

things. places. years.

Jewish women in London

documentary film
format: 50 min, DV-cam
language: english with german subtitles

A documentary film on the effects of the past in the present, of emigration and expulsion in the lives of Jewish Women of the first, second and third generation after the Holocaust. A film on their courage, power, knowledge and contribution to the arts and sciences, to the cultural field.



- 5 Protagonists
- 7 Content of the film
- 10 Katherine Klinger

Note

On the following pages you find only a part of the film concept. For a full version see the German original.

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A documentary by Klub Zwei

Directors: Simone Bader, Jo Schmeiser

Camera 1: Anita Makris

Camera 2: Rainer Egger, Daniel Pöhacker

Sound: Daniel Pöhacker

Production: amourfou Vienna

synopsis.

“Things.Places.Years.” comprises interviews with Jewish women of three generations after the Holocaust. The film’s first generation protagonists escaped from Nazi Austria as children or young women. The second and third generation protagonists are daughters and granddaughters of survivors, emigrés and escapees born and brought up in the U.K.

Core objective of the film is to show and investigate how experiences of emigration, diaspora and genocide are passed on from generation to generation. What does the history of the (grand-) mothers mean for the daughters and granddaughters? How does it affect their lives, their work, their identities? Which role does the past take in the present?

The film shows the after effects of emigration, expulsion and genocide in the lives of Jewish Women. And it documents their courage, power, knowledge and contribution to the arts and sciences, the cultural field in general.



Geraldine Auerbach



Josephine Bruegel



Erica Davies

protagonists.

Geraldine Auerbach, born in South Africa,
Jewish Music Institute, lives in London

Josephine Bruegel, born in Prague,
Club 43 (Literature Club), lives in London

Erica Davies, born in Wales,
Freud Museum, lives in London

Lisbeth Fischer-Leicht Perks, born in Vienna,
musician und author of the book
"The Unsung Years", lives in Stroud / England

Katherine Klinger, born in London,
Second Generation Trust and
Wiener Library, lives in London

Elly Miller, born in Vienna,
art publisher, lives in London

Rosemarie Nief, born in Siebenbürgen,
Wiener Library, lives in London

Anni Reich, geb. in Vienna,
Club 43 (Literature Club), lives in London

Ruth Rosenfelder, born in London,
Department of Gender and Music,
City University, lives in London

Ruth Sands, born in Vienna,
Second Generation Trust, Wiener Library
and Spiro Ark, lives in London

Nitza Spiro, born in Israel,
Spiro Ark, lives in London

Tamar Wang, born in London, daughter of Elly
Miller, publisher, lives in London



Lisbeth Fischer-Leicht Perks



Katherine Klinger



Elly Miller and her daughter Tamar Wang



Rosemarie Nief



Anni Reich

content of the film.

We have been interviewing 12 women in London. Some of them are bilingual, they speak English and German. Some understand German, but prefer to talk to us in English. Our interview partners have different histories and backgrounds.

First generation

Anni Reich (London) was in England on a business trip with her husband when Hitler entered Vienna in 1938. Josephine Bruegel (London) came to London as a student in 1939, from 1945 to 1947 she lived in Prague and then in London again. Lisbeth Fischer-Leicht Perks (Stroud, England) came on a Kindertransport to Holland in 1938 and, together with her mother, she emigrated to England in 1939. Elly Miller (London) left Vienna as a small child, together with her family she emigrated via Switzerland to London. Her father, Bela Horovitz, was the founder of the Phaidon Press and he managed to take his publishing house with him to London. Ruth Sands (London) was brought to France in 1939, when she was only a few months old. She was accompanied by a woman organized by a Jewish organization to get Jewish children out who were not yet old enough to get on the Kindertransports. As a young woman she left Paris and went to London.



Ruth Rosenfelder



Ruth Sands



Katya, granddaughter of Ruth Sands

Second and Third Generation

Katherine Klinger (London) was born in London, her parents were young students when they had to flee from Vienna/ Prague to London in 1938/ 1939. Tamar Wang (London) was born in London, she is the daughter of Elly Miller. Ruth Rosenfelder (London) was born in London, her parents fled from Poland via Belgium to London. Nitza Spiro (London) was born in Israel, her parents emigrated from Germany in the 1930ies, she went to London in the 1970ies. Geraldine Auerbach (London) was born in South Africa, her parents emigrated from Germany at the end of the 19th century, she also moved to London in the 1970ies

Experts

Rosemarie Nief (London) emigrated with her family from Romania to Germany, in 1985 she went to London, where she has been working at the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library, the oldest institution of Holocaust research in the world. Sie has a vast knowledge on Holocaust research, women survivors' accounts and the position of women in Judaism. She does not have a Jewish background. Erica Davies (London) went from Wales to London and also has no Jewish background. She calls herself an economic migrant and deals with issues of emigration, exile and Jewish identity in her work as the director of the Freud Museum in London.



Ruth Sands with her granddaughter Katya



Nitza Spiro

Exemplary interview passages

Below we describe the main focus of the film by discussing exemplary passages of the interviews with our 14 protagonists.

The passages quoted here are extracted from the interviews with Katherine Klinger.

Structure

The Interview passages are structured by the film's chapters Things, Places and Years.

The chapter Years describes aspects of each interview partner's history: her generation and family background as well as her specific experience of emigration. Furthermore you find statements on her work in the cultural field.

The chapter Things comprises statements and remembrances that were triggered by objects, for example a photograph, a book or a musical piece. With these objects the interview partners associate specific events, remembrances or experiences.

The chapter Places consists of places in London, in Vienna and in Israel that are important to our interview partners. They talk about places they like, fear or hate – places they associate with their personal and collective histories. They also talk about places of education and knowledge, for example museums, archives, libraries and concert halls. And they think about the meaning of places in general, which roles these places have in their lives.

Katherine Klinger

Things. Places. Years.

Katherine Klinger was born as daughter of Jewish refugees in London. Her mother came from Vienna, her father from Prague. She counts herself to the 2nd generation and in her work she deals with the topic of the effects of emigration, expulsion and genocide. She founded the Second Generation Trust, an organisation that held a couple of conferences on the im/possibility of a dialogue between descendants of Holocaust survivors and Nazi perpetrators or bystanders in Vienna, Berlin and London. She currently works at the Department for Education of the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library, the oldest Holocaust research institution in the world located in London's Devonshire Street.

When we meet Katherine Klinger in London for the first time, she first of all discusses her own suspicion and aggression towards us and our project:

"I was thinking about my first response when you contacted me and asked if I wanted to be part of your film. What I was really aware of was my immediate aggression towards you. And I thought that that was very relevant. It's an immediate suspicion, aggression and a desire and a need to test you out as to who exactly are you. Not so much what your position is because I can more or less guess and know that you're going to say all the right things. And the reason why I have to do that is precisely because in Austria I have almost never met anyone who has what I would call 'integrated', on a deeper level, the meaning of what their, your country has done and is part of as a historical and as an on-going continuum."



Katherine shows us a work by New York artist Melissa Gould, a postcard from the series called "Schadenfreude":

"It shows a scrubbing brush which is a souvenir from 1938. I think that that cannot fail to hit one right in the stomach in seeing it. This everyday object, a scrubbing brush, that most of us just regard as a thing to clean dirt up with and it has got no significance whatsoever. Of course we know that in 1938 it actually became not only a metaphor but a practical way for a deeply humiliating experience in which – certainly from famous photographs that we have of this time – the good ordinary bystander population of Vienna participated with this 'very innocent' scrubbing brush. They participated in watching certainly my grandfather amongst thousands of other grandfathers bended on their knees in the streets just cleaning with these scrubbing brushes and in other cases with tooth brushes.

And it isn't about trying to recreate that experience, to imagine – what must it be like to be down on my knees in the city where I have spent my life and that I love. It gives it a kind of immediacy in the present, that I think is very, very profound.

Given the amnesiac response of the Austrians to what happened, one has to hit one's punches as low as this in order to create some kind of response. Because clearly, on the whole, Austria, Vienna has been able to think that its past is of no consequence and meaning. And so, one has to come up with these very, very clever, simple statements, which is what I like so much about this postcard."





Perhaps the immobility of the things that surround us is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves and not anything else, by the immobility of our conception of them. For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful way to discover where I was, everything revolved around me through the darkness: things, places, years.

Marcel Proust, Remembrance of Things Past,
p. 6, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff
and Terence Kilmartin