

Speech on the occasion of Lilo Fromm's farewell in Hamburg on Friday, August 25, 2023

Dear friends of Lilo Fromm, dear fellow mourners,

We have gathered here today to say farewell to Lilo Fromm, this incomparable illustrator, painter, poet and friend – also maid of honour to Marlis and me. She is now where she will see many of her wonderfully described and painted people and animals, including those mythical creatures: the magnificent "Golden Bird" will flutter above her and haughtily look down at "Karoline's Duck" as she searches for the railway line with 'Gusti'. And the mountains she loved so much around the 'Maison Bleue' will nod to her when she sets off on a hike with one of her many beloved dogs.

We have more than fifty of Lilo's paintings in our possession created during our friendship and marking the journey we have travelled together: a strapping musketeer in his little house reminds me of my difficult time as a soldier, which she followed with a mixture of detachment, amusement and concern.

A painting of a VW camper van, being driven over mountains and through valleys, recalls a nine-month road trip with Marlis in the 'Bulli'. Then there are the landscapes that we discovered together, that were calling out to be painted by her: from the Markgräflerland to the Drôme and again and again the mighty Mont Ventoux, which once she even climbed up on foot!

When we met up after times spent apart, we were always overwhelmed by the pictures that she had painted in her grey, pink or blue periods or simply something spontaneous. Expressing everything from the deepest melancholy to the greatest joie de vivre and an affirmation of life that deserves to be celebrated during our short stay on this planet.

Her life was as varied as her art, and those who were most interested and fascinated were always the children, following her into fairytale, mysterious, melancholic, mischievous landscapes and experiencing exciting adventures with her.

But it would be short-sighted if we were only to reduce her memory and our remembrance of her to her artistic existence. Lilo was such an incredibly lovable and vivacious person, her hospitality was legendary. For all her seriousness, her character had managed to retain something childlike, almost naïve, but in a good sense. She was all the more terribly affected by my brother Christoph's wretched infidelity, which he then portrayed in his novella "Licht" (Light) as if she were the guilty party. As a result, I almost gave him up completely – this brilliant poet and

painter who so recklessly put his own happiness at risk in his break up with Lilo. Admittedly, he was affected by our own family background.

Lilo never let my relationship with him, which I often found oppressive, interfere with our friendship. On the contrary, we often drove to Provence to look after her house when she was away. We walked and hiked with the respective dogs – Nordie, Cindy, Winnie, Tommy – the last of which was even allowed to come to Hamburg. They were all so dearly loved and spoiled that we would often say it would be good if we were Lilo's dog! Apart from during the hunting season, which the French take to so fanatically and which Lilo hated. In fact, one of her dogs was accidentally shot by a hunter. A shock from which she only recovered with great difficulty. This incident contributed to her becoming estranged from the neighbourhood in which she also had many contacts. After decades of friendship with an immediate neighbour, she was deeply affected when not invited to the funeral.

Lilo leaves behind a rich legacy, not just what was donated to the Youth Book Library (Jugendbuchbibliothek) in Munich. She has written and/or illustrated more than 250 books and painted countless adorable pictures, scattered far and wide. This is an incredible legacy for which she has rightly been honoured many times. It was a great privilege that she allowed me to open some of her exhibitions in France and Germany. Sadly she was no longer able to come to the last major retrospective of her paintings and works in the Paul Ege Art Collection in Freiburg, but many visitors still remembered her and her time in Freiburg, when she was studying at the art academy.

It was there where she met my brother Christoph among many others who became her friends. She immersed herself deeply in the Markgräfler Land region that she loved, where she lived, worked and led an idyllic country life. Our friendship started there in the fifties/sixties, into which Marlis was accepted a little later on, and which has given us so much.

It was the time of parties at the Krohn bookshop in Badenweiler, whose owner was devoted to the artists of the Markgräfler Land, who cavorted there, playing their practical jokes, and where the painter Brodwolf suddenly became a professor 'Kuchenfuchs'...

With Christoph "off on his travels" my friendship with Lilo was able to take on an independent form. Lilo and I often hiked into the little valley near Egerten, which is still idyllic today. I carried an apparatus called the 'People's Grill', on which we fried a few sausages and spoke about what was on our minds. For example, that the farmer and landlord of her small apartment was after this strange bird Lilo, who had appeared in the house, which she viewed with a mixture of composure and humour.

The images of Lilo Fromm that each of us here today carry within us are made up of many individual facets, experiences and encounters. But her troubled childhood and youth and the difficult path to an isolating, one-sided and introspective profession as an illustrator are also a part of this picture. Even as a child she knew what she wanted to be, and she made it happen, but the breakthrough to her true calling as a painter was not an easy process.

What will remain as a deeply felt memory is that she took us and so many others, with her great books and pictures, into a colourful, enigmatic and, yes, still mysterious world. That she let us share in her successful life and gave us generous and rich gifts. She also found herself in the role of the recipient, as in the fairytale of the ‘Sterntaler’ (The Star-Money), which she often painted and which symbolizes her own life:

“And as she so stood, and had not one single thing left, suddenly some stars fell down from heaven, and they were nothing else but hard shining coins, and although she had just given her little shirt away, she had a new one which was of the very finest linen. Then she gathered up the coins in it and was rich for all the days of her life.”

Andreas Meckel
25th August 2023