

THE HALBERSTADT

Michèle searching for Max

IKONA GALLERY

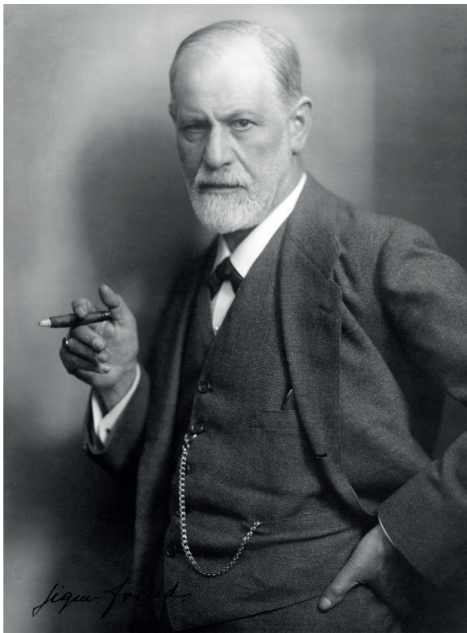
Exhibition curated by Živa Kraus

01/09 - 30/10/2022

open from 11 am to 7 pm - closed on Saturday

Inauguration Thursday September 1st 2022, 6 pm

THE HALBERSTADT Michèle searching for Max



Sigmund Freud, signed portrait
Max Halberstadt
Undated
Spangenthal Collection, England

The exhibition “The Halberstadt. Michèle searching for Max” recounts the intimate journey of the French writer and cinema producer, Michèle Halberstadt in search of her origins. The highlights of her discovery are illustrated by the photographs taken by Max Halberstadt (1882-1940), one of Hamburg’s most renowned portrait photographers during the 1920’s. The iconic portraits of his father-in-law doctor neurologist Sigmund Freud, along with pictures of Venice and Hamburg enable Michèle and the exhibition to reconstruct and tell the story of the “Halberstadt” evoking the memory of the major upheavals that characterize the first half of the XX century.

The blueprint for the exhibition is Michèle Halberstadt’s book “Née quelque part” published by Albin Michel in 2021. “Born somewhere” annotates the various destinations reached by the author in the search of her origins and roots. Michèle travelled to Hamburg, Vienna, Halberstadt, and Wegrow, where her father David was born a Polish Jew, and leafed through the archives looking for that “somewhere” in the history of her name and her own story.

Her research, as it inevitably happens when we look into the past, is backed up by photography; not just some photography but that of Max Halberstadt (1882-1940), one of Hamburg’s most renowned portrait photographers during the 1920’s, whose story – as Michèle discovers – is intertwined not only with that of her paternal family but also with the story of professor Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis.

Educated in Monaco, Paris and Basel, Max opened his first photographic studio in 1907 in Hamburg at the age of just 25 years. After military service in the First World War, his work was immediately recognized which earned him publication in some of the most important photography reviews of the time such as: “Hamburger. Theater-Zeitung”, “Das Atelier Des Photo Graphen”, and “Photofreund”. His interests and research went beyond the portrait toward landscape and cityscape, in particular. Max loved to capture the apparently insignificant moments of everyday life in his static documentary photographs. The market of Hamburg, the Bridge of Sighs, and Saint Mark’s Square in Venice give us a new important outlook on the civic history and reality of those years.

The sophisticated and unusual style of his photographs did not escape the attention of a figure such as Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist and philosopher who sought out Max to give a face to his first publications and scientific essays. The mutual trust and professional esteem generated by the first encounter soon blossomed resulting in Sigmund’s consenting to Max’s marriage with his daughter Sophie.

The exhibition “The Halberstadt. Michèle searching for Max” presents photographs and documents as well as intimate and personal comments of the writer referring to the tumultuous fates of the Halberstadts. The images in the photographs on display provide rhythm to the words of her research. The escape of Max from Nazism to Johannesburg, the death of Michèle’s father’s sisters Hinde and Mindel in the extermination camp of Treblinka, as well as Sophie’s death from the Spanish flu, are illustrated in a form of a micro story that serves as a document and memory of the macro story of the Jews in the XX century.

“Je suis né quelque part
Laissez-moi ce repère
Ou je perds la mémoire”

(“I was born somewhere
Leave me that mark
Or I will lose my memory”)

Lyrics of the song “Née quelque part” by the French singer Maxime Le Forestier quoted in the book “Née quelque part” by Michèle Halberstadt.



Entering Halberstadt
Michèle Halberstadt