

CHAPTER 1 - NICHTS NEUES - A PROFILE FOR RUTH SET TO MUSIC

Neutral Comment

Scene: Indoors, office. Dialogue between museum director and secretary.

Atmosphere: Like in the 50s, woman typing

It was exactly the time when Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt freed herself from all the clichés associated with typewriters.

Comment male museum director

Are you ready for the dictation? It's regarding the text about Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt. Her exhibition 'Nichts Neues' - nothing new.

Comment female secretary

Why 'Nothing New'? Just because the lady is 91 years old?

Comment male museum director

No, no it's more of a question... a provocative, ironic hypothesis.

Comment female secretary

Oh, you mean because Wolf-Rehfeldt is completely new to many people, because hardly anyone knew her for a long time?

Comment male museum director

Yes and no. Are you ready to write?

Comment female secretary

Yes...

Comment male museum director

In 1983, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt sent out her mail art sheet 'Signs of Signs'.

Comment female secretary

Do you mean 'Signs of Signs', the kind of personal profile wrapped up as a work of art in English?

Comment male museum director

Exactly! The first word is: Biography.

Siri

Born as a humane being

Comment male museum director

Born in 1932 in Wurzen, which is also the home of *Zwieback* – rusks – in East Germany.

Comment female secretary

Crisp art, dry humour,- Yes, actually, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt was, still *is* like that.

Comment male museum director

Let's continue: Biography:

Siri

pupil, apprentice, employee, student, artist

Comment male museum director

In 1947, at the age of 15, she learns shorthand and typing.

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt

I had to leave school because we didn't have any money, and then I worked as a sales assistant.

Comment female secretary

However, the job was not the end of her career but an inspiring starting point for the ever-inquisitive Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt. For her, the typewriter is not a means of oppression but a tool of emancipation.

Comment male museum director

Hm, go on

Siri Voice

Trying to become a human being

Comment male museum director

She tries to be human – so simple and challenging at the same time.

Comment female secretary

But not this 'New Man' dictated by the recently invented socialism of East Germany. She and her husband, who was an artist too, are of one mind on this issue.

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt

And one day I said to him: "If I were a painter, I would become a painter on the stove in the kitchen!" "Well, then do it, he said " And then I said: "I'll do it!" "Well then, you'll have to learn how to do it." And then we bought canvas frames, I had to learn how to stretch and prime the canvas, and he would have loved to teach me how to mix paint colours, too.

Comment male museum director / Siri Voice

love: nature

like: art - all kinds of art, esp. visual arts

Comment female secretary

Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt paints amorphous shapes that seem to have a colourful life of their own. And she writes little poems in which she explores gaps and reveals contradictions.

Comment male museum director

Like this:

We're doing too well,
which is why we're not doing well,
after all, we can have everything,
but nothing is good enough for us.

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt

Ah yes, the poems – that was mainly in the 60s and 70s. I didn't write any later on. I thought I still had to do something with language in some way, apart from what I painted, and I thought about whether to start studying again, language studies or something.

Comment male museum director

Let's move on with the biography. Cue: Slogan.

Siri Voice

To a true philosopher every piece of art means native land.

Comment female secretary

Wow

Comment male museum director

As early as 1954, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt studied philosophy at the Faculty of Workers and Farmers in Berlin.

Comment female secretary

But after two semesters, free-spirited Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt gave up, took a job as a clerk at the newly-built Academy of Arts east of the recently built Berlin Wall, and took up typewriter art...

Comment male museum director / Siri Voice

Motto: peace on earth

Comment male museum director

And this art would remain under the shadow of the Cold War for almost 30 years.

Ian / Siri

Want to be healthy and a philosopher

food: artmosphere

Comment female secretary

Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt was reading Lao Tzu and meditating as early as 1973. To this day, this graceful woman, who seems to live of love and air only, goes on a retreat once a year.

Comment male museum director & female secretary

I: Now it starts getting more complicated. By 'colour' she probably means 'favourite colour', doesn't she? This spot here looks purple. Don't you agree?

N: Yes, the colour of modesty and humility.

I: And this thing here, a pendant, maybe? A '2', what is that supposed to mean?

N: Hm, maybe it's an expression of the way Ruth thinks in binary codes, the harmony of opposites she strives for.

Comment male museum director

zodiac

Siri Voice

aquarius

Comment female secretary

Yes, Ruth is a typical Aquarius, unique and extraordinary.

Comment male museum director / Siri

hobby: mail art

activities: collages, paintings, drawings, notes etc.

Comment female secretary

But after East Germany collapsed, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt stopped creating art completely.

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt

I think mail art largely stopped at that time, because there was this openness all of a sudden. And I had the impression that there was so much art out there that I didn't need to create any myself on top.

Comment male museum director

That is what I call chutzpah, when you're in your mid-50s and you really aren't producing anything new.

Comment female secretary

Well, she might not be creating any new pieces, but she's still making art - in her mind and in her life - once an artist, always an artist!? Besides, for us and the curators of the MINSK museum, there's still a lot of her old work to be rediscovered.

Original Sound Paola Malavassi, director DAS MINSK

Ruth has her heart in the right place when it comes to political attitudes and awareness of the great challenges of our time. It is amazing how accurately she predicted our here and now even before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Original Sound Marie Gerbaulet, curator DAS MINSK

Ruth's work is still relevant today. That's why we're looking at her art today - not only us, but many others, too.

Original Sound Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt in german - voice over Sylvie

Yes, I'm actually quite surprised, I wasn't expecting it. I had already stopped thinking about it, because I'm not doing anything art-wise anymore. But I wouldn't have been upset if nothing had come up, because I wasn't expecting it anymore.

Comment female secretary

Alright, let's write: Nothing new... not.

Comment male museum director

Yes. Exactly. Full stop.