



Frankfurt Impressions

Newsletter 2 – June 2013

Week of Action: Growing older in Frankfurt

From the 3rd until 15th June, we hold the week of action: Growing older in Frankfurt. It is organized by the municipal central office growing older.

This action week (which actually lasts 2 weeks) takes place in the summer for years. The main topic this year is: "At home in the district". One of the aims of this week is to introduce the various activities of the district one lives in, to encourage people to join the activities, to meet others of the same neighbourhood.

Inhabitants of Frankfurt have been asked to take pictures of their most liked place in the quarter and send them to the central office. The vernisage of all these pictures was the start of this year's event.

More than 150 events, divided in seven categories, take place during that time. The categories are: Health, Art, Culture & Education, Care, Life & Living, Sport & Dancing, Open Houses and Information Desks.



In the category of "health" is a symposium focused at men's health. Why do men, especially older men, not take advantage of prophylactic medical examinations? In addition, one can get a lot of information about health in general and about special subjects like Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer, dementia or drugs.

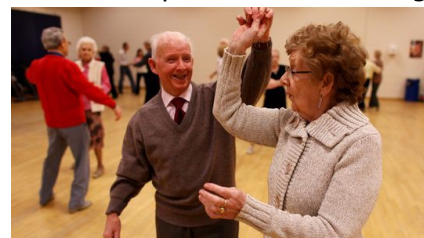
In the category of "Art, culture & education", myriad activities can be found like **Mnemonic** techniques, music, singing, English and French conversation classes, a flirt course (!), an Israeli breakfast, memory training, drumming, chess, painting and so on.



A wide range of services can be found in the "care" category like information about current developments, new possibilities and different concepts.

Nowadays everybody knows how important the living situation for the quality of life is. Mobility, participation and the different ways of living together with others is the subject of the "Life & Living" category.

If people like to dance or do gymnastics without previous practice, it is no problem in the category "sport & dance".



If one wants to know how homes for the elderly look like from the inside, one can get an impression of it because many institutions offer an "Open House". Very famous in that category is the open house of the "central office growing older" itself. There is a big party in the outdoor area with music, dancing, a lay fashion show and free eating and drinking. More than 100 people come to meet others, get information, have fun and enjoy themselves.



At the end of the week, information is presented by the "Netzwerk Neue Nachbarschaften" (network new neighbourhoods). They are a colourful mixture of more than 250 inhabitants of Frankfurt, grouped together in more than 15 districts. The goal is to create a network where people can reach each other by foot, help each other in time of need but also to exchange news and experiences. All generations, cultures, nationalities, whether rich or poor are welcome.

A large variety of people take the chance to inform themselves during that week about the possibilities they have when they grow older or are already older. It usually is a great success for all, the people, the institutions and Frankfurt.

Peter Gehweiler



Google-Suche

Auf gut Glück!

Maria Sibylla Merian

In April this year, the google doodle referred to the 366th anniversary of Maria Sibylla Merian, a naturalist and scientific illustrator, known worldwide.



Do you know what a google doodle is? See the picture above. It is the logo of the search machine – and if you pay attention, you will note that google changes the person or theme from time to time, depending on special events or anniversaries. I myself started reading Sibylla Merian, when I caught sight of one of Sibylla Merians marvellous paintings as the one above.

Merian was born in Frankfurt in 1647 and began painting insect specimens she had captured at the age of 13 years. Her father was the engraver and publisher Matthäus Merian. He

died, when she was three years old. Her stepfather, the still life painter Jacob Marell, encouraged the little girl to draw and paint.

After her marriage in 1665, she began her own botanical and entomological work. In 1670 she and her family moved to Nuremberg. To facilitate her studies, Merian raised and kept live specimens and was therefore able to show the insects at each stage of their development. Merian left her husband in 1685. She joined a Labadist (a French pietist) sect in the Netherlands, together with her children. In 1699, she travelled with her daughter Dorothea to a labadist mission in Surinam. Here she completed a series of paintings detailing the tropical flora and fauna. After a bout of yellow fever she moved to Amsterdam in 1701 and published a series of engravings from her watercolours in her book titled the "Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium".



In the foreword she wrote: "I spent my time investigating insects and plants from specimen I had captured. At the beginning, I started with silk worms in my home town of Frankfurt. I realized that other caterpillars produced beautiful butterflies or moths and that silkworm did the same. This led me to collect all the caterpillars I could find in order to see how they changed."



She is known in the world of science and nature for studying plants and insects and producing detailed paintings of them. She later worked as a botanic artist and published collections of engravings of plants. Shortly afterwards she began to focus more on the study of insects. Her work on the life cycle and metamorphosis of butterflies is regarded as groundbreaking, making her a significant contributor to entomology.

In her time, it was very unusual that someone would be genuinely interested in insects, which had a bad reputation and were colloquially called "beasts of the devil". Because of this reputation, the metamorphosis of these animals was largely unknown. Merian described the life cycles of 186 insect species, at a time when the contemporary notion prevailed that insects were "born of mud" by spontaneous generation.

She died in poverty in 1717. After her death, the Russian Tsar Peter the Great acquired a number of her paintings, which are still kept in academic collections in St Petersburg.

Besides schools, places, streets, the PRIMUS- LINIE, a Frankfurter passenger shipping company, gave her name to his newest ship in 2012. About 1000 persons were sending in name proposals – and the winner was **Maria Sibylla Merian!**

Trude Dorscht

Der Struwwelpeter



You most likely have read a book called "Struwwelpeter" when you were a child. The author of this lovely and world-famous children book was Heinrich Hoffmann, born in Frankfurt in 1809. Hoffmann was a general practitioner, anatomist and psychiatrist, later on Director of the Institute for the Insane and Epileptic in Frankfurt, the city's mental hospital. He was one of the first to put into practice new medical knowledge about the mentally ill and built the first hospital for them in Frankfurt. He wrote many other children's books but none became as famous as Struwwelpeter. His main passion was writing poetry. He also published numerous books on comedies, satires and political prose. Not to forget his medical writings on psychiatry. In fact, he was an exceptionally versatile person. Beside his talent for drawing, he was quick-witted, humorous, sociable, politically very active, widely travelled and an excellent speaker. He worked as a doctor until the age of 80 and died in 1894 at 85.

In the year 1844, Hoffmann was looking for a picture book as a Christmas present for his 3-year old son. He couldn't find what he was looking for therefore, he decided to write and illustrate a little booklet himself. As expected, his child loved it very much and so did, quite unexpectedly, Hoffmann's grown-up friends! They persuaded him to have it published. In 1845, the book first appeared in print but under a different title. Since the fifth edition in 1847 under the title of "Struwwelpeter". Presumably, in 1858 Hoffmann created a new version with altered pictures. All subsequent editions of the Struwwelpeter are based on it.



Hoffmann around 1845 堡

The Struwwelpeter comprises illustrated and rhymed stories, mostly about children. Each story has a clear moral that demonstrates the disastrous consequences of misbehavior in an exaggerated way. The title story is the shortest. "Struwwelpeter" describes a boy who does not groom himself properly and is consequently unpopular. The picture on the cover is impressive enough to lure one into the whole book. Do you remember the following picture-stories?



Struwwelpeter became a classic of children's literature. The German-language edition is now well over 30 million, it has been reprinted over 540 times and translated into 40 languages and 50 dialects, even into Latin and Braille. 1848 the English translation was done by Mark Twain and called "Shock-headed Peter". Mark Twain gave his translation to his three young daughters as a surprise at Christmas, just as the author had done! The American version was called "Slovenly Peter". In addition, well over 1000 parodies and politicizing rewritings have appeared since 1847. The first foreign languages into which the book was translated were Danish, English, Russian and Polish. By the way, Hoffmann spoke no English but fluent French.

The popularity of Struwwelpeter was reflected in over 30 musical works. It started in 1875 with the Struwwelpeter Melodies for House Music. The great-grandson of Hoffmann composed a Struwwelpeter-Suite in 1934 and a Struwwelpeter-Cantata for children in 1949, which became quite famous. A Struwwelpeter shellac record was also produced around 1935. Even a Struwwelpeter-Cabaret was founded in 1947 and a Struwwelpeter movie was made 1954 in former East Germany. The "Shock-headed Peter" musical in London in 1998 received worldwide attention. It now belongs to the repertoire of German theaters.

The original manuscript of the Struwwelpeter from 1844 is exhibited at the Germanic National Museum at Nuremberg. The Frankfurt University Library has the original manuscript of the second version of the Struwwelpeter from 1858. They also have a large collection of Struwwelpeter books, including the first German edition from 1845 up to the present day.



In Frankfurt, we not only have the little Struwwelpeter Museum but we also have a Struwwelpeter Applewine Pub, a Struwwelpeter Pharmacy and even a Struwwelpeter tree. The eyes shine at night! The German Post Office had of course a collection of Struwwelpeter stamps.



I

spent many hours at the Struwwelpeter Museum reading everything they had on exhibit. At the end, I simply loved and admired the man Hoffmann. What a fascinating personality; lovable, witty, endowed with myriad talents, skills and abilities - just a little genius!

Edeltraud Thobe

Places of literature: "Frankfurt is reading a book" – "Frankfurt liest ein Buch"

An event to inspire people of a town to read and discuss a book in two weeks:

<http://www.frankfurt-liest-ein-buch.de>

It is the fourth time that this event takes place in Frankfurt. Every year a jury proposes a book, written by an author of Frankfurt, to be read and discussed by the public over the course of a fortnight.

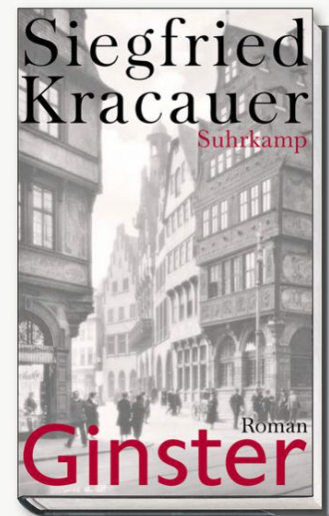
During these fourteen days a great number of events will take place in Frankfurt including: readings, discussions, tours through the town exploring locations mentioned in the novel or from the author's life, reports on local TV and radio; the book will be read twice in succession by a prominent speaker.

This takes place not only in bookstores, libraries, and theatres, but also in many usual and unusual places of the town - free of charge or with tickets. This of course requires that people support and sponsor this public reading - and it works!

This year the book "Ginster" by Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) was chosen. 72 events took place in 50 places and an estimated 10.000 people participated!

The author:

Kracauer lived in Frankfurt. His uncle had been teacher at the Jewish school and wrote the book "The story of the Jews in Frankfurt from 1150-1824". Kracauer worked as an architect, but didn't like his profession. Later he worked as a journalist for cultural affairs at the "Frankfurter Zeitung" and was well known in the 1920s. He wrote a study about the "Employed" and in 1928 published "Ginster". In 1933, he emigrated with his wife to France and in 1941 to New York. There he wrote a psychological history of German film, which was much discussed. Theodor W. Adorno (German philosopher and sociologist) was one of his best friends. Kracauer died in 1966.



The contents of the book:



Reading "Ginster" in the Public Library in Rödelheim 16th April 2013.

The architect Ginster is 25 years old when World War I starts. He tries to stay at home, working as usual. However, as an architect he is finally also involved in the war - but not as a soldier at the front but planning factories for munitions or cemeteries for soldiers.

He looks critically and ironically on his own work and the work of others and considers that those works are not serving the war but are taken only as an excuse for making war.

For me it is a book against war, not easy to read, written with much personal space against persons and things going on, but with a great sense of humour and irony and of course we in Frankfurt know all the places where he lived.

"Bibliothek der Alten" – "Old People's Library"

On the occasion of the exhibition "The Memory of Art" in the Schirn, Art Museum (2000/01), the artist Sigrid Sigurdsson from Hamburg asked me to take part in a **cross-generational project**, which will last until the year **2105**. She was looking for writers somehow connected to the history of the city of Frankfurt. The participants - sixty-five over fifty and thirty-five under fifty years of age - were requested to present a biographical, historical or scholarly look back over the past century. The Old People's Library is located in the **Historical Museum of Frankfurt**.

More than eighty contributions are meanwhile accessible to the public in the Bibliothek der Alten. No specifications are made with regard to content or form; the authors can make their contributions in either cassette or book form. The contributions can comprise historical or biographical reflections, diaries or correspondence, drawings, minutes, or scholarly articles and scientific studies, and encompass photos, tape recordings and films. Visitors can view books directly; cassettes must be requested in advance. An [alphabetical overview of all authors](#) is also available, and interviews and films can be viewed on a monitor.



The younger participants have as much as fifty years to write "into the future" and reflect on the twenty-first century. Until the year 2055, a new author is to be added every year, so that, in the end, the Bibliothek der Alten will contain 150 contributions. If the last author, chosen in 2055, is under fifty, this project could end with his contribution fifty years later, in 2105, and thus encompass a span of more than two hundred years of remembered history.

There are talks in the exhibition carried out with individual authors since the opening of the Old People's Library in late 2004. These talks focus primarily on personal biographies as well as the special theme addressed by the cassette or book. Other personal documents and photographs are presented in glass cases.

If you are interested, I can tell you more about it during my stay in Krakow in May 2014. I can also show you the Old People's Library when you are in Frankfurt. In the same room, there are several models of the old city of Frankfurt before and after the war.



Melanie Hartlaub