



LESSING PRESENTS LESSING

Austrian Cultural Forum London

Exhibition opening: Thursday, 30 November 2017, 7 - 9pm

01.12.2017 – 23.02.2018

www.acflondon.org

Curated by: Hannah Lessing and Danielle Spera, Director of the Jewish Museum Vienna

Erich Lessing (b. 1923, Vienna) is among Austria's most celebrated photographers. He is a chronicler of the post-war era, not only of Austria but of Hungary, Palestine and the wider world. With his finger on the pulse of the times he has documented major political events, capturing the protagonists with his camera in an inimitable manner. Although he claims not to be a portrait photographer, he has shot unique pictures of some of the most important politicians of our times, documenting current events in his own distinctive fashion. His legendary photo during the signing of the Austrian State Treaty with Foreign Minister Leopold Figl and the Allied Foreign Ministers on the balcony of the Belvedere has become an iconic symbol of the new Austria, whose democratic development he energetically supported.

As a Jewish child in Vienna, Erich Lessing experienced persecution and the expulsion of his family from their home. His mother and grandmother were murdered in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. Erich Lessing managed to escape to Palestine, where he worked as a taxi driver and as a carp breeder in a kibbutz. His youthful hobby eventually became a career. He started out as a kindergarten and beach photographer before joining the British 6th Airborne Division.

After World War II, Lessing returned to Austria and in 1947 became a photo reporter for **Associated Press**, and was invited to join **Magnum Photos** by David Seymour in 1951. He became a full member in 1955 and remains a contributor. His photographs capture the atmosphere of post-war Europe, such as the Allied occupation of Vienna, and the reconstruction in war-damaged West Germany. Not to mention the dramatic events of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, for which Lessing was awarded the Imre Nagy-medal from the President of Hungary in 1992. His photographs were published in LIFE, Paris Match, Epoca and Picture Post. Portraits of Eisenhower, Adenauer, Khrushchev and Kokoschka won him international acclaim. In the 1960s Lessing turned to cultural subjects such as art, science and history. He also photographed on the set of films like Moby Dick, Zorba the Greek and The Sound of Music.

He has taught at the Venice Biennale, the Salzburger Summer Academy, and the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna. In

2013, Lessing received the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class. This award was bestowed by the Republic of Austria in recognition of his lifetime achievements.

This unique exhibition, curated by the photographer's daughter Hannah Lessing and Danielle Spera, director of the **Jewish Museum Vienna**, offers a very personal insight into the work of a great photographer. From his political portraits and documentations to Israeli landscapes and 1960s beauty queens and beach-goers, the exhibition aims to present a new and intimate side of the celebrated photographer.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Jewish Museum Vienna.

<http://www.jmw.at/en>

For more info:

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Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 10am – 5pm

Free Entry

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Images:

Left: The Western Railway Station Vienna, Austria 1953 © Erich Lessing

Right: A Berlin stripper settles down for a quiet night. Berlin, Germany 1960 © Erich Lessing



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