

belvedere

**IN-SIGHT**  
**GEORG EISLER**  
**TRACING LIFE**

Upper Belvedere  
8 April to 25 September 2022



Georg Eisler, *Self-Portrait*, 1989, Sammlung Konrad, Wien  
Photo: Pixelstorm © Bildrecht, Vienna, 2022

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**For Georg Eisler, being an artist meant being an eye-witness to the times. He tenaciously traced and engaged with life, capturing both carefree and dramatic moments in his images. We encounter passengers in a tram and dancers in a club on the one hand, politically motivated violence in Belfast or Soweto on the other. Although his subjects were contemporary, stylistically he never moved toward the avant-garde, and over the decades he remained true to a figurative, realistic style of painting. This *IN-SIGHT* exhibition at the Upper Belvedere showcases a critical mind and an astute observer, an artist whose pictures remain as topical as ever today.**

*CEO Stella Rollig: "Georg Eisler's subjects connect with current issues: from the Me Too and the Black Lives Matter movements, to conflicts at demonstrations, such as the Covid-19 protests, or political crises. Presenting Eisler's work thus means exploring his and our own reality, and recognizing, with horror, that history repeats itself."*

*"To make visible the intervening spaces, the perspectival, emotional, and psychological spaces between figure and figure,"* is how Georg Eisler described his artistic approach in 1963. Always with a sketchbook at the ready, Eisler captured life where he saw it and scenes that moved him and made him think. He generally depicted his subjects in loose and lively brushwork, avoiding unnecessary details and concentrating on the essentials. He thus created a visual style that holds a lasting fascination to this day.

The exhibition places a focus on the sometimes controversial themes in his art. These bear witness to the painter's critical engagement with political and social issues. Eisler wanted his images to stir people and some of his paintings certainly express his criticism of the establishment. He had himself experienced political sanctions in his youth—leaving a deep impression that enduringly characterized his work. The son of the composer Hanns Eisler and the singer Charlotte Eisler, both members of the communist party, he had frequently encountered violent conflicts in the period before the Second

World War. Until his return to Vienna, he had spent his youth in the then Soviet Union (Moscow) and Czechoslovakia (Prague), and finally in exile in England (Manchester, London).

Humanity is at the core of Georg Eisler's work: a critical engagement with human character and relationships within the social fabric underpinned his choice of subject matter. Eisler sensitively explored identities and mentalities: the layers of personality, the polarity of individual and society, of the single person and the mass.

*Curator Kerstin Jesse: "In Eisler's multifaceted oeuvre, I am particularly captivated by the socio-critical subjects from the 1960s onward. At first glance it seems you can quickly grasp these scenes. On closer scrutiny, however, a multitude of personal and social interactions come to light, which Eisler captured in a manner that is both incisive and sensitive. The dense atmosphere and the thought-provoking content make his images extremely compelling."*

Georg Eisler was always a figurative artist. He never absorbed post-1945 contemporary trends, such as abstraction, Surrealism, Art Informel, Pop Art, or Neo-Expressionism. As an artist he was preoccupied with translating the visible into his own pictorial language using loose brushwork, and this posed a constant challenge. This is reflected in his personal writings dating from 1962 to 1997. They provided an important source for this *IN-SIGHT* exhibition and offer an unfiltered glimpse of the artist's thoughts and concerns.

After Georg Eisler's death in 1998, Alice Eisler took over her husband's artistic estate. In 2013, the estate was transferred to the Georg and Alice Eisler Fund for Artists and Composers, which is still exploring and managing his extensive oeuvre. Since 2019, the Belvedere has been collaborating with the Fund to compile a catalogue raisonné of the artist's work.

In the context of the exhibition, the Belvedere received a generous donation of fourteen Georg Eisler paintings from the Fund. The large-scale works explore themes that were previously not represented in the Belvedere's collection of Eisler's work and thus close an important gap.

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*IN-SIGHT* is a series of exhibitions at the Upper Belvedere that spotlight specific aspects of the Belvedere's collection, analyzing and exhibiting artworks from fresh curatorial perspectives.

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1928 Georg Eisler was born on 20 April 1928, the only son of the well-known composer Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) and the vocalist and voice teacher Charlotte Eisler (1894–1970). His parents divorced when he was seven years old.
- 1936 Move to Moscow with his mother
- 1938 Due to Hitler's invasion, he was prevented from returning to Vienna and stayed in Prague.
- 1939 He fled into exile via Poland and Gothenburg to England, with stops in Birmingham, Manchester, and London.
- 1942 He became friends with Erich Fried.
- 1944 He met Oskar Kokoschka and participated for the first time in an exhibition of Austrian art at London's Foyle's Art Gallery.
- 1946 After a first solo exhibition in Manchester in March 1946, the 18-year-old returned in September to a Vienna in ruins. He attended Herbert Boeckl's "Abendakt" [evening nude drawing class], making the acquaintance of Alfred Hrdlicka, Rudolf Schönwald, and Fritz Martinz. To earn a living he took on various side jobs, but was nevertheless heavily involved in painting and traveled to Italy, Holland, France, Germany, and England, among other places.
- 1958 He had his first solo exhibition in Vienna at the Wolfrum Gallery; his exhibition activities continued to expand, including internationally.
- 1946 The first Eisler monograph, written by Erich Fried and Ernst Köller, was published.
- 1965 Austrian State Prize for Painting
- 1966 He married the lawyer Alice Gerson (1930–2011).
- 1968-72 President of the Vienna Secession
- Ab 1970 He began various teaching activities, which also took him to the USA; in the same year, a monograph/catalogue raisonné was published by Otto Breicha.
- 1971 Prize of the City of Vienna for Painting

- 1974 Austrian Medal for Science and Art
- 1982 He participated in the Venice Biennale and began a long friendship with the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.
- 1997 He co-organized a comprehensive retrospective at the Upper Belvedere.
- 1998 On 15 January, Georg Eisler succumbed to cancer; he was buried in a grave of honor by the City of Vienna.

## EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Please find updated information about our on-site program on our website:  
<https://www.belvedere.at/en/on-request-groups>

Subject to the current valid regulations!

## GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Exhibition Title</b>	IN-SIGHT: Georg Eisler Tracing Life
<b>Exhibition Duration</b>	8 April to 25 September 2022
<b>Exhibition Location</b>	Upper Belvedere
<b>Exhibits</b>	29 paintings, 9 sketchbooks, one playing card deck (1995)
<b>Curator</b>	Kerstin Jesse
<b>Exhibition Management</b>	Tanja Angermann-Cekinmez
<b>Exhibition Catalogue</b>	<b><i>Georg Eisler. Spurensicherung</i></b> In-Sight Series Editors: Stella Rollig, Kerstin Jesse Authors: Reinhard Bachleitner, Barbara Coudenhove- Kalergi, Kerstin Jesse, Stella Rollig Graphics: Atelier Andreas Wesle Printing and Binding: Gugler GmbH, Melk 136 pages, 111 illustrations Format: 16,5 × 23,5 cm, Softcover German Edition, Eigenverlag ISBN 978-3-903327-02-3 Price: EUR 19.00
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The current opening hours and ticket prices can be found on the website at [www.belvedere.at](http://www.belvedere.at)

*For more information on the exhibition and high-resolution press photos please visit <https://www.belvedere.at/en/press>.  
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