

This exhibition is (almost) exclusively about women!

Nowadays the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) is a far cry from the exclusively male society that it was for many decades – and as which it is sometimes still perceived even today. As part of the Berta Karlik Year celebrations, 50 years after the first election of a woman as a full member, this exhibition, designed and curated by Full Member Brigitte Mazohl, focuses our attention on the importance of women and their research at the Academy, both past and present.



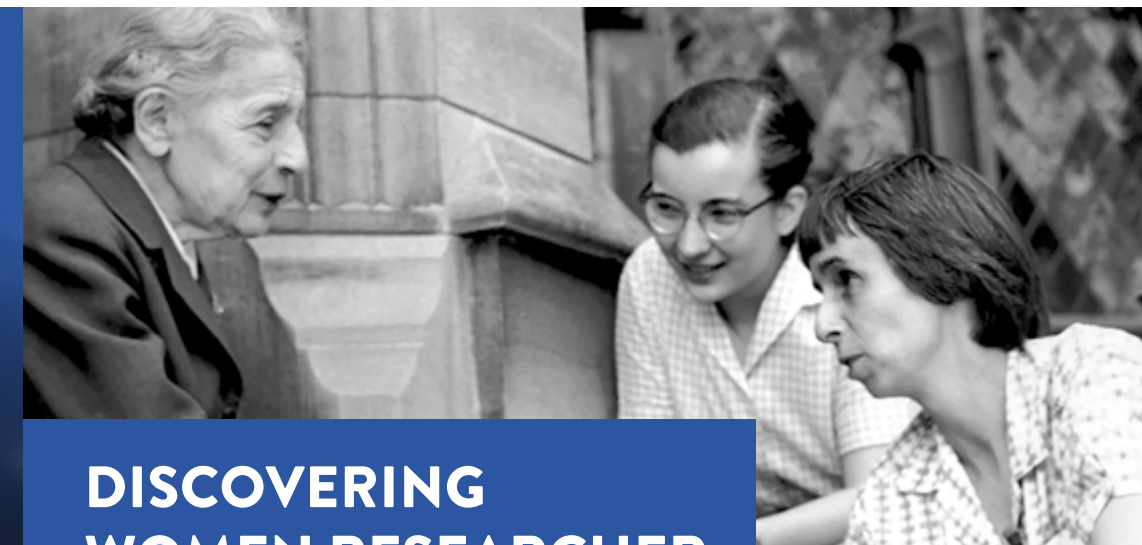
BRIGITTE MAZOHL is Professor emeritus for Austrian history at the University of Innsbruck. She has been a full member of the OeAW since 2008 and was the president of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences from 2013 until 2017. At present, she is a member of the Board of the University of Innsbruck, among other things.

It is important to remember that 50 years ago, women were permitted to study, but it was still regarded as highly controversial. Teachers, educators and doctors fiercely debated the pros and cons, and the opponents seemed to be in the majority.

ERIKA CREMER

IMPRINT Austrian Academy of Sciences, Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna | **Curation and concept:** w.M. Brigitte Mazohl, Assistenz: Sandra Klos | **Pillar design:** w.M. Alexia Fürnkranz-Prskawetz, k.M.I. Barbara Horejs, k.M.I. Katrin Keller, w.M. Sylvia Knapp, M.J.A. Katharina Rebay-Salisbury | **Exhibition Design:** Martina Hostalek | **Exhibition Structures:** Mader Werbetechnik | **Project Managment:** Klassenpräsidentin Christiane Wendehorst | **Project Coordination:** Katrin Brückner, Bernadette Gugerell | **Public Relations:** Sven Hartwig, Debora Knob | **Consulting:** Exekutivkomitee der weiblichen Mitglieder unter der Leitung von w.M. Verena Winiwarter.

Credits: ÖAW (Olga Prager); Österreichische Zentralbibliothek für Physik (Karlik; Meitner & Karlik); Hans Pettersons (Blau); ÖAW-Phonogrammarchiv_Privatbesitz (Schäfer); A. Schumacher, Naturhistorisches Museum Wien (Venus); Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Foto: Elke Estel/Hans-Peter Klut (Antoine Pesne); Adobe Stock (2), ÖAW (B.Mazohl); Pexels (chokniti-khongchum; sora-shimazaki)



DISCOVERING WOMEN RESEARCHER

WOMEN AT THE AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

1 DECEMBER 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024

MONDAY – FRIDAY 9.00 AM – 5.00 PM

AULA · DR. IGNAZ SEIPEL-PLATZ 2 · 1010 VIENNA · **ADMISSION FREE**

SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT THE

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

1 DECEMBER 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024



A WEALTH OF IMAGES

The painting by the Viennese artist Olga Prager of a meeting of the Academy in 1912 conveys the image of a Learned Society consisting exclusively of men. At the time this was accurate, but this picture no longer reflects the reality of today. For this reason, two artists have reflected critically on the painting:

Tatiana Lecomte has juxtaposed the male members of the Academy depicted in Olga Prager’s painting with the names of all the female members elected since its founding. The work of art has been conceived as a living work, and is to be continued by adding the names of future female (and non-binary) members of the Academy.



Tatiana Lecomte, born 1971 in Bordeaux, France. Lives and works in Vienna.

Heidi Schatzl has analysed the composition of the painting and linked it to the biographies of the academics it depicts, resulting in the work “OLGA PRAGER 1912 (Re-) Konstruktion des Jahrhunderts der Extreme” (OLGA PRAGER 1912 (Re-)Construction of the extreme century), which enables us to read Prager’s painting as a politically visionary group portrait.



Heidi Schatzl, born 1971 in Freistadt, Austria. Lives and works in Vienna.

Olga Prager’s painting and the two new works of art are on display in the Club Room. Additionally, a screen in the auditorium will give visitors insights into how the works of art came into being.

BERTA KARLIK YEAR

The path to becoming the first female member of the Academy was a long one. It was not until one hundred years after the founding of the Academy in 1847 that in 1948, the physicist Lise Meitner became the first woman to be appointed to the Academy as a *corresponding member abroad*. And it was only in 1973, a further 25 years later, that the physicist Berta Karlik became the first female *full member*. Selected exhibits relating to Berta Karlik’s scientific work are being displayed in two showcases. These are measuring devices from the field of physics and an extract from lecture notes taken during her time studying under Hans Thirring, with whom she corresponded throughout her life.



Berta Karlik

At present the Learned Society of the OeAW includes 170 female members (out of a total of 765 members), and in the under-60s age group, the proportion has already risen to around 45 per cent. Further selected statistics on the composition of the sexes at the Academy are displayed on a screen in the auditorium.

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Lise Meitner and Berta Karlik



Marietta Blau

The focus of the exhibition

THE FIRST FEMALE MEMBERS

Supplementing the glass steles featuring the portraits of four female scientists that were erected in 2022, a pillar presents five further early female members, who were appointed to the Academy between 1964 and 1981. These nine women, born between 1878 and 1925, stand as representatives for the first two generations of female scientists who were able to enjoy a successful academic career. Touchscreens offer visitors the opportunity to access more detailed information about their lives and their scientific achievements, via sound recordings among other things. In this, we have deliberately chosen to address the Nazi history of some of these first female members.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The often “invisible” but indispensable work done by women who worked in the background at the Academy is honoured with the portraits on another pillar: the outstanding achievements in the field of science of the

mostly male members of the Academy were frequently only made possible thanks to the tireless work done in the background by our administrative staff, and often also thanks to the unpaid work done by family members, and the precarious working conditions of their female colleagues. As demonstrated by the case of Marietta Blau, for example, recognition of research carried out independently by women, on the other hand, was often hindered by multiple discriminatory considerations (e.g. the fact that she was both a woman and a Jew).

RESEARCH BY WOMEN TODAY

Four further pillars are dedicated to the research being conducted by women today. Much of this work incorporates gender-related aspects and topics – an innovative perspective that would hardly have found its way into science had it not been for research questions being asked by women. To supplement this, information on all the female members of the OeAW can be accessed via a touchscreen.

GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY The female dimension of archaeology is evident in certain topics of the archaeological research being conducted by the Academy: gender archaeology explores the hitherto little regarded spiritual role of women as priestesses and challenges current gender-related clichés that were previously superimposed uncritically on the past. A special field of research is investigating how prehistoric societies dealt with motherhood, and the different funerary practices adopted for boys and girls are being explored through child graves.

HISTORICAL STUDIES The pillar for historical studies shows what great potential for new discoveries is to be found in the previously neglected aspect of gender. Under the heading “Invasion of the Women?! Politics and Gender in the Early Modern Era”, selected examples are used to shed light on the scope for action available to women in courtly society. Our modern understanding of politics and the distinction between “public” and “private” life we now take for granted frequently distort our view of how power was exercised in earlier centuries. Contrary to what is often thought, their rank and status afforded many women the opportunity to be confidently pro-active.

DEMOGRAPHY As one of the pioneering sciences, demography adopted gender as one of its basic categories from an early stage. Many of the research questions being addressed by the OeAW deal directly with the relationship between the sexes in the present day: How much time do men and women, respectively, spend on childcare and housework? Does this allocation of tasks relate directly to the desire to have children? Similarly, the level of satisfaction of women and their well-being in different circumstances and in different countries (here using Türkiye as an example) are being investigated. That women on average live longer than men has been known for a long time. A study has now shown why that is the case, even if women tend to be ill more often.

INFECTION BIOLOGY At first glance, research in the field of infection biology, exploring the potential dangers for the lungs from pathogens affecting the airways, for example, appears to be gender- or sex-neutral. But even this research has proven to have gender-relevant dimensions, e.g. when exploring the effects of events during pregnancy on the risk of infection for children. In the case of older people, on the other hand, specific illnesses such as pulmonary fibrosis play a role, and this particularly affects men. In general it has been discovered that every individual pathogen affects the lungs in a particular way, with both age and gender affecting our immune response.



GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY



HISTORICAL STUDIES



DEMOGRAPHY



INFECTION BIOLOGY