



Milein Cosman

Portraits of Politicians and Artists –
Between exile in London and
the new German Republic in Bonn



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Milein Cosman and her work were, sadly, almost unknown in Germany for a very long time. I am therefore especially pleased that we are able to host this exhibition of the artist's drawings to celebrate the 101th anniversary of her birth. We owe this exhibition to the generous donations made by Milein Cosman to the German Bundestag and the Akademie der Künste shortly before her death.

Milein Cosman was Jewish. She left her home city of Düsseldorf in 1937, when she

was still at school, and went on to become a successful artist in England. She did not see herself as a Jewish artist or as a refugee. Nevertheless, Milein Cosman and her life story symbolise what our country lost in talent, art and intellect. With its crimes against the Jewish people, Germany committed an act of cultural self-mutilation.

Milein Cosman escaped the Holocaust and was able to make her dream a reality. In 1949, she returned to her former home country when she was commissioned by a magazine to draw the first federal government and record impressions of the political new start in Bonn. She had no desire to stay in Germany, however.

What is striking about these portraits of art and politics is that almost all the subjects are men. And not only because Cosman found drawing women more challenging, as she said herself. There were no women in senior political roles for her to draw: another twelve years would pass before Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt was appointed as a minister in Konrad Adenauer's third cabinet in 1961—against vigorous opposition from the Chancellor.

Milein Cosman's drawings are full of life, instantly captivating. People and moments in time are recorded on paper in easy strokes with such lightness of touch, seemingly so effortlessly, that one can only marvel. I hope this exhibition will be an opportunity for many more people to discover this great artist for themselves.

Below: The President of the German Bundestag opens the exhibition in the Members' Lobby of the Reichstag Building on 6 April 2022 (photograph: DBT / Jörg F. Müller)

Preface

Bärbel Bas, President of the German Bundestag



How does an artist feel when, in 1949, she returns to Germany for the first time after exile and emigration? How does she interact with people, and what does she record in her drawings? Milein Cosman provides an unexpected answer. Four years after the end of the Second World War, she was commissioned by the Munich-based weekly magazine *Heute* to travel from England to Bonn in order to portray the members of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's first cabinet. Besides enabling her to reacquaint herself with her home region, the Rhineland, the commission was a great opportunity for the 28-year-old to gain recognition as an artist. Her travel companion was the journalist Robert Müller, who was commissioned to write the accompanying texts and who, like Milein Cosman herself, had been forced to leave Germany on account of his Jewish background. In her own words, she was

“enthusiastic” about the commission, “not because of the government, but because I myself am from the Rhineland. [...] I thought it was quite marvellous. I wasn't afraid at all. [...] What was there to be afraid of?” she said in a film interview in 2014. “I draw people and that's all there is to it.” Milein Cosman's fearless words are both surprising and awe-inspiring. There is no hint of resentment about the fate of her family, nor any concerns about visiting the country responsible for the war and the Holocaust and meeting people whose role under National Socialism she would have been unaware of. What mattered to the artist were recollections of her happy



Milein Cosman, Hans Keller, 1961
(©Gerti Deutsch, archiv.fotohof.at)

Welcome

Werner Heegewaldt, Director of
the Archives of the
Akademie der Künste

childhood in the Rhineland and the chance to reconnect with friends from her youth who, in her eyes, symbolised the other Germany. And elsewhere in the interview, she states: "I had reached a reconciliation with myself. [...] Not on account of Germany itself, but on account of my friendships, and my parents' friendships." She approached the commission with objectivity and pragmatism, dismissing advice from her friend John Heartfield to reject the offer or at least to opt for a satirical depictive style.

Milein Cosman was always able to connect with people with great ease and openness, and it is this which makes her work so distinctive. Her warm and engaging nature meant that she saw the good in everyone. Rather than being character studies, her drawings are more like snapshots which seek to capture the subjects in a few strokes. In some cases, she formed close relationships with her subjects and these portraits have their own special charm. An example is the portrait of Carlo Schmid, the Vice-President of the first German Bundestag, whom she shows in a relaxed, un-statesman-like pose. The Bonn commission led to a friendship, although Cosman did not accede to Schmid's request that she return to Germany which, he said, needed people like her.



John Heartfield with his cat,
graphite drawing, c. 1948,
25.2 × 20.1 cm, Akademie der Künste,
Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5429

We owe Milein Cosman's countless portraits of figures from the arts and culture to the wide circle of friends and acquaintances cultivated by the artist herself and her husband, the musicologist Hans Keller. The drawings provide an impressive record of London's cultural life in the post-war years. Her subjects include many emigrants—her friend John Heartfield, the pioneer of photomontage, writers Erich Fried and Elias Canetti and artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky—as well as performers making guest appearances in the British metropolis. Shortly before her death, Milein Cosman donated a selection of her works to the

Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Most are portraits of members, which perfectly complement our art collection. For many years, the Archives of the Akademie der Künste have been entrusted with the important task of not only safeguarding our members' works and acquiring their written estates, but also of collecting expressive likenesses of the artists themselves. These efforts have produced a rich and diverse portrait gallery dating from the 18th century to the present day and representing all genres, from oil paintings to sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and even death masks. But Milein Cosman's donation is an important addition in another respect as well. The portraits enrich our collection focus on exile, a priority topic in our collection and a formative element of the Archives' own history.



Elias Canetti, pen drawing,
c. 1950–1959, 27 × 21.5 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5433

After 1945 two Academies of Art were established in the Eastern and Western parts of Berlin. Individually efforts were made to bring artists who had been persecuted and exiled under National Socialism back into German public consciousness. Survivors were invited to return, their achievements were recognised and, in addition, the estates of deceased emigrants were secured. The unification of the two Academies in 1993 led to the establishment of Germany's most comprehensive archive for modern art. Today the archives of the Akademie der Künste are home to the largest holdings of art and archive materials by artists forced to emigrate under National Socialism."

My thanks go to Andreas Kaernbach, Curator of the Art Collection of the German Bundestag, and Anna Schultz, Research Associate at the Art Collection of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, for devising and initiating this exhibition. Although visitor numbers will be limited due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this publication will make a lasting contribution to achieving greater recognition for Milein Cosman's impressive portraits in Germany as well.



Werner Heegewaldt, Director of the Archives of the Akademie der Künste
(photograph: DBT / Jörg F. Müller)

Of all the artists I met in the first part of my adult life Milein Cosman is the one who gave me the greatest practical help and advanced my career. After university, I got a job as researcher in Robert Douwma's print shop in Covent Garden and moved to London. Through the gallery's accountant I had the extraordinary luck of meeting the Austrian painter Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, and by renting a room in her house I got to know her well. Being Marie-Louise's lodger often meant opening the door for people who came to visit and this is how I met Milein. One evening she and her husband Hans were invited to eat and, as often, I was the first to respond to the doorbell. This was 1984, in the final year of Hans's life and the great musician was looking very haggard. For me, however, it was the start of a very important relationship.

My upbringing in Cambridge had prepared me well to enjoy the company of German speakers. My childhood and that of my sisters was documented for my parents by an outstanding Austrian photographer called Bertl Gaye, who used a Rolleiflex and never needed a light meter. Bertl impressed on me the importance of overexposure in order to obtain a 'thick' negative. Bertl was only one of several influences on my visual education. Another important figure was the family dentist Mali Meyer, in whose waiting room I saw original prints by German artists for the first time: a self-portrait lithograph by Käthe Kollwitz and a beautiful landscape by Lovis Corinth. I had not the faintest idea what a drypoint was, but its black foliage and the vibrant shadow effect created when inking the copper plate struck me as exquisitely beautiful. It was an effect I would later witness at first hand as Milein printed her plates. I played the violin in the



Some memories of Milein Cosman

Peter Black

Self-Portrait drawing, felt pen,
c. 1980–1985, 29.7 × 20.7 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5422

Cambridge youth orchestra which had an exchange programme with Heidelberg and the symphonies we played with our German friends were of course mainly those of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. My father spoke German, having done military service in Austria. He was an academic publisher, and impressed on me the value of the contribution to Britain's post-war cultural life made by those whom the Nazis had forced to flee from Europe.

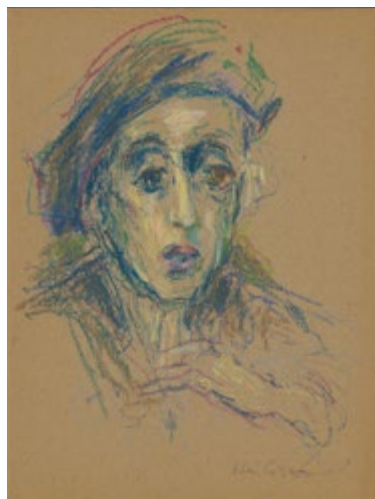
With these childhood memories I arrived in London and having met Milein I joined a growing circle of Germans and other émigrés. Marie-Louise von Motesiczky was, as Milein assured me, a truly great painter but she lacked confidence when speaking English and was happy to slip into German or, better still, Wienerisch. Milein, on the other hand, spoke with a confidence

which—if such a thing is possible—exceeded that of a native speaker. Her voice was deep and musical. Unlike Marie-Louise, Milein spoke in complete sentences and never hesitated. If a thought slipped her mind, she would tack on to what she was about to say some perfectly idiomatic, and often amusing English phrase, uttered with emphatic and rhythmical flourishes. There was never a hint of Germanic intonation in her voice, or of phraseology borrowed from her native tongue. I was at first simply amazed; only in recent years, as Ines Schlenker worked on Milein's biography, did I learn that Milein started learning English at a very early age because her older brother Cornelius had friends in Scotland and indeed went on to study Chemistry at Glasgow (1934–1938). It was Cornelius who wisely urged Milein to study at the Slade in London, allowing her to move seamlessly from school to art school as well as escape the horrors inflicted by the Nazis.

For about fifteen years, until I moved to work at the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery in Glasgow, I was in touch with Milein every week. If I now think back to life in my 20s, and the early stages of a career in art history and with a special interest in printmaking, I realise what extraordinary luck I had. Milein and Marie-Louise were senior figures in the art world and both were visited by art historians and curators whom I would sometimes meet because I was tagging along. In my idealistic way I felt that only I had seen the value and importance of these artists' work. Marie-Louise was guarded about introducing me to her contacts and even asked me not to get in touch with her old friend Ernst H. Gombrich. But Milein treated me from the start as a colleague and equal. My plan was to

publish on printmaking and I was working on a catalogue raisonné of prints by Stanley William Hayter. Marie-Louise had little interest in 'graphic' art, although she remembered having visited Hayter's workshop in Paris in 1938, with her friend and admirer Wolfgang Paalen. Milein on the other hand took me absolutely seriously and the help she gave was invaluable. She gave me a portrait of Hayter that she had made during a talk given at the Victoria & Albert Museum, a modest pen drawing, but with that immediacy which

Milein Cosman: Portrait of the artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (verso: sketches), oil pastels, c. 1990–1995, 32 × 24.3 cm, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5429



can only be obtained from life. She also opened her address book to me so that very soon I was visiting people who might help with my research. I took time off work at the gallery in order to look at the small collections of Hayter's prints and correspondence belonging to Ursula Goldfinger and Margaret Gardiner, who at that time went swimming together each morning in the Ladies' Pond on Hampstead Heath.¹ Margaret shortly afterwards asked Milein to print a small ex-libris plate of a horse with plaited tail, which Hayter had engraved for her in 1931. Milein had no hesitation in telling Margaret that she had passed the plate to me and thus I had the experience of printing an actual plate engraved by Hayter.

Most important of all, Milein found me a flat to rent in Golders Green, from Pippa who was the widow of the Czech painter Jacob Bornfreund, in whose studio Milein and Marie-Louise had met. Milein took me to Peter Freeth's etching classes in Kentish Town and thus I learned to put into practice some of what I knew about prints, and I met more of Milein's friends. One of these was Mary Kleinman who had a gallery in her house on Highbury Terrace and she offered it to me for my first exhibition as an independent art dealer in June 1989. I showed paintings, drawings and prints by several artists, including Milein, as well as sculptures by her old friend Daphne Hardy Henrion, whom I knew from Cambridge. For a really fine oil painting by Milein, of Spanish fishermen hauling their boat up the beach at Nerja, I found a perfect match with an old gilded frame

made by Bourlet. The painting sold to a collector friend. The exhibition was an important moment for me, coming as it did in the inflationary period that led to the 1991 recession. I was unsure whether I really wanted to be an art dealer or try for a job in a museum. Several of Milein's friends visited my exhibition. One person with whom I had fascinating conversations was the art dealer Gustav Delbanco (1903–1997), who is known as the promoter of contemporary artists through his Cork Street gallery Roland Browse and Delbanco, but was also an expert on old master painting. He had reached a

stage at which he was disposing of his collection as well as dispensing wisdom about art, and I enjoyed his topical remarks about the 'inflation in the number of art galleries and the inflation of artists' reputations'. He was painfully clear about the insularity of the art world he found in Britain when he had arrived from Hamburg, and told me rather proudly of a remarkable fact: that he had published the first criticism of Henry Moore, in *Weltkunst*, in 1931. Most memorable of all was visiting Delbanco at home with my wife Jantien and spending an evening chatting in front of the wonderful early Rubens painting of the Fall of Phaeton which he was on the point of selling to the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

¹ Margaret Gardiner (1904–2005) was a peace activist and a supportive friend to writers and artists. Her art collection was given in 1979 to form the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, Orkney. Ursula Blackwell was married to the architect Erno Goldfinger. Margaret and Ursula were survivors of a group of modernist intellectuals whose patronage was vital for émigré artists settling in north London from the 1930s onwards.

Milein Cosman: Two artists, John Heartfield and Jakob Bornfreund (Bauernfreund), walking in the Finchley Road (verso: portrait of John Heartfield from the 1940s), pen drawing, c. 1945–1949, 25.4 × 17.8 cm, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5423



This encounter with a great Rubens painting and the story of its acquisition as the work of a follower, in a mixed sale at Christie's, only weeks before the Second World War, will always remain with me. In conversations around Milein's dinner table in Frognaal Gardens Rubens would come up periodically and if anyone tried to belittle the great Flemish master Milein came vigorously to his defence. She knew Rubens extremely well, and not just his drawings. There is not space here to catalogue the extraordinarily eclectic range of exhibitions which Milein visited. But one example is perhaps instructive. I remember receiving from her a short lecture about Bonnard after I made a dismissive remark about his drawings which were then on show. I decided

to go and find out what it was that she saw in them. I concluded that she and Bonnard both made drawings, not for the sake of exhibiting them, but from a passionate desire to record what they saw around them. In an interview that Milein gave to the Association of Jewish Refugees there is a telling moment in which the significance of drawing comes to the surface. Describing her first meeting with Hans Keller, and her intense focus on his impressive head, she exclaims: "The main thing that struck me when I saw him was his face. I thought: Ha! If only I could draw that man!"

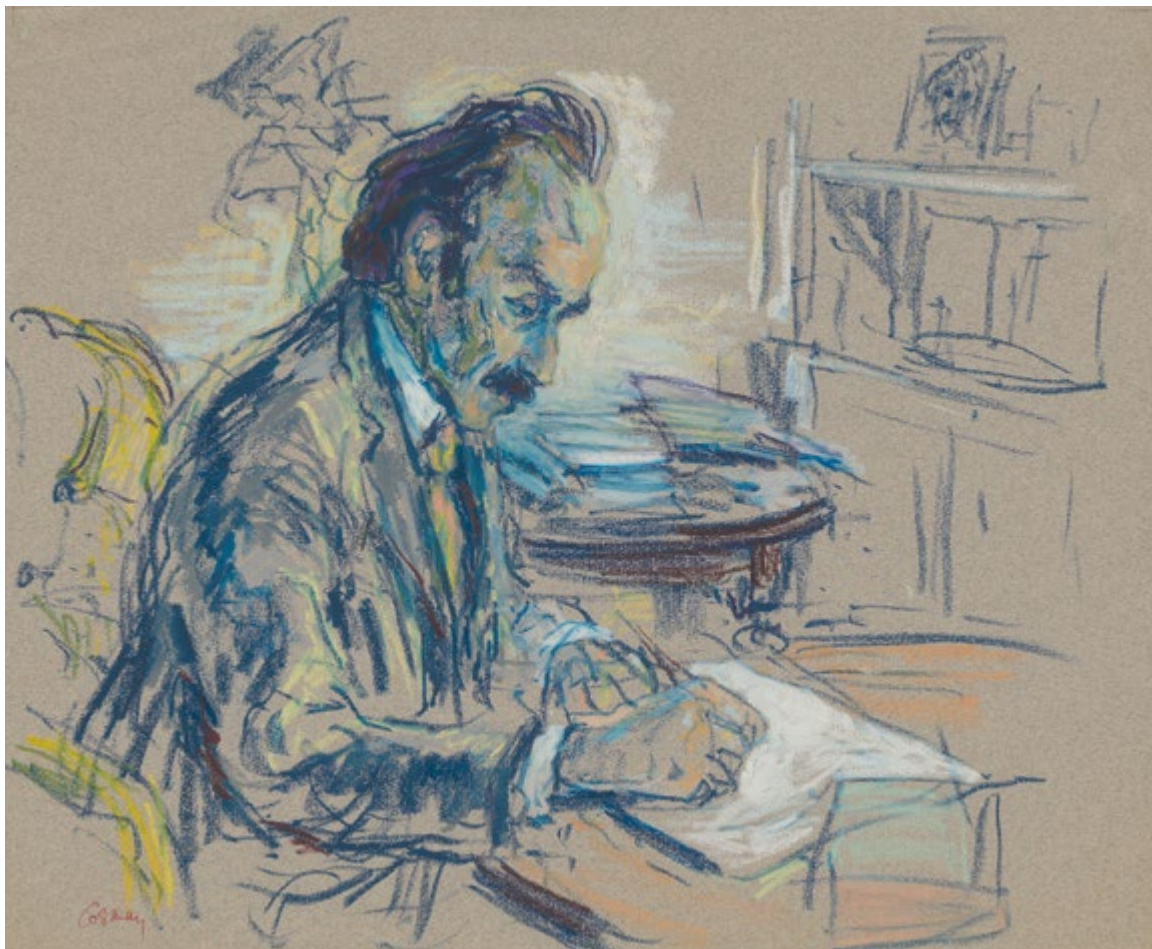
Peter Black is Honorary curator of prints at The Hunterian, University of Glasgow



Lorelei Rock, drypoint, c. 1995,
29,6 × 40,1 cm (sheet),
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, DR 8403
(above)

Peter Paul Rubens: The Fall of
Phaeton, oil on canvas,
c. 1604–1605, 98.4 × 131.2 cm,
National Gallery of Art, Washington
(left)





Hans Keller at his desk, oil pastels
on grey wove paper, c. 1980s,
39 × 47 cm, Akademie der Künste,
Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5387

In recent years, more female artists have begun to attract attention, casting into sharp focus the previous biased neglect of those who hold up half the sky. This applies especially to female artists who were forced to flee the National Socialist regime and who did not come back to Germany after 1945, or who, if they did return, were unable to gain a foothold and were ignored by the art market and critics. A notable example of this “lost generation” is the painter Lotte Laserstein (1898–1993), who was forced to emigrate to Sweden in

1937 on account of her Jewish background. For Laserstein, later acclaim came only with the acquisition of one of her major works, *Evening Over Potsdam* (*Abend über Potsdam*) (1930) for the Neue Nationalgalerie in 2010. The painting now occupies a prominent place in the foyer, opening the exhibition “Kunst der Gesellschaft 1900–1945. Sammlung Nationalgalerie”.

Milein Cosman (born 1921 in Gotha, died 2017 in Hampstead, London) faced a similar fate due to her Jewish background. Although she too was able to emigrate in 1937, first to Switzerland and then to England, where she commenced her studies of art, this came at a price: an absence of any recognition for her artistic work in Germany. By contrast, in England, her adopted home since emigration, she is acclaimed as an artist and her works feature

in the most important collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the British Museum. In Germany, her rediscovery began later, in Düsseldorf, where her family lived prior to their emigration. Major impetus was generated by the first major retrospective of her work in Germany, hosted by the Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf in 1988. Milein Cosman’s works were recently on display again in Düsseldorf in a joint exhibition with works by her fellow artist and friend Ilde Schrader.

Thanks to a generous donation made by the artist during her lifetime and fulfilled by the Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust, a further chapter in the recognition of her work can now be opened. The donation to the Art Collection of the German Bundestag consists mainly of drawings of politicians from the Federal Republic’s very early days, produced by Milein Cosman in 1949. *Heute*—the first German-language magazine to appear in Germany after the end of the Second World War—was published by the US military government. Keen for its readers to share the experience of the dawning of Germany’s new democracy in the Rhineland, its editors commissioned their London correspondent Robert Müller

Milein Cosman’s portraits of the first year of the Bonn Republic

Andreas Kaernbach, Curator of the Art Collection of the German Bundestag

„An artist sees by doing, but it is only by drawing that he understands“

and the artist Milein Cosman, who was still living in London, to record “their impressions of Bonn”. This resulted in portraits of Konrad Adenauer, Theodor Heuss, Kurt Schumacher and many other government members and MPs, as well as images of the daily routine and landscape views as the backdrop to the parliamentary buildings in the Rhine valley. It is particularly fortunate that the commission did not go to a photographer but to Milein Cosman, who possessed virtuoso drawing skills: her sketches capture the heady atmosphere of those early days, but also the incompleteness, the

open-endedness of the political situation, with more immediacy than would have been possible in a photograph. In that sense, rather than providing mere illustrations of her subjects, Milein Cosman is able to convey a sense, an understanding, of their characters, her drawings giving an impression of their personalities and the aura that radiates from them.

Andreas Kaernbach, Curator of the Art Collection of the German Bundestag (photograph: DBT / J. F. Müller)

Milein Cosman donated a similar collection of drawings of artists to the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, so it seemed appropriate for the two institutions to bring art and politics together in a joint exhibition in the Members’ Lobby of the Reichstag Building. In this exhibition, located close to the plenary chamber, the two spheres of art and politics are directly connected. They can be a source of mutual inspiration, but they also remind and warn us of darker times while recalling the hopeful expectations yet to be fulfilled with the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Milein Cosman's works, and especially her numerous portraits of artists—some of which form part of an extensive and quite marvellous donation which she made to the Art Collection of the Akademie der Künste shortly before her death—serve as permanent testimony to a lifetime of experience: her many concert visits, excursions and encounters. Together, they form an impressive panorama of London's cultural scene in the post-war years, especially life in the London suburb of Hampstead. A home to many German exiles, Milein Cosman lived here among a large circle of friends from 1946 until her death in 2017.

Born Emilie Cosman in Gotha in 1921, Milein, as everyone called her, spent her childhood in Düsseldorf before attending the École d'Humanité, a progressive boarding school, in Switzerland. In 1939, when school ended, returning to Germany was impossible. Milein's parents had been forced to flee to the Netherlands. Her brother

Cornelius, who was based in Glasgow, encouraged Milein to move to England and study art at the Slade school. After completing her studies, she worked as an illustrator of non-fiction and children's books and various magazines and quickly gained a reputation as one of England's leading portrait painters. In 1947, she met her future husband, the musicologist and music critic Hans Keller (1919–1985). He would remain one of her favourite subjects until his death; she produced drawings, paintings, etchings and models of his head hundreds of times.

Milein's fascination for music—or, rather, musicians—runs like a red thread through her entire artistic oeuvre and did not only begin with her marriage. She portrayed her friend and neighbour, the pianist Alfred Brendel, in symbiotic harmony with his instrument, and captured the sweeping gestures of cellist Mstislav Rostropovich with the same skill with which she conveyed the elegance of



Self-Portrait and Study of a dancer,
oil pastels, 1952, 27.7 × 18.5 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5421

Milein Cosman—Portraits as time capsules

Anna Schultz

Wilhelm Furtwängler's conducting hand, the movements of his baton controlled yet gentle, a counterpoint to his aloof gaze, which is averted away from the orchestra. Her intensive preoccupation with her subjects and her respect for their work are particularly evident in her many portraits of Igor Stravinsky, some of which were used as illustrations for a book to which Hans Keller supplied the text. Stravinsky seems to conjure up the—unseen—orchestra like a magician, with the paper itself acting as an echo chamber. But there is a humorous side to these portraits as well: even from behind, the composer is instantly identifiable by his bald spot.

In her carefully observed and sensitive portraits, Cosman not only recognises her subjects' defining characteristics; she captures them on paper so skilfully that the drawings seem to convey the very essence of the person.

German artists were of particular interest to her. When she attended a guest performance by the Berlin Ensemble in London in 1956, she was entranced by Helene Weigel's acting. In a few lines and with sparing use of detail, she successfully portrayed Weigel as Mother Courage, her most famous role. In 1983, she drew Joseph Beuys—with his hat, of course—at a press conference for an exhibition opening at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, his nervousness hinted at in the unusually tremulous lines of her felt pen. Although, as Milein's long-time friend Julian Hogg implied in a conversation, she was unimpressed by Beuys's attitude, his appearance fascinated her. Later, she turned the motif into a drypoint etching and hand-coloured some impressions with watercolour, transforming what appear to be reproductions into unique works of art.



Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting,
etching, c. 1980s, 57 × 37.6 cm
(sheet), Akademie der Künste,
Berlin, Art Collection, DR 7530



Igor Stravinsky conducting,
 aquatint, c. 1960–1971, 38 × 57 cm
 (sheet), Akademie der Künste,
 Berlin, Art Collection, DR 7528
 (above)

Igor Stravinsky, back view, etching,
 c. 1960–1971, 38 × 28.4 cm (sheet),
 Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
 Art Collection, DR 7526 (right)





Cosman

As this example clearly shows, she was as talented a printmaker as she was an artist using pencil and paper. She applied this technique with verve, spontaneity and lightness to outstanding effect; Castiglione's somewhat overworked term *sprezzatura* perfectly describes her skill.

Writers also feature prominently in Milein Cosman's oeuvre: Erich Kästner, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Elias Canetti – she produced portraits of all of them, and many more. Thomas Mann, whose work she greatly admired, was sketched by her on 25 May 1947. The portrait shows him visibly exhausted on his first European journey after the war, soon after the publication of the novel *Doctor Faustus* and during a conflict with Furtwängler over the latter's readmission to professional practice. When I met Milein Cosman a few months before her death, her eyesight was poor and

she was no longer able to draw. Yet her gaze was clear and alert, and the elfin figure who sat straight-backed on the sofa radiated an immense zest for life. It soon became apparent during the conversation that her memory sometimes let her down, but she still had vivid and joyful recollections of some people, such as her good friend John Heartfield, the subject of my research in preparation for an exhibition at the time and my original reason for visiting her. Milein Cosman had become acquainted with Heartfield, famed as the pioneer of photomontage, and his wife Gertrud ("Tutti") in the 1940s during his exile in London and she remained in close contact with the couple until their deaths. On remembering her friend, her body rocked with delight and her legs danced up and down.

Helene Weigel as Mother Courage
pulling the wagon, pen drawing
with correction in lead white,
September 1956, 33 × 22.6 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5440



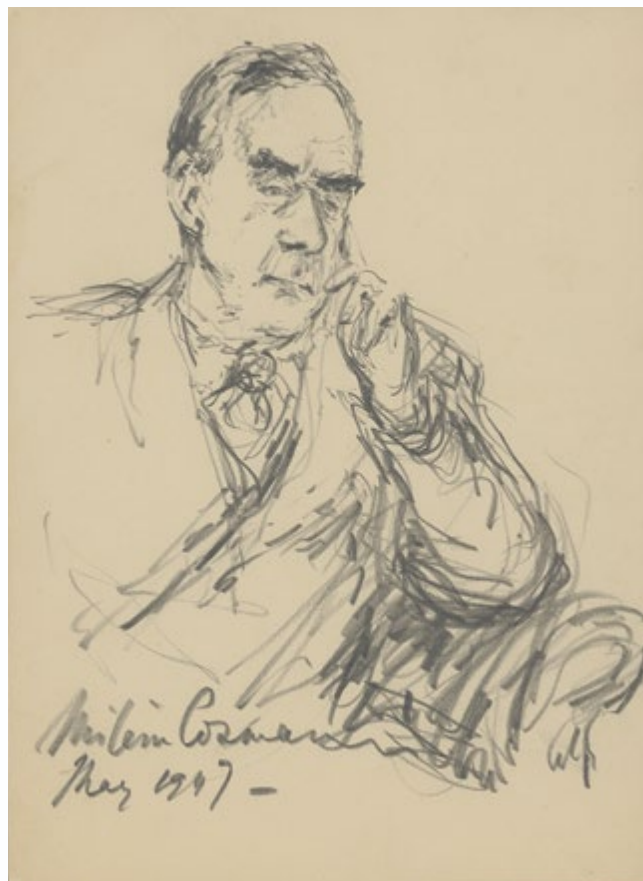
Joseph Beuys, felt pen, 1983,
29.7 × 21 cm, Akademie der Künste,
Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5420
(above)



Joseph Beuys, drypoint, printed in
pink with hand-colouring, 1983,
55.5 × 38.5 cm (sheet),
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, DR 7523 (right)

Milein's friends who had the privilege of knowing her for a longer time recall that she would use every available moment, no matter how fleeting, to capture people's images on paper in pencil, felt pen, chalk or whatever else happened to be to hand. In almost every case, she was able to convey her subject's character, revealed through their facial expressions and gestures, their specific traits or typical movements, and portray them with accuracy and sensitivity. In their totality, these works provide a magnificent record of the cultural life of the post-war period and portray the artist's eminent subjects in their temporal and spatial context in masterly fashion.

Anna Schultz is a research associate at the Art Collection of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.



Thomas Mann, graphite drawing,
May 1947, 23.5 × 17.5 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5430 (above)



Erich Kästner, graphite drawing,
c. 1947–1949, 24.6 × 32.4 cm,
Akademie der Künste, Berlin,
Art Collection, HZ 5425 (left)

Posterity will be grateful to Milein Cosman above all for the sureness of her eye, with which she has succeeded in capturing the unique quality of so many of our distinguished contemporaries. Conceivably photography has made access to this miracle more difficult. For is it not a kind of miracle that a swift pencil can transfix the characteristic gestures of a conductor or a concert virtuoso on to paper? The artist is not, after all, taking an instant snapshot. What has always been considered 'the representation of nature' can only be brought off when the confident eye and the skilled hand have time to reproduce the motif line by line.

Milein Cosman

Ernst H. Gombrich

This doubtless explains why for instance Lessing, in his *Laokoon*, denied the ability of creative art to represent the passing of time; in his opinion the artist can at best select a 'fruitful moment' which enables the observer mentally to supply the before and after, and thus visualise the complete movement. But even to make such a choice out of several moments, the artist's eye must be able to conquer the transience of appearances, for life is never motionless. The secret of this achievement cannot lie in mechanical facility.

Thus even Rembrandt himself apologises to the commissioning patron for the time a painting had taken, saying that his concern has been to express "the greatest possible natural mobility". The artist in this case was speaking of biblical representations, but as a portrait painter he certainly knew that such "natural mobility" is essential to portraiture, if the face is not to petrify into a lifeless mask.

The experienced artist knows how to counteract that effect by concentrating on the vital factor, and expressing in the very use of the line how essential it is to capture movement in mid-flight, as it were. But even so there are limits set to this perception. A photographer may perhaps find among a number of snapshots one that convincingly embodies the 'fruitful moment'. The painter cannot simply discover it: he has to invent it. Drawings such as Milein Cosman's are therefore more than the sum of a talent for acute observation and an exceptional visual memory. To present a 'living, speaking

image' of a human being requires above all an intuitive capacity for empathy, an inner resonance. What still needs adding has been supremely described by Goethe in a brief dialogue which he inserted into his novel in letter form, *The Collector and His Circle*. In this particular letter the writer in philosophical strain reports on a debate with his sceptical visitor:

“Visitor: It is the way of your philosophers to conduct dispute from behind a shield of weird words.

Visitor: Productive of what?

Myself: In this instance I can safely assert that I was not speaking as a philosopher: these were all matters of experience.

Myself: Why, experience! There is no experience which has not been produced, generated, created.

Visitor: That’s bad enough!

Visitor: You call experience what others cannot grasp at all.

Myself: That is especially true of the artist.

Myself: Every experience requires a receptor organ.

Visitor: Indeed, how enviable a portrait painter would be, and how sought-after, if he could create all his clients without bothering them with numerous sittings!

Visitor: Meaning a special one?

Myself: Not a special one, but it must have one certain quality.

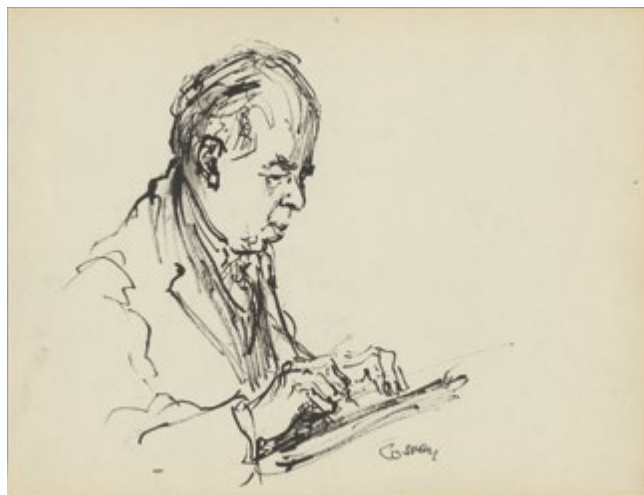
Myself: That possibility does not frighten me at all. I am actually convinced that no portrait can be any good unless the artist has in the truest sense created it.”

Visitor: What would that be?

Myself: It must be productive.

The Visitor leaps to his feet on hearing these words and refuses to take them seriously. Had he been acquainted with the technique of photography, it would have seemed easy to him simply to show up the absurdity of his opponent’s views, and yet a stroll through Milein Cosman’s exhibition would have sufficed to convince him that this artist has ‘in the truest sense created’ her portraits.

The art historian Ernst H. Gombrich, pen drawing, 1970–1979, 22.6 × 29.8 cm, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Art Collection, HZ 5431



Milein Cosman's story is also intermeshed with that of her husband, the musicologist Hans Keller. In 1938, Keller—who had previously been arrested and tortured by the Gestapo—was able to emigrate from Vienna at the eleventh hour. It is these experiences which connect the lives of Milein Cosman and Hans Keller with the fates of most of the politicians portrayed here: in almost every case, their confrontation with the barbarism of National Socialism would shape their lives. The forms of persecution they endured ranged from disbarment from their professions and periodic arrests to extreme scenarios, such as that endured by Kurt Schumacher: although a disabled war veteran, he was

dragged from one concentration camp to another and mistreated for almost 10 years—yet the National Socialists never succeeded in breaking his spirit of resistance. In that sense, the politicians from the Federal Republic's early days who were drawn by Milein Cosman genuinely represent a new and better Germany.

The commitment and determination to shape a new future, which typified the personalities of those early years, are tangible in Milein Cosman's vibrant sketches; so too are the uncertainties of a time of nascent political activity and the incompleteness of a young republic that was still in its formative stages. Milein Cosman's virtuosity is evident in her ability to convey this mood in a few strokes and capture it in graphic form on paper. But she does not simply depict the mood at the time or

merely illustrate her subjects; more than that, she penetrates and interprets their psychological depths. This is very well-illustrated by a comparison of the portraits of Carlo Schmid and Kurt Schumacher.

Carlo Schmid, who was born in France, was one of the founding fathers of the Basic Law. He was an advocate for European integration and especially for reconciliation between France and Germany. On a personal level, he was also a great admirer of the French way of life, gaining distinction as an “homme de lettres” with his translations of works by André Malraux and Charles Baudelaire, including a still current translation of the anthology of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Milein Cosman portrays this

man of culture, who enjoyed life to the full, in soft, sweeping, almost melodious lines which amply express the powerful humanity of this remarkable figure.

The drawing of Kurt Schumacher is quite different: short, nervous, sketchy lines capture the alert, tense and ascetic face of a man of conviction—a man who, every day, had to summon enough strength from his injured body to sustain his political engagement. Every one of these psychological portraits can be read in this way; the onlooker thus learns more and gains a deeper understanding of the subjects than a photograph could convey. Milein Cosman's legacy to us is, in a sense, a snapshot of the mood at the Federal Republic's moment of birth—a pivotal moment in our nation's history.

Portraiture as a psychological study (Excerpt from exhibition opening speech)

Andreas Kaernbach



Carlo Schmid (1896–1979),
Chairman of the Main Committee of
the Parliamentary Council
(1948/1949), Federal Minister in
Kiesinger's cabinet (1966–1969),
Vice-President of the German
Bundestag (1949–1966,
1969–1972),

1949, chalk, Art Collection of
the German Bundestag



Kurt Schumacher (1895–1952),
Chairman of the SPD (1946–1952),
leader of the opposition in the
German Bundestag (1949–1952),

1949, graphite drawing,
Art Collection of
the German Bundestag



1921

Born in Gotha, Thuringia as Emilie Else Cosmann daughter of Hugo and Helene (née Dalberg) Cosmann

1927–1937

Educated at the Goethe-Lyzeum, Düsseldorf

1937–1939

Visited schools in Switzerland: L'École d'Humanité and L'École Internationale de Genève

1939–1942

Emigrated to England and trained at the Slade School of Fine Art, based in Oxford during the war

1942–1945

Attended evening classes at the Oxford City School of Art. Taught French and Art in Oxford schools, and lectured for the Workers' Educational Association

1945

Moved to London. Worked as a freelance artist for various magazines, national and international newspapers. This work built her reputation, mainly for drawings of musicians, dancers and leading cultural figures

1947

Met and later married the Viennese-born musician, writer and broadcaster Hans Keller

Late 1940s

Began book illustration, including work for *Penguin Books*

1949

First of many solo exhibitions. Commissioned by *Heute* magazine to draw the new West German cabinet under Konrad Adenauer in Bonn

1957

Musical Sketchbook published by Bruno Cassirer

Mid 1970s

Milein joined the Camden Printmakers and embraced various printing techniques

1988

Solo exhibition in the Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf

2005

Permanent exhibition of portraits of musicians opens in the Wigmore Hall, London.

2006

Founded *The Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust*

2007

Solo exhibition in the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

2008

Film on Cosman made by Bea Lewkowicz for the Association of Jewish Refugees

2012

Lebenslinien/Lifelines published by *Edition Memoria*

2014

Solo exhibition in Gotha. Film on Cosman made by Christoph Böll

2017

Gift of drawings of dancers to the University of Salzburg. Gift of well over a 1,000 drawings and prints of musicians to the Royal College of Music, London

2019

Capturing Time—biography by Ines Schlenker

2021

A Centenary Celebration. Joint exhibition with Ilde Schrader in the Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf.

Milein Cosman Chronology

Milein Cosman and Hans Keller at the Holland Festival, 1958
(© Henk Jonker, partacam pictures, Amsterdam)



Parliamentary Buildings,
1949, chalk, Art Collection of
the German Bundestag



Parliamentary Council,

1949, chalk, Art Collection of
the German Bundestag (above)

Plenary chamber of the
German Bundestag,

1949, chalk, Art Collection of
the German Bundestag (right)





Ludwig Erhard (1897–1977),
Federal Minister of Economic
Affairs in Adenauer's cabinets,
second Federal Chancellor of the
Federal Republic of Germany
(1963–1966),

1949, chalk, Art Collection
of the German Bundestag (above)



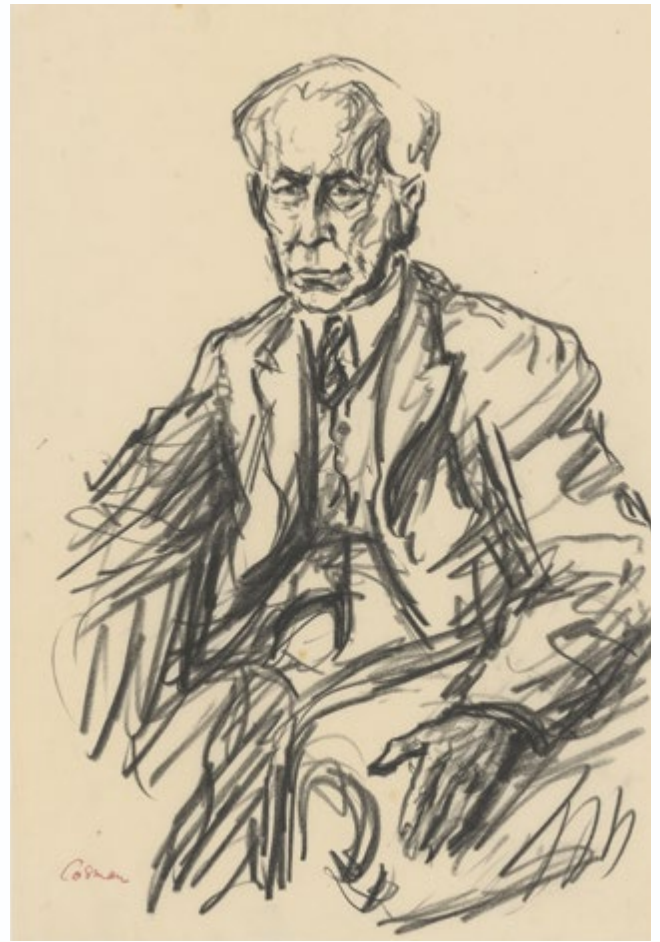
Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967),
first Federal Chancellor of the
Federal Republic of Germany
(1949–1963),

1949, chalk, Art Collection
of the German Bundestag (right)



Jakob Kaiser (1888–1961), Federal Minister of All-German Affairs (1949–1957),

1949, chalk, Art Collection of the German Bundestag (above)



Theodor Heuss (1884–1963), first Federal President of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949–1959),

1949, chalk, Art Collection of the German Bundestag (right)



Gustav Heinemann (1899–1976),
Minister of the Interior in
Adenauer's first cabinet
(1949–1950), Minister of Justice in
Kiesinger's government
(1966–1969), third Federal
President of the Federal Republic of
Germany (1969–1974),

1949, chalk, Art Collection of the
German Bundestag (above)

*Heute. Eine neue illustrierte
Zeitschrift für Deutschland* and
other newspaper cuttings with
drawings by Milein Cosman (above)



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www.adk.de,

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