

# GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER

curated by\_Hans Ulrich Obrist

Schutzgeister  
FRIEDERIKE MAYRÖCKER

5 SEP – 10 OCT 2020

*"There is no certainty anywhere, there is only hope."* Friederike Mayröcker

By Hans Ulrich Obrist

When I first met Maria Lassnig in 1985, she told me of her passion for Friederike Mayröcker's literary works. She showed me *Rosengarten* (Rose Garden), the artist's book she and Mayröcker made together. This publication marries Mayröcker's poems with Lassnig's illustrations in a combination that would leave a lasting impression on me. Lassnig proceeded to read to me from *Rosengarten*. This encounter, when I was 17, thus found me emerged in a wonderful conversation about literature and art, and how the two interact. Lassnig explained how her paintings describe a body awareness and that Mayröcker's works address bodily contemplation. It is thanks to Lassnig that I discovered Mayröcker's work and began to read her countless books. Along with Etel Adnan, Édouard Glissant, and Robert Walser, Mayröcker is one of the few writers whose works I have read almost entirely. Naturally, I always wanted to meet Mayröcker in person, and it was Lassnig again who made this possible. In the many decades of my friendship with Lassnig, it became a kind of ritual for me to visit her whenever I was in Vienna. During one of these visits, when Lassnig's life was near its end after 95 years, she turned to me and asked worriedly: "What will you do in Vienna when I'm gone?" So during our very last visit, she suggested that I meet her good friend Friederike Mayröcker, the great Austrian writer.

After Lassnig's death, I wrote a letter to Mayröcker, explaining Lassnig's touching idea. And that is how we came to meet at Café Sperl in Vienna.

Mayröcker firmly believes that writing reflects life, and she describes melancholia as her driving force. She has devoted her entire life to writing, and the intensity of her dedication has resulted in more than 100 books to this day.

At our first meeting at Café Sperl, I discovered that Mayröcker's work also includes drawings. These drawings, which she has been creating in series for decades, depict, among other things, the 'protective ghosts' that have lent this exhibition its name. We could really use their protective powers, especially in these difficult times. Over the years, Mayröcker has drawn many protective ghosts – for example, ones that "protect against life's uncertainties," which she dedicated to her life partner Ernst Jandl.<sup>1</sup> Mayröcker has also drawn other protective ghosts for Jandl: Ghosts who protect against the fear of being alone and against being afraid of the dark, and ghosts who protect you from bad people, from feeling tired in the mornings, or from not having enough cigarettes. Other series of drawings in this exhibition include the *ABC-Thriller* and *Kinder Ka-Laender*, the latter of which is presented in two versions: the finished series and first sketches.

It was my intention to tie the many different dimensions of Mayröcker's work together and to place her poetry, her prose, and her audio books in the context of her drawings. Mayröcker's more than 100 books are also presented in the exhibition on tables specially designed by Koo Jeong A for this purpose.

My sincerest thanks to Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Edith Schreiber, Robert Fleck, Melanie Harl and the entire team of Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Koo Jeong A, Lorraine Two Testro, Max Shackleton, and Adèle Koechlin.

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<sup>1</sup> Friederike Mayröcker in a conversation with the author, KC-1702

## GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER

FRIEDERIKE MAYRÖCKER was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1924 and is considered one of the most significant contemporary female writers in the German-speaking world. After completing her secondary education, she sat the state examination for English and, between 1946 and 1969, worked as an English teacher at various schools in Vienna. She started working on her first literary works as early as 1939 and, from 1946 onwards, published a number of smaller anthologies of poems. In 1954 she made the acquaintance of experimental poet Ernst Jandl, with whom she enjoyed a close friendship; he would later become her life partner. Following her first poetry publications in the Viennese avant-garde magazine *Plan*, her first book *Larifari: ein konfuses Buch* was published in 1956. It was followed by poetry and prose, short stories, and radio plays, children's books, and texts for the stage. Friederike Mayröcker's oeuvre has garnered numerous awards and prizes, including the Grand Austrian State Prize for Literature (1982), the Droste Prize (1997), the Georg Büchner Prize (2001), and the Austrian Book Prize (2016). Friederike Mayröcker lives in Vienna.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST (b. 1968, Zurich, Switzerland) is Artistic Director of the Serpentine Galleries in London. Prior to this, he was the Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Since his first show 'World Soup (The Kitchen Show)' in 1991, he has curated more than 300 exhibitions. Obrist has lectured internationally at academic and art institutions, and is a contributing editor to *Artforum*, *AnOther Magazine*, *Cahiers D'Art*, and *032C*; he is a regular contributor to *Mousse* and *Kaleidoscope* and he writes columns for *Das Magazin* and *Weltkunst*. In 2011 he received the CCS Bard Award for Curatorial Excellence, and in 2015 he was awarded the International Folkwang Prize for his commitment to the arts.

His recent publications include *Ways of Curating* (2015), *The Age of Earthquakes* (2015), *Lives of the Artists*, *Lives of Architects* (2015), *Mondialité* (2017), *Somewhere Totally Else* (2018) and *The Athens Dialogues* (2018).

Design of the book table: Koo Jeong A

### Accompanying programme:

#### Screening

„Das Schreiben und das Schweigen. Die Schriftstellerin Friederike Mayröcker“, 2009

Documentary by Carmen Tartarotti, Pio Corradi / Camera

90 min, 35 mm

Tuesday, September 15, 2020, 6 p.m.

Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus / stadtkinowien.at

#### Reading

Friederike Mayröcker will give a reading as part of the exhibition. The date will be announced.

We would like to thank Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wienbibliothek, Stadtkino Wien and Carmen Tartarotti and Edith Schreiber for their valuable cooperation.

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| <b>curated<br/>by</b><br><br>5. 9. — 26. 9. 2020<br>Vienna / Wien<br><br>curatedby.at | <b>H</b> | <b>Y</b> |  |
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