

Im Heimweh ist ein blauer Saal (In Homesickness is a Blue Room)

Heba Y. Amin
Maja Bajević
Else Lasker-Schüler
Herta Müller

Curated by Jürgen Kaumkötter

February 21 – April 4, 2020

Opening: Thursday, February 20, 6 p.m.

Zilberman | Berlin



Else Lasker-Schüler, *Theben mit Jusuf*, 1922 (Detail)
Pen, crayon, chalk, gold bronze on the back of a telegram form, 25,3 x 21,3 cm
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for the Center for Persecuted Arts Solingen

Zilberman-Berlin is pleased to announce the group exhibition *Im Heimweh ist ein blauer Saal (In Homesickness is a Blue Room)* with works by Else Lasker-Schüler, Herta Müller, Heba Y. Amin and Maja Bajević. The exhibition is curated by Jürgen Kaumkötter, the director of Zentrum für verfolgte Künste. The opening will take place on February 20, at 6 p.m. and the press preview at 11 a.m.

“Back home I have a blue piano
Yet I can’t play a single note.
It’s been standing in the shadow of the cellar door
Since the world became savage.”

In the poem *My Blue Piano*, which avant-garde artist, poet and playwright Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945) wrote during exile, we encounter the longing of an impossible home. After being attacked by the SA (the paramilitary organization of Hitler’s party), Lasker-Schüler, who was an influential figure in Berlin, fled first to Switzerland, then to Jerusalem, Palestine. In her work, text and imagery merges as one, playing with mysticism and religion, orientalism (!) and longing. Through her performances with several alter egos she also performed in daily life—such as Prince Yussuf—the artist broke through social and gender norms with an ironic play.

The exhibition—dedicated to one of the vigorous female figures of German expressionism—addresses some of the complex political and social realities such as exile, displacement, longing; censorship and exercises of power. Text and research play the core character of the exhibited artists’ oeuvres engaging with crucial debates around gender and power.

In the six autobiographical drawings created in the 1920s by Lasker-Schüler, we encounter characters from her dreamland. Hope is apparent in these drawings, despite the hardships of life she was having as a poor artist in exile. As a reflection on the six drawings, 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Herta Müller has been creating word collages since the 1980s—both artists are known for their arduous responses to patriarchal structures. In the collages, Müller reveals a different, more metaphorical approach compared to her realistic books about torture and cruelty, such as the collage with the sentence: “came the wind as fresh as milk as old as clay became cuddly and looked at me from inside.”

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As another point of view against the established violent structures, Cairo-born artist Heba Y. Amin has been researching the ways in which the colonial imagination has objectified vulnerable bodies, through the invasive gaze of optical tools. Her artworks invoke mechanisms of domination and control through methods of surveying land and systems of surveillance. In the ongoing photographic series *German Landscapes by Night* (2019-), Amin portrays a scenario of a land surveyor from Africa—the artist herself—assessing and mapping German landscapes through optical devices by night. She borrows from colonial tactics to reveal the still-existing structures of exploitation through the use of technologies and weaponry predominantly being utilized against civilians in the Global South.

The works of Sarajevo-born (Ex-Yugoslavia) artist Maja Bajević dwell on truth, identity and the idea of homeland. The video *How do you want to be governed?* (2009) depicts a silent woman being constantly and violently poked and pushed. The voice-over repetitively asks an impossible question: How do you want to be governed? While contemplating on power relations and their absurdity, Bajević's piece highlights the use of words as instruments of repression. As an homage to Raša Todosijević's *Was ist Kunst?* (1976), the piece reflects on the positions of artists as precarious characters in a governed society. Remembering the poverty and homelessness that Else Lasker-Schüler had to cope with, Bajević's piece reminds us of the toxic truth: not much has changed, and we are still targets of a brutal hegemonic system.

Further Exhibitions:

Zilberman | Istanbul - *Jpeg Archipelago*, Antonio Cosentino, February 28 - May 2, 2020

Fairs:

Art Dubai: March 25-28, 2020

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