

Spieltordamm 5, 19055 Schwerin
Mi-So/Wed-Sun 15:00–18:00
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Cora Pongracz
8 erweiterte portraits
30.08.25–11.01.26

EN

In dialogue with:
Seiichi Furuya
Deva Schubert
Marietta Mavrokordatou
DAVRA
Paul Niedermayer
Claudia de la Torre

Kunstverein Schwerin und Vorpommern
für Mecklenburg in Schwerin

Biography

Cora Pongracz:
During her lifetime, Cora Pongracz’s works were exhibited at the Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck; Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna; the Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna; Neue Galerie Linz and Graz; the Gang-galerie at the Graz Town Hall; Galerie H-Humanic, Graz; Galerie IntAkt in Griechenbeisl, Vienna; the Tyrolean State Museum in Innsbruck; Molotov, Vienna; Foto-galerie Wien; Galerie Fotohof, Salzburg; The Secession, Vienna; Galerie H.S. Steine, Vienna; Camera Austria, Vienna; Kunstverein Ludwigsburg; the Maimonides Centre, Vienna; the Rupertinum, Salzburg; Galerie Steinek, Vienna; Halle Steiner, Vienna; and Kunsthalle Krems.

Posthumously, her photographs have been exhibited at Gabriele Senn Gallery, Vienna; the 21er Haus, Vienna; the OstLicht Photo Gallery, Vienna; Maxwell Graham Gallery, New York; Wschód Gallery, New York; Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London; and the Zurich Biennale. Her estate is managed by the OstLicht Photo Gallery. Since 2023, Maxwell Graham Gallery has also represented Pongracz’s work. In 2000, Cora Pongracz was awarded the Austrian State Prize of Recognition for Photography.

Marietta Mavrokordatou:
Marietta Mavrokordatou (*1996, Nicosia, Cyprus) lives and works in Athens. She studied at Camberwell College of Arts and the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Mavrokordatou has participated in various solo and group exhibitions at Radio Athènes, Athens (2025); Camera Austria, Graz (2025); Benaki Museum, Athens (2025); Final Hot Desert, London (2025); Brunette Coleman, London (2024); Radio Athènes, Athens (2024); Akwa Ibom, Athens (2024); wieoftnoch, Karlsruhe (2024); Thkio Ppalies, Nicosia (2023); A Thousand Julys, Nicosia (2022); KM S/S 2024, Akwa Ibom, Athens; and Felix Gaudlitz, Vienna (2023).

Curated by:
Hendrike Nagel
(Artistic & Managing Director)

Luisa Kleemann
(Assistant & Program Curator)

Program

Opening:
29.08.2025, 19:00

Dialog Exhibition
with: Seiichi Furuya
21.09.2025 – 26.10.2025
Opening:
20.09.2025, 18:00

Dialogical Curator’s Tour:
01.10.2025, 17:00

Performance:
Deva Schubert
Glitch Choir
at Goldener Saal (Neustädtisches Palais)
25.10.2025
– Culture Night 2025 –

Dialog Exhibition
with: Marietta Mavrokordatou
02.11.2025 – 30.11.2025
Opening:
01.11.2025, 18:00

Central Asian Moving Image
Screening:
by: DAVRA
curated by Aida Adilbek
12.11.2025 – 14.11.2025
– Days of Exile 2025 –

Dialogical Curator’s Tour:
13.11.2025, 18:30
– Days of Exile 2025 –

Dialog Exhibition
with: Paul Niedermayer
& Annual Editions Exhibition 2025
07.12.2025 – 11.01.2026
Opening:
06.12.2025, 18:00

Dialogical Curator’s Tour:
18.12.2025, 17:00

Closing:
11.01.2026, 15:00

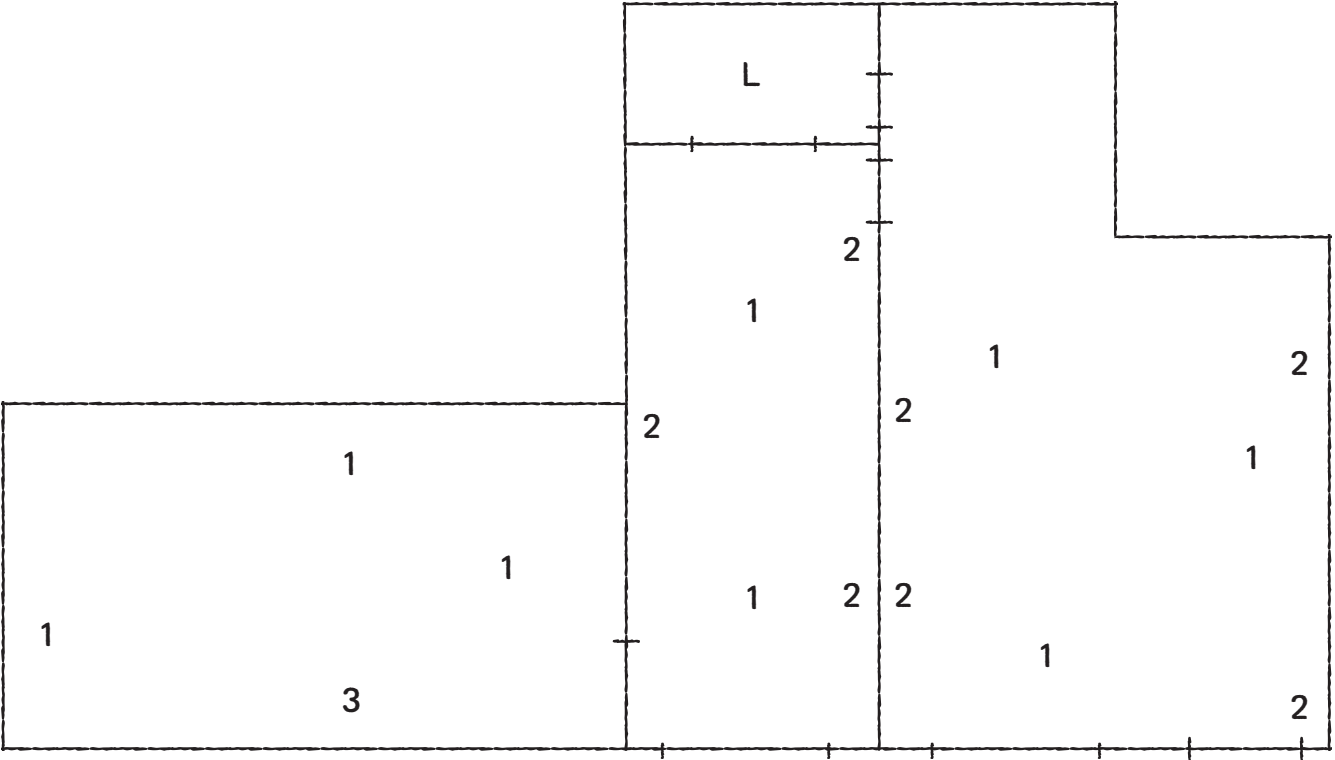
With kind support:



Floorplan

- 1
- Cora Pongracz, 8 erweiterte portraits, 1974, each: 23,5 × 23,5 cm, silver gelatin prints on baryta paper. Courtesy: OstLicht Collection, Vienna.
- 2
- Marietta Mavrokordatou, 6/1, 2025, 7 PAR 30 spotlights. Courtesy: The artist & Brunette Coleman, London.
- 3
- Marietta Mavrokordatou, Untitled (The way back), 2025, 81 colour 35mm slides, dimensions variable. Courtesy: The artist & Brunette Coleman, London.

L Growing library with artist’s publications, various authors



Cora Pongracz

8 erweiterte portraits

30.08.25–11.01.26

With *8 erweiterte portraits* the Kunstverein für Mecklenburg und Vorpommern in Schwerin presents an exhibition that places the work of Austrian photographer Cora Pongracz (1943–2003) in focus. Through the medium of photography Pongracz's works open a dialogue about identity and a politics of representation that is sensitive towards diversity. For this exhibition in Schwerin – the first comprehensive institutional presentation of Pongracz's works outside of Austria – one of her most important series of works, *8 erweiterte portraits*, 1974, is shown in its entirety for the first time. In order to reflect both the significance and the potential of Pongracz's artistic practice in the context of current social discourses, a number of contemporary artists have been invited to respond and relate to Pongracz's work through their own photographs, texts, performances, and other forms of critical interventions, throughout the exhibition.

Cora Pongracz was born in Buenos Aires in 1943. Due to her mother's Jewish ancestry, the Pongracz family, originally from Vienna, had been forced to flee to Argentina. The family remained in exile, unable to return to Europe until the end of the 1940s, at which point they went first to England, then to Austria, and later to Germany. It was there that Pongracz received her education in photography. In the vicinity of Frankfurt am Main she attended Marta Hoepffner's photography school from 1962–63, after which she studied at the Bavarian State Institute of Photography in Munich from 1963–64. Her student years thus coincided with the social upheaval of the 1960s. She lived through this period initially in Munich and later in London, where she came into contact with various (youth) movements, including the anti-psychiatry movement, who, as part of the post-war generation, rebelled against the established authorities and values systems. In 1968 Pongracz eventually moved back to Vienna where she, now married to poet and essayist Reinhard Priessnitz, became involved with the local art scene, in particular the Viennese avant-garde.

Pongracz gained regional recognition primarily as a documentarian of the actions of the predominantly male protagonists of Viennese Actionism. Apart from these documentary projects, however, her own artistic work remained for a long period largely unseen. In order to earn a living and secure a certain degree of independence, Pongracz regularly took on assignments for newspapers, magazines and travel guides. She did so despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the authorial photographic character of her training, which was influenced both by the artistic self-image of the Subjective Photography movement and by the humanistic orientation of LIFE magazine photography. The multi-perspective versatility of Pongracz's practice is also evident within her individual works. Although

many of her photographs can be viewed primarily as portraits, they can also be classified as reportage. As such Pongracz's artistic approach deliberately seeks to expand these classic roles and canonical categories of photographic representation. Her works are rather based on doubts about institutional authority and the paradigmatic belief that a person can be represented 'unambiguously', either institutionally or photographically. Accordingly, she repeatedly focuses her gaze on specific socio-cultural environments, without aiming to establish a fixed identity. Instead, identity in her work is made visible and productive not as a closed container, but as a relational structure. Her photographs also particularly convey the circumstances of their creation: Pongracz understood the act of taking a photograph as a communicative one that extends far beyond the boundaries of the image format into society, psychology and politics.

Over the course of her career, Pongracz developed her own photographic visual language that decisively addressed these socio-political issues. A distinctive feature of her photographs is her preference for transitory moments: instead of capturing striking poses in her images, Pongracz favours moments of change and movement. Important aspects of her critical strategy of questioning are cropping, repetition, perspective, and location. As an expression of her feministically informed stance, her photographic approach can be described as a media-reflexive translation that examines the conditions of photographic representation in terms of their limits and applicability.

This is particularly evident in her conceptual series, which reflect on the dispositives of identity and performativity, for example with regard to gender roles in the context of religion and politics. These images are influenced by Pongracz's own life journey, and later also by questions of mental health and inclusion. They include the 56-part series *8 erweiterte portraits*, 1974, whereby each of the eight portraits is comprised of two photographs of the selected women to which are added five images of associated motifs. The choices for these associative extensions were made by the subjects themselves, who thus brought their favourite places, family members, objects or activities of individual significance into the picture and appropriated them – filtered through the gaze and apparatus of the photographer. The eight women in the series are deliberately not named, but as well-known personalities of the Viennese art scene at the time, they are identifiable. With dialogical works such as these, Pongracz programmatically transfers the supposed authorial agency to the women portrayed, thereby subverting the traditional triangular relationship between the camera, the 'model', and the photographer, as well as the discursive fixation on women's social position in the private sphere. *8 erweiterte portraits*, 1974, like Pongracz's entire oeuvre, is based on an attitude that is consistently intersectional and open to diversity – and thus fundamentally anti-fascist – whose relevance is as great today as it was when they were created.

*Reference and further information: Marie Röbl; Peter Coeln (eds.), Cora Pongracz. The Photographic Work, Vienna 2016.

Cora Pongracz

8 erweiterte portraits

with: Marietta Mavrokordatou

02.11.25–30.11.25

The second dialogical presentation expands Cora Pongracz's series and exhibition of the same name, *8 erweiterte portraits*, with works by Cypriot artist Marietta Mavrokordatou, which complement Cora Pongracz's media-reflective and expanded understanding of portraiture and identity with the dimension of embodied and situated experience. Drawing on a phenomenological understanding of vision, Mavrokordatou repeatedly uses the camera in her artistic practice as an extension of the body—as an instrument that not only mediates perception, but also constitutes it. In this sense, her works operate in the interplay between body, medium, and perception and, much like Cora Pongracz, explore the potential of the photographic medium with regard to self-determined, experience-based forms of expression and multi-perspective narratives of the self.

With reference to the exhibition architecture, both works developed in dialogue with the exhibition *8 erweiterte portraits* refer to the motif of the labyrinth—a spatially and symbolically charged site where paths, images, and meanings overlap, dissolve, and reconstitute themselves. In dialogue with Pongracz's works, a visual rhythm unfolds, consisting of similarities, differences, and repetitions, though at the same time structured by interruptions and displacements. This dynamic creates a mode of reception reminiscent of the process of searching: moments of disorientation alternate with moments of recognition.

The work *Untitled (The way back)*, 2025, exhibited in the final room, arranges 81 photographic slides within a slide carousel. The work takes up the motif of breadcrumbs from fairy tales—as a metaphorical aid that provides orientation, guides the way back home. The 81-part series of projected images thus becomes a photographic search—and preservation—of traces, revealing itself also only as a temporary trail of light: Traces of everyday life appear on personal items and everyday objects: on clothing, laptops, cell phones, and the lens of the camera. The macro lens chosen by Mavrokordatou allows for a detailed—yet simultaneously more abstract—perception of these minute particles and provides access to what is usually beyond one's own reach and field of vision. Due to the specific functioning of the slide carousel, the projected images are arranged in a sequential narrative that has neither beginning nor end. In contrast to the classical logic of the photographic principle, that captures and fixes a single decisive moment, what emerges is rather

a cyclical continuum: a loop that eludes any definitive interpretation and determination.

The work *6/1*, 2025, continues this processual understanding of mediation, explicitly expanding it through the dimension of bodily experience. The gesture of transferring the rhythm of the carousel projector to the adjacent exhibition rooms creates a(nother) trail: of rhythmically modulated light conditions. What initially causes irritation upon entering gradually transforms into a rhythm that structures the perception of the photographs and subtly modulates their reception. The repetitive light pulses not only function as a visual element, but above all activate awareness of one's own physical presence in the room: one's position in relation to the projected images, and one's perception of time and space. Only in the last room, in direct encounter with the work *Untitled (The way back)*, 2025, does the full intention of this sequence become apparent: the mechanical repetition of the projector becomes a medium that conveys a complex interplay between sensory impression and subjective experience.

As established in the works of Cora Pongracz, both of Mavrokordatou's works—which also engage in dialogue with each other—refer to the photographic apparatus: the uniform, mechanical functioning of the slide projector—the repetitive clicking and flashing—sets the pace of the exhibition and simultaneously creates a mediated aesthetic experience in which the viewer's perception, the medial staging, and the spatial situation are inextricably linked.

Translation:
Emma Roy