

Maximiliane Baumgartner: Das Lokale ist nicht lokal

30.06. – 17.11.2024



Opening 29.06.2024 16:00 – 21:00 Uhr
Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft
Kressengartenstraße 2 90402 Nürnberg
kunstvereinnuerenberg.de

Maximiliane Baumgartner's works combine elements of painting, radical pedagogy¹, and artistic research. Her memory work opens up spaces of encounter, intergenerational exchange, and practical references to history and its blindspots. Based on the thesis "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal" (The local is not local), Baumgartner's most recent works investigate the lives and works of women artists from the so-called "lost generation" as documents of their time. Many of these figures share the experience of being the first generation of women artists to be admitted to German art academies, and they often worked on the national (not just local) level. Yet, their lives and work were interrupted by the Second World War and National Socialism, occasionally suppressed by exhibition bans and defamed as degenerate. After 1945, their works remained largely ignored in the national discourse.

In the course of her Marianne Defet Painting Scholarship, Baumgartner studied the work of Nuremberg artist Dore Meyer-Vax (1908–1980) in this context. Meyer-Vax trained as a printmaker at the Kunstgewerbeschule Nuremberg before transferring to the art academy in Berlin in 1929, and shortly afterwards she also pursued her studies in the studios of various artists, including Karl Hofer among others. This was the environment where she met her future husband Walter Meyer and became part of an artistic scene around Felka Platek and Felix Nussbaum. From 1933 on, there were no longer any opportunities for her to exhibit, so Meyer-Vax left Berlin in 1939 and returned to Nuremberg, where she was employed as a technical draughtswoman at the transformer factory. Shortly after the war's end, she joined the communist party (KPD), which was soon banned, and became one of the founding members of the Women's International League for Peace

and Freedom. During this time, her political commitments were reflected in numerous works as well as political campaigns. From the 1950s on, Meyer-Vax was entrusted with a series of commissions for public spaces in Nuremberg and designed or executed murals for the youth library, schools, the state theater, and the zoo, among others. In several series of drawings and paintings, Baumgartner responds to these social sites and the democratic pictorial approach of Meyer-Vax's works. In addition to political commentaries on the events of her time, Meyer-Vax repeatedly depicted situations of collective learning and solidarity as well as moments of exhaustion, which Baumgartner reconsiders in the context of today's socio-political debates and her own situated perspective. In her painterly process of "looking at pictures through pictures," Baumgartner points out historical gaps without trying to fill them. She also establishes a connection to the Freiburg artist Eva Eisenlohr (1891–1977), who was affected by similar patriarchal and political mechanisms of ignorance and active forgetting. In the process, Baumgartner makes the works of both artists legible within an expanded discursive space: The local is not local.

As the title of the series "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen" (Re-painting the threads of the past) on display suggests, Baumgartner makes temporal connections and critical commentaries, the perspective of which she expands by activating various groups in Nuremberg. To this end, she will initiate a series of actions over the course of the exhibition, which various groups and the public are invited to participate in. The opening of the exhibition "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal" thus marks the beginning of these processes of getting to know each other and working together.

Foyer

Dore Meyer-Vax's (1908–1980) design for a ceiling painting from 1956 shows a group of children. Lying on their stomachs on a carpet, they seem completely absorbed in their books, but perhaps also in a conversation or game. The scene depicts children's self-determination and curiosity in a way that seems astonishingly free for the 1950s. Initially developed for the former youth library in Luitpoldhaus, which is now part of the city library of Nuremberg, the original was lost during the renovations. Now reincarnated as a multifunctional banner print, the motif becomes a central reference in Maximiliane Baumgartner's "action wagon," which welcomes visitors to Kunstverein Nuremberg's foyer as a prelude to the exhibition.

The action wagon titled "**Viele Vampire sind Vögel**" (Many vampires are birds) is one of the central tools and vehicles that Maximiliane Baumgartner has been using in her action-pedagogical practice since 2019. It can be variously used as a transporter, table, or hanging construction and provides the necessary infrastructure for strolls, lunches, and small exhibitions. In the context of "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal", it symbolically but also quite practically reflects the desire to leave the boundaries of the institution and come into contact with various social spaces in Nuremberg as well as the residents and visitors of their respective neighborhoods.

Room I

Dore Meyer-Vax's design for the ceiling painting of the city library can also be found in a watercolor and pencil drawing in one of the vitrines in Room I. The child-oriented perspective of this work seems to have been transferred to the exhibition as a whole. The display cases, drawings, and paintings are all set up at an unusual height and testify to the desire to involve a younger generation as well as fundamentally question who is being addressed and how. In the archival presentation "**Das Lokale ist nicht lokal**" (2024), Baumgartner has compiled and layered various reproductions, original works, issues of the magazine *tendenzen*, and newspaper articles by Dore Meyer-Vax. They are grouped into the chapters "Kunst im öffentlichen Raum / Kinder nehmen sich Raum" (Art in public space / Children claim their space), "Die Lernenden" (The Learners), and "Arbeit gegen NS-Kontinuitäten" (Work against nazi continuities). The presentation was informed by exchanges and discussions with the art historian Wolfgang Brauneis as well as Bernd Zachow, who was a contemporary, art critic, and (political) companion of Meyer-Vax. The interviews with them are on laid out on top of the vitrines. While references such as Meyer-Vax's triptych "Ritter, Tod und Teufel" (Knights, Death, and The Devil, 1963/71) or the early work "Impressionen" (Impressions, 1945) focus on processing the traumas of the war years while criticizing the fascism and militarism underlying them, the article "Weisen Sie das Geschenk zurück!" (Reject the gift!) from Nuremberg's "8 Uhr-Feuilleton" provides information about the artist's local political engagement. There, Meyer-Vax criticizes the Nazi collusion of Hermann Kaspar, an artist and professor at the Munich art academy who had just created a monumental tapestry for the Meistersingerhalle in Nuremberg at the time. In keeping with Meyer-Vax's democratic pictorial practice, the presentation emphasizes her interest in achieving wider dissemination of her art via editions, postcards, or flyers. Her efforts to facilitate chance encounters in public spaces through art and help create permeable spaces of shared learning are also concretely reflected in the presentation via a series of designs for the music library, Luitpoldhaus, Sigena Gymnasium, and the tapestries intended for the state theater. But the presenta-

tion also goes beyond the social scope of her works to look at the ways social coexistence and individual psychological realities interact in Meyer-Vax's works such as "Der Verlierer" (The Loser, 1955), "Ruhendes Mädchen" (Resting Girl, 1952), and "Melancholie" (Melancholy, 1971). They speak of the ways individual psychologies and broader societal structures are inevitably entwined.

The spatial juxtaposition of the archive presentation and a selection from Baumgartner's series "**Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen (I)**" (2023) with reference to the Freiburg artist Eva Eisenlohr reveals lines of continuity with other actors whose reception has been impacted by intersectional oppression². After 1945, both Eisenlohr and Meyer-Vax continued developing artistic approaches that acquired an overarching relevance precisely because of their specifically local working methods. Eisenlohr shared Meyer-Vax's aspiration to make an impact in public space with her art, though unlike the latter she realized many of her works on her own initiative. In a series of works also produced for public space as part of Biennale für Freiburg 2, Baumgartner deals with the oeuvre of an artist whose works were defamed as degenerate during the National Socialist era. The confiscation of two of Eisenlohr's works by the National Socialists, as documented by files in the Freiburg city archives, runs through the works as a band of gray shadows in A4 format. At the same time, movements from Eisenlohr's works are re-imagined in the paintings, forming a kind of critical counter-movement to the Nazi documents that led to the disappearance of her works.

The titular installation "**Das Lokale ist nicht lokal**" (2023/24) similarly focuses on shadows, missing links, and gaps. The front sides of the aluminum dibond panels are white, i.e. left blank. Leaning against the wall, they can be read as a possibility or—even more so—as the necessity to understand the past as a place for negotiating the present. The dimensions of the cut aluminum dibond panels are derived from the work series "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen" and thus materialize the artist's ongoing thinking and working process. In a frieze of 17 drawings above, Baumgartner takes up various details from Meyer-Vax's prints and paintings, thus creating a direct bridge between the two exemplary artistic positions.

Room II

The action setting "**Das Lokale ist nicht lokal**" (2024) doubles as a space for discussions and a place of practical negotiation. Reproductions and recreations of Meyer-Vax's works, along with a buffet of materials on a platform, invite interaction and individual or collective critical reflection. Over the course of the exhibition, an open image archive based on duplication and dissemination will flourish with the help of a photocopier. Painting and drawing are thus mobilized for a radical pedagogy that creates space for a gestural engagement with history and its documents, images, and desired updates. In this context, Elke Krasny has proposed the concept of "public lessons" as a collective learning process where there is no longer any distinction between art and its teaching, nor the still common delay between the creation of work and its reception later on downstream³. The action setting builds on a long-standing aspect of Baumgartner's practice, which included developing a mobile architecture for public space in Munich called "Fahrender Raum" (Driving Space) that she initiated in 2015 and programmed until 2019. The hybrid painting installation and action space served as the platform for a variety of educational activities with diverse neighborhoods.

She continued this principle with the "Sprechenden Eck" (The Talking Corner) realized in 2023 as part of Urbane Künste Ruhr in Essen. There, local teenagers and children ran a project office that accepted commissions from the neighborhood.

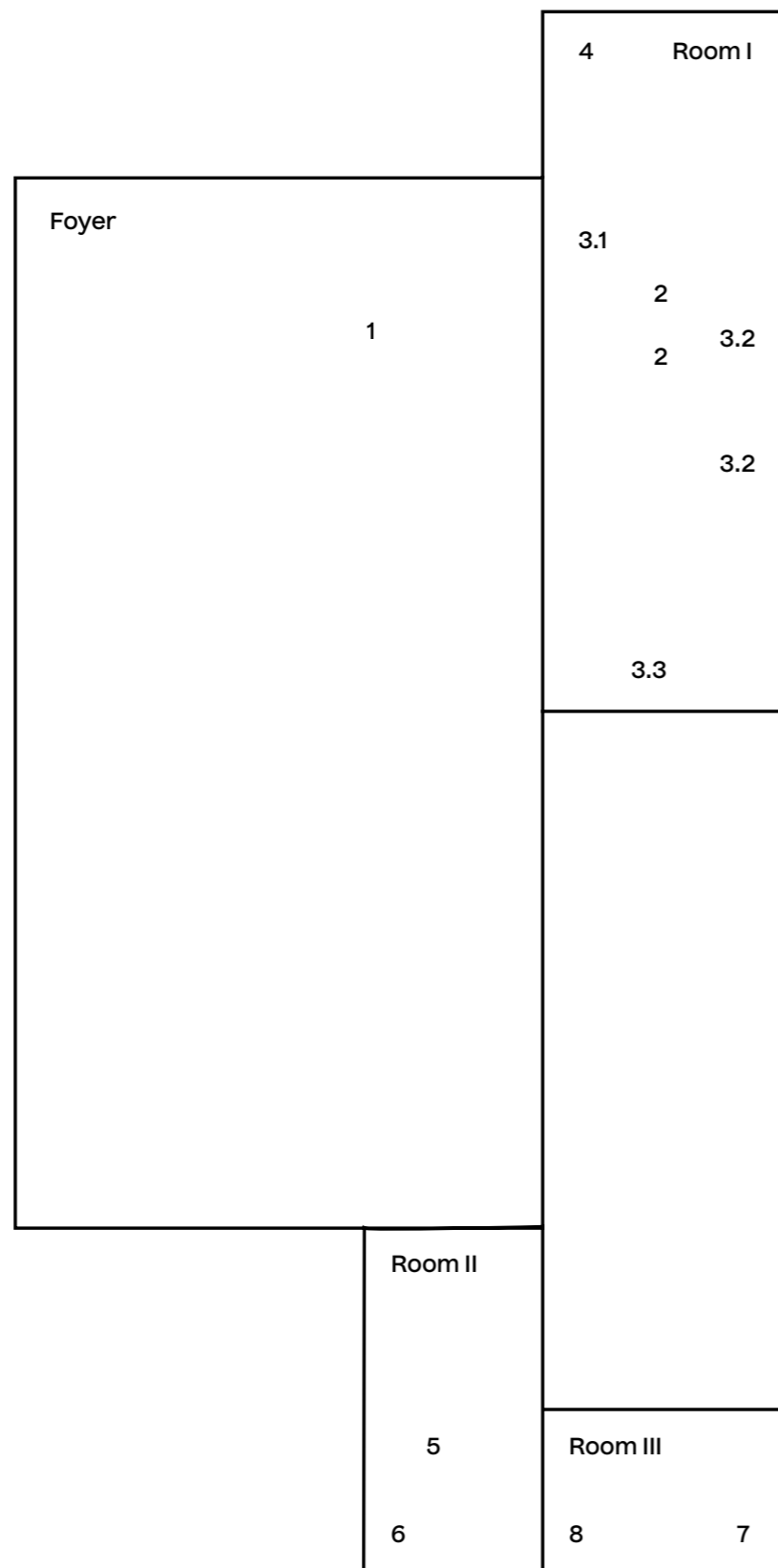
Room III

Baumgartner's observations of how visitors approach these spaces and use them practically as active participants have in turn been inscribed in the paintings "**Das Sprechende Eck III**" (2024) and "**Das Sprechende Eck IV**" (2024). Baumgartner thus combines different temporal realities in the medium of painting. The reciprocal influence between painterly and pedagogical moments is intensified and presented in spatial dialogue with Meyer-Vax's work "**Mädchen im Sessel**" (1949).

Maximiliane Baumgartner (b.1986 Lindenberg, DE) is an artist, educator, and visiting professor of painting at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. She has shown her works and action spaces internationally, including at the Neuer Essener Kunstverein; Stadtgalerie Bern; Kunstverein München; Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf; and Galerie Kaufmann Repetto, Milan / New York. Most recently, Baumgartner realized expansive new commissions for the Biennale für Freiburg and Urbane Künste Ruhr (both 2023).

"Das Lokale ist nicht lokal" was initiated by Wolfgang Brauneis and academically advised by Thorsten Schneider. The exhibition is being realized in cooperation with the Kunstvilla, which mounted a comprehensive retrospective of Dore Meyer-Vax's work in 2020. Maximiliane Baumgartner held the Marianne Defet Scholarship 2023–24 at the invitation of the Kunstverein Nürnberg. The resulting project "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal" is accompanied by a publication with an introduction by Nele Kaczmarek and text contributions by Wolfgang Brauneis, Clemens Krümmel, Paula Kommiss, and Thorsten Schneider.

Curator: Nele Kaczmarek
Curatorial assistance:
Julie Batteux, Leonora Prugger
Installation and tech:
Tomoe Hikita, René Radomsky



Foyer

1 Maximiliane Baumgartner, action wagon "Viele Vampire sind Vögel", 2019, Banner print based on Dore Meyer-Vax's design for a ceiling painting in the Nuremberg Youth Library, 1956

Room I

2 Maximiliane Baumgartner, archive presentation "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal", 2024, Originals and reproductions of Dore Meyer-Vax's work (on loan from the Kunstvilla), newspaper articles, issues of tendenzen, conversation between Maximiliane Baumgartner and Wolfgang Brauneis, conversation between Maximiliane Baumgartner and Bernd Zachow

3 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen (I)", 2023, Multi-part painting installation

3.1 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "X" from "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen (I)", 2023, Lacquer on aluminum dibond

3.2 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "XX" from "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen (I)", 2023, Lacquer on aluminum dibond

3.3 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "XXXX" from "Von einem Punkt aus der Vergangenheit, einen Punkt aus der Gegenwart malen (I)", 2023, Lacquer on aluminum dibond

4 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal", 2023/24, Multi-part installation, aluminum dibond, colored pencil, paper with frieze of 17 drawings

Room II

5 Maximiliane Baumgartner, action setting "Das Lokale ist nicht lokal", 2024, Based on Dore Meyer-Vax's ceiling painting in the Nuremberg Youth Library, 1956, Material buffet, archival material on Dore Meyer-Vax

6 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "Das Sprechende Eck III", 2023/24, Two-part painting, lacquer on aluminum dibond

Room III

7 Maximiliane Baumgartner, "Das Sprechende Eck IV", 2023/24, Two-part painting, lacquer on aluminum dibond

8 Dore Meyer-Vax, "Mädchen im Sessel", 1949 (on loan from Kunstvilla), Oil on canvas



¹ Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire and Bell Hooks, the term "radical pedagogy" is also used to describe a pedagogical approach where emancipatory self-determination is central to the learning process, which became increasingly influential from the 1960s onwards. The tools of art, painting, printmaking, drawing, poetry, and dance are used to work towards a change in real, socio-political conditions. Important work was done in Bavaria by initiatives such as the group KEKS (Kunst-Erziehung-Kybernetik-Soziologie), which was active in Nuremberg and Munich and whose extracurricular activities opened up new spaces for play and action while asserting political influence.

² See the score for the performative action „Mit der Schubkarre“ (With the Pushcart), Biennale für Freiburg 2, <http://www.aktionsraeume.org/fussnoten/freiburg.html>.

³ See Elke Krasny, "Öffentliche Lektionen. Kunst als Radikale Pädagogik," in Maximiliane Baumgartner, *Ich singe nicht für Bilder schöne Lieder*, p. 26.