? overnattes/Spend the night near Ringebu.

On the third day, the three have breakfast on the back of a truck. They are now in Kvam – where they had met at the Forbrigid farm. Vi blir mottatt av Ragnhild/We are received in Ragnhild. Er med slåttonna Nils Erling/Taking part in cutting the grass (slåttonna expression for activity when the farmer and helpers cut the grass for hay). Natt/Night.

The next day they went on an excursion. Velkommen til seteren (Welcome to the mountain pasture). On the next landscape drawing is: The mountain! And again: Natt/Night. Similar to her diary entries, Ruth Maier mainly draws the events instead of describing them for pages on end.

One drawing of the travelers (Fig. 29), was also probably made during the trip on these holidays, as was a portrait of a woman in a room (Fig. 30).¹⁶ She sits at a table, one arm resting on the table, with the other she appears to support her head. The room is depicted very colourfully in watercolour. Clearly visible, the preliminary drawing in pencil. In the background is a latticed window with blooming potted



Fig. 29: O. T.



Fig. 30: O. T.

flowers in front of it. Through the lattices a view of a landscape with sky is visible, each of the six parts could be an individual abstract image.

Colourful Visual Language

The watercolour *Behind the Church* dated April 1939 (Fig. 31) was made in Lillestrøm. Here too, two houses, with a sug-



Fig. 31: *Behind the Church*, April 1939 (front and back)

gestion of people sitting in front of the buildings, are picturesquely depicted in a yellowish landscape with trees and a blue sky. On the back is a mainly black, crossed-out watercolour with the following addressed to Judith: "Please give me your honest opinion. Of course, the one on the other side! Don't you think it has some atmosphere? Don't throw it away."

In 1941 Ruth Maier changed to a more linear conception of her expressionist watercolours. She sketches shapes in pencil and for the most part sticks to these guidelines, but uses colour picturesquely within these lines, such as, for example in *Bare Trees* from March 1941 (Fig. p. 46),



Fig. 32: *Tau*, May 1941



Painted whilst Ruth Maier was in Ullevål Hospital. On the 17th of March 1941, she wrote in her diary, "I'm to stay here for another month. My only diversion is drawing. *Park*: Very good. Green meadows on either side of a path. Bright spots and flowers. People are walking along a path, which curves to the left. People are sitting on a bench. A woman looks into the distance. [...] *Bare Trees*: Five bare trees in front of a row of houses."¹⁷ The trees are on a colourful lawn, behind them, clearly separated by a line, are the houses, both on the left and right stands a person, next to the one on the right another tree. The expressionist depiction of the trees is reminiscent of those of Gabriele Münter, for example, in *Vereiste Straße* [Icy Road] (1911) or Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in *Forest-Cemetery* in



Fig. 33: *The Red Bridge*, Trondheim, 1941



Fig. 34: *Longing*, 1942

Davos (around 1935). Smoke rises from one house. In the blue sky two clouds are moving. Interesting that the darker blue of the sky is mainly within the branches, as if these define new colour areas.

In a letter to her family in England on the 25th of April 1941, she wrote: "And even if I sometimes write a poem, paint. *Those times are past*. I would like to go to art school. But Musch [as Ruth Maier called her mother], my opinion of this school would be quite different from how you imagine. I really like painting. Sometimes I produce some pretty colours. I've done two things that are beautiful. I want to frame them later and hang them in our room. One of them is called *Spring* and the other *Bare Trees*."¹⁸

The local colour (character) can deviate from the original colour of objects and so tree trunks can also appear in red, blue, yellow, green or different colours. This is depicted, for example, in a watercolour painted in Tau in May 1941 and dedicated to Petter (Fig. 32): A path in ochre, next to it a green meadow with an electric pole, gray and brown boulders layered on top of each other, with trees growing behind them in shades of brown, red, and blue tones, with yellow leaves, shrubs indicated by green dots, blue water behind them, and ochre moun-



Fig. 35: *Kvam*, July 42

tains in the background. The pencil drawing is clearly visible. The colouring of the trees is reminiscent of those of André Derain, or Edvard Munch (for example, in *The Garden in Åsgårdstrand*, 1904-05).

In *The Red Bridge* in Trondheim (Fig. 33), also from 1941, she sketched out shapes in violet and then coloured them. Holes at the four corners of the painting indicate that Ruth Maier had hung it, like other works, with drawing pins. On the 23rd of January 1941, Ruth Maier wrote: "I really enjoy drawing with colours. It is as if I were making music. A yellow and a red next to each other make me feel happy inside."¹⁹

Ruth Maier described the picture *Longing* whilst still in hospital: "Another drawing: *Longing*: an avenue of bare trees, a meadow, a large house. A person is walking across the meadow. Birds in the sky. When I get some colours I want to paint it."²⁰ Inspired by the drawing, she transformed the image into colour in 1942 in a modified form, the large house and the birds are missing (Fig. 34). A path with four trees, a meadow in orange and red tones, in the background in yellow and green, a forest with green-blue trees and behind it a mountain in violet. Above, as a complementary contrast to purple, a yellow sky. Here she has mainly used the primary co-



Fig. 36: O. T.

lours (red, yellow, blue) and the complementary colours (orange, green, violet). She probably cropped the picture too tightly, or made a mistake when cutting the watercolour, and as a result she glued parts of the picture together, and accordingly, repainted a corner at the bottom left.

A watercolour from the drawing pad that was created in *Kvam* (Fig. 35) shows very clearly how Ruth Maier selected sections of her pictures. Here she has defined them in pencil as well as in ink and – in this now newly created image within an image – titled *Kvam* and dated bottom right "July 1943". The choice of cropping creates tension, with the part of the building leading into the picture on the left and, in the middle ground, the hills arranged one behind the other with a bridge. The hill in the background is lighter than the one in the foreground which, in addition to the arrangement of the elements one behind the other, creates pictorial depth.

In another watercolor (Fig. 36), as in the drawing with the word "blue" in the background (Fig. 17), there is text in the image space: "Om igjen!" (Once again!) at the bottom left and circled areas of the image "overflødig" (superfluous) and several times "dårlig" (bad)²¹ – these are probably the comments of a teacher at the art



Fig. 37: O. T.

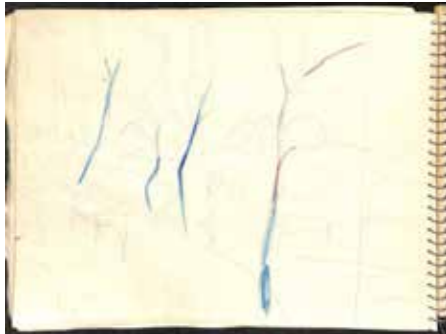


Fig. 38: O. T.

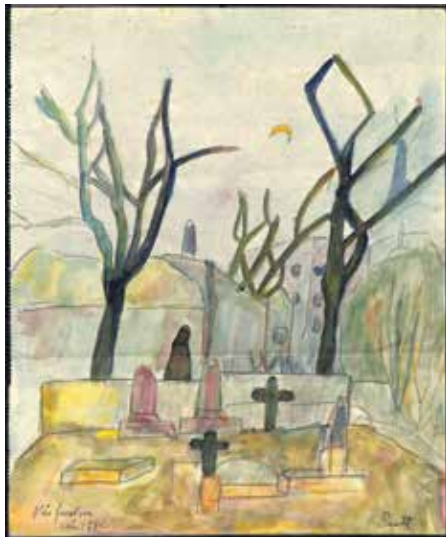


Fig. 39: Vår Frelsers Gravlund, 1942



Fig. 40: Vår Frelsers Gravlund, 1942

school that Ruth Maier attended in Oslo. Thus, art and art criticism – albeit devastating – are combined in one image and show the teaching practices.

In the drawing block, Ruth Maier's working method becomes clear; first, the pencil drawing is created, sometimes several, before a newer version is coloured, some watercolours also remain unfinished: One watercolour depicts a park with trees and benches on which two people are sitting (Fig. 37). In the background is a church tower with a cemetery in front of it – this is probably the *Gamle Aker kirke*, the oldest building in Oslo. On another sheet, she has drawn the place in pencil from a slightly shifted angle and started to colour four of the trees blue and purple (Fig. 38).

In 1942, in addition to city views, she created many pictures of cemeteries, especially at Vår Frelsers Gravlund, this was near her accommodation at the girls' boarding house (Dalsbergstien 3). In Fig. 39, graves can be seen in the foreground, and behind a wall are bare trees, a shrub, and a person walking along a path. In the background are houses. A yellow crescent moon appears in the sky. In some places, such as on the trees and the human figure, she has applied the colours more densely,



Fig. 41: O. T.

or rather repeatedly, whereas other parts, such as the houses, appear lightly glazed, with thinly applied paint. In contrast, in Fig. 40 she has depicted a cemetery scene in bright autumn colours. Here, too, there is a person in the background, kneeling in front of a wall. Behind it houses again, this time against a yellow sky. The trees here still bear leaves in shades of orange, brown and yellow.

In an unfinished watercolour she captured a funeral scene (Fig. 41). In this autumnal scene, those present protect themselves from the rain with umbrellas. The watercolour line, drawn from top to bottom, already seems to mark the section of the picture.

In the cemetery depiction (Fig. 42), an increasingly narrow path leads almost undulatingly into the background; a woman and a child walk along it, another woman kneels next to a grave, and in the middle ground, almost hidden behind the trees, are two more people. The ground areas are partly kept very angular. The trees are bright yellow, the ground blue, red, green and orange. Notes of violet appear again and again, for example as the complementary colour of the shadows cast by the trees. Ruth Maier has worked with the



Fig. 42: Kirkegård/Vår Frelsers, Oslo 1942

primary colours and their complementary contrast in a much more detailed way than in *Longing* (Fig. 34). On the tree trunk at the right edge, branches and leaves are depicted spherically, while the trees, with yellow trunks and branches, remain bare, as so often in her works. The horizontal stripes of the picture show that she has mixed colours on the sheet as a translucent glaze, as there is no uniform application of paint, the colours lie on top of each other and another shines through. The boundary of the picture is formed by barely perceptible houses and above them, as well as between, she has painted the sky. The scope of the picture is not only created by perspective, but also due to the purity of the colours and the density of the paint application in the foreground, almost dissolves in the background: space is created by sfumato – contours seem almost imperceptible, much more water is added to the paint than in the foreground. Bottom left Ruth Maier has signed the picture with her first name and written in the middle "Til Gunvor fra Ruth" [To Gunvor from Ruth].

Parks also appear again and again as motifs in Ruth Maier's works. One watercolour (Fig. 43) could be another view of the park in Figs. 37 and 38, based on the



Fig. 43: O. T.

church steeple. In this painting, she has not coloured the different parts of the drawing, rather quickly sketched over the pencil lines with brush and paint, making the painting appear very dynamic and almost abstract. Due to the pencil drawing, the various elements of the picture, such as trees, buildings, benches, and people are clearly discernible. Lighter and thinner extensions of brushstrokes characterize the application of paint in this work.

Ruth Maier also depicted the Palace Park several times (Figs. 44-46). Here Ruth Maier again uses an expressive language of colour and form: Houses, trees, and a person walking through the park (Fig. 44). A path seems to lead directly to the road with rails, presumably showing the place leading to Henrik Ibsens gate, opposite Huitsfeldts gate, behind a row of houses. Behind the rails, in front of the houses, is a group of people. Oval and round shapes are found on the branches of the trees, which in earlier works were mainly depicted bare. Not yet so pronounced as in this extreme form, approaches to it may have been inspired by several paintings: *The House with the Cracked Walls* (1892-94) by Paul Cézanne, *Olive Trees II* or *Trees in the Garden of Saint-Paul Hospital* by Vincent van Gogh, *Separation* (1896) or



Fig. 44: The Palace Park, 1942

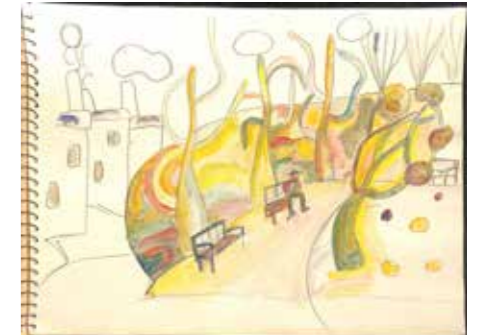


Fig. 45: O. T.



Fig. 46: O. T.

Winter at Nordstrand (c. 1900) by Edvard Munch.

Although Ruth Maier titled, dated, and signed *The Palace Park* in Fig. 44 with Ruth, she did not complete the park in the

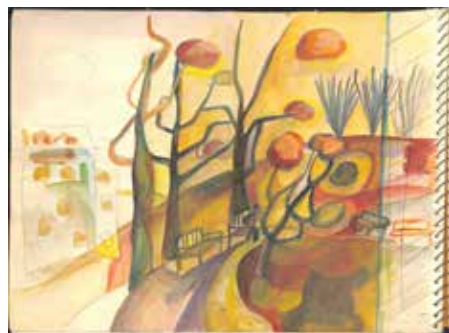


Fig. 47: O. T.

sheets of the drawing pad (Figs. 45 to 46) and primarily designed the middle ground of the picture with watercolours. Here, too, the round extremities of the trees reappear, as they do in another watercolour, which has the Palace Park as its motif (Fig. 47). Here, too, the left part of the picture with the houses seems to be unfinished, while the middle part is finished. These three paintings share the same view of the park,



Fig. 48: O. T.



Fig. 49: O. T.

with the path, the benches, and the person sitting on the bench at the back. In Figure 47, as in the picture from Kvam (Fig. 35), Ruth Maier has selected a section of the picture and defined it on the right by a clear line, with the lighter watercolour part additionally crossed out in pencil.

In Figure 48, a watercolour depicting a crucifixion scene, the remaining part of the previous sheet is visible. As is a crossed-out section of a picture that has already been cut off. If *The Palace Park* (Fig. 44) is superimposed, it shows that this image has been cut off from the part remaining in the sketchpad (Fig. 49). The shoe of the right foot of the person depicted appears as a small dot on the right side of the finished watercolour, and the purple branch of the tree behind the woman also protrudes into the image and has been cut off. The colouring of the finished painting is clearly stronger than on that part that remained in the pad.

Other watercolours show city views of Oslo (Figs. 50, 51). While houses are in the background of the *Palace Park* (Fig. 40), for example, here they become the central element. The picture on page 8 probably shows a view from the boarding house window, Dalsberstien 3, the houses filling the entire image. Because of the strong and varied choice of colours, the two pictures resemble the one from the *Palace Park*. Here, however, the preliminary drawings with pencil seem to be completely missing. Lines have been established with watercolours.

The works show Ruth Maier's closeness to Expressionism, as well as Fauvist influences, for example, through her departure from original local colours and her expressive locating of pictorial elements: Trees, houses, windows and people. Nevertheless, Ruth Maier found her own innovative pictorial language.



Fig. 50: O. T., 1942

Ruth Maier experienced the world with open eyes and recorded, both in writing and in art, what she experienced and what she saw, and sometimes mixed the two. Ruth Maier thus leaves us a unique testimony, not only in terms of content, but also formalistic.

1 "I wrote a diary in Château de Salorges. I lost it. There's nothing I can do about." Ruth Maier's Diary. A young girl's life under Nazism, Edited by Jan Erik Vold, Translated from the German by Jamie Bulloch, Harvill Secker, London 2009, p. 67.

2 Gunvor Hofmo: Jeg glemmer ingen, Etterord: Jan Erik Vold, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag ASA, Oslo 1999.

3 Maier 2009, p. 377.

4 Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7: Maier, Ruth, G: Dagbøker, 0001: Dagbok 17.05.1933 - 29.11.1934, 35.

Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7: Maier, Ruth, G: Dagbøker, 0002: Dagbok, 13.11.1935 - 28.10.1936: 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 56, 58, 68, 73, 76, 77.

Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7: Maier, Ruth, G: Dagbøker, 0005: Dagbok, 21.09.1937 - 23.12.1937: 9, 10.

Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7/F/0001, PA-7: Maier, Ruth F: Brevkorrespondanse, 0001: Brev fra Ruth Maier til familien, 19.01.1939 - 14.07.1939: 62, 88, 164

5 Maier 2009, p. 19.

6 Maier 2009, p. 21.

7 The categories "Picturesque" and "Linear" are important for classifying the different art styles, both classical and modern. "Picturesque" denotes the blurred, broken, loose definition of color and contour. The opposite of picturesque is a clear, unbroken and sharp definition, which Heinrich

Wölfflin described as "linear". However, the dividing line between the picturesque and the linear is by no means hard and clear. There are many artists whose work combines elements of both and whose painterly handling can go hand in hand with linear formal language and vice versa. See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, Translated from 7th German Edition (1929) into English by M D Hottinger, Dover Publications, New York 1932 and reprints.

8 Diary entry from 11.VII.36, dated September 11th 1936 by Jan Erik Vold: "I've now read my other two diaries. mThey're so corny it fills me with horror. I don't think I'm going to begin a new one when this is finished. At the very most I'll just note down observations and ideas If I really feel the need to write I can do it on notepaper; that can be burned afterwards." Maier 2009, p. 27.

9 E.g. "War This book by German soldiers is aimed at all friends of the fatherland who are proud of today's dead in

our army." Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7: Maier, Ruth, G: Dagbøker, 0002: Dagbok, 13.11.1935 - 28.10.1936: 74. After a visit to the cinema she wrote: "The second was from the civil war in Spain. Women firing rifles. Armed young men and adolescents. A dead man lying on the ground. Tolosa in ruins. So what is the point of all of that? The communists want world revolution. What will that be like? Millions of people would die! Perish! Keel over! But perhaps it's not so wretched if I know I'm doing it for freedom?" Maier 2009, p. 26.

10 Senter for studier av Holocaust og livsynsminoriteter, HL/PA-7: Maier, Ruth, G: Dagbøker, 0002: Dagbok, 13.11.1935 - 28.10.1936: 73.

11 According to Sigmund Freud, compression is a mechanism of dream work, in which latent dream thoughts are shortened or condensed and transformed into manifest dream images. See Sigmund Freud, VI. Die Traumarbeit. A. Die Verdichtungsarbeit, in: Ders., Studienausgabe, Bd. II, Die

Traumdeutung, Frankfurt/Main 2000, S. 282-304. Later, in Biri, Ruth Maier dealt with Freud's interpretation of dreams. Jan Erik Vold comments on the hospital stay: "In her diary she describes dreams, and she analyses her own dreams and those of her fellow patients; she had been reading Freud in Biri." Maier 2009, p. 275. Ruth Maier also wrote down dream analyses in her diary. See Maier 2009, pp. 305-306, pp. 361-362, or pp. 363-364.

12 Maier 2009 p. 253 - Frau Strøm is not translated in Mrs. Strøm.

13 See Maier 2009, p. 275.

14 Maier 2009, pp. 277-278.

15 Thank you Norma del Camino for the translation.

16 Photographs from this trip have also been preserved.

17 Maier 2009, p. 299.

18 Maier 2009, p. 328.

19 Maier 2009, p. 270.

20 Maier 2009, p. 278.

21 Thank you Norma del Camino for the translation.

Ruth Maier – Diary Entry September 1942, Oslo

"I'm reading a lot at the moment. I work until three o'clock ... decorating souvenirs ... wooden things. At four o'clock I go to a drawing class. Six o'clock I'm back home. I attend drawing classes. Why? Within me there's a dormant dream: to become a painter. An artist! Is it vanity, a frantic attempt to salvage something from this general collapse? I have a white smock. But do I have the strength in me to create, endure, sacrifice? Oh, I could sacrifice, I could sacrifice for all sorts of things: for socialism and peace, for knowledge and beliefs. But sacrifice for art? For the sake of art? Not for the sake of sacrifice! And do I have the energy, the strenght to put everything into painting? To see the world with the eye of a painter. That's hard. And you have to be bursting at the seams with your art. Oh, I feel I'm so small and I don't know how I have the nerve to think about it. And yet: if I have paints, and I paint, and I succeed. A blue and a red! And it blends. A mood develops. Then I feel happy.

I walk down the street. See a house, a tree. Sky. I think: I'll paint that, later ... But that's what gives me doubts, this later. Why do I say later? If I were an artist (for I must be an artist now already if I'm ever to be one), if I were an artist I ought to paint everthing I see, everything that grabs me. But I'm afraid. Yes, I'm afraid. I set my whole furture on each watercolour that I begin. And if it goes wrong, then ... Oh. It's not as if

there's a fire within me, consuming me with the idea of painting. I have a small talent that I'm carefully nurturing, gingerly nurturing.

And yet! If my talent were a thousand times smaller than it is. And if nobody had told me that my colours are nice. That's not what concerns me. What concerns me is the ability to be totally saturated by one's art. To paint as another might eat and drink. Because he needs to. Not to sit down, force oneself and say: I've got to make an attempt now. I've got to prove that I have talent. I'll paint now. No, I was not born for art.

I think this a lot at the moment. I'm one of a type. I've read about myself in books. I'm one of those who ... oh yes, they've got talent, they write poems, short poems, and read books, and in the past they wanted to be actors. They're interested in literature. And they paint small pictures in pretty colours, they love pictures, are interested in literature and poetry. God knows what they're not interested in. It's easy to think of them too highly. Perhaps they look a little interesting. As if they've overexerted themselves reading. Some say these people are intelligent because they wear glasses. And from time to time in conversation they say something ... good. They like discussions, you see. But not anything with a serious basis. All told it's superficial.

Oh, in the past I seriously believed that I had the talent, at least to enter into something. I believed I had the will

to get to the bottom of something. To study, maybe. To get to the bottom of something. I'm discovering that I don't even possess that. I'm attending drawing school ... perhaps just in a frantic attempt to preserve an illusion. Oh, how I sometimes loathe myself because of this blasted drawing! Why are you vain? I think. You're still doing small watercolours and you think that gives you the right ... yes, you feel you are being 'summoned' to become an artist. In the same way that another sets out to become a shoemaker.

I ought to be able to do just as much as other people. I'll succeed in drawing just as well as thousands of others who live from selling their pictures. I don't doubt that. What I doubt is my ability to experience. To experience the world through the eyes of an artist. And it's not just that I must be able to experience, to see it as a painter, I must also feel the need to express my experience. If only I didn't like colours so much, if only I had never painted those small watercolours that I do like. Sometimes I feel that the longing to become an 'artist' makes me tired, it drains me. The awareness that a picture must be created from what I see takes away from me the ability to experience.

Oh no! First I'm starting to analyse, then ... It's a curse to be so selfabsorbed."

Ruth Maier's Diary. A young girl's life under Nazism, Edited by Jan Erik Vold, Translated from the German by Jamie Bulloch, Harvill Secker, London 2009, pp. 401-403.

NORMA DEL CAMINO

Ruth Maier's diaries and letters are rich in touching moments and literarily very sensitive linguistic images, complemented by impressive drawings and watercolours. In my lyrical contribution to this book, I very much enjoyed being inspired by Ruth Maier.

As small introductions to my texts, here are some of the excerpts from Ruth Maier's diary¹ that particularly inspired me.

I

*Oh, why should iron bars deny me the light?*²

*You also know the dusty grey flowers and the sky outside.*³

waiting

have the scrawny flowers on the windowsill forgotten their flowering time?

naked my fingers slide

down the bars

into the night

and me

I wait for a moon world

that once was

familiar

the morrow

an optical illusion

I am so cold

II

As I lie so quietly, very quietly, the thoughts go up the walls, up the pale blue walls.

*Searching in vain for colourful dots on which to rest. Just walking on the pale blue walls, lonely, alone.*⁴

lying still

The walls

linger in lonely heaviness

bear wounds

where my wishes wait

as if the walls

were my whole world,

when I lie here still,

the walls

with

torn dignity in blue

a pale era

of vanishing colour,

when I lie here still

until you

until your smile

pushes through to me,

as if my wishes were your

whole world

and

carry us

out over the walls

and then

back to ourselves:

III

Outside, seagulls are screaming. [...]. Seagulls are wonderful [...].

*If I want to be an animal...I want to be a seagull [...].*⁵

*And seagulls over the fjord. Do you also like to hear seagulls screaming?*⁶

Outside I

out in the pale nights

out by the furthest sea

out there

the seagulls cry

far away

through worlds and winds

so pure so white

free

as life

once

become

we all

be seagulls

like mirrored peace in the sea foam

we stand

firmly on the rocks:

Outside II

the fjord – a colourless farewell

silent as glass

but the seagulls

have wings,

can fly until

we die:

do you hear the seagulls

where you stand

under the sun

we fly

over the fjords

from there

where no one has to scream

where none have to die

where

we go

where

out in the bright nights

out by the sea

one day we will all be

be seagulls.



HL-senteret

IV

*The days are brighter when you love.*⁷

Or will I be waiting for you,

Anxiously counting the hours with my watch.

Till you come?

*You.*⁸

Sometimes

sometimes

you come

even today

not

sometimes

I wait

even

not

silently at the window

strange and trapped

beats

the hourless time

doors

through

sometimes

I hear

but

your familiar

footsteps

along the corridor

then

for a while

quietly resting in my lap:

with the day

your steps go away

and again you are far away

sometimes

love separates

while

I wait

even today

not

and sometimes

you come

but

sometimes

the days are bright

V

This smile on my lips... it was alone... Having

*become without a home... it will die soon.*⁹

*[...] the smile is far too alive in her for that.*¹⁰

Smile

It was

the aliveness

of her smile

and I

was her

Prisoner

but now

I live

from myself

separated

her smile

but still hangs

on my lips

her smile

has become my home

VI

I touch Gunvor's letters gently, I'm afraid will break

*her letters if I touch them hard.*¹¹

Letters

in delicate pen

writing you send

me

your words

in:

Secret Cipher

about

me

about you

about our worlds

Intertitles

in a wounded suitcase

Interims

in a sealed envelope

only

the letters know

about our love

VII

The water in these fjords is very, very still like glass... and mountains to the right and left [...]. And above the fjord seagulls.¹² Why should we not suffer when there is so much suffering?¹³

Fjord Mourning I

Fjords,
that found no refuge
that tenderly
spilled out.
Sweet
was your ink
under stars of silent witnesses
sing
songs of silent betrayal
white is the seagull's blood
you bleed in me
unbridled waves
full of longing
sink
with us in a coffin of souls
the sea
gives
the sea
separates
two at a young age:

Fjord Mourning II

your last lines
in my hand
on Pir 1 tonight
there are no lighthouses
for us
but your handwriting
is
our sky
carries us on
beyond times
calmly rocks the sea
why
why should we not suffer when there is
so much suffering?

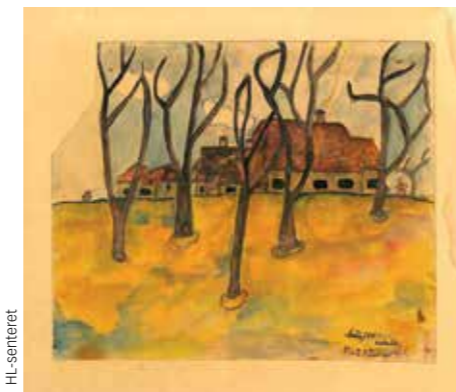
Fjord Mourning III

your ink writing alone
was
not in vain
we lived
we loved
Tides on the Pir 1
Night over night in the sea foam
the depth of your eyes
revived
strengthened in your smile
you are
here
near
in cold sorrow
I carry our dreams
awake
secret love
released
in times that
people
love
two women
their love
revived
they will never forget us:

VIII

Your world
Behind your walls
the mountains call
so free
I should be
in your world
Imagination
but entrance to me
not granted
Desire
remains
far away
I am locked up
separated
from
ME

within me
the riddle rises
in me
yet grow
mountains rise
yet grow
summit feelings
want to fall
wants to land
assimilation unburdened
my breath out
let
afford fresh
air afford
peace in ME
quiet
call the mountains
behind your walls
but wait
mountains
move
behind your walls
human times rise high.
my time

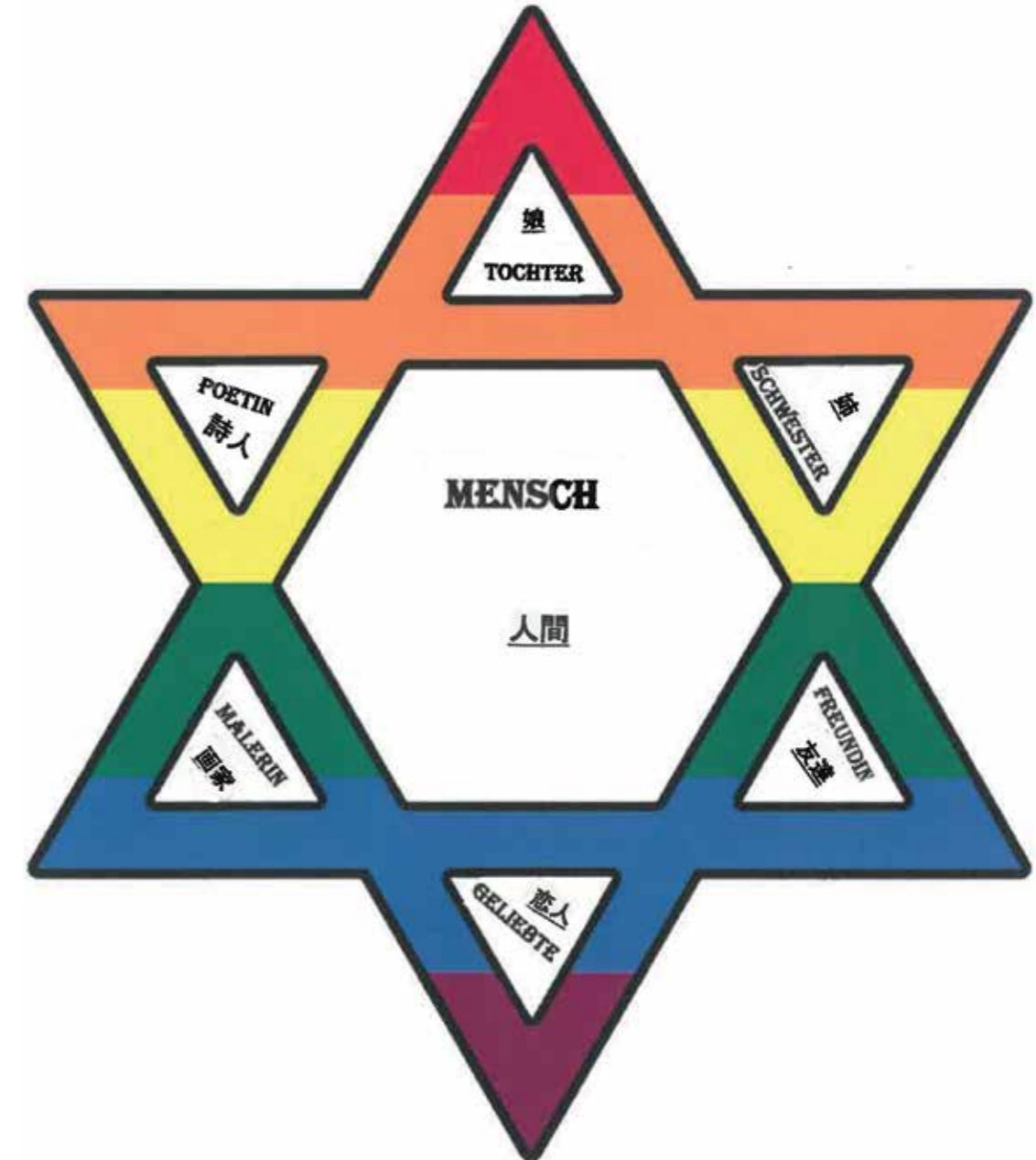


HL-senteret

¹ Ruth Maier: „Das Leben könnte gut sein“. Tagebücher 1933 bis 1942. Hrsg. Jan Erik Vold, btb Verlag, München 2008
Danke an Barbara Fröhlich für die Übersetzung.
² S. 467
³ S. 469
⁴ S. 392
⁵ S. 219

⁶ S. 226
⁷ S. 344
⁸ S. 356
⁹ S. 355
¹⁰ S. 380
¹¹ S. 416
¹² S. 226
¹³ S. 526

BARBARA FRÖHLICH



SOPHIE KRÜGER

There has certainly been some information gathered on the biography of Ruth Maier in this publication. I was particularly impressed by her diary entries, which depict the life of a young woman who is not only extremely inquisitive and devours vast amounts of literature, but also has acting talent, can draw, and pursues a variety of other interests as well. Immersing oneself in the diary entries, which thanks to her sweetheart Guvnor Hofmo have been preserved, one is transported to a time that deals with an almost carefree youth and describes, among other things, first crushes on girls and boys. The suddenness with which Ruth's life is changed by current political events is extremely

palpable. As a persecuted Jew, she had to leave the places she was familiar with, her family was torn apart, and a completely foreign country became the new center of her life. I can unreservedly recommend reading "Es wartet doch so viel auf mich..." [Ruth Maier's Diary] In times when people are again increasingly discriminated against and attacked on the basis of their origin, religious belief, sexuality, disability or other characteristic, places and spaces where educational work is carried out can provide a space for a form of self-determined and resilient activity. If a library bears the name Ruth Maier, however small it may be, it sends a strong signal preserving memories and making history

visible. Libraries and archives, which are places for the transmission and acquisition of knowledge and enable people to gather, have enormous power. Unfortunately, there are very few publications in German about Ruth Maier. Ruth Maier's *Wikipedia* article was, until recently, kept extremely short. As a means of recording biographies and making knowledge accessible to all, the world's largest online encyclopedia offers a wonderful opportunity to remember this courageous woman. I would like to contribute to the establishment of this place in Vienna and have designed a freely available photo of Ruth Maier together with a handwritten excerpt from her diary using cyanotype.





50.03770, 19.17371



59.92289, 10.73804



48.23618, 16.32646

a life leaves traces, coordinates, written pages.

a life leaves traces on the skin, on paper, in thoughts, on maps, on streets, in archives, on objects.

can be told in numbers, you can measure it, number it, locate it, describe it in lengths and widths.

and numbers on the map tell their story among countless ones.

and then there is the sky, which is wide...

SABINE SCHWAIGHOFER

a poem for ruth maier

sweet diary of mine

the quiet inward-looking form, in a small way great
the private to the outside
including every genre - not forced to be a poet
my self help in reflection
you my everlasting companion, my secret keeping friend.

we tell our stories ourselves
our inside is outside

sabine schwaighofer 2023



2023



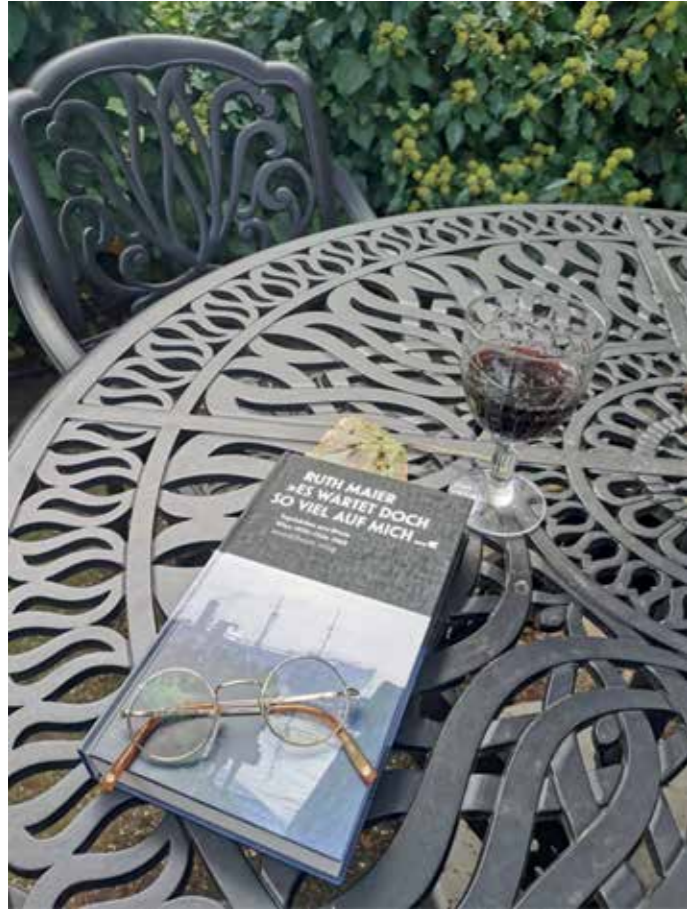
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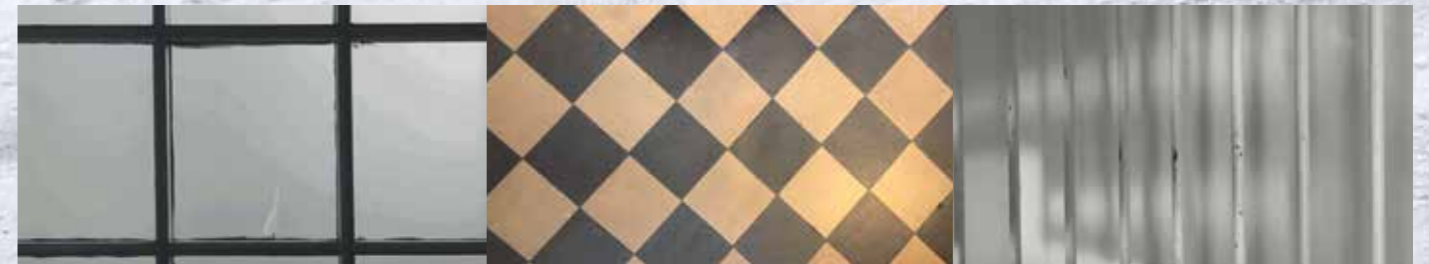
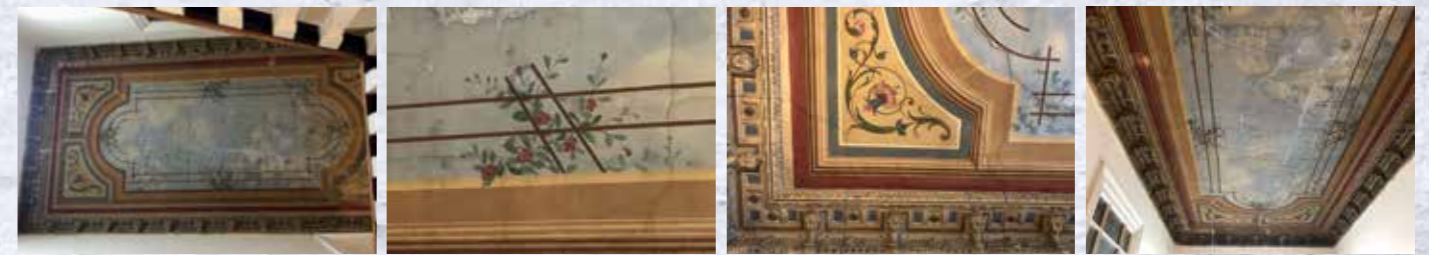
2019



BRIGITTE ZIKA



PETRA PAUL Inside Dalsbergstien 3



MARIE THUR Anagramm

**RAUHT REIM
REIMT RAU**

**RAEUMT IHR
MAUERT IHR**

**RAUMHIRTE
MAUERHIRT
MAURE HIRT
MAURER HIT**

**RUH IM RATE
UHR IM RATE
RAT HIERUM**

TRAUM HIER

**HAI MURRTE
HERR MIAUT
ARIER MUHT
MURRTE I AH**

RUEHRT MAI

**ARMUT HIER
IHRE ARMUT**

ER TRAU IHM

HURRA TIME

RUHE IM RAT

MARIE RUHT

Ruth Maier witnessed in 1938 the November pogroms in Vienna. She, who had no previous connection to Judaism, began an intensive examination of her Jewish identity in her diary. On her mother's initiative, Ruth was able to find accommodation in Lillestrøm in January 1939 with the family of the Norwegian postal worker Arne Strøm in order to complete her High school diploma.

Voluntary reports for labour service ensured Ruth Maier's livelihood in Norway. There she met Gunvor Hofmo, a year younger than her, with whom she became romantically involved. Ruth wanted to become a painter, drew and created watercolours, and also wrote poetry. After the Nazi occupation of Norway and the establishment of the collaboration government, all Jews living in Norway were registered. In autumn 1942 Ruth Maier moved, and in October 1942 the deportation of the country's Jewish population began. Ruth Maier was arrested in Oslo on the 26th of November 1942, taken by ship Donau to Stettin and from there to Auschwitz, where she was gassed on arrival on the 1st of December 1942. Ruth Maier's diaries have been translated into numerous languages and have been part of the UNESCO World Document Heritage *Memory of the World* since 2014.

The majority of the books in the *Ruth Maier Library* come from the estate of HOSI Vienna activist and editor-in-chief of *Lambda-Nachrichten* Gudrun Hauer (1953-2015).