

Exhibition Guide



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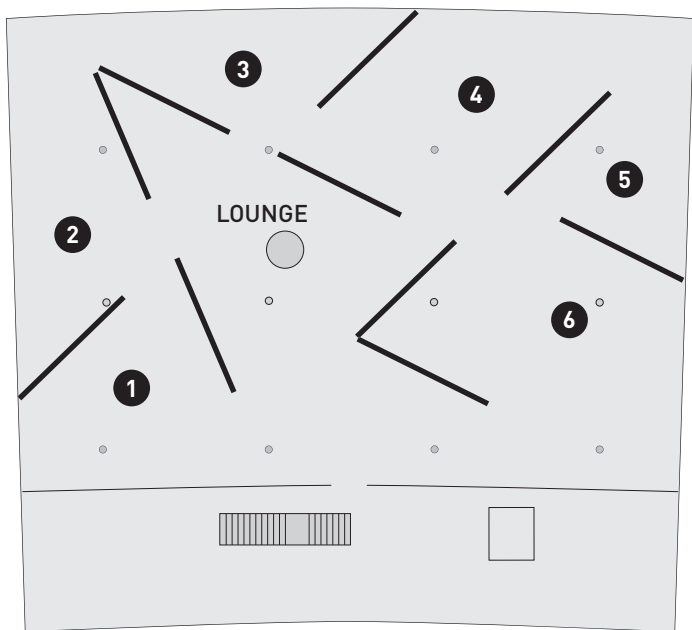
Departure without Destination. Annemarie Schwarzenbach as photographer

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Floorplan



Writer, journalist, photographer, traveller, cosmopolitan: Annemarie Schwarzenbach is one of the most dazzling and contradictory figures in modern Swiss cultural history.

Schwarzenbach saw herself primarily as a writer. Yet she was also a pioneer of photojournalism in Switzerland. Around 300 of her texts appeared in Swiss magazines and newspapers during her lifetime. From 1933, they were increasingly accompanied by her own photographs. However, since the majority of these images remained unpublished, the quality and scope of her work as a photographer has been relatively unknown until recently.

Most of Schwarzenbach's photographs were taken during her travels, which between 1933 and 1942 took her across Europe, to the Near East and Central Asia, to the United States and Central and North Africa. Her work as a journalist, but also her upper class background and her status as the wife of a diplomat granted her an extraordinary freedom of travel for the period.

Her images and writings are closely intertwined and document the upheavals, tensions, and conflicts of the period leading up to World War II: the consequences of the Great Depression, the hope for social progress, the threat of National Socialism, the effects of modernization and industrialization, or the European fascination with the "orient".

Schwarzenbach's photographs also convey private themes, such as life in exile, the search for identity, homosexuality, or the desire to transgress conventional gender roles. But above all, they express Schwarzenbach's unbridled passion for travel – and her search for encounters with the unknown, the "departure without destination" as an existential experience.

This exhibition is based on the approximately 7,000 photographs in the estate of Annemarie Schwarzenbach, which is held in the Swiss Literary Archives in Bern and is open to the public.

A biography of Annemarie Schwarzenbach as well as quotations and texts from the exhibition may be found in the exhibition guide. For the sake of readability, the text passages appear in the exhibition in a shortened form.

1 "A Love for Europe"

Annemarie Schwarzenbach's work as a traveling photojournalist began with a journey to Spain in 1933. Her travel companion, the German photographer Marianne Breslauer, was responsible for the photographs while Schwarzenbach was accountable for the writing. However, the National Socialist rise to power that year soon made it impossible for Breslauer, who was Jewish, to continue working as a journalist. Schwarzenbach herself subsequently took on the dual role of journalist and photographer.

In opposition to the nationalist ethos of her day, Annemarie Schwarzenbach thought of herself as a European and a cosmopolitan. She feared for the cultural and intellectual legacies of freedom, humanism, and tolerance in the face of burgeoning nationalism. Nevertheless, the photographs from Schwarzenbach's travels through Europe – especially those from Scandinavia but also from Switzerland – paint a surprisingly peaceful picture of the time.

The contradiction between the idyllic images of Europe and the political threats in the background exemplify Schwarzenbach's dilemma as a writer. On the one hand, she wanted to resist fascism through her writing. On the other, as a non-Jewish woman from Switzerland, she enjoyed privileges that allowed her to continue to move freely within Europe and escape immediate danger.

- 1.1 “And then – finally Switzerland, the friends, the homeland, Sils. You don’t know how much I long for it after so much that was foreign in the external sense.”
Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Annigna Godly, April 24, 1942
- 1.2 “We were already used to it: it rained the third day. In the city it didn’t matter; in the mountains, with good will, it increased the romance of our situation. And in what mountains! In the western Pyrenees, abandoned by the world – you encountered neither a village, nor a gas station, nor another car. Our road [...] ran away clay-yellow beneath us. [...] After many hours of a grey drive through the fog, we were at the end of our patience and called for an undertaking. And come it did: a village. [...] A small girl with a flower in her mouth discovered us, and now the strangely dead houses, the ruins of little walls, and broken gates, the yards full of junk and the empty windows turned out to be inhabited.”
Abridged, from: “Fremdlinge dringen in ein Pyrenäendorf” (Strangers Invade a Pyrenean Village), 1933
- 1.3 Over the course of the year 1933, after the National Socialist takeover in Germany, the media landscape was brought into line and “aryanised.” Jewish journalists like Marianne Breslauer were forbidden to practice their profession. The German photo agency “Akademia,” which had commissioned Breslauer to travel in Spain in the spring of 1933, announced after her return that the photographs could only be published under the Aryan-sounding pseudonym “Annelise Brauer.” The back of this photo is labelled “M. Brauer,” with the handwritten correction “M. Breslauer” – most likely made by Marianne Breslauer herself.

- 1.4 "I only ask myself – and every day it becomes more urgent – if people actually realize the significance of what is taking place – namely, that not only a hateful tendency is gaining the upper hand here but also that an entire people, and in spite of it all a highly talented one that cannot be erased from the history of European culture – is committed to this path [...] for years to come. [...] Turning away from it actually amounts to self-abandonment and suicide. We do have to live, and we are members of German culture. [...] Opposition would not take the form of escape or renunciation [...], but rather the cultivation of the intellectual and spiritual values in which one believes, until a better hour."

Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Klaus Mann, April 8, 1933

- 1.5 "Gripsholm Castle is four hundred years old. And in June, the 'Midsummer' month, the Swedes [...] knew just how to organize all aspects of a huge and popular anniversary celebration at Gripsholm. [...] Foreigners who attended the festivities were amazed that it was so peaceful and agreeable without any discord, – that the Swedish Social Democrats were so patriotic, that the king was not afraid to sit among all the red labour unionists without bodyguards and undercover detectives, that the military bands were so popular, and that the ethos – which was clearly expressed in the texts at the festival, – was so decidedly pacifist. In short, that in Sweden, all the differences that have led to such bitter fights and sharp divides everywhere today seem to have been overcome in the most natural way [...]."

Abridged, from: "Vierhundertjähriges Jubiläum in Gripsholm" (Four Hundred-Year Anniversary at Gripsholm), 1937 (unpublished typescript)

Quotations

You know that I do not love National Socialism, but I do cherish our shared European culture. Where can one find it today except in its most rudimentary form?

Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Claude Bourdet, Potsdam, July 4, 1932

The departure from Europe always seemed to me to be a great and, in one way or another, a decisive moment. Sometimes it was a celebration of new beginnings; I was determined to leave everything behind [...]. Sometimes it was a nightmare.

"Nach Westen" (To the West), 1940 (published posthumously)

The fact that I didn't want to know anything about war no longer is of any use: Now it is so and faced with this fact, we have no choice. And as long as we live in this world I wouldn't be able to find bliss in Tibet either [...].

Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Arnold Kübler, Nantucket Island, September 16, 1940

I want to understand the deeper roots of our European crisis, and want to search for the source of real force we will need, during and after this terrific war, to build up in each soul the resistance not only against Fascism, but against all evil and "wrong life" which it has brought upon us.

Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Ella Maillart, on board the SS "Quanza", March 18, 1942

The sanatoriums of Europe are overcrowded. The armies are ready for battle. The youth has been disciplined. The machines are working. Progress is underway. And entire peoples are gripped by psychosis. Some are cured through “work therapy” and return to normal life. Normal life ... how deep do its roots still reach? What sources does it feed upon?

“Das glückliche Tal” (The Happy Valley), 1940

2 "Little Encounters"

There are numerous portrait photographs in Annemarie Schwarzenbach's estate. They show how well she was able to approach people, establish relationships, and gain trust. She portrayed both friends and family members as well as farmers, miners, students, market vendors, circus performers, travellers, and numerous children.

As a journalist, Schwarzenbach was not only interested in how people looked but also in their stories. In the 1930s, she repeatedly used the format of the "little encounter" with people who had different world views or life experiences in her reportage. What were often contradictory viewpoints on world events revealed the profound conflicts of their time.

Although she made many photographic portraits of individuals from Europe and the United States, Schwarzenbach usually photographed groups of people in the Near East and Central Asia. In large part, this was likely due to linguistic and cultural boundaries. Her camera presents a more personal view of friends, such as Erika Mann and Barbara Hamilton-Wright. The photographs paint a sensuous picture of modern and self-confident womanhood. And some of them resonate with a sense of homoeroticism that ranges from the clearly visible to the subtly perceptible.

- 2.1 "They [the 'sharecroppers'] receive from the plantation owner a piece of land, a mule, equipment, a shack, and credit in his store. Half of the harvest is supposed to belong to them. But they almost never get anything. [...] A 'sharecropper' – especially when he is black –, who would take it upon himself to control his account would be expelled from the plantation or arrested by the police under any pretext – if not simply lynched. This system [...] is the replacement that the ruling class of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy found for the institution of slavery after the defeat in the Civil War."
Abridged, from: "...um die Ehre der amerikanischen Südstaaten"
(...For the Glory of the American South), 1938

- 2.2 "Mary [...] has to appear before the court on Monday morning. She is accused of having wounded a police officer with a razor. Mary is a quiet little girl who returns every glance with a gracious smile. Her friend Aline, who is to appear as a witness at the trial, bitterly explains to me: '[...] I know how they handle things. They buy witnesses. And they'll ask me: 'Can you swear that Mary D. did not have a razor hidden in her shoe?' – If I answer: 'Yes, I swear,' then they'll say: 'Did you stoop down during the fight to see if your friend Mary had a razor hidden in her shoe?' – And if I answer: 'I can't swear [...],' then they'll say: 'So you admit it's possible that Mary used a razor...'"
- Abridged, from: "Holzfäller, Bergarbeiter, Bauern und ein Farmhaus in den Bergen von Tennessee" (Lumberjacks, Miners, Farmers, and a Farmhouse in the Mountains of Tennessee), 1937*

- 2.3 "The people of Pechory [...] do not have a lot of variety in their lives: on weekdays the bar 'The Black Tomcat,' mass on Sundays [...]. And once a year the traveling circus comes, sets up [...] its light tent, lighting isn't necessary, the summer nights are bright here in the north, the fellow who drove the truck all day plays his march on the

accordion, the clown – just now he has hammered down the stakes and tightened the ropes – sits in colourful makeup at the register, and it's time to begin. There aren't seats for the audience, [...] and the snake lady goes around, her flickering darling wrapped around her shoulders like gruesome jewellery [...]. Then the music stops, because the big moment is arriving, the evening's sensation: the lions are driven out of their cages [...]. The next morning the 'Drakooni' have disappeared from Pechory. But in Pechory, the people will talk about the lions, the monkeys, the poisonous snake, and the fearless performers with exotic names for a long time [...]."
Abridged, from: "Die 'Drakooni' kommen nach Petschur! "
(The 'Drakooni' Are Coming to Pechory!), 1937

3 The “New Earth”

A prominent motif in Annemarie Schwarzenbach’s photographs is the relationship between nature and culture in the wake of mechanization and industrialization. In the United States, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Iran, Schwarzenbach witnessed massive undertakings in the realms of modernization, industrialization, urban planning, and infrastructure, and chronicled them in her reportages.

The term “new earth” refers to a film by the Dutch documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens. Through dramatic images, his film *Nieuwe Gronden* (New Earth, 1933) showed the drainage of parts of the Wadden Sea for land reclamation. In the fall of 1934, Schwarzenbach attended the Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow and saw a preview of the film. She was deeply impressed by both the visionary nature of the project as well as the political impact of its images.

Schwarzenbach was ambivalent toward technological development. To be sure, its potential to improve human lives fascinated her. Yet she criticized the widespread belief in progress in places like the United States and the Soviet Union, the generally lacking consideration for traditional ways of life, and the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources. Photographs of industrial wastelands, landscapes ravaged by coal mining, and the dismal, misanthropic wastelands of workers’ housing developments cast doubt on the idea of progress as humane.

- 3.1 "But where the cities, factories, elevated railways come to an end, the dismal expanse of tainted, marshy, scrap iron-strewn dead land begins. Somewhere unemployed young people are at work, clearing and cleaning, draining, planting grass or trees; a government project, more hopeless than what the Greeks might have dreamt up: cleaning out a stable, rolling a stone up a hill, and decapitating a multi-headed monster."

From: "Jenseits von New York" (Beyond New York), 1937

- 3.2 "This earth is a plane, a shallow basin, an expanse of rubble. The colour is that of iron and smoke, bluish black and grey, in between water, sump, or flood, dark, gleaming, putrid pools. Batteries of smokestacks appear, sheaves of sparks rise and fall like shooting stars, plumes of smoke form clouds and move with the wind. Between the chimneys and stagnant water, however, there are human settlements, blackened barracks, rows of workers' houses, a faded wood façade, dull windows, behind are yards, enclosed by brick or timber walls. Laundry hangs there, there are pots with puny plants, children play there. Where else could they play?"

From: "Jenseits von New York" (Beyond New York), 1937

- 3.3 "You have to go to the Swedish mining districts and industrial areas in order to discover the secret of Swedish prosperity. These are not mining settlements or factory towns in the usual sense, they almost seem like farmland, so down-to-earth, having been there for centuries, and the Swedish miners remain in the same profession from generation to generation. [...] In the old mining districts of central Sweden, near Norberg, Dannemora, and Falun, where ore has been mined for centuries according to uninterrupted tradition, you come

across abandoned mine entrances and smelteries in the woods, while not far away the new steel works roars with life.”

First part: “Erz aus Schweden” (Swedish Ore), 1937 (unpublished typescript)

Second part: Inscription on the back of the photograph “The Ore Mine Dannemora near Uppsala, Sweden,” 1937 (A-5-17/217)

- 3.4 “The relocation of the government to Ankara outwardly represents an admirable victory over the other Turkey that the Gazi [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk] had resolved to overcome. The Anatolian train climbs through barren, steppe-like wasteland for eighteen hours. And right between the yellow hills the new capital city unfolds, the strongest and most objective refutation of that notion of Oriental impassability. The Seljuk castle with old towers and walls still crowns the city on the hill, at its feet a few ancient, almost village-like alleys, and the temple complex of Augustus. But the new city grows alongside it, conquering the terrain, enormous street beds are being dug out, rails are being laid, new residential areas are emerging, banks, commercial buildings, whole European streets are bustling. Everywhere in between is undeveloped land, everywhere, like tongues sticking out, shreds of the raw, poor Anatolian soil.”

From: “Türkei: zwei Hauptstädte: Ankara und Istanbul” (Turkey: Two Capital Cities: Ankara and Istanbul), 1933 (unpublished typescript)

- 3.5 “During the final days [...] they showed us some new films. Ivens, a young Dutch director, showed us the film ‘New Earth’. A documentary film, ‘New Earth’ is about the drainage of the Zuiderzee. The images of the works are of great beauty. Here you begin to think that

it is right to love the technology that makes such works possible. After the sea has been vanquished, you see the 'new earth,' still heavy and damp, still barren, as if it had emerged from the primeval sea. At dusk, the first man walks over the collapsing clods of earth. After ten years of work, the first harvest is brought in, houses rise at the edge of endless fields. Sheaves are piled up, wide reaping machines drive through the rustling grain."

Notes by Annemarie Schwarzenbach on the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, Moscow, 1934

- 3.6 "Today, with every step you take, you sense the new ground, everywhere you see that which is newly created, still lacking the setting, the frame, you can easily be tempted to believe that you are on a film set, where grand facades likewise arise overnight, the ceremonial avenues that are paved a few hundred meters wide and run along in splendid breadth, only to end abruptly in desert terrain."

From: "Gegensätze: vier Bilder aus Anatolien" (Contrasts: Four Pictures from Anatolia), 1933

Quotations

[...] in America I learned with horror what we Europeans could make out of a beautiful earth once we are given unlimited possibilities. I didn't have to relearn in America, I just became sad, similar to an adult reflecting on the innocence of their childhood.
"Nach Westen" (To the West), 1940 (published posthumously)

This is not a place where man pursues coal, this is a place where coal dominates man and the land. Mounds of cinder dominate the flat horizon, the wind is laden with the smell of coal and sulfur, and the sky is veiled with coal dust.
"Reise nach Pittsburgh" (The Journey to Pittsburgh), 1937

America was a vast, unsettled, uncharted virgin territory. The soil in the south seemed endlessly fruitful; no one took the trouble to let it rest. The forests in the north were immeasurable; no one took care of reforestation. The wide plains of the Midwest seemed to offer enough pastures and farmland for many generations. The natural resources, the oil wells, the stores of coal and iron, and the gold, where they began to be exploited, made millionaires out of enterprising adventurers.
"Amerika kämpft um den Bestand der Demokratie" (America Fights for the Survival of Democracy), undated (unpublished typescript)

The youthful optimism of the Soviets, which has something beautiful and admirable, makes me sad. They are building a new world – and, much more importantly, they are educating new people. [...] Today, nothing else occupies the poet's mind. But I fear for this world, and I think that the poet always stands in opposition to the bright side of the world of facts [...].

Notes by Annemarie Schwarzenbach on the Writers Congress, Moscow, August 25, 1934

The view was breathtaking: [...] coke, limestone, and crude iron boil in open furnaces, compressed air purifies the mixture in puffs of breath that scatter dangerous sheaves of sparks through the hall. Then the furnace tilts, and the liquid steel shoots into a huge cauldron in a transparent jet.

"Die Reise nach Pittsburgh" (The Journey to Pittsburgh), 1937

4 "Beyond New York"

At the invitation of the American photographer Barbara Hamilton-Wright, Annemarie Schwarzenbach travelled to the United States for the first time. There she encountered a society in which the scars of the economic crisis remained visible in many places after 1929. Unemployment was widespread, and rural populations suffered from the consequences of drought and the decline of the wool industry.

In Washington, D.C., Schwarzenbach spent time in the archive of the Farm Security Administration. Since 1935, the agency had commissioned photographers to document the social impact of the crisis. The main purpose of these images was to ensure the support of the general public for the government's social policies. Annemarie Schwarzenbach identified with this political mission.

Schwarzenbach hoped that her travels throughout the United States would enable her to bring her political engagement into alignment with her activity as a writer and photographer. She cast her gaze on the evidence of the economic decline: the unemployed, street children, the homeless, and others whom the system had failed. Her work exposes the dramatic differences between the poor and the rich, and also between black and white Americans. Schwarzenbach criticized the American promise of liberty as illusory and attributed the nation's prosperity to its ruthless exploitation of human beings and nature.

- 4.1 "New York is sinking: the vision of the gargantuan Babylon, whose towers rise from the sea. And it is no coincidence that the ghostly ferries gliding on the Hudson in the fog or the underwater tunnels bring us to and fro; it is no coincidence that it all has the atmosphere of a dull dream – because over there in New Jersey, Hoboken and Newark, New York does not come to an end, and exiting is not liberation: That place is the backstage, the belt, the gruesome reality behind that vision of a 'superhuman city,' as New York can be regarded in aesthetic terms."

From: "Jenseits von New York" (Beyond New York), 1937

- 4.2 "The little town that we reached late in the evening is called – ironically enough – 'Mount Pleasant.' [...] Mount Pleasant lies in the middle of the rich coal mining region of Westmoreland – an area that has been particularly hard hit by the crisis. [...] When part of the mine had to be closed in 1932, the workers were left in their apartments and granted credit [...]. Since then the crisis [...] has been overcome – but the Frick Company has moved to the southwest, where new mines that are easier and cheaper to exploit have been opened. The company transplanted some of the workers to the new work sites, but the majority remained behind. In recent years, the terrible fate of these 'abandoned miners' has occupied the authorities in Washington."

Abridged, from: "Die Reise nach Pittsburgh" (The Journey to Pittsburgh), 1937

- 4.3 "The vision of a better life, the long-nourished American dream, becomes more nebulous the further south the streets lead. The land is parched by the heat of the summer and rusts in the drizzle of seventy years of poverty. In the broad valley of the Tennessee River, red autumn foliage glows from the hills, and red earth breaks out of the deep crevices that the wind and water have eaten into the

slopes. The forests that once protectively covered the land have disappeared, black tree trunks and white stones are scattered across the sparse, crude fields that yielded a little corn, potatoes, and sugarcane – not enough to feed the farmer and his family. The river winds slowly toward the plains of the Ohio, the traces of destruction from the rain and flood season following along its banks: pinched farmhouse walls, empty windowpanes, sunken pillars, torn fences, and pastures turned into wastelands.”

From: “Auf der Schattenseite von Knoxville” (On the Dark Side of Knoxville), 1937

- 4.4 “I had seen many prisons in America of late [...]. I had seen the commotion of distraught prisoners and heard their cries, which soon died down, because they went helplessly unheard and violated the rules, bringing new punishments and new torments. And I saw clearly how, in such misery, stripped of all pride and responsibility, men and women and even children became disaccustomed to all rules of humanitarianism and affectionate longing, how they cowered suspiciously in their corners, everyone for themselves, and how they were soon hardened to ignore the screams and tears of their brothers beside them [...].”

Abridged, from: “Die weissen Ebenen” (The White Plains), 1941

- 4.5 “Pate knocked. Mrs. Jacobs opened the door, and from under her arms a half dozen children burst forth, wearing strange rags, with tousled hair. All girls. While Mrs. Jacobs spoke with us, they crouched together on the stairs, making brazen remarks that embarrassed their mother, but patiently allowed themselves to be photographed. [...] She didn’t complain. Didn’t seem to understand that she and her children were condemned to vegetate like animals – and why. [...] We took photos, it was distressing to use this heap of squalor as a ‘subject.’ But Pate said to Mrs. J.: ‘They do it for the

right purpose, it's going to help.' 'Documentary photography,' is what they call it, reality, proof – but how, if people themselves don't realize their situation?"

Abridged, from: "Lumberton," 1937

- 4.6 The photographers Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans were commissioned by the U.S. government as part of the New Deal to document the lives of impoverished rural Americans. The agency that issued these photo assignments was called the Farm Security Administration. It was founded after the severe economic crisis of the 1930s and is primarily known today for its photographic legacy.
- 4.7 "When I [...] first came to America, and [...] tried to discover something like an American 'world view,' it was made relatively easy for me. I was told [...] that the American was a fundamental optimist and that this quality was [...] innate within him. [...] It was a traditional belief, gained from historical experience. For the history of America is the history of [...] an unprecedented exploitation of the available riches, the soil and the forests that seemed inexhaustible, the gold mines, the mines, the rapidly expanding industries, and with it the workforce. [...] everybody had his chance, [...] his 'opportunity' [...] you just had to be hardworking, a little ruthless, and of course optimistic. [...] but today [...] the market has been exploited and industry can no longer employ all job seekers, who for their part have little chance of becoming millionaires or even climbing the next rung of the social ladder."

Abridged, from: "Das Ende des amerikanischen Optimismus"
(The End of American Optimism), 1936

- 4.8 "For generations, the white ruling class has directed its entire political effort towards preserving the supremacy of the white over the black race. As a result of this, the destroyed fields and poor factory

towns are the home of a miserable proletariat that is now about to be exploited once again in the current wave of industrialization.”

From: «...um die Ehre der amerikanischen Südstaaten» (...about the Honour of the Southern US States), 1938

Quotations

The vision of a better life, the long-nourished American dream, becomes more nebulous, the further south the streets lead.

"Auf der Schattenseite von Knoxville" (On the Dark Side of Knoxville), 1937

On the steep hillside stand houses, dark and lifeless as stage sets, no fire in the hearths, the doors closed. No one lives here, you might think – no one *can* live here. But in the meantime, you have discovered that the streets of the bright city of Knoxville [...] just change, and become grey and unpaved and dark and uneven, and as such, shamefully veiled, so to speak, lead down steeply into the wet darkness of the river.

"Auf der Schattenseite von Knoxville" (On the Dark Side of Knoxville), 1937

And one still says that America is a new frontier and the land of the future, in contrast to an ancient and sceptical Europe. I don't believe the equation is that simple.

"Nach Westen" (To the West), 1940 (published posthumously)

"Dress inconspicuously. Don't constantly hold a Leica to your eye. Don't have your Ford washed too often!" – These were the last instructions that I received in Washington before I [...] left for the vast steel centre of the United States, the "Iron City" of Pittsburgh.

"Die eiserne Stadt" (The Iron City), 1937 (unpublished typescript)

A man was walking on the railroad tracks with a sack on his back. I photographed him as he went by. He stopped, looked at my camera and asked: "Are you saying that you just took a picture of me?" "Yes," I said, "I took a picture." "The next time you want to take a picture of my face, your camera could easily break," said the man and went on.

"Die Reise nach Pittsburgh" (The Journey to Pittsburgh), 1937

5 "Between Continents"

The motifs of uprootedness, departure, and the quest for hope in the unknown appear throughout Annemarie Schwarzenbach's work, connecting it to the modern literary tradition. These themes also unify her journalistic and literary writings with her photographs.

Many of her images convey the joys and strains of travel, and do so in a variety of ways. They capture the moments and places between departure and arrival. They reflect the longing for faraway places and the encounter with the foreign. Intermediate zones such as streets, harbours, and the decks of ships become the sites of a transient community – including those who have lost their homes due to historical or political circumstances – and stages for painful good-byes or hopeful new beginnings.

Schwarzenbach's own life was defined by an extraordinary restlessness. For her, the experience of travel was nothing less than a concentrated version of existence – and a tantalizing and romantic but often merciless and agonizing school of life. More and more, she had to admit to herself that her hasty departures did not allow her to leave behind her problems.

- 5.1 "On a pier at Lisbon's old-fashioned harbour, a dog lies before the American steam ship 'Siboney' and guards a cabin hatch, behind which the face of his master has disappeared."

From: "Keinen Platz für Tyras" (No Room for Tyras), 1942

- 5.2 "No one travels for pleasure today, and adventurers are rarely found among the passengers, but when you listen to the story of each one, you ask yourself whether you are on a ghost ship, or if the sum of fates here is perhaps an accurate picture of the fate that has definitively ended the old life in our old, trusted, civilized, orderly European world, abolished all the laws, shattered every certainty."

From: "Eine Stunde vor Funchal" (An Hour from Funchal), 1941

Quotations

What is it that always drives me to depart anew? What do I want to experience? *Something essential.*

Letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Anita Forrer, Bellevue Clinic, Yverdon, December 4, 1938

We drove for a very long time. Finally, I asked where Sibylle wanted to go. "Where?" she said. "I don't know either. Why do we need to know."

"Lyrische Novelle" (Lyric Novella), 1933

"Our life is like a journey..." and thus the journey seems to me to be not so much an adventure and excursion into unknown territories as a concentrated image of our existence [...].

"Die Steppe" (The Steppe), 1939

Travel is departing without a goal, only embracing a village or a valley with a fleeting glance, and that which one loves the most, one already loves with the pain of parting.

"Ankunft in Mallorca" (Arrival in Mallorca), 1936

Why do we leave this loveliest country in the world?

Handwritten note on the back of the photograph "Girl with Flowers, Simplon Pass", Switzerland, 1940

Who, today, still has a passport? – Who can still travel – depart, say farewell, return as they please? – And who still *wants* to?

"Ein Artikel über die Schweiz" (An Article about Switzerland), 1940

6 "The Happy Valley"

Today, Annemarie Schwarzenbach is especially known for her car journeys through the Near East and Central Asia. In the 1930s, she made four trips, taking different routes through Turkey, to Palestine and Syria, to Iraq, Iran, and finally to Afghanistan and India. There she sought refuge from and an alternative to crisis-ridden Europe in what was thought to be the fairy tale world of the "Orient."

Schwarzenbach's photographs and writings present the Near East as a timeless, almost biblical landscape. In many ways, her romanticized representations of the "Orient" uphold the conventions of that time. But Schwarzenbach also introduced a more nuanced perspective. For example, her photographs depict the modernization of Turkey and urban life in Baghdad. During her last trip to Asia in 1939, which she undertook with the Geneva photojournalist and ethnographer Ella Maillart, the lives of locals finally came into focus.

She wrote what is probably her best-known work, *Das glückliche Tal* (The Happy Valley, 1940), in Iran. In it, the barren landscape of the Iranian highlands becomes a site for exploring existential questions and chasms. The book reflects Schwarzenbach's profound personal crisis: Her hope for a better life far from home did not materialize. Instead, her loneliness and drug addiction escalated.

- 6.1 "Baalbek ranks among the heroic names that are not uttered lightly, the evocations, the invocations in the desert of our doubts. [...] Like everyone else, I had seen photographs of Baalbek. But you cannot photograph dimensions and can only convey experiences of beauty and perfection imperfectly."

Abridged, from: "Winter in Vorderasien" (Winter in the Near East), 1934

- 6.2 "I don't have a lot of time left. Summer is coming to an end, and at these altitudes that means departure is irrevocable. The water level of our river is now so low that we can only catch very small fish. The white streaks on the cone of the Damavand are thin and worn, and the scorched volcanic earth spreads menacingly. But soon snow will fall, and then the pyramid will wear its ethereal, brilliant robe once more, and we, no longer able to bear the magnificent sight, will understand the sign."

From: "Tod in Persien" (Death in Persia), 1935 (published post-humously)

- 6.3 "Sometimes we call this valley the end of the world, because it is high above the world's plateaus, and cannot lead any higher except to the otherworldly, the inhuman that touches the sky – except to the smooth cone of the colossus. He blocks the exit from the valley, but when you move toward his snow streaked body, he is as distant as the moon, and yet a magnificent sight."

From: "Tod in Persien" (Death in Persia), 1935 (published post-humously)

- 6.4 This film is based on reconstructed film material by Ella Maillart (1903–1997). Ella Maillart was a Swiss athlete, travel writer, ethnographer, and photographer from Geneva. In 1939, she travelled to

Afghanistan with Annemarie Schwarzenbach. The film's narration includes selections from Maillart's letters and her book *Der bittere Weg* (The Cruel Way, 1952).

Quotations

But who really knows where the roads lead, and who knows the names of the cities, the ancient, sunken, and resurrected ones?
“Winter in Vorderasien” (Winter in the Near East), 1934

Nature is so powerful here that it kills. You would have to stop being human, bound to human conditions. You would have to become a piece of the desert and a piece of the mountains, and a streak of the evening sky. You would have to trust the land and be absorbed by it.

*“Fast dasselbe Leiden” (Almost the Same Suffering), undated
(published posthumously)*

Distance does not exist; because we cannot climb higher, not high enough to see beyond our valley, beyond the rocks and scree slopes that delimit it.

“Das glückliche Tal” (The Happy Valley), 1940

All of the roads, those that I took, those that I avoided, ended here, in this “happy valley,” from which there is no escape, and which must, therefore, already resemble the place of death.

“Tod in Persien” (Death in Persia), 1935 (published posthumously)

Here the landscape is Asian barren, Asian magnificent. A steppe landscape, hilly, monotonous, with grey stones, yellow soil, treeless, windswept, with stark, silhouette-like curves as far as

the eye can see. Here in the high mountains, at a very early hour, one sometimes experiences the austere purity of these contours bathed in light.

"Gegensätze: vier Bilder aus Anatolien" (Contrasts: Four Pictures from Anatolia), 1933

Biography

- 1908** On May 23, Annemarie Schwarzenbach is born into a wealthy Zurich industrialist family. She is the third child of the textile manufacturer Alfred Emil Schwarzenbach and Renée Schwarzenbach-Wille, daughter of the general Ulrich Wille.
- 1927–1931** Studies history, philosophy, and psychology in Zurich and Paris. In April, graduates with a thesis on *The History of the Upper Engadin in the Middle Ages and the Beginning of the Modern Era*, at 23 years of age.
- 1931** Moves to Berlin and makes contact with literary bohemians, notably Klaus and Erika Mann. Her first novel, *Freunde um Bernhard* (Bernhard's Circle), is published. Schwarzenbach takes active part in nightlife and encounters drugs for the first time.
- 1933** Embarks upon her first journalistic voyage to Spain with the photographer Marianne Breslauer. The same year, Annemarie Schwarzenbach takes a car journey from Turkey to Syria, Iraq, and finally Iran, where she participates in archaeological excavations and works as a photographer for the first time. Publication of her book *Lyrische Novelle* (Lyric Novella).
- 1934** The National Socialist government prohibits Schwarzenbach from living in Germany because of her financial involvement in the emigrant journal *The Collection*, which was founded by Klaus Mann. A house in Sils-Baseglia becomes her permanent Swiss residence. In August,

attends the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow with Klaus Mann. Afterward, the journey continues to the south of Russia and ends in Tehran.

- 1935** Second trip to Iran in May. Schwarzenbach marries the French diplomat Claude Clarac and spends the summer in a high mountain valley near Tehran. Illness and drug use force Schwarzenbach to return to Switzerland in the fall.
- 1936** Journey to the United States. In Washington, D.C., Schwarzenbach visits the archive of the Farm Security Administration. She travels through the industrial parts of Pennsylvania between Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh with the American photographer Barbara Hamilton-Wright.
- 1937** Return from the United States. In summer, Annemarie Schwarzenbach travels through the German Reich, East Prussia, and the Baltic states to Moscow. She makes another journey through the United States in September. Together with Barbara Hamilton-Wright, drives through rural Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Ohio.
- 1938** Travels by car through Austria to Prague, where Annemarie Schwarzenbach witnesses and documents National Socialist expansionism firsthand. Publication of her most successful book, *Lorenz Saladin, ein Leben für die Berge* (Lorenz Saladin: A Life for the Mountains), which is based on materials from the estate of the Swiss mountain climber who had recently died in an accident.

- 1939** Together with the Geneva athlete, ethnographer, and writer Ella Maillart, Annemarie Schwarzenbach drives through the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan to India. The journey is overshadowed by Schwarzenbach's drug problems. In Kabul, the women part ways.
- 1940** Another journey to the United States, where Annemarie Schwarzenbach meets the writer Carson McCullers in New York. Publication of the novel *Das glückliche Tal* (The Happy Valley). After a psychological breakdown, Annemarie Schwarzenbach is admitted to a clinic.
- 1941** Release from the clinic and return to Switzerland. From Lisbon, embarks on a journey to the Belgian Kongo, where she stays at the Swiss plantation "Molanda" in the Congo Basin, among other places. She writes the novel *Das Wunder des Baums* (The Miracle of the Tree), which is published posthumously.
- 1942** Sojourns in Morocco and Portugal. In September, Schwarzenbach suffers serious head injuries in a bike accident in Sils in Engadin. On November 15, she dies under circumstances that have yet to be fully explained.

Führungen und Begleitprogramm

Platzzahl beschränkt. Programmänderungen und Einschränkungen vorbehalten (siehe www.zpk.org)

Sonntags 12:00

Öffentliche Führungen

Dienstags 12:30 – 13:00

Kunst am Mittag

Fremdsprachige Führungen

Französisch, Englisch, Italienisch

siehe www.zpk.org

Sonntag 15:00

11. Oktober / 22. November / 06. Dezember 2020 / 03. Januar 2021

Literarische Führung

Michaela Wendt liest Texte von Annemarie Schwarzenbach und weiteren Autorinnen und Autoren.

Mittwoch **14. Oktober 2020** 13:30

Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Mit Dominik Imhof, Leiter Kunstvermittlung ZPK

Sonntag **01. November 2020** 15:00

Kunst und Religion im Dialog

Martin Waldmeier, Kurator ZPK, im Dialog mit Michael Braunschweig
(Reformierte Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn)

Freitag **13. November 2020** 16:00

Fotografin und Fotografierte

Dialogische Führung durch die Ausstellung mit Alexis Schwarzenbach, Historiker und Kurator, und Martin Waldmeier, Kurator ZPK

Donnerstag **19. November 2020** 18:00

Freunde ZPK

Führung für die Freunde ZPK mit dem Kurator Martin Waldmeier und Expertinnen und Experten des Hauses

Sonntag **29. November 2020** 15:00

Kontext Schweizer Pressefotografie

Dialogische Führung durch die Ausstellung mit Nora Mathys, Kuratorin am Musée de l'Elysée und ehemalige Leiterin des Ringier-Pressearchivs, und Martin Waldmeier, Kurator ZPK

Samstag **05. Dezember 2020** 11:00

Annemarie Schwarzenbach im Kongo

Dr. Henri-Michel Yéré, Historiker, Franziska Jenni, Kuratorin, und Michèle Magma, Künstlerin, kommentieren Schwarzenbachs Fotografien von den schweizerischen Plantagen im Belgisch-Kongo.

Samstag **19. Dezember 2020** 13:00

Sinn-Reich

Eine alle Sinne ansprechende Führung für Gäste mit und ohne Behinderung. Mit Gebärdendolmetscherin und induktiver Höranlage

Kunstvermittlung für Familien

06.09.20 – 24.01.21

Interaktive Ausstellung «Fernweh»

Kreativer Brückenschlag von den Ateliers des Kindermuseum Creaviva in die Ausstellungen des ZPK

Dienstag bis Freitag 14:00 / 16:00

Samstag und Sonntag 12:00 / 14:00 / 16:00

Offenes Atelier im Kindermuseum Creaviva

Stündige Workshops zu einem monatlich wechselnden Thema in Verbindung zu den Ausstellungen im ZPK

Sonntags 10:30 – 11:45

Familienmorgen

In der Ausstellung und im Atelier des Kindermuseum Creaviva für die ganze Familie

Samstags 09:30 – 11:45

Kinderforum

Der Creaviva-Kinderclub ab 7 Jahren zum Thema «Unterwegs mit Freunden»

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The Zentrum Paul Klee is open to all
and offers inclusive events.



Zentrum Paul Klee

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Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10:00 – 17:00

Find us on



Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern

Founded by
Maurice E. and Martha Müller
and the heirs of Paul Klee