

(AN)ARCHIVE

CHILDHOOD, MEMORY, AND THE COLD WAR

EDITED BY MNEMOZIN



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3. Passing Bye

Hanna Trampert

This chapter retells an autobiographical journey of Hanna Trampert, an artist who was born in Poland during the Cold War but frequently visited her family members in the Eastern borderlands of Germany. Growing up in a divided world, the themes of borders, freedom, and fear have accompanied Hanna throughout her life and have also been reflected in her artwork. This chapter is a reflection on Hanna's work since 2019. Inspired by her participation in the Reconnect/Recollect project, it focuses on the theme of connection(s). The experience of working with childhood memories has created an opportunity to see—and make visible—the existing connections and entanglements that have always existed despite walls and borders.

My parents come from the Eastern borderlands of Germany, a territory lost to the Soviet Union after World War II. In the 1950s, my parents emigrated to Gdynia on the Baltic Sea in Poland, where I was born in 1963. Most of my family stayed behind the border, and we visited them every year. These journeys were associated with complicated procedures: applying for invitations and passports, standing in line, enduring long daytime and nighttime train journeys with frightening border controls. The visits to the beloved grandma and aunts were very warm, but they were also very demanding. The towns and villages looked unlike Baltic Poland, the smells and the dishes were different from those at home, and many women wore headscarves. There was so much to watch and observe. Although I did not dare to speak in

the foreign language, I learned Russian passively on these visits and, later, in school, I already knew everything taught in language lessons. In socialist Poland, my father was a party member and often told us that silence was golden, that it was best not to say anything outside of home. In 1986, the borders were closed, and travelling to the West became illegal. The theme of borders, freedom, and fear have since accompanied me and have also been reflected in my artwork.

My participation in the Reconnect/Recollect memory workshops in Berlin and their interest in childhood memories set something in motion that caused a change in my thinking about boundaries. I have noticed that not only is silence golden but so, too, is talking. Both the narration and sharing of the small, seemingly unimportant moments from my childhood and the showing of the memorabilia during the workshop produced an outgrowth echoed in my paintings.

The mood in many of my earlier works might be described as one of being 'behind the wall'. In the new works created after the workshop in Berlin, the theme of connection(s) began to play a role and was reflected in a different mood. I see new relationships with myself and others. Being part of a group caused the walls to fall away and new communities and dialogues to emerge in their place. In some pictures, this shift is reflected in the childlike lightness, the beauty of nature, and the tangible quality of light-heartedness. I was able to participate in this project as a non-English speaker, for which I am grateful. This new experience showed me that it is possible to belong despite a language barrier. With the help of interpreters and translators, I have become a part of this project, and my paintings speak for themselves. Here I show some examples of my works from 2019 onwards.



Fig. 3.1 Hanna Trampert, *Was uns verbindet*, 2019, 80×60 cm.

The first artwork of the project Reconnect/Recollect was created after our initial, online exchange of childhood memories. It is an assemblage with ball bearings that symbolise a movable and smooth connection with other countries and continents. At this early point, I already felt part of this far-reaching program. My signature logo on the artwork—the girl's face—is one of these connections.

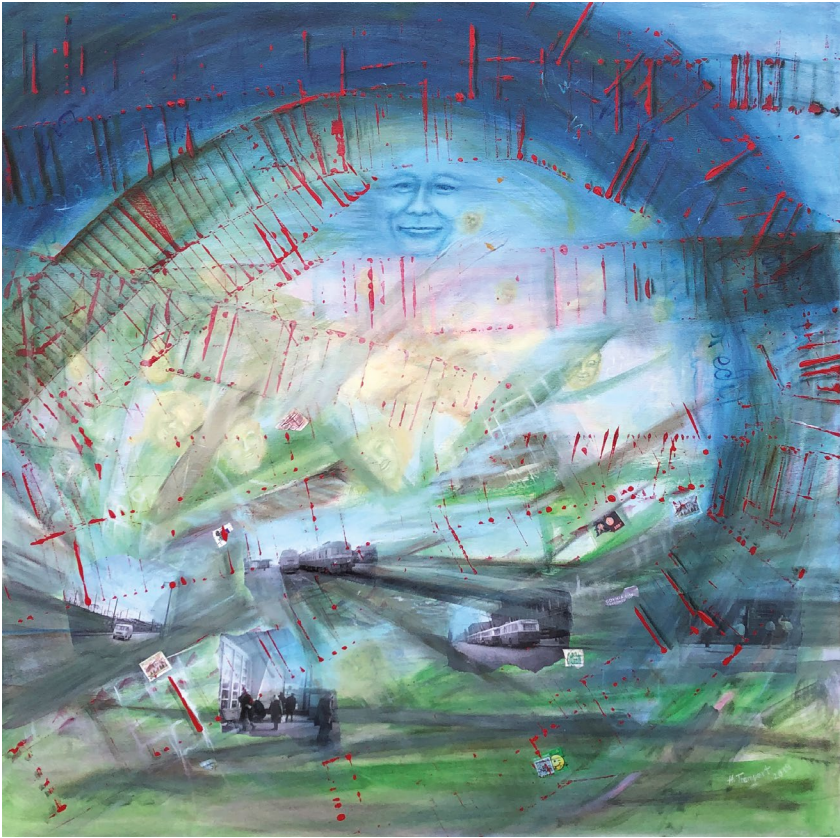


Fig. 3.2 Hanna Trampert, *Travel in Space and Time*, 2019, 100×100 cm.

This artwork was created based on the memory workshops in Berlin, and it tells about our meeting, our stories, and our memories. The piece is a collage made with my old stamps and my photos of Gdynia, Vilnius, and the trains. It captures the journeys, the connections, the tracks, the faces. Maybe you see the tunnel that appears in the ghost-train story and the light when you leave the tunnel. The history of the train was told by the GDR historian Anja Werner and the West Berlin social anthropologist Sarah Fichtner (see Chapter 15). The image has its dynamics, has many layers of experience, is circular, like recurring memories, like the time clock. Part of the red colour in the image stores the light during the day and glows at night. This is a symbol of the memory project: it is a form or process that makes old memories visible.



Fig. 3.3 Hanna Trampert, *End of the Day*, 50×100 cm.

Women and children form a small community walking at sunset. The piece has a cheerful mood and light colours.



Fig. 3.4 Hanna Trampert, *Together*, 2019, 70×90 cm.

Together (Figure 3.4) is the cover picture for my exhibition 'Expedition Mensch', which took place in 2020 at the Catholic Family Education Center Ehrang e. V. I felt the need to represent physical contact, the touching of people's hands.

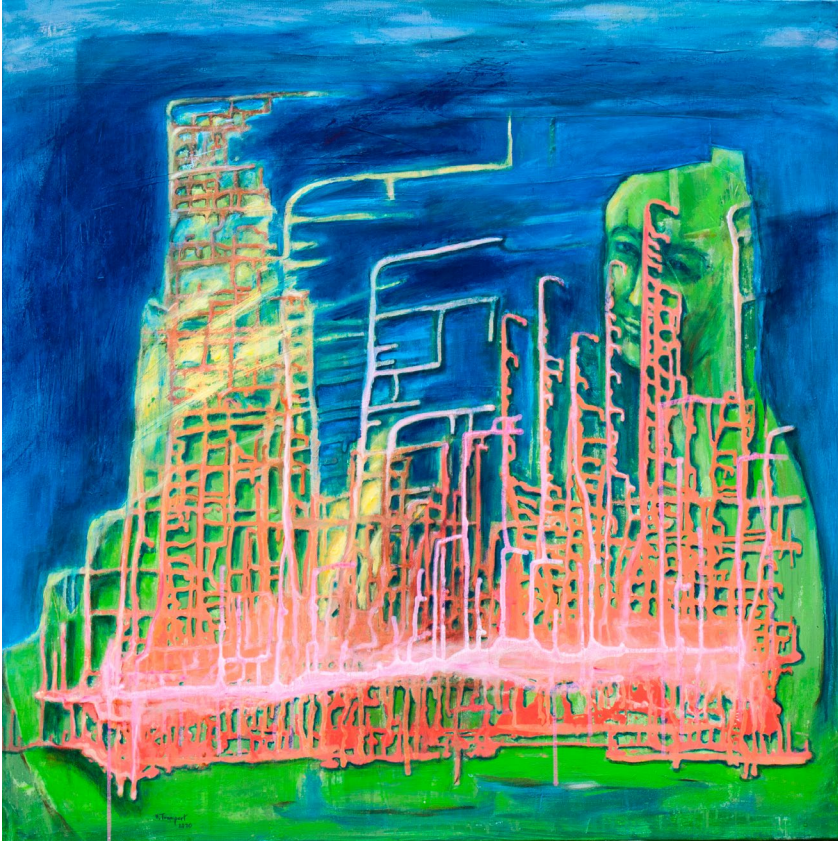


Fig. 3.5 Hanna Trampert, *Memory 1*, 2020, 100×100 cm.

As if in a vehicle or a boat, memories are on the move. They are subject to constant transformation, especially when they get to the surface. Connections build up and collapse. In the background, there is a quiet person who is remembering and contemplating. She has a benevolent look, a smile. The colours here are fresh and intense, matching how children see and experience the world. Many colourful objects cause the picture to look closed and all-encompassing at the same time. Viewers

have the impression of passing by, of flowing, as well as of going into the depths. Maybe it is the world, the continents connected by blue waters, or maybe a river or sea journey? 'It's a psychological painting of the unconscious,' Zsuzsa Millei reflected.



Fig. 3.6 Hanna Trampert, *Memory 2*, 2020, 100×100 cm.

This piece represents the brain's building of memory pathways or the subconscious. It also describes the human experience in the twenty-first century of changing time.



Fig. 3.7 Hanna Trampert, *The Girl with the Balloon 1*, 2020, 70×90 cm.

The act of giving childhood an importance, a justification, has a very special and significant impact on adult life. This is what happened for me in the Reconnect/Recollect workshop: something changed and continues to change so that I feel as light as a balloon.



Fig. 3.8 Hanna Trampert, *The Girl by the Sea*, 2020, 70×90 cm.

Here, it is as if the girl is going back to the Baltic Sea, to where her migration from Poland began. The water beckons benevolently towards us or towards itself. In the eddies, different times of day on the sea are visible.



Fig. 3.9 Hanna Trampert, *The Girl with the Balloon 2*, 2020, 70×90 cm.

In *The Girl with the Balloon 2* (Figure 3.9), the girl is older. She is relaxed and her gaze follows the balloon, which floats far in the sky over the Baltic Sea.



Fig. 3.10 Hanna Trampert, *Friends 3*, 2021, 50×60 cm.

Here, people are depicted in nature. They are connected by the thread, helping each other. This work, as all of my work, was created intuitively. It represents my good experiences with the Reconnect/Recollect project. Helpfulness and openness pass from one person to another like a rope.



Fig. 3.11 Hanna Trampert, *Self-Portrait*, 2021, 50×60 cm.

This, the last picture inspired by the Reconnect/Recollect project, was created shortly before the conference in Berlin in which I participated. The woman (me) faces the same direction as the viewer, and a connection is created: me and the viewer are now a 'we'. As my view wanders from the west to east, it ponders history and the neighboring countries; it crosses borders. The symbolic blue surface dissolves, becomes water. Moments and memories of childhood fly over my shoulder. Temporal and spatial separations cease to exist.