

To Dorothée

The art world mourns the loss of a brilliant personality: on November 15, 2022, art historian Dr. Dorothée Bauerle-Willert passed away in Montegrotto, Padua, Italy, during a trip to visit the Venice Biennale at the age of 71.

In the 1980s Dorothée Bauerle-Willert entered the contemporary art scene quickly and effectively. Standing out with unconventional exhibitions as an experimental young curator in Baden-Baden, Bremen and Wiesbaden, and then as deputy museum director in Ulm. She focused on works by young, then still largely unknown artists which she daringly confronted with established positions. These exhibitions were fully in the limelight, they had pioneering character.

From 1990 onwards, the focus of her life shifted far beyond Germany. Along with her husband Rainer Willert, who was responsible for the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's socio-political development projects, Dorothée Bauerle-Willert now lived and worked in various countries of in different continents, these periods came along with close new contacts to the respective art scenes, with guest professorships in Asunción/Paraguay, Montevideo/Uruguay, Tallinn/Estonia, Belgrade/Serbia and Skopje/Macedonia.

During these seventeen years abroad, Bauerle-Willert became a committed "ambassador for art" who set in motion international dialogues and intensive exchanges. German artists were thus invited to distant countries, and some artists from the respective host countries were presented in Germany.

After returning to Germany in 2007 and settling in Berlin, Bauerle-Willert was closely associated with the IKG, the International Artists' Committee, which was founded in 1976 by Klaus Staeck and Joseph Beuys, among others. To this day the IKG has taken up the cause of freedom of art across national borders. Since 2019, she was the president of this highly active association and thus participated in the German Cultural Council and its technical committees, as well as in the German Art Council and the Art Fund. Additionally, she connected the theater with and within the visual arts, as a freelance production dramaturge at the Vorarlberger Landestheater in Bregenz from 2010 to 2019, where she stood up for faithfulness to the work and against quick appropriation with profound knowledge.

In all these fields of activity Dorothée Bauerle-Willert recurringly enthused people for the arts, carried them away, opened eyes, ears and senses in a spirited and eloquent manner at the most diverse current events. Words played an eminent role in her work. Language itself became her art.

Dorothée Bauerle-Willert studied art history, literature and philosophy in Tübingen and Marburg. She received her doctorate in 1980 with a dissertation on Aby Warburg's epochal picture atlas. The title of the dissertation and the following highly

cited book is: "Gespenstergeschichten für ganz Erwachsene: ein Kommentar zu Aby Warburgs Bilderatlas Mnemosyne" (Ghost stories for adults: a commentary on Aby Warburg's picture atlas Mnemosyne). In the spirit of Aby Warburg, who traced recurring themes and patterns from antiquity through the Renaissance to contemporary culture, Bauerle-Willert acquired an immense treasure of knowledge that was always and spontaneously accessible and even more so alive to her. Aby Warburg remained her role model. She still had plans to continue working on his framework in the future.

Dorothee Bauerle-Willert first came to prominence in 1982 with a Kounellis exhibition at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden. Her breakthrough as a curator of contemporary art came in 1983 with a large open-air exhibition: "Sculpture and Color" for the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen, which included Tony Cragg, Isa Genzken, Elisabeth Wagner and Franz Erhard Walter. The Wiesbaden Sculpture Days, 1984, showed works by 15 sculptors in an exhibition organized by her. The artists ranged from David Rabinowitch and Richard Serra to the time's newcomers such as Klaus Simon. Her debut exhibition for the Ulm Museum. "Magirus 117 Art in the Hall", took place in old factory floors, once again juxtaposing established and newly emerging artists, ranging from Mario Merz and Bruce Nauman to Reinhard Mucha, Harald Klingelhöller and Magdalena Jetelova. The 1996 exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo with Elisabeth Wagner, Vaclav Pozarek, and René Zäch should be mentioned as an example of the numerous initiatives she carried out during her years abroad.

The sculptor Norbert Radermacher, who served as her predecessor as the president of the International Artists' Committee IKG from 2004 to 2010, wrote the following on Dorothee Bauerle-Willert's death: "Her heart beat for art, for artists, whether young and unknown or old and well-known. Her curiosity was as inexhaustible as her pleasure in encounters, her knowledge was as extensive as her tendency to put herself in the foreground was reduced. She was happy to remain supportive and reserved, observing everything with her bright eyes, her encouraging smile and her gesticulating hands. One experienced her at her happiest when a meeting turned into a party and people danced deep into the night to wild music."

Dorothee Willert held her last art discussion on the day of her death, a long and lively one with her artist friends Elisabeth Wager and Silke Leverkühne, concerning a painting by Tintoretto that hangs directly above the entrance to the Palazzo Querini Stampalia in Venice. Silke Leverkühne reports: "First it caught the eye because of the interesting coloration (the blue-turquoise clouds in relation to the human bodies). And then deciphering the iconography. Before that we were in the Giardini of the Biennale. So stimulating. A final precious afternoon."

Stephan von Wiese (translated by Max Willert)