

Anneliese Everts was born in 1908 in Solingen-Widdert¹, a town located in the low mountain range region „Bergisches Land“ within the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. At a time when a revolutionary change in art history was just about to be initiated.

Three years earlier, four students of architecture² had founded the artist group „Die Brücke“ in Dresden, in order to find new forms of visual expressions.

In 1907, Pablo Picasso created his early cubistic painting *Les Femmes d'Alger*, which was to go down in art history as a groundbreaking masterpiece of modern art.

In the end of 1911, artists close to the “Blauer Reiter” organised their first exhibition. Their attempt to visualise the subconscious, the unreal and spiritual resulted in the first abstract works by artists like Wassily Kandinsky.³

An increasing rebellion against the style taught at art academies as well as against the established art pervaded the artistic creation and was reflected in radical avant-garde forms of expression: abstraction, vibrating expressive colours, the dissolution of the traditional central perspective and its single vanishing point, the rejection of any realistic reproduction, rigid, reduced worlds of forms, and cubist decompositions.

Classic modernism⁴ had begun to pave its way.

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„With a belief in continuing evolution, in a new generation of creators as well as appreciators, we call together all youth. And as youth carrying the future, we intend to obtain freedom of movement and of life for ourselves in opposition to older, well-established powers. Whoever renders directly and authentically that which impels him to create is one of us.“

Extract from the Brücke Manifesto, 1906

From 1914-1918, Anneliese Everts visited the primary school in Widdert, and then the secondary school for girls (Lyceum) in Solingen, which she left with an upper secondary maturity degree in 1925.⁵ *

1 Höhscheid-Widdert, the original birthplace, became a suburbanised district of the city of Solingen in 1929.

2 Founding of „Die Brücke“ in 1905 by Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

3 Kandinsky, Wassily. 1911. *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, R. Piper & Co, Munich.

4 The term “classic modernism” roughly defines the period between 1900 - 1945, depending on the interpretation. Already in the end of the 19th century, a shift away from traditional art became apparent in the works of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and other artists.

5 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen. // *Anneliese Everts' sister Lieselotte, who was two years younger, took the same school career and later studied church music in Cologne.

A former student of the Lyceum described in 1953, that Anneliese Everts had already demonstrated an above-average drawing talent during her school years, and her works - nature studies, still lifes, water colours and portraits - were exhibited regularly in the showcase next to the teachers' room.⁶

However, instead of pursuing an art education after her graduation, she first worked temporarily in the arts and crafts store Herweg in Solingen, and then for 12 years⁷ part-time as a typist at the city council Höhscheid (later Solingen), because her parents - the father was a self-employed master scissors-grinder, the mother a housewife⁸ - were convinced, that only something realistic and practical would provide an opportunity to make a living.

But Anneliese Everts did not lose her passion for the arts and looked for ways and means to educate herself and refine her artistic expression: Apart from her daily tasks, she attended courses in drawing, painting and modelling at the College of Metal Design in Solingen. Her teachers were the painter and graphic artist Ludwig Füllbeck as well as the metal artist and sculptor F. Otto Hoppe⁹, who, in 1927, created the monument *Rüdenstein* in Leichlingen (Rhineland) at the river Wupper. Furthermore, she had private lessons with the painter Albert Eichenberg¹⁰, who, like Ludwig Füllbeck and F. Otto Hoppe, followed and taught the traditional academic style.

In this context it should be noted that female students - with a few exceptions - were not admitted to German art academies until the year 1919. Only then women could benefit from the same professional artistic training on an equal footing with men.¹¹ Previously, many women were forced to switch to private schools and private lessons or received - if at all - only a status as a guest student at the art academies.

The above mentioned caesura was owed to the Weimar Constitution, which in 1919 had not only enshrined voting rights for women, but the general equal legal status of women and men, which in many areas led to an empowering of women and a weakening of their traditional role as spouses and wives. Including the fact, that the female employment rate rose, leading to an increasing independence and a greater autonomy and allowing new blueprints for life.¹²

Freedom of existence.

6 Dr. Reinmöller, Lore. 1953. *Bergische Malerinnen - Besuch bei Anneliese Everts und Liesel Stoer* in: *Romerike Berge*, Zeitschrift für Heimatpflege im Bergischen Land.

7 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

8 Anneliese Everts' father - Richard Everts - was also a municipal councillor in Höhscheid after World War I. Her mother's name was Adele Everts, née Herder.

9 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

10 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

11 Herber, Anne-Kathrin. 2009. *Frauen an deutschen Kunstakademien im 20. Jahrhundert. Ausbildungsmöglichkeiten für Künstlerinnen ab 1919 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der süddeutschen Kunstakademien*, Dissertation, Heidelberg.

12 Elpers, Susanne; Meyer, Anne-Rose (Eds.). 2004. *Zwischenkriegszeit. Frauenleben 1918-1939*, Berlin.

And Anneliese Everts savoured this freedom. In 1928, at the age of just 20 and one year before the Great Depression, she undertook her first big journey by ship, which was to take her and a joining friend to the Mediterranean. The journey lasted over three weeks. She sat on deck of the ship, filled with wonder, created paintings and drawings, captivated by the magic that surrounded her, and tried to capture the variety of new impressions.

This first journey to distant places and the immersion in foreign cultures was not only an escape from a rather well-structured and orderly life, but will also leave, as well as the following journeys, a deep imprint on her artistic oeuvre.



Anneliese Everts (right) with her girlfriend Toni¹³ on the deck of the Monte Sarmiento, 1928 | image detail

At the beginning of May in 1928, they first went to Venice by train, from where the twin-screw motor ship Monte Sarmiento took them on a journey through the *waters of the Mediterranean Sea*¹⁴.

13 On another photo, which also shows Anneliese Everts with her friend during their Mediterranean trip, the following handwritten note can be found on the back: Die Solinger! Toni & Annelie!

14 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

The Monte Sarmiento, which was able to accommodate almost 2,500 passengers and which was the largest motor ship in the world, when it was commissioned in 1924¹⁵, headed for the Greek island of Corfu as its first destination.



Anneliese Everts, „Corfu“, 1928

Anneliese Everts' descriptions of the following experiences and impressions are strikingly colour-related and show, that her poetic and sensual view of nature was that of an artist. The light of the southern sun and the unusual play of colours and impressions of nature had captured her.

About Corfu she wrote: „Large-leafed plants, black flames of the cypresses, yellow glowing rock faces, blue islands. Yellow flowers glared in the midday heat, moths tumbled, beguiling scents, sun, sun, white boats on blue silk.“¹⁶

And then, about an evening boat trip on the ocean: „The sun blazed through the evening clouds in gold and purple. Blue-violet islands dipped into the rainbow-coloured sea.“¹⁷

Around the harbour of Athens, however, only two colours prevailed according to Anneliese Everts: The greyish yellow of the parched soil and the blue of the sky and the ocean.¹⁸

After that, the Monte Sarmiento passed the strait Hellespont¹⁹ to Constantinople, a *fairy-tale town once again glowing in the solar purple brilliance, when the anchor was hoisted.*²⁰

15 Source: Wikipedia / The free Encyclopedia.

16 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

17 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

18 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

19 The term “Hellespont” chosen by Anneliese Everts originates from classical antiquity. Modern: Dardanelles.

20 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

Malta followed as the next travel destination.



On deck of the Monte Sarmiento off the island of Malta, 1928 | Photo: Anneliese Everts



Maltese, 1928 | Photo: Anneliese Everts | image detail

From Malta, the Monte Sarmiento continued its journey to Tunisia.

About the Tunisian town of Sidi Bou Said, situated 20 km away from Tunis, Anneliese Everts wrote the following notes in her travel diary: „*Light green the evening sky, a more delicate green the sea, almost transparent. A blurred horizon, no border between sky and water, and the ships floated weightlessly and surreally in space. And the pale blue mountain range rested like a spectre in the soft green haze.*“²¹ She also described cube-shaped houses, heavy brown buffaloes, gold-purple mountains and water that appeared like liquid gold.

It is likely, that Anneliese Everts was not aware that she was following the footsteps of Paul Klee and August Macke when visiting this magical place. In 1914, the two artists had left, together with Louis Moilliet, by ship for their now famous journey to Tunisia, visiting Tunis as well as the town of Sidi Bou Said, that Paul Klee had described in his diary as *the quintessence of a fairy tale*²² when he first saw it from the ship. Just as Anneliese Everts, he had described the remarkable rhythmic, white shapes of the houses that characterised the appearance of the city.

During their two-week trip to Tunisia, the three painter friends had indulged in the secrets of the foreign culture and in the magic of the North African country and had captured their impressions right on the spot. August Macke, who was to die a few months later as a soldier during World War I, had created 33 water colours and 79 drawings during their journey, Paul Klee returned with 35 water colours and 13 drawings.²³

The colour and light plays that Paul Klee experienced in Tunisia were, years later, still a great source of inspiration for his works. During this journey he wrote in his diary: „*I now abandon work. It penetrates so deeply and so gently into me, I feel it and it gives me confidence in myself without effort. Colour possesses me. I don't have to pursue it any longer. It will possess me always, I know it. That is the meaning of this happy hour: Colour and I are one. I am a painter.*“²⁴

Anneliese Everts also did not remain untouched. When reading her travelogue, one gets the impression that her voluble and strongly colour-related descriptions are an anticipation of her artworks, which were to be realised only 2 decades later and which will then be characterised by precisely that expressive choice of colour. As if she first was taking a detour via the word, to later capture her impressions with courage, brush and colour on canvas.

After the stay in Tunisia, the Monte Sarmiento again took off for Italy and headed for the cities of Palermo, Naples and Genoa.²⁵

21 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

22 Klee, Paul. 1957. *Tagebücher 1898 - 1918*. Published by Felix Klee, DuMont Buchverlag GmbH & Co.

23 Zentrum Paul Klee. 2014. *Die Tunisreise. Klee, Macke, Moilliet*. Exhibition text.

24 Klee, Paul. 1957. *Tagebücher 1898 - 1918*. Published by Felix Klee, DuMont Buchverlag GmbH & Co.

25 During her trip, Anneliese Everts did not visit the island of Capri. But Capri is mentioned, when she briefly stays in Sorrento: „*In front of us, the whole tremendous semicircle was spreading in all its beauty from Capri via the island of Ischia to Naples with the noble form of the smoking Vesuvius via Pompeii to Sorrento.*“

Sailboats were gliding across the sea like *drunken butterflies in dazzling light*²⁶, and triggered the spark in Anneliese Everts to set out to the shimmering, ultramarine expanse driven by the vivid wind.²⁷

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Further journeys followed, and, in 1930, Anneliese Everts began to work as a freelancer for the daily newspaper *Solinger Tageblatt* and wrote articles for the supplement *Travel, Hiking, Traffic*.

Her painterly-poetic perception is again striking in a travel memory of her stay in Abbazia on the Istrian peninsula: „*The sea is rushing at the rocks, whispering and singing [...] the sea is recumbent in the brightest, most cheerful blue [...] in front of dark cypresses, bushes with bright red fruits are tilting over rugged rocks down to the sea-rushed shore [...] the sea is resting in a deep blue, showing more delicate and silkier nuances in the distance*“. And when the fishermen light the lanterns on their boats at night, they appear „*like signs of the zodiac glowing on the dark bed of sea and sky. And, then, the white silver of the moon is pouring down, trembling*.“²⁸

But she could also enjoy and admire local nature in all its splendour. In 1931, she wrote the following about a hiking tour in the Wupper mountains in the month of May: „*Blossoming trees! What an inherent charm lies in these words. They express all the sweetness of spring. And human faith and hope for a better, happier time are tied to this ephemeral splendour. [...] This spring-fresh world, luxuriating in fragrances. [...] Delicate spirals of ferns surge towards the light. [...] One can not do or think about anything else but walking through this delightful landscape, smiling, without any worries, young and exceedingly overjoyed*.“²⁹

Anneliese Everts finished the article with the following words: „*Set out for a hike, follow your longing for nature, feel the glint of eternal hope that also a turnaround of your inner life can again be anticipated! Be inspired by those bright pictures of spring, so that each one of you brings some sunshine in his heart back home into the semi-darkness of the dwelling*.“³⁰

On this occasion, the Wandervogel movement should be mentioned, whose members set out on hiking expeditions in order to escape the social constraints and to live out their love for nature.³¹

It is unclear, whether Anneliese Everts was connected to this movement.

26 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

27 Personal notes by Anneliese Everts.

28 *Abbazia*. A travel Memory by Anneliese Everts. 1930/31 ?, *Solinger Tageblatt*,

29 Anneliese Everts. 8 May 1931. *Die Zeit der Baumblüte. Blütenzauber in den Wupperbergen*. *Solinger Tageblatt*.

30 Anneliese Everts. 8 May 1931. *Die Zeit der Baumblüte. Blütenzauber in den Wupperbergen*. *Solinger Tageblatt*.

31 The Wandervogel movement emerged in 1901 as an association in Berlin and rapidly spread as a youth movement throughout Germany. In the 1920s, numerous individual associations existed with about 30,000 members. After the National Socialist takeover, the various confederations were dissolved in 1933 and were merged into the Hitler Youth. (Arnulf Scriba. 2014. German Historical Museum, Berlin.)

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In 1933, the National Socialists took over the command in Germany and headlines such as *The Christmas Market of the German woman in the town hall of Solingen* or prompts like *The true Christmas joy can only be accomplished with German gifts* characterised the issue of the Solinger Tageblatt of 13 December 1933. In the same issue, one could also find an article mentioning the 80th birthday of Anneliese Everts' grandmother³². „The little old lady (das alte Mütterchen)“³³ is described as a role model of a real Bergisch housewife. She gave birth to 11 children, one of whom died. 38 descendants celebrated her special day with her in 1933.

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*The nightingales were turning mute,
looking for a safe place to reside.
And only the vultures were screaming
well above the rows of graves.*

Extract from: Mascha Kaléko, Monologue of an Emigrant, 1945

Months before, in March 1933, the *Enabling Act (Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the Reich)* had authorized the National Socialist Government to pass legislation without the consent of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat, thereby transferring the entire state power to Adolf Hitler. This did not only mean the end of democracy, but also the end of all artistic freedom.

In his government statement on the Enabling Act, Hitler revealed his National Socialist vision: [...] „Simultaneously with this political purification of our public life, the Reich Government intends to undertake a thorough moral purging of the German Volkskörper. The entire system of education, the theatre, the cinema, literature, the press, and radio - they all will be used as a means to this end and valued accordingly. They must all work to preserve the eternal values residing in the essential character of our Volk. Art will always remain the expression and mirror of the yearning and the reality of an era. [...] Heroism is arising passionately as the future shaper and leader of political destinies. The task of art is to give expression to this determining spirit of the age. Blood and race will once more become the source of artistic intuition [...]“

On 24 March 1933, the Enabling Act came into force. On 10 May 1933, the first public book burnings took place in Berlin and in 21 further cities.

³² In the article referred to as *the Uwe Karl August Everts*.

³³ Solinger Tageblatt. 13 December 1933.

The journalist Stéphane Roussel, who reported as a foreign correspondent from Berlin for the morning paper *Le Matin*, recalls in her book *Die Hügel von Berlin (The Hills of Berlin)*:

„Since the afternoon, open trucks loaded with books have brought everything, which was before collected from city libraries and private collections from all parts of the city. *Students, who have climbed onto the pile of books, are now swinging flags and are chorusing Nazi songs. [...]. I'm paralysed with horror. [...]. The public execution of the written word. [...] The voice of the minister is raising in the manner of an incantation: The flames proclaim a new era.*“³⁴

The fine arts were equally affected. Quite a few artists were faced with an occupational ban, were displaced or arrested. Numerous museums directors, who had collected classical modernist art, were dismissed from their posts, and art works that did not conform to the new „moral idea of state and culture“³⁵ of the Nazis were confiscated from the museums.

The chase culminated in the display of the confiscated works in the exhibition *Entartete Kunst (Degenerated Art)* which was initiated by Joseph Goebbels and took place in Munich on 19 July 1937. More than 650 works by artists connected to modernist movements were presented to the public as “Blasphemous Art (Schmähkunst)“- works by impressionists, expressionists, cubists, dadaists, futurists, and the new objectivity.

What kind of impact did that period of massive suppression, humiliation and persecution of dissidents have on a young woman, who did not only worship art and poetry, but also felt an artistic vocation in herself?

Is is difficult to imagine, how Anneliese Everts felt and thought in view of this bruited of fear. It is known that she made a clear and courageous decision in favour of a career as an artist in October 1937 - which means only a few months after the artists of the classical modernism were publicly derided, defamed and exposed to hostility in the above mentioned way.

She quit her job at the city administration of Solingen and began her studies at the School for Craftsmen in Essen (Folkwang School)³⁶ at the age of 29. Due to her proficiencies, Anneliese Everts could skip the first semester, so that she attended the lessons of the Department of Applied Graphics and Typography for a total of 3 semesters. Her subjects included advertising graphics, typeface, advertising photo, freehand drawing, plant drawing, life drawing and applied drawing. In the subjects plant and figure drawing she finished with the mark *very good*.

34 Stéphane Roussel.1986. *Die Hügel von Berlin, Erinnerungen an Deutschland*. Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt Verlag.

35 Adolf Hitler. 1925. *Mein Kampf*, 1st Volume. „This cleansing of the culture *must be extended to nearly all fields, theatre, art, literature, cinema, press, posters and window displays must be cleansed of all manifestations of our rotting world and placed in the service of a moral, political, and cultural idea.*“

36 In 1934, the Folkwangschule für Gestaltung / Folkwang School of Design was renamed “Handwerkerschule der Stadt Essen (Folkwangschule) / School for Craftsmen (Folkwang School)”. “*The renaming corresponds to an instruction shift which put a special emphasis on craft training and was laid down in December 1933 in a decree for schools of crafts, trades and arts.*” (in: Gerda Breuer, Sabine Bartelsheim, Christopher Oestereich (Eds.). 2012. *Lehre und Lehrer an der Folkwang-Schule für Gestaltung in Essen. Von den Anfängen bis 1972*. Wasmuth Verlag, Essen). In 1938, once again a renaming followed, the school was now called “Meisterschule des Deutschen Handwerks / Folkwangschule der Stadt Essen (School for German Master Craftsmen / Folkwang School of the city of Essen)“.

The director of the School for Craftsmen of the city of Essen (Folkwang School) at that time was the painter and graphic artist Albert Mankopf, who had been a member of the NSDAP since 1927 and was also a subject specialist for fine arts in the *Kampfbund der deutschen Kultur*. In 1933, he had taken over the directorship and exercised it until the denazification in 1945.³⁷

Around 1935, Albert Mankopf wrote in an information booklet about the Folkwang Craftsmen School: [...] „In orderly education, under the sharpest rejection of amateurish art fantasies, the school leads the students to perfect craftsmanship. [...] As an enemy of any „fashion“ and of all art-snobbishness [...] it fights in a Nationalist-Socialistic manner for the shaping of the German culture.“³⁸

Due to such a realignment, it was impossible for the students and thus also for Anneliese Everts to develop a free artistic thinking. The creative spirit, which always requires freedom and which is the fundament for creative work, had now been radically banished from the artistic teaching.

In mid-March 1939, only two days after the German troops invaded Czechoslovakia, Anneliese Everts received her certificate from the School for Master Craftsmen (Folkwang School). Six months later, World War II began with the German invasion of Poland.

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After completing her studies, Anneliese Everts accepted contract works as a commercial painter and graphic artist³⁹ and, among other things, illustrated the texts of the book *Heimatuschen*⁴⁰ by Peter Witte⁴¹, that contained poetry and prose in Solingen dialect and appeared in two editions.

One year later, the illustration of the book *Spuk am Himmel (Haunted in the Sky)* by the Solingen author Karl Theodor Haanen followed. In 1946, the mentioned book, in which Haanen tells the adventures of the airplane Anton, was censored in the Soviet occupation zone just as the rest of Haanen's books⁴² and was put on a list of literature which was to be discarded. This sanction affected books, which among other things had a fascist or militaristic content.⁴³

From 1939 to 1944, Anneliese Everts also made drawings for the daily newspaper Solinger Tageblatt as well as for the local section Solinger Beobachter of the Rheinische Landeszeitung. The drawings

37 Gerda Breuer, Sabine Bartelsheim, Christopher Oestereich (Eds.). 2012. *Lehre und Lehrer an der Folkwang-Schule für Gestaltung in Essen. Von den Anfängen bis 1972*. Wasmuth Verlag, Essen

38 Gerda Breuer, Sabine Bartelsheim, Christopher Oestereich (Eds.). 2012. *Lehre und Lehrer an der Folkwang-Schule für Gestaltung in Essen. Von den Anfängen bis 1972*. Wasmuth Verlag, Essen

39 The term “commercial painter” was at that time chosen by Anneliese Everts herself.

40 Witte, Peter. 1939. *Heimatuschen. Poesie on Prosa en Soliger Monkart*. Düsseldorf. Völkischer Verlag. The drawing on the cover was realised by Willy Schwickerath.

41 Peter Witte was a scissors manufacturer (1876 - 1949) and also published the poetry collection *Heimatleuten - Gedichte in Solinger Mundart* in 1948.

42 Additional books by Karl Theodor Haanen, which were also on the list in 1946: *Flieger vor die Front; Fröhliche Fliegerei; Fliegerhorst im Erlenbusch; Der Flieger-Münchhausen; Jungens am Himmel; Das Fliegende Kleeblatt; Flaksoldat Münchhausen; Nie genug Segelflug!; Ein Segelflieger; Sonnenstürmer: Otto Lilienthal und sein Erbe*

43 It also referred to books that contained political expansion strategies, supported the racial doctrine of the National Socialists or included content which was opposed to the allies. The censored books were removed from public libraries in the Soviet occupation zone. (Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, Liste der auszusondernden Literatur. 1946. Preliminary edition. Berlin: Zentralverlag.)

illustrated regional articles carrying headlines such as *The beautiful Homeland; 50 Years of the Iron Bridge in Kohlfurth; 80 Years of the Solingen Gymnastic Club 1863* and *De Lewerfrau*⁴⁴ - a small *Memory of the Fatherland* and reflected, as well as the corresponding articles, the homeland consciousness (Heimatbewusstsein) propagated by the National Socialists and, associated therewith, the preservation of tradition.



Anneliese Everts | illustration | published 21/22 October 1944 in Solinger Tageblatt

The above mentioned assignments were, like various others, necessary for her to earn a living. Anneliese Everts was unmarried, childless and lived in her parents' house. The latter circumstance enabled her to dedicate herself to her true "world", her vocation - the arts - in spite of her obligations in the exterior world. Her studio was in her dwelling house and here she painted and created drawings as soon as there was time available for it. She then withdraw into a world of her own. experimentalised and also carried out commissioned works for private clients. At the same time she fought against her increasing sadness and hopelessness.⁴⁵

On 7 November 1943 she wrote in her diary: „*Very low-spirited, the dreariness of life took again all courage.*“ In the same year she had been conscripted to work in the Solingen department for economy and worked there part-time until the summer of 1945.⁴⁶ „*I often feel as if I will never get away from the office. And all the previous years are vividly present with all their agony.*“⁴⁷

44 Lewerfrau = delivery woman. Among other things, the delivery women delivered goods for the grinders and transported the material from the workshops to the cutlery companies. For the most part, the delivery women were family members of the craftsmen. The goods were sporadically transported in large baskets on the head.

45 Diary notes from 1943.

46 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

47 Diary notes from 1943.

Despite all the adversities, Anneliese Everts was already able to present her works in a group exhibition in Solingen when still being a student. In November 1938, and in cooperations with the cultural office of the district, the city administration had organised an exhibition which „was to represent a cross-section of the artistic achievement in Solingen and its neighbourhood“⁴⁸. About 200 works by about 30 artists and 20 artisans from Solingen and Remscheid were displayed in the Professional School in Solingen. Anneliese Everts' contribution - images of children - was appreciated as follows in the Solinger Beobachter: *„The delicate and meticulous stroke of the downright feminine talent can be seen in the very impressive pictures by Anneliese Everts, which are also not without characteristic influences of a good schooling.“*⁴⁹ The article, which covered one newspaper page, carried the title *Folk Art (Heimatkunst) full of Character*.

Additional contributions to exhibitions followed until the year 1943.

One example is Anneliese Everts' participation in the group show *Images of Children from three Centuries* in the Municipal Studio House in Solingen. in 1941. Dr. Hans Messer describes her contribution to the exhibition as follows in the Solinger Tageblatt⁵⁰:

„[...] Her work has remained multifaceted, both technically and in terms of content; Landscape and figure, study and composition, oil painting and water colour, woodcut and drawing are equally cultivated and equally show the willingness to progress. The artistic freedom in relation to the object, the ideational fulfilment, which elevates the craft to a work of art, have grown noticeably and have a significant effect on the overall impression, even there - and this, in particular, speaks in favour of her - where the mastery of the technique does not fully equal the high and serious intention. The man playing the harmonica is placed into the rectangle of the pictorial ground in an elegant as well as confident manner, and the area which isn't filled in by any object is filled wisely and stylishly. The clearly drawn hands holding the instrument vigorously and full of expression are especially beautiful. But the image of the little girl in the flower garden, though being of a wholly different nature, is no less impressive. From the tropical lushness of the flower walls, realised in an exaggeration corresponding to the childlike perspective, the little human being steps into the world - terrified, astonished, becoming silent, clinging to the familiar flowers, as if it wants to protect them from a sudden enemy attack.

Big, serious, succinct is the expression in the woodcut of the mother and her child - already rather mature in its compositional concentration. Nevertheless, that water colour showing the bleached debris of a boat falling apart ashore, mirroring the billowing dichotomy of heaven and earth, shows perhaps the most sovereign expression of the freedom of artistic ideality. The light of a thunderstorm inverts the brightness value: Dark sky elevates the water surface and dead woodwork to ghostly brightness. Thus, the external atmosphere of the object is painterly transformed until it is adequate to the interior one. This is the process of a real work of art. With great expectation we spot Anneliese Everts well on her way to this destination.“

48 Müller-Sohler, Carl. 26 November 1938. *Solinger und Remscheider Künstler stellen aus*. Exhibition announcement in the Stadtanzeiger / Solinger Tageblatt. After World War II, Carl Müller-Sohler published the book *Das Solinger Tageblatt. Eine Darstellung seiner Entwicklung von 1809 - 1945*, B. Boll, Solingen, 1950.

49 27 November 1938. *Charaktervolle Heimatkunst (Folk Art full of Character)*. Article in the Solinger Beobachter.

50 Dr. Messer, Hans. 21 July 1941. *Aus dem Solinger Kunstleben - Anneliese Everts stellt aus*. Article in the Solinger Tageblatt.

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Adolf Hitler ended his life on 30 April 1945. On the 8th of May 1945, World War II ended⁵¹ and the destructive dictatorship of the National Socialists was over.

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The political turn after the end of the Second World War did not only lead to a liberation of society, but also enabled the reblossoming of artistic creativity without suffocating constraints, and, above all, without the massive repression by the National Socialists. However, it needed a reorientation when faced with the ruins that the Nazi dictatorship had left culturally: Many important modernist artists had been banned from painting during the Nazi era. Many had fled abroad or, in their desperation, had chosen internal emigration. Others did not witness the end of the war, because they had lost their lives. Also by their own hand. A tragic example was the fate of the expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. More than 600 of his works had been removed from the museums in 1937 by the Nazis. One year later, the artist had committed suicide.⁵²

In the light of this deep wound left by the National Socialists in the art world as well as culturally, one can only speculate how Anneliese Everts experienced the end of the Second World War and the forthcoming new epoch. Her following intense search for her own imagery and, above all, her impressive productivity allow the conclusion, that the time from 1945 onwards was one she felt to be a decisive blow for her creativity. A turning point. She was now 37 years old.

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In 1946, Anneliese Everts became a member of the Bergische Kunstgenossenschaft Wuppertal, an art cooperative that was already founded in 1905 as an Interessengemeinschaft Bildender Künstler (an interest group of visual artists)⁵³, but was forbidden with the National Socialist assumption of power, since the works by the artists were considered to be “degenerated”. In 1947, she joined the Gemeinschaft Solinger Künstler (Community of Artists from Solingen) and, three years later, became a member of the Bundesverband Bildender Künstler Westfalen (Federal Association of artist Westphalia).

In this context, it is remarkable that, in 1945, Anneliese Everts had still considered herself as a commercial painter and commercial artist and not as a fine artist.⁵⁴ But this rather corresponded to her reality, since she had primarily carried out commissioned works or had created works, which showed technical experience but were lacking an artistic autonomy due to the prevailing creative vacuum during

51 On 2 September 1945, also Japan surrendered, and World War II was finally over.

52 Since 1918, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner lived in Davos, but did not feel safe there anymore during the Nazi dictatorship, since Davos was a „heartland of National Socialism in Switzerland“. (Karin Schick. *Wie starb Ernst Ludwig Kirchner?*, DIE ZEIT, 18.6.2009). It is known, that he was very afraid of the National Socialists, and also suffered from depressive phases. Still, one can only speculate about the reasons leading to his suicide, because he didn't leave any suicide note.

53 Source: Website of the Bergischen Kunstgenossenschaft e.V. Wuppertal.

54 Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

the Nazi period. In now joining the mentioned artists' association, she seemed to be eager to demonstrate, that she was very willing to strike a new path, with the intention to find and establish herself as a fine artist.

The freedom gained through the end of the Nazi era was at the same time connected with the challenge of developing an individual and independent visual language as an artist. An intense time of experimental work began. In the following years, Anneliese Everts must have dealt with the specific artistic movements of classical modernism and here in particular with the expressionists, cubists and also surrealists, since she then began to create works which showed a distinct reference to those styles.

From an art-historical point of view, this may have been a sole appropriation of the external form, since the revolutionary character, that had marked the works of classical modernism decades before, was missing. But for Anneliese Everts it was a radical break with her previous style and, above all, an approach to new forms of expression.

In some of her works, Anneliese Everts adopted the reduced, flat and woodcut-like worlds of forms of the expressionists and began to use strong, expressive and exaggerated colours like the formerly ostracised artists.



Anneliese Everts, „Summer Evening“, 1945-50

An example is the oil painting *Summer Evening*, presumably created between 1945-50, which shows a naked, young man in a sitting position who is turning his face to the setting sun and is dreamily playing the flute, with his eyes closed, while a pale blue bird is flying around his head. Night has already been

falling and is bathing the cube-like houses in the background as well as the ground in a warm glow of red. It is the time lapse between day and night, the hours of melancholy, of tranquility and enchantment.

The radical change in style, that Anneliese Everts had accomplished in just a few years, becomes particularly obvious in two works, each of which shows a mother and her child - a timeless motif belonging to the most prominent ones in the history of art.



Anneliese Everts, „Untitled“, around 1940



Anneliese Everts, „Untitled“, 1945-50

The naturalistic representation with modelled bodies, which still had characterised Anneliese Everts works in the years of war, is now replaced by a shift to hard-edge surfaces and geometric elements in the post-war period. The depicted figures are starting to break away from reality: the eyes of the mother are oversized, the faces appear like discs, and the body shapes are outlined by angular strokes. Despite the great differences in stylistic implementation, both works have one thing in common: one can sense the deep and intimate connection between mother and child.

Art is magic delivered from the lie of being the truth.

Theodor Adorno

The more Anneliese Everts turned away from an imitation of nature, the more she entered a world that revealed infinite freedom and inspired her to create works, that followed her own vision and her own perception of reality and in which she could express her soul.

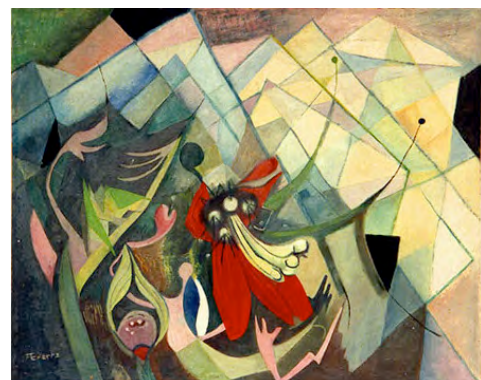
In post-war years, she then did not only experiment with expressionist elements of style, but also with cubistic expressions of forms⁵⁵, and created works, whose compositions followed their own inherent logic and less and less any naturalistic specifications. She disassembled reality into geometrical shapes and combined the squares, rectangles and triangles according to regularities immanent to the image instead of to actuality, whereby the works, in spite of the accompanying abstraction, gained vividness and vigour.



A.E., „Child with Doll“,
around 1950



A.E., „Image of a Child 01“,
around 1950



A.E., „Market Garden“, 1950-55

It is here striking, that, during her cubistic experiments, Anneliese Everts left human bodies as well as animals and plants mostly in their realistic form, as one can notice in her paintings *Child with Doll* (around 1950), *Image of a Child 01* (around 1950) und *Market Garden* (1950-55).

In these works, she dissolved spatial and architectural constructions, such as the greenhouses in the painting *Market Garden*, into a dynamic whirl of geometric shapes, or permeated the dress of the young girl in *Image of a Child 01* with hard-edged patterns, but excluded the people depicted and especially

⁵⁵ Cubism emerged around 1907 and is characterised by the fact, that reality is dissolved into geometric forms. As a result, cubism is one of the first stylistic direction that approached abstraction.
„The expressionists sought and found their subjective truth in the colour, the Cubists found it in the form.“ (in: Karl Ruhrberg, Manfred Schneckenburger, Christiane Fricke, Klaus Honnef. Ingo. F. Walther (Ed.). 2005. *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Volume 1, Malerei. TASCHEN GmbH.

their faces as well the plants from the cubistic deconstruction. And also the doll, which the child holds in its arm in the painting *Child with Doll* and which seems to receive all of the girls' affection, is portrayed with soft, round forms.

In using this stylistic break, Anneliese Everts might have intended to emphasise the contrast between living and dead matter. Or perhaps, as a lover of nature and subtle poet, she simply did not have the heart to dissolve living beings and organisms - the souled - into hard forms.

One thing is certain, however: With her turn towards a cubistic expression of forms, Anneliese Everts took a first step towards abstraction.

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Painting is arriving at a different place.

Franz Marc

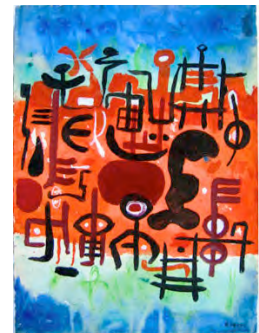
Night is Falling (1950-55). A minimalist-shaped, large-eyed, black bird sits in a green area and casts a dark purple shadow, while a bowl-like formed red crescent moon turns to the universe. A head-creature with thin sticky legs, as comic-like as the bird and positioned horizontally in the pictorial ground, smiles at the spectator, while a shadowy black character is walking into the depths of the blue background. Another figure is poising motionless in the green. Lines and abstract forms indicate life and structures and are merging to a mysterious composition in the centre of the painting. Night is falling and with it the world of dreams. Reality is whirled up, rearranged or disappears entirely.



A.E., „Night is Falling, 1950-55



A.E., „Zeichenwesen (Graphical Creatures)", 1950



A.E., „Untitled", 1950

While one can still recognise faces, facial expressions and - though already distinctly reduced - body forms in the painting *Night is Falling*, these characteristics of individuality completely vanish in the painting *Zeichenwesen (Graphical Creatures)* (1950). The interacting characters, which partly seem to dance without any head or body, are solely outlined by elatedly placed lines and indicate, that Anneliese

Everts here reached the boundaries to abstraction, which she finally exceeds in her painting *Untitled* (1950), since the compositional arrangement shown there is solely based on amorphous forms and minimalist structures, and does no longer reveal any relation to reality. The plastic element, the shaping of the bodies by the use of light and shadow, does no longer exist, just as any creation of a visual image stage based on perspective appliances.

Only the essence remains.

*

Since Anneliese Everts did not date the majority of her works in the post-war period, the chronological classification of her respective style experiments is solely based on estimations by the bereaved, which very much limits the description of a clear line of development. What is certain, though, is that her seeking for an own visual imagery was associated with strife and struggles, which, in addition to an approach to new forms of expression, occasionally led to a return to realism, as exemplified in the reed pen drawing *Schoolgirl* (1950-55).



Anneliese Everts, „Schoolgirl“, 1950-55

The seemingly contrary artistic approaches⁵⁶ could be due to the fact, that Anneliese Everts had received many private assignments in den 1950s⁵⁷, which perhaps occasionally made her follow the (stylistic) wishes of the clients. It is equally possible, that she consciously kept returning to realism, since

⁵⁶ Examples are expressionism, cubism and abstraction versus realism.

⁵⁷ Battenfeld, Beate. 2010. *75 Frauen - Solinger Persönlichkeiten*, [Ed.]: Bergischer Geschichtsverein Abt. Solingen e.V., Solingen.

it was the artistic direction in which she was trained and in which she felt safe and at home. A temporary pause before she again dedicated herself to the unknown.

*

In May 1954, Anneliese Everts traveled France with some friends and, apart from Paris, Marseille, St. Tropez and some other cities, also visited the community Vallauris, that was located in the southeast of the country and in which ceramics had been produced since antiquity⁵⁸. Around 1900, Vallauris had been regarded as the largest French manufacturer of utility ceramics, but most of the industrial pottery manufacturers had to be shut down by the end of the 1930s, due to, among other things, the emergence of cheaper metal kitchenware. Alternatively, handicraft businesses as well as artist's workrooms began to emerge, which then specialised in popular ceramic goods and artistic ceramics.⁵⁹

The latter met with increasing interest, also among artists who were not native to France. Picasso, who had already visited a pottery in Vallauris in 1936, settled in the community after World War II between 1947 and 1954⁶⁰. During this period of time, he created numerous ceramics such as plates, bowls, vases and figures, which were exhibited in the local Museum Grimaldi.

Anneliese Everts did not only visit various potteries in Vallauris, but also the Château Grimaldi.



On the way to the Museum Grimaldi | Photo by Anneliese Everts | found in her travel diary

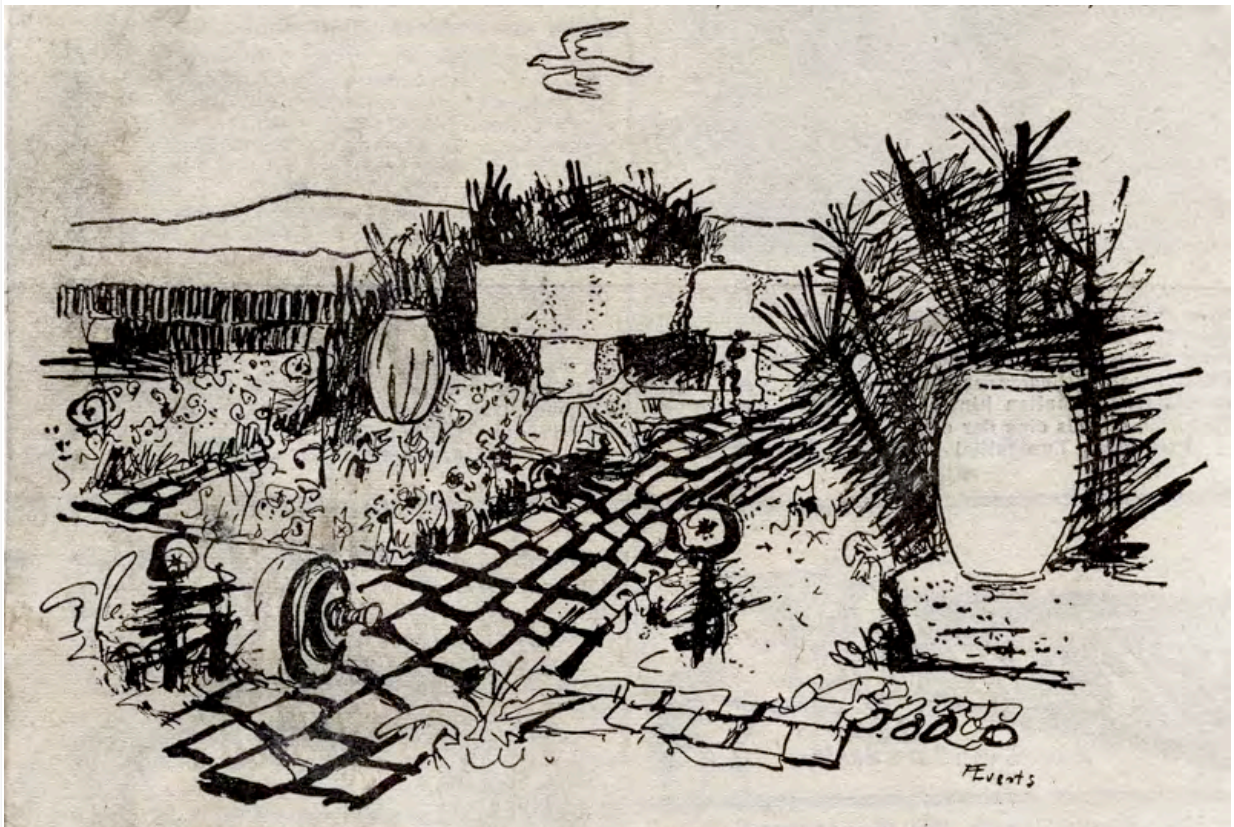
A few month later, she published a travel report on her visit to the French city in the Solinger Tageblatt.

58 Harald Theil: *Bild und Gefäß - Studien zu den Gefäßkeramiken Pablo Picassos*, Dissertation, 2007

59 Harald Theil: *Bild und Gefäß - Studien zu den Gefäßkeramiken Pablo Picassos*, Dissertation, 2007

60 Harald Theil: *Bild und Gefäß - Studien zu den Gefäßkeramiken Pablo Picassos*, Dissertation, 2007

The headline read *This is where Matisse, Dufy, and Picasso did Pottery*⁶¹, and a drawing, created by herself, supplemented the one-page article.



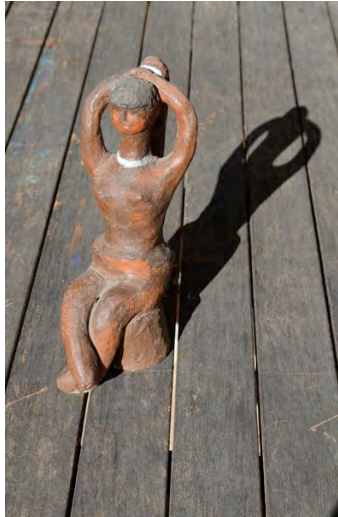
Anneliese Everts | accompanying drawing to the article *This is where Matisse, Dufy, and Picasso did Pottery*. 1955

In her travel report, Anneliese Everts did not only describe her impressions of the “pottery village”, but also Picasso's vessel ceramics and vases in the shape of animal figures, as well as bowls decorated with faun heads and bullfighting scenes, which were all presented in the midst of sarcophagi, urns and excavations at the Museum Grimaldi. This unusual presentation was due to the fact, that the former ancestral castle of the noble family had previously housed a museum of history and archeology, before the Museum Grimaldi was built in 1945.

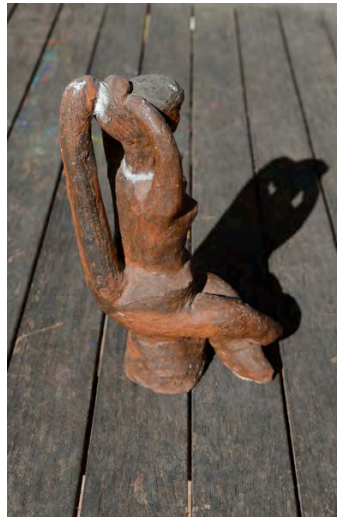
The journey to Vallauris seems to have inspired Anneliese Everts substantially, since, a few years later, she also began to experiment with clay and created in the course of that a variety of ceramics which turned some of her familiar motifs into a haptic experience.

Among other objects, she created the 23 cm high figure *Girl*, which in warm, reddish-brown tones shows a young woman in a sitting position, who, absorbed in herself and full of grace, is tying her hip-length hair back in a ponytail. The natural beauty of the girl is highlighted and underlined by the almost untreated surface of the clay and the discreet use of colour.

61 Anneliese Everts. 8 January 1955. *This is where Matisse, Dufy, and Picasso did Pottery - Between picturesque Streets, Urns and Sarcophagi*, Solinger Tageblatt.



A.E., „Girl“, 23 x 13 x 9 cm,
around 1960



lateral view



A.E., „Nausicaa“, woodcut, 1945-50

The clay figure brings to mind Anneliese Everts' woodcut *Nausicaa* (between 1945-50), which thematises the burgeoning love of a young woman. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Nausicaa falls in love with Odysseus, but he decides against her and returns to his homeland Ithaca and his wife Penelope. In both works, the portrayed body posture with raised arms epitomises an absent-minded play with the own appeal and charm, graceful abandon, yet also vulnerability.

An entirely different form of stylistic realisation becomes apparent in the plate *God of Fire*, which Anneliese Everts also created around 1960. In the centre, one sees the pulsating, powerful, blood-red face of the superhuman being, whose archaic-minimalistic shaped facial expression is emphasised with an ashen-pale white: The staring eyes lie under furiously puckered eyebrows and the circular mouth seems to spit fire.



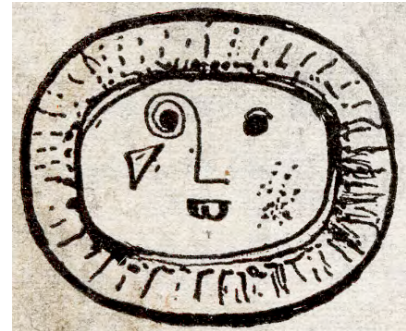
Anneliese Everts, „God of Fire“, Ø 27 cm, around 1960

A soot-black rim surrounds the angry-red face. It bears witness to burned matter and, at the same time, recalls the endless depth of the universe. It is a furious, destructive und mighty god.

By comparison, the *Sun-Moon* object looks almost childishly naive in its deliberately left imperfection. Soulfulness, enchantment and lightness. Two celestial bodies, considered by some to be an emblematic representation of the feminine and masculine principle, were here united by Anneliese Everts.



A.E., „Sun - Moon“, 20 x 20 cm, front / rear side, around 1960



A.E., illustration, 1955

Anneliese Everts used a similarly designed sun as a small complementary drawing to her article on Vallauris and Picasso's ceramics. It is unclear, whether she here sketched a work by Picasso, and her *Sun-Moon* ceramic, realised several years later, was a tribute to the famous artist, or whether the mentioned drawing only captured a typical regional motif.

As with her paintings, Anneliese Everts also pursued diverse stylistic approaches and techniques with her ceramics. While the sculpturing aspects were the main focus when creating her figures and objects, in other works the ceramics solely served as an alternative pictorial ground, similar to the use of canvas or paper. This is particularly true for some of her plates and tiles.

An example of this is the plate *Dancer*. While the *God of Fire* is characterised by elaborate facial expressions and clearly defined colour patches to underline his power and strength, the ceramic of the *Dancer* only serves as an underground material for Anneliese Everts' experiments with various colour glazes, which she used in a similar manner as in her water colours.

Symphonies of intertwining swirls of colour surround the soft contours of the young dancer. The vibrantly glowing colours are an expression of joie de vivre and lightheartedness.



Anneliese Everts, „Dancer“, Ø 26 cm, around 1960

Two further examples include the tiles *Sylvan Spirit* and *Two Dancers*, in which Anneliese Everts also worked primarily with the transparency and luminosity of the glazes: Lightness, spontaneity and the tolerance of imperfection are leading to an even stronger emphasis of the ensouled.



A.E., „Sylvan Spirit“, tile, 15 x 15 cm, around 1960



A.E., „Two Dancers“, tile, 15 x 15 cm, around 1960

A yearning for wide open spaces. Escaping from rigid structures. Feeling one's own senses and indulging in the charms of nature. Anneliese Everts seemed to have found all of this on her numerous journeys. Again and again, she was particularly fascinated by the ocean, and the boats which seem to sail into infinity. In the light of the south, a light seemingly penetrating the colours and evoking their brilliant glow.

Her journeys were always a source of inspiration for Anneliese Everts' artistic work motivating her to create numerous paintings, water colours as well as drawings and woodcuts, in which she captured her impressions. The works, however different they were from a technical point of view, indicate, from 1950 onwards, an increasing detachment from the visible world towards a perceived reality. The water colours, in particular, enabled her to capture the ethereal effect of the light, which set a shimmering airiness above the scenes.



A.E., „Southern Sun“, oil on hard fibre, 1950-55



A.E., „In the South“, oil on hard fibre, 1955



A.E., „In the South“, water colour, around 1955



A.E., „In Provence“, water colour, around 1961

*

*I try to show the essence of things,
try to strip away their ballast and attempt to visualise the invisible.
I do not paint views of landscapes and objects,
but faces and dreams of a landscape.
Not the visible, but the essential.
I use abstraction, to expose the hidden and subtle content.
I'm looking for a new reality.*

Anneliese Everts, 1957

In 1960, Anneliese Everts again undertook educational journeys to Paris and Italy and spent some time on Capri. The following year, she traveled to Provence and, in 1962, to Mallorca. Her last trip took Anneliese Everts in 1965 to Rhodes, where she visited Kritinia, an old village located in the mountains. During these stays in the south, the artist created numerous water colours with the main focus on *light and stones*. She here did not only deal with the instantaneous appearance of the stones under certain light conditions, but also with the form-dissolving effect of the light. Abstraction. The resulting works are stylistically autonomous, powerful and at the same time accompanied by lightness, and it seems, as if Anneliese Everts, after a long search, did not only come home as an artist, but also as a human being. In May 1960 she noted in her diary: *„It has begun yesterday, and it was terrible as well as beautiful. What? Life.“* One year later she added: *„If one is in a state of perfect harmony internally as well as externally, it contains a happiness and cheerfulness, that brings all creative forces to the scene. You are invulnerable in this state, you feel the power to create the impossible, you are able to playfully perform the process of creativity. An almost wild joy for the beauty of the earth is conquering the mind.“*



Anneliese Everts, „Provençal Sheets of Paper VI“, 1961



Anneliese Everts, „Provençal Sheets of Paper ?“, 1961

In her water colour series *Provençal Sheets of Paper* from 1961, the abstracted stones are captured in soft transitions with a gentle stroke of the brush, they glow in a strong yellow or in a rich blue, violet or red, as if they were inspirited beings, who by the power of light lose their hardness and heaviness, who are brought to life and begin to float.

As shiny as the glaze of the blue bugs.

The nymphs are tittering in their white beauty.

Black, brown, violet stones, pink and blue, as hard as steel, and brittlely cracking from the lightest touch.

And the light is piercing through them, swirling around them, evoking their transparency and dissolving their heaviness.⁶²



Anneliese Everts, „Provençal Sheets of Paper VI.“, water colour, 1961

62 Extracts from Anneliese Everts' travel diary.

Anneliese Everts died in Solingen in 1967. Five years earlier, she had been elected to the board of the Bergische Kunstgenossenschaft (a local art cooperative). The artist left an extensive and decidedly varied oeuvre, which includes about 250 oil paintings, 400 water colours and the same amount of drawings. In addition, she had created about 200 prints as well as collages and ceramics.

She was the first major female artist in Solingen and her works were shown in numerous cities in Germany⁶³, as well as in Venice, Paris⁶⁴, New York⁶⁵ and Houston⁶⁶, Texas. Furthermore, they are represented in the public collections of the Kunstmuseum Solingen, the Stadt-Sparkasse of Solingen, the Von der Heydt Museum Wuppertal and also in private collections. Even after her death, Anneliese Everts' artistic work is honoured, inter alia, in the context of recurring memorial exhibitions initiated by the city of Solingen.

Anneliese Everts was a sensitive and poetic artist who was fighting for her art and felicity.

In February 1961, she noted in her diary: *„It is often only moments when one lives in paradise - when one loves life more fervently and wilder in all its vigour and grandeur. But these moments make it worthwhile to have lived and to be a human being, even if one is banned from paradise again and again.“*



Anneliese Everts, „Untitled“, water colour, around 1965

63 Examples here include the cities of Aachen, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Essen, Hagen, Hamburg, Hannover, Herford, Cologne, Leverkusen, Remscheid and Wuppertal.

64 The information (exhibitions in Paris and Venice) originates from the artist (CV from 1966).

65 With the help of a contact person, Anneliese Everts tried to sell her works in the USA. Then, in 1956, the New York gallery *the little studio, Ltd.* offered three of her paintings for sale. However, no purchaser was found.

66 *Contemporary German Graphics*, 1956, group exhibition, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas, USA

*

A pulsing red body nestles up against the old, gnarled trunk of an olive tree.

Full of dedication and trust.

Amongst the realms and spheres.

When I look at the water colour series *Metamorphosis of the Olive Tree* from 1962, I picture Anneliese Everts uniting with nature and becoming one with it.

Transition.

A seeking soul finds its salvation.



Anneliese Everts, „Metamorphosis of the Olive Tree“, water colour, 1962

*