

The children's drawing collections of two children's book women

Jella Lepman and Bettina Hürlimann

By Dr. Anna Lehninger (Zurich, Basel), associate researcher at SIKJM

The picture collection of the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM) contains not only original illustrations of historical children's books, prints and picture sheets, but also children's drawings. They come from the possession of two women who were both devoted to children's books and to each other in friendship: Jella Lepman and Bettina Hürlimann, the latter a publisher at Atlantis Verlag, whose children's book segment she shaped for decades. From her estate come the approximately 200 pictures which, through research, could be determined as two collections and are presented below for the first time.

Children see our world - Jella Lepman's collection of children's drawings in the SIKJM

In 1971, Ullstein Verlag published the book *Kinder sehen unsere Welt*, followed by the Italian edition in 1972 and the English edition in 1975. This book is the last publication by Jella Lepman (1891-1970) to be published posthumously. Jella Lepman was a Jewish-German journalist and writer, translator and founder of the International Youth Library (IJB) in Munich. After the end of the Second World War, she had returned to Germany and worked in the so-called "reeducation". She wanted to counteract the ideological imprint of National Socialism on German children by founding an international library for children in Munich in 1949 in order to lead the growing generation to cosmopolitanism and tolerance through children's books. In her autobiographical notes *Die Kinderbuchbrücke* (The Children's Book Bridge) from 1964, the author described the emergence of the youth library as well as the interaction with children's drawings, which were repeatedly collected, exhibited and published on certain themes (self-portrait, wedding), because, according to Lepman: "Children's books and children's art belong closely together." (*The Children's Book Bridge* 1964, p. 175).

Today, the picture collection of the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media contains at least 115 international children's drawings and texts that Lepman collected for the book *Kinder sehen*

unsere Welt (Children see our world) Due to Jella Lepman's death and the posthumous publication of the book in 1971, the pictures remained in Lepman's estate in Zurich and presumably entered the library of the SIKJM via Bettina Hürlimann. In addition to Lepman's drawings, there are other children's drawings in the collection that came from the estate of the Swiss children's book publisher Bettina Hürlimann (1909-1983) and whose provenance still needs to be clarified in detail.

The drawings were assigned to Lepman's book by comparing them with the publication (Figs. 1-4). The publication shows that children from 35 countries responded to an international call for drawings and texts: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, England, Finland, France, Greece, Japan, Yugoslavia, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Austria, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Singapore, Soviet Union, Spain, Thailand, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, USA, Uruguay, Vietnam.

The works submitted were assigned to five main themes: Family, Kindergarten and School, Books and Mass Media, Transport and Technology, War and Peace. The jury that made the selection from the submitted pictures in 1970 included, in addition to Lepman Erich Kästner, Eduardo Moll, painter, art teacher, Lima, Peru; Madame Gisèle Debek, Ecole Français, Munich; Dietmar Meyer, Chief Graphic Designer, ELTERN magazine; Walter Scherf, International Youth Library, Munich and Walter Zacharias, International Painting Studio, Munich. The pictures were also used to organise an exhibition "of children's drawings from all over the world" from 21.2. to 23.3.1973 at the IJB. Once again, children's drawings were used as cultural diplomats to promote international understanding and peace between formerly hostile nations.

The collection has not yet been researched in depth, but initial research points to a rich field of research in the future.

Literature

Jella Lepman, *Die Kinderbuchbrücke*, ed. by the International Youth Library with the collaboration of Anna Becchi, Munich: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 2020 (original edition 1964).

Christiane Raabe, "Kinderbilder als Friedensboten. International Children's Picture Exhibitions at the International Youth Library in Munich in the Post-War Period", in: *Das Bücherschloss. Mitteilungen aus der Internationalen Jugendbibliothek*, 2018/2019, pp. 10-19.

Myself, myself, moi-même. Kinderselbstportraits aus aller Welt, collected and ed. by the

International Youth Library, with prefaces by Jella Lepman, Emil Pretorius and Erich Kästner, Munich: Internationale Jugendbibliothek, 1952.

Wedding. Paintings by children from all over the world, collection of the International Youth Library Munich, Die Neue Sammlung, publication for the exhibition from 26 March to 5 May 1957.

Children see our world. Texts and drawings from 35 countries, collected and edited by Jella Lepman, designed by Dietmar Meyer. Berlin: Ullstein, 1971.

Jella Lepman, Come i bambini vedono il mondo, trad. di Amina Pandolfi, Milano: Garzanti, 1972.

Jella Lepman, How Children See Our World. Words and pictures from thirty-five countries, coll. and ed. by Jella Lepman, New York: Avon Books, 1975.

Dreamlands - The children's drawing collection by Bettina Hürlimann at the SIKJM

Other children's drawings in the SIKJM come from the possession of a bookwoman: Bettina Hürlimann (1909-1983), born Kiepenheuer, completed an apprenticeship as a typographer before marrying the Swiss publisher Martin Hürlimann, having four children and moving to Zurich with her family in the 1930s. Bettina Hürlimann headed the children's programme of the Atlantis publishing house for decades, began collecting historical and contemporary children's books and developed into an internationally recognised children's book expert. In 1953, together with Astrid Lindgren, Lisa Tetzner, Erich Kästner, Richard Bamberger, Fritz Brunner and Jella Lepmann, Hürlimann was involved in the founding of the "International Board on Books for Young People" (IBBY) in Zurich.

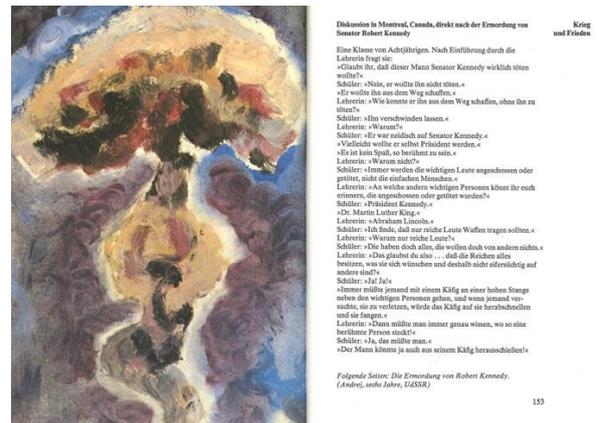
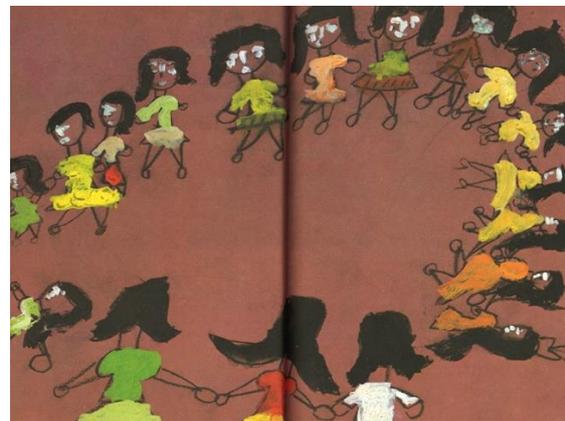
She had probably also begun collecting children's drawings as early as the 1930s. Presumably these were drawings by her own children or those of friends and private gifts. One, for example, was inscribed in awkward letters: "Mrs. Hürlimann with baby in pram". Others are inscribed with names referring to children of writer and illustrator friends. Drawings of the children of the illustrator couple Valerie and Eduard Bäumer are also included, documenting their fate in a touching way: The couple had fled from Germany to Austria with their children and were trapped in Salzburg; they spent the last years of the war in hiding. Letters from Eduard Bäumer to Bettina Hürlimann from these years tell of his efforts to obtain commissions as an illustrator. His letters seem to have included the pictures of his children.

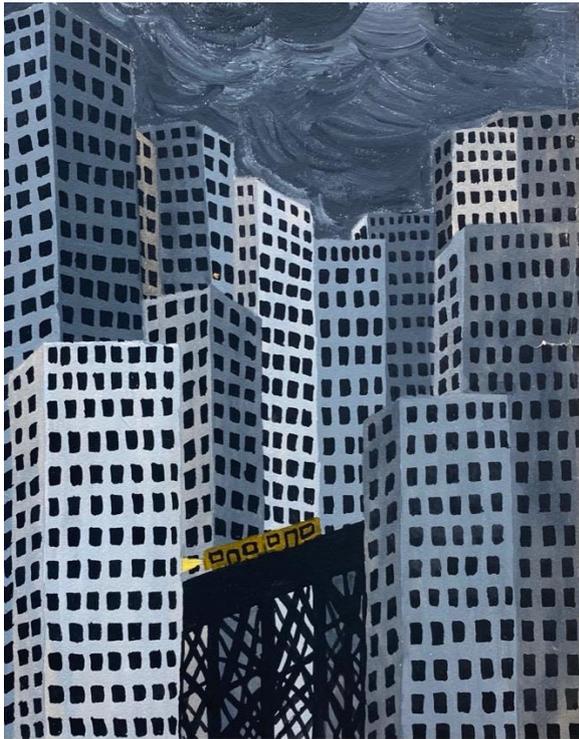
Some pictures from Hürlimann's collection were used in 1934 to illustrate an article by Sigismund

von Radecki in the magazine Atlantis. Länder, Völker, Reisen, which had been published by Martin Hürlimann since 1929 (Figs. 5-6). The journal repeatedly published articles on children's drawing, including by proven experts such as Hans Friedrich Geist. Some drawings have inscriptions that indicate further publications. Clippings from journals with illustrated articles on children's drawing also attest to the children's book publisher's interest in children's drawing. Whether this collecting interest is related to the private interest of a mother of four who also drew herself, or to the bookmaker's view of her audience, or even a combination of both, is unclear. Further research should show how the children's drawing collection relates to her work as a children's book publisher and her commitment to international understanding.

Literature

Bettina Hürlimann, *Seven Houses. Aufzeichnungen einer Bücherfrau*, Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1976.
 Sigmund von Radecki, "Dreamlands" (illustrations), in: *Atlantis. Länder, Völker, Reisen*, XII, 6, pp. 705-709.





Sources

<http://kalliope-verbund.info/DE-611-HS-3686832>