



FREUDS VERSCHWUNDENE NACHBARN

FREUDS LOST NEIGHBOURS press information

a film by KURT MAYER



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www.kurtmayerfilm.com

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a film by **Kurt Mayer**

A 2006, 71 min.

CREDITS

Writer / Director Kurt Mayer
Cinematography: Helmut Wimmer
Original Sound: Klaus Kellermann
Editor: Harald Aue
Score/Music: Rupert Huber
Assistant Director: Birgit Johler
Steadycam Operator Hubert Doppler
Assistant Editor: Judith Doppler
Colour Timer: Tom Varga
HD Mastering: Herbert Fischer
Wolfgang Vetter
Arri Laser: Listo Video
35mm print: Franz Rabl
Sound Editor: Bernhard Maisch
Sound effects: Otger Kunert
Dolby mastering Tremens Tonstudio
Graphic design: Neiss & Neumann
Translation: Sandra Collins
Production Coordinators: Alexandra Hutter
Marion Rutzendorfer
Production / Set Manager: Rosmarie Lackner
Expert Advisor: Inge Scholz-Strasser
Producer: Kurt Mayer
Supervisor of TV Adaptation: Wolfgang Lorenz
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We thank the Sigmund Freud Museum Vienna for their support.

Distribution **kurt mayer film**
www.kurtmayerfilm.com

SYNOPSIS

The film traces the history of Sigmund Freud's neighbours from 1938 to today.

While Freud and his closest relatives managed to leave Vienna in time, more than 80 of his immediate Jewish neighbours were deported to extermination camps between 1939 and 1942. Before they were deported, they stopped off at several locations in Vienna.

This very special film about Vienna starts off at Berggasse 19 and heads for these places, thereby tracing the routes which were used in the course of "Aryanization" right under the eyes of the Viennese people.

The house in Berggasse 19 – a fixed point in any visitor's programme of Jewish Vienna – is not only the "birthplace of psychoanalysis". It also is a cinematic point of reference for an additional identity-creating culture of remembrance which tries to overcome the post-war consensus of "repression", a concept first described by Freud himself.

COMMEMORATING ROOMS OF RESONANCE

Berggasse 19 – one of the most famous addresses in Vienna. Sigmund Freud lived here for 47 years before he had to leave Vienna in 1938, just in time before Austria's annexation to Nazi Germany. Yet other Jewish families who did not manage to leave in time used to live here as well. They were forcibly relocated in the following years. Starting from Sigmund Freud's former apartment, "Freud's Lost Neighbours" follows the tracks of those - often anonymous - Jewish neighbours, who had to leave their "Aryanised" apartments and were relocated to so-called "Sammelwohnungen" or "collective flats" before their final deportation. Although Kurt Mayer pursues their tracks, he does not follow their individual stories to their end; their individual suffering and the collective crime which caused it is only hinted at as the film unfolds. They rather lead us through a present in which the memory of these stories and the crimes against humanity which were veiled by silence for decades can only be heard as a far cry from the past. (Robert Buchschwenter)

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was my intention to focus on those places and routes which cannot be reconstructed as a memorial. People experienced an average of three forced relocations throughout the city before they were deported to one of the concentration camps. A perfidious strategy meant to destroy those social structures which are now inscribed in the city's virtual map of remembrance. It took a great deal of effort to reconstruct those places and routes from the lists and records which mentioned Freud's neighbours. When we first tried to make appointments with the present tenants they refused to see us. Some even wrote long letters to explain why it was important not to remember these things. It was even difficult to get into those houses where there had been "collective flats". Most of the gates were locked. We often had to wait for somebody to go in and would then quickly put our foot in the door and go from apartment to apartment hoping to have the chance to get more than just one sentence out of our mouths. More often than we had expected, we met the direct descendants of the Aryanisers themselves. We also found "new displaced persons".

So, following the traces of Sigmund Freud's neighbours revealed information about a very particular period of Viennese history.

Registration forms, lists of names, letters – those are the hard-to-come-by documents which hint at the fate of Freud's neighbours. They clearly revealed the extent of the Aryanisers' brutal intrusion into Viennese life. Something which hardly gets mentioned at all among my generation. It is becoming more and more difficult to deal with the topic as a documentary. Contemporary witnesses can hardly be found any more. The question of memory is turning into a question of commemoration. Research and oblivion are overlapping. Following "stage directions" from the years 1938 to 1942, I made a film about contemporary Vienna.

"It's an uncanny thought that we suddenly start killing each other because something changed..."

Sophie Freud, Sigmund Freud's granddaughter (film quote)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The film is based on an exhibition and a book with the title "Freuds verschwundene Nachbarn", edited by Lydia Marinelli and published by Turia&Kant. The film follows the tracks of the tenants of Berggasse 19. Nearly all of them were displaced or murdered during the Third Reich. The film is based on an award-winning publication by the Sigmund Freud Museum. Thorough research of documents has uncovered the history of the tenants of Berggasse 19 from 1938 until the present day.

The research revealed that the National Socialist authorities set up "collective flats" for Jewish tenants in Berggasse 19. Such living arrangements were common in Vienna's 9th district. While Freud and his closest relatives managed to leave his apartment where he also had his doctor's practice, more than 80 fellow Jewish citizens were deported from these flats between 1938 and 1942. The film seeks a new approach to the documentation and treatment of Aryanisation and deportation. The main focus is the impact on the present and on the times to come. The question is whether these things could happen again, right under our noses. Some statements of the recent tenants of the Aryanised apartments hint at this, as do the alarming results of the asylum policy.

Beginning with the most famous address of Jewish Vienna and looking at Freud's own displacement, selected individual stories and paths reveal the urban topography and the logistics of the systematic robbery and deportation that took place. Focusing on the present, the year 2005, the question arises whether things like that could happen again anywhere and at any time right in front of the eyes of an urban population, in an inhuman system.

Starting in Freud's former practice and in the apartments of Freud's former neighbours, the film traces five individual stories. It follows the paths and stops of those who were terrorised by the National Socialists and chased across Vienna, from their homes to the collective flats, from there to the stations Nordbahnhof or Aspangbahnhof and then to their final deportation to the concentration camps. The film looks at those places, routes and stops which cannot be reconstructed as a memorial. Again and again the camera disrupts the privacy of the current tenants. It records intimate day-to-day objects, moves through bedrooms, living rooms, offices – through all the places which underwent such shameless exposure and criminal invasion back then. A polyphony of memories evolves. In a matter-of-fact way the tenants talk about the things they know about deportation and Aryanisation, and about the things they either don't know or don't want to know.

BERGGASSE 19

Berggasse 19, an unobtrusive Wilhelminian-style building in Vienna's 9th district. Bourgeois, close to the city centre. The Viennese are not really interested in this place, although it is Vienna's most famous address for the rest of the world. A small and unostentatious plaque next to the gate commemorates Sigmund Freud, who lived and worked here from September 1891 to June 1938. Before that, Victor Adler, founder of Austrian Social Democracy, lived at this address. Since 1976 it has belonged to the local municipality. 50,000 people visit the building every year. There is hardly anybody from Vienna amongst the visitors. The oldest tenant has lived here since 1939. His father moved his business here after Freud's emigration in 1939 when the American Dorothy Burlington, heir to the Tiffany legacy and friend of Anna Freud, was forced to leave Austria, taking her four children with her. At the time the ten-year-old boy wondered why so many people were crammed into the other flats. Today he is ashamed of having been an ardent member of the Hitler Youth.

When Jewish tenants were no longer granted protection against ejection in May 1939, about 48,000 apartments were vacated in Vienna. After the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany, thousands of Viennese citizens broke into the apartments of their Jewish fellow citizens, taking their furniture and other valuables, or simply turving the inhabitants out. Those who were lucky enough to stay in their flats were forced to take in other Jews. In 1939, the house in Berggasse 19 accommodated the largest number of people of any building on the street. 17 Jewish citizens were admitted to Freud's private apartment, Flat 5, between 1939 and 1941 – none of them survived the Holocaust.