

to go

○  
—  
○

# Literature & Attitude

## The Archive of Rachel Salamander

EN

to go

EN



Rachel Salamander at "Literaturhandlung", her bookstore on Fürstenstrasse, 1980s

© Kerstin Schuhbaum

## Intro

"Here, my hitherto invisible archive shall be made visible and spark synergies with Monacensia's collections."

Rachel Salamander, 2022

In 2022, publicist and literary scholar Rachel Salamander donated her extensive archive to the City of Munich. Her unique archive traces its origins back to Salamander's establishment of the "Literaturhandlung" on Munich's Fürstenstrasse in 1982.

The "Literaturhandlung" was the first bookstore dedicated to literature on Judaism in Germany after 1945. With her bookstore, Rachel Salamander restored Jewish intellectual life to an enduring position within the tapestry of public consciousness, decades after the devastation wrought by National Socialism. And in doing so, she has created a spiritual and emotional haven for many.

The "Literature & Attitude" exhibition documents Rachel Salamander's work and offers rare insights into her archive. At "Literaturhandlung" events, leading international minds delved into debates on relevant social issues spanning from the 1980s to the present day.

"I simply wanted to give Jewishness a presence in the non-Jewish public sphere and honor the relevance of the Jewish experience. That means talking, talking, talking, and breaking down feelings of alienation."

Rachel Salamander, 2024

"Whenever I walk down Fürstenstrasse - on my way to see you - instead of the quiet, peaceful street, I also see a different image: gray walls with plaster falling off, window cavities blackened by fire. I walked along that street often because I had a friend who lived there. Once, at the corner of Theresienstrasse, I ran into a man I knew who told me that now, or so he had heard, Jewish half-breeds (of which I was one) were being transported to camps, too. Suddenly, everything around me went dark, as if a black cloud had covered everything.

If someone had told me back then that one day, a few doors down, there would be a Jewish bookstore, that Jewish people would deliver lectures and come and go - bound in friendship - it would have seemed like a miracle to me."

Hanne Lenz to Rachel Salamander, 2007

## Writers at the "Literaturhandlung"

Rachel Salamander has curated over 1,000 events in Germany and Austria since the founding of "Literaturhandlung" in 1982. She invited authors from around the world to showcase the diversity of Jewish literary expression to an interested public and to create space for Jewish topics in conversations.

### Writing to Survive

For many Jews in concentration camps or in hiding, literature emerges as a means of survival. In verses, memorized or crafted in their minds during forced labor, they find solace and structure to endure the endless time of fear of death. "Every poem becomes a magic spell," Ruth Klüger recalls in her memoir. Writing in the camps is life-threateningly dangerous or, because of a lack of paper, entirely impossible.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, writers such as Gerty Spies and Grete Weil provide firsthand accounts of the crimes they experienced. But, at first, the survivors' memories garner little public interest. Only decades later does the writing of contemporary witnesses draw the eyes of publishers and readers.

The devastation of Jewish cultural heritage by the Nazi regime resulted in a profound void. According to Rachel Salamander, she built her "Literaturhandlung" in 1982, "practically from nothing".

**"The texts written from this immediate experience have something that is fully and fundamentally authentic. Therefore, she not only speaks for herself, but also establishes a lasting remembrance for the others who are no longer here, who perished, who were murdered."**

Rachel Salamander on Gerty Spies, 2008

Flieger nach Westen

Weiße Vögel ziehn durchs Blau,  
Und das Unglück wütet blind.  
Liebste Heimat, schönste Frau  
Sag, wo deine Söhne sind.

In der Welt hast du die rauhe  
Hilfungslosen Zerstörung.  
Komm erweckst du, wo ich steh,  
Sommers, in der deine Kind.

September 1944

Gertrud Spies

Gerty Spies, Flieger nach Westen, Theresienstadt 1944

Münchner Stadtbibliothek / Monacensia, L 5461

"It was difficult to conjure up the paper to write from the nothingness of our misery. But what must be finds its way."

Gerty Spies, My Years in Theresienstadt: How One Woman Survived the Holocaust, 1984

Transcription

Flying West

White birds fly across the blue,  
And disaster rages blindly.  
Dearest homeland, fairest of  
women,  
Pray tell, where are your sons.  
The harsh wind of times, heavy  
with lament,  
Scatters them into the world.  
You weep stars wherever I look,  
Skies, over your child.  
September 1944  
Gertrud Spies

## The Children of the Survivors

"My parents had kept their knowledge of Jewish heritage from me, or perhaps they themselves had never had it. When my first son was born, I wanted him not only to be of 'Jewish descent,' but also to be able to lead a Jewish life with me. In truth, I was searching for a minimum of Jewish identity in my life."

Barbara Honigmann, *Self-portrait as a Jewish Woman*, 1999

"There is a void that defines my generation. This lack of all things that are considered a matter of course, this absence, remains the defining event of our existence."

Rachel Salamander, *Jewish Life in Germany*, 1999

"Most children of survivors had very little idea of their parents' past. ... Everything was painful. Everything was pungent. Charged. Children of survivors were surrounded by secrets. The holes in their parents' pasts punctured and perforated the children of survivors. It left them with fissures and rifts and fractures. It left them with large hollows and cavities of their own."

Lily Brett, *Too Many Men: A Novel*, 2002

"He didn't feel like a Jew at all, on the contrary, he was retreating his father's lost respectability, for since his father had left the country as a Jew, he decided to re-enter it as a German, and that is how it stayed. Yet he had a difficult time denying to himself that something dark was always present in him."

Robert Schindel, *Born-Where*, 1992

"Israeli literature does not primarily respond to the void left by the Shoah. It deals with other issues: that as a Jew, one must stand up for oneself, that one must build a new society. Born into a state that now has its own history, the problems are homegrown."

Rachel Salamander, *My Kindred Spirit: Anat Feinberg*, 2021

"Over the hills and far away, the city of Tel Aviv was also an exciting place from which came the newspapers, rumours of theater, opera, ballet and cabaret, as well as modern art, party politics, echoes of stormy debates, and indistinct snatches of gossip. There were great sportsmen in Tel Aviv. And there was the sea, full of bronzed jews who could swim."

Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, 2005

"I didn't want to hide Israel, but I was more concerned with what goes on inside a human being."

Zeruya Shalev in an interview with Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel*, 2000

"It's a fact, he said, that I derive no benefit from being Jewish, or any pleasure. It almost got my parents and me killed. A fact that doesn't inspire me to believe in God. It makes me deny him and wish that I weren't one of the chosen, that I hadn't been thrust at birth into this monstrous trap. All the same, so long as there are people who care whether I am a Jew pretending to be a Gentile, I have to remain a Jew, even though I feel no more Jewish than a smoked ham. If the question is asked, I'm obliged to say that I'm a Jew ..."

Louis Begley, *Matters of Honor*, 2007

"Someone like me wasn't foreseen in Germany. If asked what I was, I said, 'I'm a Jew.' I said it because it was true, and I was surprised that other people were confused. I noticed they were confused because they immediately changed the subject, smiled as if moved by emotion and said, quietly 'I see.'"

Maxim Biller, *The Second-Hand Jew*, 2009

"This literature is written by Jews about Jews and things Jewish. The authors explicitly describe themselves as caught between the German environment and Jewish existence. This is often experienced as growing up in a foreign society from which everything Jewish has disappeared."

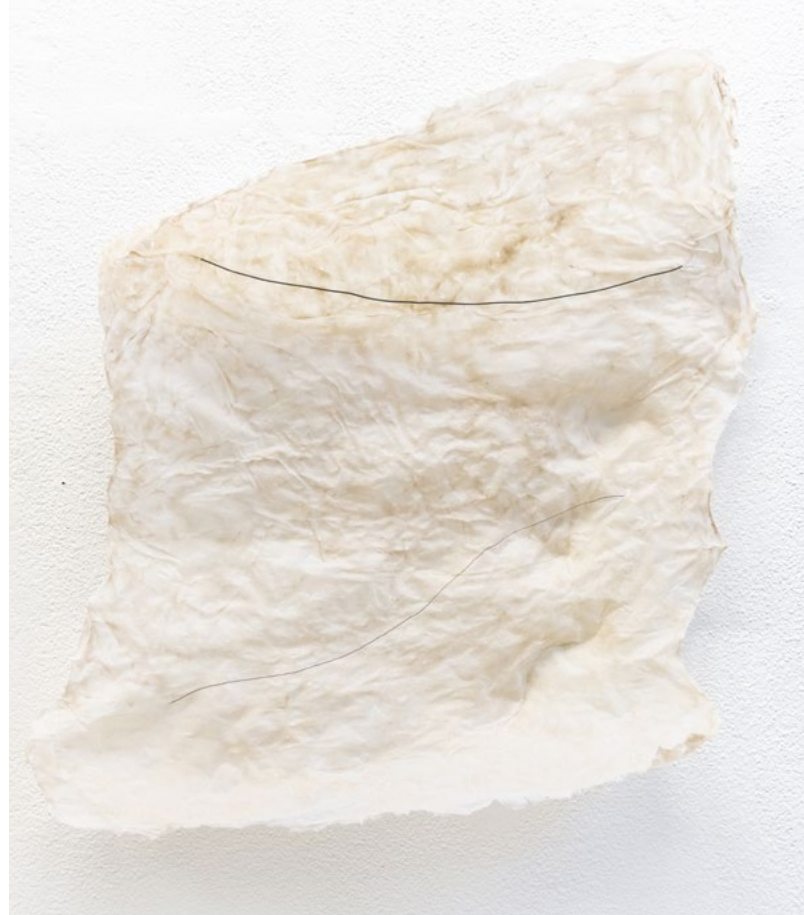
Rachel Salamander, *My Kindred Spirit*: Anat Feinberg, 2021



## Associate Artist

**"In my artistic practice, I work with paper as my primary medium. I sculpturally link its inherent cultural-historical significance as a vehicle of (written) symbols and information to their legibility, spatial extension, and spatial disintegration."**

Miriam Salamander, 2026



Detail of Work, Wire and Paper

© Miriam Salamander / VG Bild-Kunst, 2026, photo: Wanying Xie



Literaturhandlung at Fürstenstrasse 17, 1988

Münchener Stadtbibliothek / Monacensia, RSA F 87

## Editorial Notice

### Literature & Attitude. The Archive of Rachel Salamander

An exhibition by Monacensia at Hildebrandhaus  
curated by Anke Buettner, Patrick Geiger, Sylvia Schütz

### Literature & Attitude To Go

Concept & Editorial Development: Anke Buettner, Patrick Geiger,  
Sylvia Schütz

Project Coordination: Farina Asche

Translation: Tracey J. Evans

Design & Typesetting: Büro Alba, Munich

Printing: Weber Offset, Munich

## Anthology



Selected literary texts by Louis  
Begley, Maxim Biller, Lily Brett, Da-  
vid Grossman, Batya Gur, Barbara  
Honigmann, Imre Kertész, Ruth  
Klüger, Amos Oz, David Rokeah,  
Robert Schindel, Zeruya Shalev

German Edition  
ISBN 9783957326409

The "Literature & Attitude" exhibition is part of the "Archive Salamander" initiative, a multi-year project by Monacensia at Hildebrandhaus focusing on development and outreach. This event falls under the patronage of the Mayor of the City of Munich.

This project is funded by the Alfred Landecker Foundation.



ALFRED LANDECKER  
FOUNDATION

Dive into MON Mag, our online magazine, where you'll find in-depth articles and digital content. [www.mon-mag.de](http://www.mon-mag.de)

**MONMAG**



#LiteraturHaltung

MONACENSIA.ORG



© 2026 Monacensia at Hildebrandhaus

Maria-Theresia-Str. 23, 81675 Munich

## #LiteraturHaltung

