

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

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.

Translation:
Ella Krivanek

Cora Pongracz

8 erweiterte portraits

with Seiichi Furuya

21.09.25–26.10.25

The first dialogical exhibition expands Cora Pongracz's 56-part series and exhibition of the same name, *8 erweiterte portraits*, with two serial cycles of works by Seiichi Furuya. Since the 1970s, the Japanese photographer, who lives in Graz, has been using the medium of photography to process personal experiences and processes of remembering and (non-)forgetting in a multi-layered visual project. In numerous exhibitions and artist books, he combines portraits, especially of family members, with photographs of living spaces, travels and everyday situations.

The series *Portrait*, 1978–1985, shows Furuya's wife Christine Furuya-Gössler, whom he photographed for the first time in 1978 – and thereafter almost daily over a period of seven years. In 1985, after a prolonged period of mental distress, Christine Furuya-Gössler took her own life. She had been diagnosed with schizophrenia in the early 1980s. After her death, the more than a thousand portrait photographs became a testimony of her presence and her agency – as a person, woman, actress, mother, partner, etc. – and the time they spent together, but also a process of self-assurance for the photographer and a reflection on the social and political realities that shaped their shared life.

Memories of the early years of their relationship and the birth of their son intertwine with Furuya's experience of a European lifestyle initially unfamiliar to him – first in Austria, later in the GDR – as well as the confrontation with mental illness and loss through suicide. The cycle of works does not mark a closing, but rather the beginning of an open, never-ending processing of complex relational networks. The freedom of associative arrangement and referentiality that Furuya grants his series implies a constant (re-)balancing of the roles that are inscribed in both the medium of photography and traditional gender allocations.

The second cycle of works, *Berlin-Ost/West-Berlin 1985–87, 2025*, also deals with the conditions of a divided reality – in this case, in particular, with changing external circumstances characterised by repeated relocations. From 1984 to 1987, Seiichi Furuya worked as an interpreter for a Japanese construction company. During this time, the family first lived in Dresden and later in East Berlin. The resulting photographs interweave private moments with scenes from public life in the GDR. The projection on view shows 690 of these photographs – mostly in black and white, some in colour. Instead of adhering to a linear order, the sequence of the images follows an open, associative structure.

In addition to photographs of family – like the portraits of Christine Furuya-Gössler – architectural motifs are a central theme throughout the series. Many of the photographs were taken during the celebrations on 4 July 1987 marking the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin. The SED had over 300 episodes of the city's history enacted in theatrical scenes and linked these with the portrayal of the supposed achievements of socialism. In its cultural policy competition with the West, the GDR focused on rebuilding the historic city centre. In addition to these architectural reconstructions, the series' imagery also features industrialized apartment blocks, the Palace of the Republic, the Volksbühne theatre, the Kino International cinema and the Berlin Wall, photographed from both East and West Berlin.

Like the *Portrait* series, this cycle of works also follows the overarching project of remembrance that fundamentally defines Seiichi Furuya's photographic practice. Similar to Cora Pongracz, both cycles of work reveal lived realities and relationship structures as dynamic, constantly changing relational constellations, which are moulded by intimacy, migration, political framing, subjective experiences, as well as – non-pathologized – psychological states. Both artists thus elude an authoritarian view of the subjected individual. Instead, they create spaces that allow for ambivalence, intermediate states, and a vulnerable understanding of identity that is always in the process of being negotiated – both in images and in life.

Translation:
Emma Roy

Seiichi Furuya
Portrait, 1978–1985

Room 1
(from left to right)

- 1 Seiichi Furuya, Izu 1978, 1978, Type C-Print (1995), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 2 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1978, 1978, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 3 Seiichi Furuya, Moscow 1978, 1978, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 4 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1978, 1978, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 5 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1979, 1979, silver gelatin print, 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 6 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1979, 1979, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 7 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1979, 1979, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 8 Seiichi Furuya, London 1979, 1979, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 8 Seiichi Furuya, London 1979, 1979, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 9 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1980, 1980, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 10 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1980, 1980, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 11 Seiichi Furuya, Lassnitzhöhe 1980, 1980, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 12 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1981, 1981, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 13 Seiichi Furuya, Deutschlandsberg 1981, 1981, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 14 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1981, 1981, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm

- 15 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1982, 1982, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 16 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1982, 1982, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 17 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1982, 1982, silver gelatin print (2000), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 18 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1982, 1982, silver gelatin print (1996), 49,5 × 36,8cm

Room 2
(from left to right)

- 19 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1982, 1982, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 20 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 21 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 22 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 23 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 24 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 25 Seiichi Furuya, Graz 1983, 1983, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 26 Seiichi Furuya, Dresden 1984, 1984, silver gelatin print, 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 27 Seiichi Furuya, Eibiswald 1984, 1984, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 28 Seiichi Furuya, Dresden 1984, 1984, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 29 Seiichi Furuya, Wien 1984, 1984, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 30 Seiichi Furuya, Dresden 1984, 1984, silver gelatin print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm

- 31 Seiichi Furuya, Ost-Berlin 1985, 1985, Type C-Print (2014), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 32 Seiichi Furuya, Potsdam 1985, 1985, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 33 Seiichi Furuya, Venedig 1985, 1985, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 34 Seiichi Furuya, Rostock 1985, 1985, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm
- 35 Seiichi Furuya, Venedig 1985, 1985, Type C-Print (2013), 49,5 × 36,8cm

Courtesy: Galerie Thomas Fischer, Berlin.

