

Vienna, January 2011

**Wien Museum Karlsplatz, 1040 Vienna**

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**TRUDE FLEISCHMANN –  
A SELF-ASSURED EYE**

**Press conference:** Wednesday, 26 January 2011, 10 a.m.  
**Opening event:** Wednesday, 26 January 2011, 6:30 p.m.  
**Exhibition site:** Wien Museum Karlsplatz, 1040 Vienna  
**Duration:** 27 January to 29 May 2011  
**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Sunday and holiday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Closed on 1 May  
**Press photos:** [www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse](http://www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse)

A photographer of theatre stars, dancers and intellectuals; an artist whose portraits of contemporaries like Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos or Albert Einstein have become famous, whose motion studies of nude dancers in the 1920s caused quite a sensation ... Trude Fleischmann (1895–1900) without any doubt ranks among the greats of 20<sup>th</sup> century female photography. She was one of those self-confident young Jewish – and female – photographers who read the signs of the times, opened their own studios in post-war Vienna and made their careers in a male-dominated sphere with works that were bolder and more modern than their forerunners’.

In the 1920s, when society was in a euphoric mood and open for aesthetic experimentalism, the “New Woman” arrived on the scene, striving for emancipation and independence. Trude Fleischmann epitomised the very image of a young, self-assured woman. Her studio became an important haunt of Vienna’s cultural circles – that is until 1938, when her career was temporarily stopped dead by the “Anschluss”. After her expulsion she managed to re-establish herself as a professional photographer in New York.

**First Comprehensive Exhibition**

Two decades after her death, the Wien Museum dedicates a comprehensive exhibition to Trude Fleischmann, focussing on her Vienna period from 1920 to 1938. The exhibition not only features her best known photos but also works hitherto unknown: In fact, Fleischmann was a very versatile photographer; her oeuvre goes far beyond her famous studio shots and is way more comprehensive and thematically wide-ranging than has been assumed. A large part of the photographs on display is owned by the Wien Museum, which holds one of the most comprehensive and internationally renowned collections of Fleischmann’s works.

### **Aged 25, with a studio of her own**

In 1920 Fleischmann, a mere 25 years old, opened her own photo studio at Ebendorferstrasse 3, near Town Hall. Within a few years, the rising star in society photography became *the* modern portraitist of Vienna, working with celebrities from all the major Viennese theatres – actors and dancers, conductors and singers. A gifted networker, Fleischmann actively approached celebrities and offered to photograph them free of charge. In return, she was allowed to use the shots for her own promotion. However, she also photographed Vienna's bourgeois society – scientists, politicians, and private business owners.

### **Between tradition and avant-garde**

The idea of the “New Woman” called for an appropriate imagery and modern methods of staging and posing, as well as for individuality and dynamics. Fleischmann favoured an objective style of portraiture. Although eager to incorporate modernist impulses, she always met radical avant-garde experimentalism with reserve. With her camera, she often zoomed in on her subjects, which makes her portraits both precise physical studies and psychological glimpses, characterised by a dramatic distribution of light and shade.

A highlight in Fleischmann's career was certainly her photographic series of dancer Claire Bauhoff, whose fair-skinned, oiled body she placed in rich contrast against a black background. Those shots marked a watershed in nude photography. Only a few years before, such staging of the nude body would have been unthinkable, but now the photos were published extensively throughout magazines, photographic volumes and professional literature.

### **Nude dancers give way to mountain peasants**

And yet the exhibition is not only about this most noted chapter of Fleischmann's life as a photographer; in fact it reveals many a facet of her oeuvre that hardly complies with the image of an avant-garde star photographer: When in the late 1920s the Great Depression broke out – and conservative Austria made a stand against anything urban and modern – Fleischmann switched to the more conventional travel reportage. Now, she provided the contemporary press with motifs of “Heimat” such as weathered mountain peasants and magnificent mountain landscapes. In the focus of her diverse travel and landscape photographs were idyllic holiday scenes, genre works, as well as views of architecture and landscapes.

Trude Fleischmann's career as a Viennese photographer came to an end in March 1938. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1938 she managed to flee Austria, with nothing but a few negatives and prints, her camera and a studio album. She destroyed her entire archive, except for some 100 to 200 negatives, which she committed to a neighbour. After sojourns in Paris and London she arrived in New York on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 1939. With the help of her friend Helen Post she managed quite quickly to re-establish herself once again, both privately and as a photographer. In 1940 she opened a studio in the vibrant theatre district of Manhattan and resumed photographing artists and intellectuals, many of whom were emigrants themselves. In New York, Fleischmann increasingly preferred to work outdoors, which led

to street scenes and travel photographs as well as occasional fashion photos. In fact many of her portraits, like for example her famous shots of Albert Einstein or Arturo Toscanini, were made outside of the studio. In 1969 she closed her New York atelier and moved to Lugano in Switzerland, only to return to the USA in 1988, where she died in Brewster, New York, in 1990.

### **The Wien Museum collection**

Fleischmann's legacy consists mostly of prints some of which entered into private or public hands even before 1938 and were later transferred to diverse collections. Early on, namely in 1936, the Wien Museum bought several of Fleischmann's photographs – especially dance, motion and nude shots. Other works found their way to the Museum in 1955, as a part of an estate. Together, these two collections cover the central aspects of Fleischmann's oeuvre. Indeed, their conservation was a stroke of luck, as it compensates for the loss of Fleischmann's own archive, at least to a small degree. Further photographs that feature in the exhibition and the catalogue come from other archives, libraries and collections, both private and public. In the exhibition, Trude Fleischmann's works are presented in their contemporary historical context, i.e. accompanied by photographs of contemporary female photographers. Whereas Fleischmann's best known shots have become icons of photographic history, little is still known about other Jewish female photographers of the interwar period. Some of them are on display in the exhibition for the first time since their expulsion.

The exhibition is curated by Anton Holzer and Frauke Kreutler (Wien Museum); the accompanying catalogue, published by Hatle Cantz, contains essays by Heike Herrberg, Anton Holzer, Marion Krammer, Frauke Kreutler and Astrid Mahler.

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**Press photos:** [www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse](http://www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse)
- Ticket prices:** Adults: 6 €  
Reduced tickets: 4 € (seniors, Wien-Card, Ö1-Club, disabled, groups of 10 persons) or 3 € (trainees, students up to age 27, military or alternative service);  
Pupils and adolescents under 19 years are free of charge!  
Free admission for all visitors on every first Sunday of the month!
- Guided tours:** On Sundays and holidays, 4 p.m.  
On every first Sunday of the month: 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.  
Booking for groups: Tel.: (+43 1) 505 87 47- 85180;  
email: [service@wienmuseum.at](mailto:service@wienmuseum.at)
- Visitor information:** Tel.: (+43 1) 505 87 47-0, [www.wienmuseum.at](http://www.wienmuseum.at);  
email: [service@wienmuseum.at](mailto:service@wienmuseum.at)
- Curators:** Anton Holzer, Frauke Kreutler (Wien Museum)
- Exhibition production:** Isabelle Exinger
- Exhibition design:** Checo Sterneck
- Graphic design:** fuhrer visuelle gestaltung
- Catalogue:** Trude Fleischmann – A Self-Assured Eye. By Anton Holzer und Frauke Kreutler (Eds.); Hatje Cantz Verlag; 200 pages / 27 €
- Main sponsor Wien Museum:** Wiener Stadtwerke
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