



ANITA'S POINT OF VIEW // Homage to Anita Neugebauer

Anita Neugebauer (1916-2012) founded Switzerland's first photo gallery in 1976 and devoted herself to the mediation of international and national photography. With her gallery, exhibition and collecting activities, she became an important pioneer for the continuing development of photography in Switzerland. With the exhibition Anita's Point of View, photo basel is dedicating a homage to the person who has done so much for Swiss photography.

Anita Neugebauer, who was born in Berlin in 1916, developed a passion for photography after graduating from high school. She attended a photography school and learned photography from the bottom up. Threatened by Hitler's antisemitism, she and her mother emigrated to Buenos Aires in 1938 and relocated to Basel with her husband, the physician Josef Neugebauer, in 1947. A few years followed during which Anita Neugebauer dedicated herself to family life, before she turned again intensively to photography. Re-entering the photographic profession was no longer an option for her, as in her own perception she was no longer familiar with the new technologies. Nevertheless, she always had a great interest in photography and contact with photographers, therefore she decided to take a different path.

The idea of opening a photo gallery in Switzerland was not an obvious endeavor in the 1970s. While photography had already been given a place in museums and galleries in the United States since the 1950s, Switzerland lagged behind. It was not until the founding of the *Stiftung für die Photographie* and its exhibition activities at the *Kunsthaus Zürich* in 1974 that photography was shown in an art museum in Switzerland for the first time. Just a few years later, Neugebauer demonstrated that photography can also be exhibited and sold in a gallery context by founding the gallery *photo art basel* in 1976. Walter Binder, who initiated the *Stiftung für die Photographie* together with Rosellina Burri-Bischof, described the opening of Neugebauer's new photo gallery as "a pioneering act far beyond Basel," and Charles-Henri Favrod, later founder and director of the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, referred to Neugebauer's new exhibition space as "la galerie des merveilles." Anita Neugebauer was aware of her pioneering role, but also of the prejudices associated with it, and seemed to find an attraction in mediation for this reason in particular. She wanted to show the general public "what it is - photography" and that it should also be an integral part of the art world and the art market in Switzerland.

Her companions described Anita Neugebauer as a true hostess, who presented exhibitions in a 35-square-meter white cube in the heart of Basel at St. Alban-Vorstadt 10. "My mother searched all over Basel for the ideal space for her gallery," Claudia Neugebauer explains. "The small exhibition space became a place of exchange: photographers brought their portfolios and presented their work, visitors spent a long time in the exhibitions, friends always dropped by - it was a coming and going and everyone was welcomed. The gallery *photo art basel* was a vibrant meeting place for all photography lovers." However, Anita Neugebauer was also aware of the power of the image and her delicate position of finding the fine line between aesthetics, documentation and art. Although she herself had escaped the Holocaust, she never exhibited works that cried out for attention - she refused to shock viewers through voyeurism. In addition to her humanistic approach to the subjects of photography, Neugebauer knew well how to mix international photographers with national as well as local ones. She brought respected photographers from all over the world to Basel - mostly for the first time - and at the same time offered well-known and unknown Swiss photographers the opportunity to exhibit. She dedicated the opening exhibition of her gallery to the French photographer Robert



Doisneau and in the further course of her 30 years of activity Anita Neugebauer curated more than 100 exhibitions with photographs by Jan Saudek, Édouard Boubat, Ruth Mayerson Gilbert, Hugo Jaeggi, Floris Neusüss, René Mächler, Monique Jacot, Roman Vishniac, Lee Friedlander and many others. This list also includes the photographer Gisèle Freund, whom Anita Neugebauer met during her stay in Buenos Aires and with whom she maintained a close friendship for many years. In connection with its active exhibition and mediation activities, the gallery *photo art basel* was one of the first photo galleries to participate in *Art Basel*.

In collaboration with Claudia Neugebauer and the Fabian & Claude Walter Galerie, we endeavored to provide an intimate glimpse into the world of Anita Neugebauer. The purpose of this homage is not to show photographs relating to a particular theme or selected time period, but rather to convey Anita Neugebauer's view of photography and her joy and passion towards the medium and therefore presenting *Anita's Point of View*.

- Alessa Widmer