

UK PRESS COVERAGE OF ILKA GEDŐ, 1985 & 1989

Contents

Clare Henry: Chance to Gain a Unique Perspective <i>Glasgow Herald</i> , 1 October 1985	3
Emilio Coia: Hungarians Occupy Glasgow (excerpt), <i>The Scotsman</i> , 7 October 1985.....	4
John Russel Taylor: Brilliant Exponent of an Outdated Style (excerpt), <i>Times</i> 29 October 1985.....	5
Clare Henry: Hungarian Artists in Glasgow, <i>Arts Review</i> 11 October 1985 (excerpt)	6
Clare Henry: Hungarian Arts in Glasgow, <i>Studio International</i> Vol 199 Number 1012, March 1986, pp 56-59	7
Clare Henry: Ilka Gedo at the Compass Gallery, <i>Glasgow Herald</i> 11 October 1985	8
Critics' Choice, <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 3 November 1985.....	9
Michael Shepherd Hungarian Temperament, <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> , 27 October 1985	10
Terrence Mullay: Views of Hungary, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> , 8 October 1985 (excerpt)	11
William Feaver Hungarian Art in Glasgow (excerpt), <i>The Observer</i> , 27 October 1985	12
William Ferguson Hungarian Arts Glasgow, 11 October 1985, <i>The Times Educational Supplement</i> (excerpt).....	13

William Packer: Hungarian Arts in Glasgow (excerpt), <i>Financial Times</i> 8 October 1985	14
Compass Gallery, Newsletter, September 1985.....	15
Murdo MacDonald, "Glasgow Tribute to Artist of Extraordinary Gifts" <i>The Scotsman</i> , 1989, ?	16

Clare Henry: Chance to Gain a Unique Perspective *Glasgow Herald*, 1 October 1985

Carrell's personal favourite is Ilka Gedo (at the Compass Gallery), a gentle soft-spoken lady who endured and recorded the hopeless and fear-filled daily Budapest ghetto life of 1944 in expressive drawings; went on to capture the raw awfulness of work in the supposedly heroic Ganz electrical factory in 1946-47 (commissioned but then obviously not used by the authorities) and later in life moved on to produce serene, delicate small paintings of fantastic and mysterious rose gardens all imbued with quiet and realistic acceptance.

After considerable difficulty in tracking her down, Carrell did make several visits to her tiny paper-strewn studio, really just a corner of her tiny flat: a creative midden. "I went for an hour, was completely bowled over by what I saw on her many portfolios and spent days there. Sadly she died just days after his last visit, so what was to have been her first European celebration is now a memorial retrospective of 45 years of work. Carrell hopes to do a major touring show and a book on her in two years' time.

Emilio Coia: Hungarians Occupy Glasgow (excerpt), *The Scotsman*, 7 October 1985

Not to be missed on any account are the works of Janos Kass at the Collins Gallery and the one-woman retrospective at the Compass Gallery. Kass is a draftsman designer of major importance, and Gedo (she died in June) is a highly sensitive, contemplative and contributing figure whose vision parallels that of Paul Klee.

John Russel Taylor: Brilliant Exponent of an Outdated Style (excerpt), *Times* 29 October 1985

Hungary also has, one may gather from elsewhere, its Neo-Expressionists, its exponents of camp/punk. (...) But the most memorable and distinctive of all is Ilka Gedo at the Compass Gallery. Sadly, she died in June, when the season was already in preparation: sadly also, she is apparently quite unknown in Hungary. The show includes some of her remarkable ghetto drawings from the Second World War, as well as some of the highly idiosyncratic flower and garden paintings of her last nine years, wayward yet tense scribbles, richly, delicately coloured, which oddly recall Mondrian's dying chrysanthemum. Fluttering on the edge of the naïve, these fragile works still cast their spell, and one imagines that their Glasgow reputation (a major retrospective is planned) will soon ensure this prophet at least posthumous honour in her own country.

The article is illustrated by a drawing of Ilka Gedo with the following text: Prophet due for posthumous honour: detail of Ilka Gedo's wayward, yet tense Ganz Factory, 1946

Clare Henry: Hungarian Artists in Glasgow, *Arts Review* 11 October 1985 (excerpt)

Gentle and soft-spoken Gedo endured and recoded the fearful years in the Budapest Ghetto, then the Ganz engineering factories and in later life a quiet acceptance moved on to produce serene and delicate mystery rose garden paintings. Carrel was very impressed by her work and made many studio visits, planning a major touring show and a book about her. Sadly, she died, at age 64, just days after his last visit, so what should have been a first western celebration is now a memorial and retrospective of 45 years of work.

Clare Henry: Hungarian Arts in Glasgow, *Studio International* Vol 199 Number 1012, March 1986, pp 56-59

Ilka Gedő at the Compass Gallery provides the smallest, quietest, most moving works brought from Hungary to Glasgow. Her gentle drawings, made as a young woman, record the hopelessness of wartime ghetto life. Her thin, spare, spidery pencil twists of painful, nervous intensity capture hungry, hollow-eyed children or exhausted figures asleep on a makeshift bed; the fear and angst-ridden era of Schiele's Vienna lurks in the huddled, frightened families. In 1946 she applied this same searing honesty to drawings of the old Ganz engineering factory, where labour was hard, not heroic: a bitter task the State did not want recorded. This time her nostalgic and symbolic abstracted rose gardens in soft, transparent colours hint at Jugendstil, Klee and Munch. Ilka Gedő's female artistic sensibility produced mountains of work in the paper-strewn corner of her tiny bedroom. As Carrell says. «I went for an hour, was completely bowled over by what I saw in her piles of portfolios and spent days there.» Sadly she died just after his last visit. Carrell is to do a major touring memorial and a book on Gedő in two years' time.

Clare Henry: Ilka Gedo at the Compass Gallery, *Glasgow Herald* 11 October 1985

At every festival, there is one event which catches the public imagination. In the Hungarian season, it's Ilka Gedo's exhibition of sensitive moving drawings and paintings.

During the 1940s as a girl in her mid-twenties Gedo recorded for posterity the reality, hopelessness of Budapest ghetto life. Her thin, spare pencil twists captured hungry, hollow-eyed children, resigned old women sewing, an exhausted figure asleep on a makeshift bed. In the bomb shelters, people huddled together, fearful of being killed, deported or separated.

In 1946 she applied this searing honesty to drawings of the old Ganz engineering factory where labour was hard, not heroic: a bitter task. Several 1947 self-portraits show her pregnant with her son, who made the trip to Glasgow to see her first one-person abroad. Sadly, she died three months ago, just as her work was becoming appreciated.

In the 1950s Gedo stopped painting until a small show of her old work was put on by a critic in his flat in 1964. „It was a very brave thing to then, as it was frowned on by the authorities,” her son told me. Encouraged by her friends' response, once she began to paint again, she went from strength to strength, creating nostalgic and symbolic abstracted rose gardens in transparent colours.

Hints of Klee, Giacometti, Munch and Art Nouveau entwined to produce a delicate, exquisite and intimate style. She also had a sense of humour as demonstrated in her Trainee Witches a picture with Sub- Titles. Ilka Gedo: a female artistic sensibility of great note. (Till November 9)

Critics' Choice, *The Sunday Times*, 3 November 1985

Art

Ilka Gedo, 1921-1985. A real discovery of a real original, an introverted self-taught Jewish-Hungarian draughtswoman and painter who combines the intensity of Gwen John and the spidery line of a Giacometti to wondrous emotional effect, Compass Gallery, Glasgow, until Sat.

Michael Shepherd Hungarian Temperament, *Sunday Telegraph*, 27 October 1985

Glasgow has embarked on a season (until November 9) of Hungarian arts in all the media. It is the first such occasion of any magnitude since the Hungarian exhibition at Earls Court in 1906. (...) The memorial exhibition at the Compass Gallery has a series of ghetto drawings that as documents compare with Henry Moore's wartime Underground sketches.

Terrence Mullan: Views of Hungary, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1985 (excerpt)

The work of two of the painters represented in Glasgow is equally crucial to an understanding of art in Hungary. One of them, at the Compass Gallery, is Ilka Gedo whose drawings of life in the Budapest Ghetto in 1944, and a factory immediately after the war, unite fine craftsmanship and humanity, which go straight to the heart.

István Mazzag, a young artist of only 27, whose work is at the Glasgow School of Art, is totally different. He has the promise of being one of the most exciting artists of the immediate future.

William Feaver Hungarian Art in Glasgow (excerpt), *The Observer*, 27 October 1985

Ilka Gedo, who died a few months ago, was probably the most isolated of all the artists represented here. Her drawings and paintings at the Compass Gallery bear faint traces of Jugendstil and of the angst-ridden Vienna in the Schiele era. Plastic flowers wilt in her delicately scumbled drawings, and in her pencil drawings she and others like her sit and wait. These studies, made in the Budapest ghetto in 1944, are the smallest, quietest, and most moving works brought from Hungary to Glasgow.

William Ferguson Hungarian Arts Glasgow, 11 October 1985, *The Times Educational Supplement* (excerpt)

The Compass Galley has Ilka Gedo, born in 1921, who died this year. Neglected in life, she has now become suddenly fashionable. Her gentle pencils and pastels call to mind Gwen John, until the subject matter leaps out: inhabitants of the ghetto in 1944 before the Communists freed them from Horthy's regime, women in a factory and a home for the aged.

William Packer: Hungarian Arts in Glasgow (excerpt), *Financial Times* 8 October 1985

Ilka Gedő, whose works fill the Compass Gallery in West regent Street, died recently. aged 64, as the final selection was being made, and her exhibition is thus retrospective and memorial. An interval of 18 years devoted to bringing up a family divide the work: the later paintings light and decorative, the imagery abstracted and symbolic; the earlier work, a mass of drawings made as a young woman in the wartime ghetto or just after the war in the old people's home and factory and workshop. Hers is most delicate and exquisite expressionism, as of Munch at his most intimate, especially in a set of tiny, lovely portrait studies.

The article shows a drawing by Ilka Gedo (Ganz Factory, Budapest, 1946, Ilka Gedo)

Compass Gallery, Newsletter, September 1985

(...) Our part in the event is an exhibition of Drawings and Paintings by a little-known artist, Ilka Gedő. She was born in Budapest in 1921. She studied privately, then, for a short period at Budapest Academy of Fine Art. She started exhibiting in 1942 and her drawings in the forties of ghetto life and factory work are realistic but, more importantly, expressive and moving.

Eight years later, in 1950, Ilka Gedő decided to stop painting. But her view of Art as an important life force transcended her interest in her own individual art and remained with her throughout the following 18 years of painting. Since starting to paint again in 1968, she has done among other works, a series of Rose Garden oil which has a thoughtful nostalgic air and has been compared in their graphic, flowing style with Art Nouveau by her critics. In recent years, her work has been gaining increasing recognition but sadly she has not lived to enjoy to the full this appreciation as she died in June this year. The present exhibition, therefore, has become a small retrospective and memorial show and will include some 80 Drawings and Paintings from the forties to the most recent work. It gives the opportunity to see the work of a modest, sensitive woman who was an artist in every sense of the word.

Murdo MacDonald, "Glasgow Tribute to Artist of Extraordinary Gifts" *The Scotsman*, 1989, ?

In his article titled *Tribute to Artist of Extraordinary Gifts* and published in the Scotsman at the time of the second Glasgow exhibition at the Third Eye Centre, the art historian, Murdo Macdonald writes as follows:

"The Hungarian painter Ilka Gedő was born in 1921 and died in 1985 with her art unrecognised. The Third Eye Centre in Glasgow has been seminal in remedying this situation and has now devoted its main gallery to a substantial retrospective, which establishes Gedő beyond doubt as an artist of extraordinary gifts and profound spiritual perception.

Gedo's work displays deep introversion but in a very positive sense. A typical subject of her drawing is a woman reading, head propped on her hand, and very often, those she portrays seem to be enclosed in a world of their own thoughts. They are drawn in pencil in a way that, as many of Van Gogh's drawings, evokes straightforward physical reality and emotional sensitivity at the same time.

As a Jew, during the war, Gedo was imprisoned in the Budapest ghetto, an experience she recorded in her work. Introverted as ever, she avoids any obvious horror—instead what emerges from these drawings of isolated people are feelings of puzzlement, uncertainty, despair and boredom.

Gedo catches the ordinariness of the extraordinary through understatement.

After the war, she produced wonderful self-portraits which through their sheer honesty of self-exploration claim the viewer's attention as few works can.

In the late 1940's Gedo became part of the circle of the philosopher Lajos Szabo. This was a double-edged contact since it both stimulated her interest in theoretical issues and put her in a double-bind with respect to her role as an artist, for Szabo seemed to deny the intellectual and artistic competence of women, while at the same time accepting her as a member of the group.

This conflict relates to her decision at this time to give up art and destroy many of her works.

Gedo started to work again in the mid -1960s but in that intervening period had thought in depth about the nature of art and not least of her activities had been to translate and annotate Goethe's *Theory of Colour*. When she re-emerges as an artist, it is with an almost carefree formal confidence and a vibrant use of colour. She sidesteps philosophy and creates a visual poetry of the soul.

Each of these later paintings is a glowing icon in which the artist gains semi-figurative inspiration from her family, from gardens, from emotions, but in each case she draws on the symbolic resources of her own and creates images of resonant universality.

Most underrated film:

Stormy Monday, The Moderns, Patty Hearst, Betrayed, Staves Of New York

Best chiller/horror

Return Of The Living Dead Part II, The Serpent And The Rainbow, Child's Play, Parents, They Live

Best

Red

Glasgow tribute to artist of extraordinary gifts

By MURDO MACDONALD



Self-portrait by Ilka Gedo

THE Hungarian painter Ilka Gedo was born in 1932 and died in 1985 with her art unrecognised. The Third Eye Centre in Glasgow has been seminal in remedying this situation and has now devoted its main gallery to a substantial retrospective which establishes Gedo beyond doubt as an artist of extraordinary gifts and profound spiritual perception.

Gedo's work displays deep introversion but in a very positive sense. A typical subject of her drawing is a woman reading, head propped on her hand, and very often those she portrays seem to be enclosed in a world of their own thoughts. They are drawn in pencil in a way that, as in many of Van Gogh's drawings, evokes straightforward physical reality and emotional sensitivity at the same time.

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Gedo only began to work again in the mid-1960s but in the intervening period had thought in depth about the nature of art and not least of her activities had been to translate and annotate Goethe's *Theory of Colour*. When she re-emerges as an artist it is with an almost carefree formal confidence and a vibrant use of colour. She sidesteps philosophy and creates a visual poetry of the soul.

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