



100 JAHRE Salzburger Festspiele

Presentation of Two Expert Reports on the Salzburg Festival Logo and its Designer Poldi Wojtek



Helga Rabl-Stadler (Festival President), Prof. Oliver Rathkolb (Historical Report), Anita Kern (Report on Design History), Markus Hinterhäuser (Artistic Director), Margarethe Lasinger (Dramaturgy, Salzburg Festival) and Lukas Crepaz (Executive Director), right to left. Photo: SF/Lukas Pilz

(SF, October 2020) Graphic artist Poldi Wojtek created the poster design in 1928 which has served as the Salzburg Festival's logo ever since – with the exception of the period of the National Socialist regime. On the occasion of its centenary, the Salzburg Festival commissioned two expert reports illuminating this chapter of Festival history:

Historical Report by Prof. Oliver Rathkolb

The historian Oliver Rathkolb was commissioned to write a “Report on connections between Leopoldine (Poldi) Wojtek(-Mühlmann) and National Socialists from 1933 to 1945 and possible continuities in her ideological attitude towards the Nazi regime after 1945”.

“Poldi Wojtek was – to borrow the humanist Ulrich von Hutten’s phrase – a ‘human being in all its contradictions’. We must realize that despite their extraordinary abilities and their talent for speaking to our emotions, artists are ultimately not perfect geniuses. They too are human beings with multiple weaknesses who only rarely oppose those in political power in a totalitarian dictatorship. Some of them, and Poldi Wojtek is among them, shamelessly took advantage of their political relationships and networks – all the way to unscrupulous enrichment by seizing Jewish property,” says Prof. Oliver Rathkolb.

Assessment of Aspects of Design History by Dr. Anita Kern

The historian of design Anita Kern provided an assessment of the poster design.

“Graphic designers are charged with visually communicating their clients’ content. Providers of ‘graphic design for daily use’ are part of a profession which is quickly confronted with conflicts of conscience in a criminal regime when accepting commissions. Not everyone had the strength to resist (or even support the resistance by graphic means). The consequences of such a dilemma for the quality of graphic work can be studied in the cases of several designers – in the case of Poldi Wojtek, submitting to an inhuman political system also killed her esprit as a graphic designer,” Dr. Anita Kern summarizes her findings.

In her statement, **Festival President Helga Rabi-Stadler** concludes:

“What does it mean for the Festival that an artist who designed a poster in 1928 which has served and proved its worth as the Festival’s logo ever since – only the Nazis had it removed from 1938 to 1945 – became not a member of the Nazi regime, but definitely profited from it? And that this Poldi Wojtek then shamelessly accepted the gift of an ‘Aryanized’ house which had belonged to her fellow artist Helene von Taussig, who was murdered in a concentration camp?

We have agreed that we wish to keep this logo, because it is a very good and timeless logo. It does not reflect the symbolism of the Nazi era. On the contrary, the logo was created in the spirit of the internationally renowned Vienna School of Arts and Crafts; Wojtek’s teachers were Josef Hoffmann and Franz Cizek, both of whom attested to her special talent. However, on our website we will, of course, point out Wojtek’s fatal later development into one of the Nazi regime’s profiteers.”

Artistic Director Markus Hinterhäuser offers the following summary: “Within the Directorate, we had intense discussions on the treatment of the logo. The past cannot be overcome; rather, an open and honest exploration of our past is essential. The ambivalence and unappetizing opportunism of Poldi Wojtek are one thing; Poldi Wojtek’s logo itself, however, reveals no affinity for National Socialism or its aesthetics whatsoever.

Although it was created during the 1920s and is beholden to the aesthetics of that period, it has remained a timeless emblem.”

Preface by the Directorate of the Salzburg Festival for the Expert Reports on the Salzburg Festival Logo and its Designer Poldi Wojtek

In light of its centenary, the Salzburg Festival wishes to engage with the ongoing debate about the painter and graphic artist Poldi Wojtek. In 1928, Wojtek designed an emblem for the Salzburg Festival that has since — with the exception of the Nazi era — served as the Festival's logo. The tension between the moral responsibility of artists and the artistic merit of their work is forcefully illustrated by the figure of Poldi Wojtek, who later ingratiated herself with the Nazi regime.

In order to shed light on this chapter of its history, the Festival turned to two experts: Professor Oliver Rathkolb researched Wojtek's political development and meticulously documented the traces of Nazism in her biography, which extended to driving through the Aryanization of a house belonging to the artist Helene von Taussig.

Dr. Anita Kern carried out an appraisal of Wojtek's artistic development, with particular attention to the artistic merit of the logo. It was clearly shown that the graphic artist, who studied with important artists such as Josef Hoffmann and Franz Cizek, was 'abreast of the times in her drawings and graphics' (Kern) when the Festival emblem was created. Her ingratiating with the Nazi regime after 1936, however, also led to a deterioration in the quality of her artistic work.

With these two reports, the Festival originally wanted to drive forward the extensive debate taking place around the world about how artworks of high aesthetic quality by politically questionable artists should be evaluated. This was unfortunately prevented by the pandemic last spring. This publication is therefore only intended to be the first step, and the Festival will conduct the planned symposium in 2021. The Salzburg Festival wants to take the centenary as an opportunity for further scholarly research into its past – not excluding, of course, its darker chapters.

Helga Rabi-Stadler President

Markus Hinterhäuser Artistic Director

Lukas Crepaz Executive Director

Summary of Oliver Rathkolb's Report

- Before the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933 and the outlawing of the NSDAP in Austria in June 1933, Poldi Wojtek was a recognized young artist in Salzburg. Prior to her success with the 1928 Festival poster, she had collaborated on major projects in Salzburg – for example the Festspielhaus frescoes – and moved among the circle of artists surrounding Anton Faistauer and Anton Kolig.

- Poldi Wojtek's Festival logo was no longer used after the annexation of Austria in 1938 – too great was its association with the era of Max Reinhardt and intellectual modernism. However, Wojtek's graphic designs were not considered "degenerate" – and therefore ideologically ostracized – as a consequence. From 1945 onwards, the emblem was once again used as a logo.

- She won the 1928 competition calling for designs for a Salzburg Festival poster, despite failing to be placed first in the judging process at Vienna's School of Arts and Crafts – her design came in second place. Her friend and subsequent husband, Kajetan Mühlmann, an art historian and press officer of the Austrian Office of Propaganda, however, had successfully pulled several strings in the background leading to this decision. At the time, Mühlmann was also responsible for press and public relations work for the Salzburger Festspielhaus-Gemeinde, which held a 50% stake in this advertising agency.

- Poldi Wojtek's proximity to Nazi clients and her involvement in Nazi propaganda works resulted from her private relationship with Mühlmann. Due to his contacts with the National Socialist minister of the interior and short-term chancellor and Reich governor Arthur Seyß-Inquart during the annexation in Vienna in 1938, Mühlmann ascended to the innermost circle of NSDAP decision-makers and became a state secretary, responsible for questions of art, as well as "Göring's European art thief". Using his name and network, he boosted Poldi Wojtek's artistic career at least indirectly, as he had done before 1938, until the couple divorced in 1943.

- As proof of her ideological record, in her "personal information survey for the application to be issued with a provisional membership card and be granted membership in Austria," which she filled out on 30 June 1938 to be admitted to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, Wojtek cited her illustrations for *Eine wahre Geschichte*, a children's biography of Hitler by Karl Springenschmid, a teacher and highly active Nazi ideologue, which was published anonymously in 1936.

- Regarding the proximity of Poldi Wojtek to Nazi ideology, it is not only the recurring and superficial illustrations of Nazi propaganda and symbolism, even before 1938, but the active pursuit of the expropriation and acquisition of the house of the persecuted Jewish painter Helene von Taussig in Anif which must be emphasized. Wojtek used the contacts of her husband Kajetan Mühlmann and her father – a former high-ranking civil servant in the state building authorities – in order to take possession of the house. Her father gave her the "Aryanized" house as a gift in 1943. Mühlmann had successfully intervened to push through this "Aryanization", despite powerful Nazi competition and the prohibition on sales resulting from the war. Poldi Wojtek herself also intervened repeatedly among the highest echelons of NSDAP officials.

· In 1952 Poldi Wojtek and her new partner Karl Schatzer – she divorced Mühlmann in 1943, since he had had a second family since 1939 – founded a training workshop for ceramics. During the search for a studio space, Landeshauptmann Josef Klaus supported her, and after an unsuccessful attempt to occupy space at the Salzburger Kunstverein, she opened a new studio together with Karl Schatzer, who had trained formally as a painter, at a new cultural centre at the Residenz. Having received several awards, Poldi Wojtek passed away in 1978.

Summary of Anita Kern's Report

· In terms of design history, Poldi Wojtek's logo is not a classical logo. It was a poster repurposed as a logo, consisting of five different visual elements plus lettering. It is a typical graphical product of its time: it is characterized by constructive rigidity, but still points to Viennese "Flächenkunst" (art of the surface) of ca. 1900.

· During the 1920s, Poldi Wojtek was abreast of her times in terms of graphic art and drawing, but she represented a conservative position – given the numerous avant-garde movements of the period.

· Poldi Wojtek's friendship and subsequent marriage to the Nazi arts official Kajetan Mühlmann led to commissions and public recognition; these, however, were legitimized by credentials as a graphic designer she had established independently. Even at the beginning of her studies in 1922, her designs served as title illustrations of children's books (the series of *Sesam-Bücher*). Her teachers at the School of Arts and Crafts, the *Jugendstil* doyens Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Boehm as well as Franz Cizek, a pioneer in arts education, attested to Wojtek's "excellent talent as a draftswoman", "imagination" and "talent". So far, Wojtek's works which are mentioned in contemporary press articles could not be located: when the Salzburg chapter of the Separate League of Austrian Artists, whose president Anton Faistauer was, exhibited works by Clemens Holzmeister and Peter Behrens, among others, in August 1925, "costume sketches and wallpaper designs by Poldi Wojtek, only 22 years old, drew attention".

· Weaving the facts into a coherent picture, Poldi Wojtek was not "co-opted" or "instrumentalized", but actively promoted Nazi ideology through her political illustrations. The more she entered Katejan Mühlmann's sphere of influence and the more political her commissions became, the more her designs lost their freshness and the more conservative and ungainly her drawings became, as demonstrated by the illustrations for the Hitler biography for children, *Eine wahre Geschichte* of 1936. Here the sophisticated, looser drawing style of the 1920s Wojtek had completely disappeared.

· The logo for the Salzburg Festival was created almost a decade earlier (in 1928) and has been an effective icon for almost a century – independently of the biography of its creator.

Short Biographies

Anita Kern

Mag. art., Dr. phil., graphic designer and cultural scholar, university lecturer for graphic design at the University of Applied Arts

Anita Kern is the proprietor of the communication design agency Kerndesign. She designs books, curates exhibitions and publishes on the history of design, including titles such as *Österreichisches Grafikdesign im 20. Jahrhundert* (2008), *Grafikdesign von der Wiener Moderne bis heute. Von Kolo Moser bis Stefan Sagmeister* (2010), *Ikonen und Eintagsfliegen. Arthur Zelger und das Grafikdesign in Tirol* (2014). Anita Kern teaches at the Vienna University of Applied Arts at the Institute of Design and at the Danube University in Krems. She studied graphic design with Kurt Schwarz and Tino Erben and advertising with Walter Lürzer. She completed her doctoral studies in the history of culture and intellectual history with Manfred Wagner (at Vienna's Academy resp. University of Applied Arts). She is a member of designaustria (where she leads the expert cluster History of Design) and the Typographical Society of Austria.

Oliver Rathkolb

University Professor at the Institute of Contemporary History of Vienna University, Institute Director and Member of the Senate of Vienna University

Oliver Rathkolb is the author, editor and co-editor of numerous publications on Austrian contemporary, cultural and media history; he also edits the journal *zeitgeschichte* and the series *Zeitgeschichte im Kontext*. In 2005 he was awarded the Donauland Non-Fiction Prize Danubius and the Bruno Kreisky Prize for Political Books (*Die paradoxe Republik. Österreich 1945-2005*, published by Zsolnay). Oliver Rathkolb is the chairman of the international scientific council of the House of European History (European Parliament, Brussels) and of the scientific council of the House of Austrian History, as well as a member of the scientific advisory council of the Jewish Museum in Vienna. His most recent book, *Schirach. Eine Generation zwischen Goethe und Hitler*, was published in October 2020.

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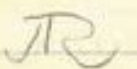
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Poldi Wojtek, *Salzburger Festspiele 1928*, Poster
Archive of the Salzburg Festival, Photo: Salzburg Museum

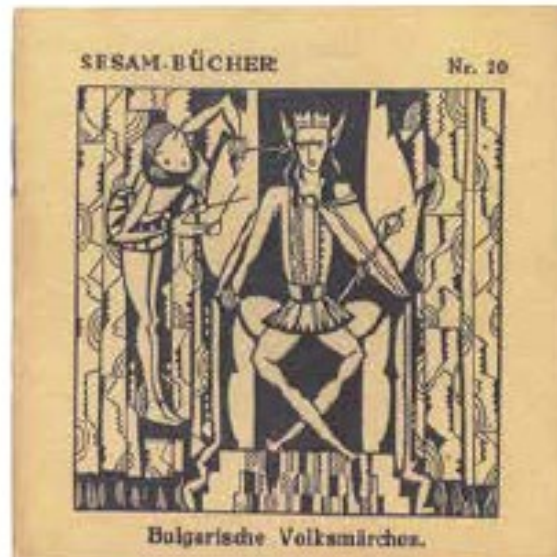


Anton Kolig with his son Thaddeus and his employee Poldi Wojtek in front of the tapestry *Adam und Eva* at Salzburg's Festspielhaus, 1926
Art Collection and Archive of the Vienna University of Applied Arts

STUDIENGANG				
DES SCHÜLERS IN DEN HAUPTFÄCHERN				
1 - ALLGEMEINE ABTEILUNG				
JAHRE	HAUPTFACH	VERWENDUNG	FORTGANG	
1922-1923	Österreichische Kunstgeschichte Reg. Dr. Prof. Franz Lischke	stärkstenfalls	vorzüglich	
1923-1924	Zeichnen - Ornamente u. d. architek. Zeichen Reg. Dr. Prof. Adolf Buchner	ausgezeichnet	vorzüglich	
2 - FACHKLASSEN				
1924-1925	Skulpturen f. Holzarbeiten Dr. Dr. Dr. Josef Hoffmann	sehr gut	gut	
1925-1926	Skulpturen f. Holzarbeiten Dr. Dr. Dr. Josef Hoffmann	gut	gut	
GESAMTURTEIL				
<p>über den angehenden Künstler</p> <p>Physiognomische Ausprägung für Kunst und Form, Begabung für Ornament- und Malerei (Reg. Dr. Prof. Franz Lischke). Sehr gute, zeichnerische Begabung (Reg. Dr. Prof. Adolf Buchner). Sprachvermögen, beweglich, sehr gute zeichnerische Begabung. Talentierte für Holz- und Metallarbeiten und alle mit einschlägigen Kunstgewerbe (Oberbaurat Prof. Dr. Josef Hoffmann).</p>				
WIEN - AM 30. Juni 1926.				
DIREKTOR		DIE PROFESSOREN		
		Reg. Dr. Prof. Franz Lischke Reg. Dr. Prof. Adolf Buchner Ob. Dr. Dr. Prof. Dr. Josef Hoffmann		
ABSTUFUNG DER NOTEN SEIT 1924 - 25				
STRASSEN VERHALTEN	SEHR GUT	GUT	ENTSPRECHEND	NICHT ENTSPRECHEND
FACHLEHRE	SEHR GUT	GUT	ENTSPRECHEND	NICHT ENTSPRECHEND
ERFÜLLUNG	SEHR GUT	GUT	ENTSPRECHEND	NICHT ENTSPRECHEND

Poldi Wojtek's leaving certificate from the Austrian Museum of Arts and Industry's School of Arts and Crafts, dated 30 June 1926

Art Collection and Archive of the Vienna University of Applied Arts



Poldi Wojtek's cover designs for the series *Sesam-Bücher*, 1920s
Art Collection and Archive of the Vienna University of Applied Arts

Ben Ausstellungen auch dem Auslande wohl-
bekannt, hat sich 1923 in Anif bei Salzburg un-
gesiedelt; neben seinen Landschaften, die die
alte Wiener Kultur bewahren, hat er sich als
Porträtist, neuerdings auch in kirchlichen und
dekorativen Aufträgen, erfolgreich betätigt.

Von Kärnten, über Architektur und Innen-
einrichtung, ist Franz Moro zu seiner Jugend-
liebe, der Malerei, zurückgekommen, um sich als
Schüler des Hochgebirges in Salzburg nieder-
zulassen.

Von den eigentlichen Salzburgern hat der
Landschafter Adolf Helmberger sich auch
seiner Wiener akademischen Studienzeit in sei-
nem idyllischen Geburtsort St. Gölgen zurück-
gezogen. Dagegen ist sein wenig jüngerer Zeit-
genosse Steinhart (nach ersten Studien bei



POLDI WOJTEK



PFILIERBEMALUNGEN IN DER NEUEN POSTHALLE, SALZBURG

Poldi Wojtek's pillar for Salzburg's Main Post Office, 1930

Österreichische Kunst, Vol. 9, 1930, p. 20-21. [http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-](http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=oku&datum=1930&page=209&size=45&qid=2UIDHC5QIT8QTJMK3OKFK73QXUJURF)

[plus?aid=oku&datum=1930&page=209&size=45&qid=2UIDHC5QIT8QTJMK3OKFK73QXUJURF](http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=oku&datum=1930&page=209&size=45&qid=2UIDHC5QIT8QTJMK3OKFK73QXUJURF)

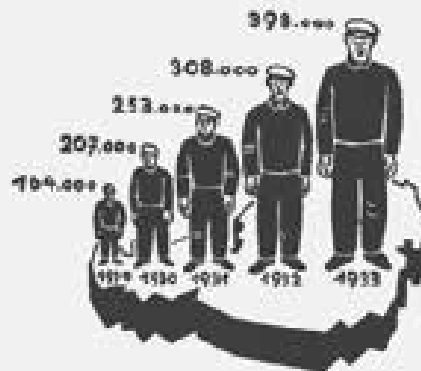
Industrie und Gewerbe in Österreich



Il. Wüstenroter (epi-Kette): „Österreich — die Arbeit“

Bild 7

Wie die Arbeitslosigkeit zunahm



Il. Wüstenroter (epi-Kette): „Österreich — die Arbeit“

Bild 8

Jeder dritte Arbeiter ohne Verdienst

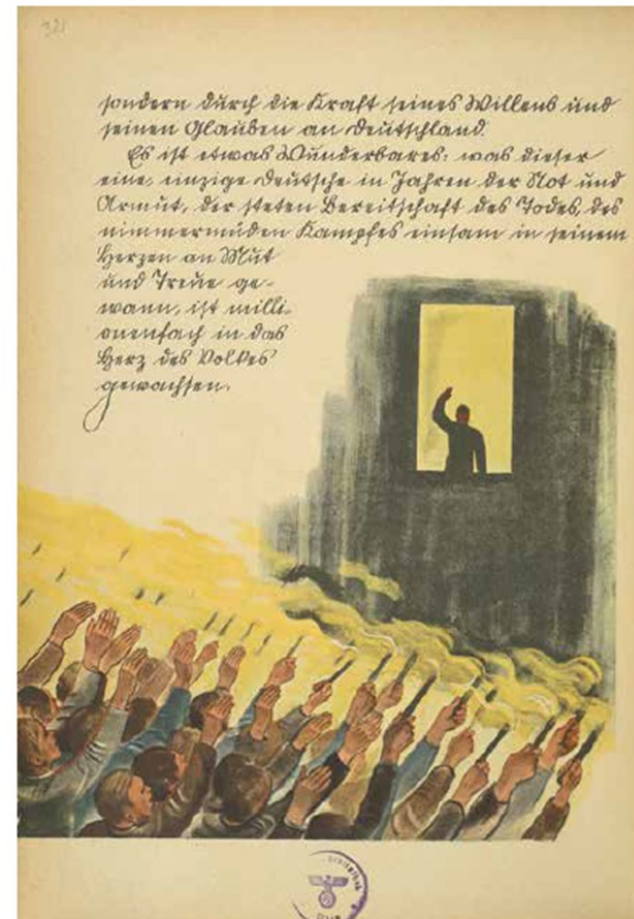


Karl Springenschmid and Poldi Wojtek-Mühlmann, *Österreich — die Arbeit*

Wüstenroter „Epi“-Reihe 1, published by Bausparkasse Gemeinschaft der Freunde Wüstenrot. Salzburg, undated



Poldi Wojtek, small poster for a group exhibition of Salzburg arts and crafts, 1920s
Salzburg Museum, Inv.-No. BIB PLA 535



Eine wahre Geschichte. Worte und Bilder von zwei Deutschen aus dem Auslande.
Stuttgart: Frank'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1937, unpaginated
Austrian National Library Vienna, Image Archive and Graphic Art Collection



Poldi Wojtek, *Salzburger Festspiele 1928*, Poster
Archive of the Salzburg Festival, Photo: Salzburg Museum



[Hans?] Gerster, *Salzburger Festspiele 1938*, Poster
Archive of the Salzburg Festival, Photo: Salzburg Museum