

DORA KOSTER

Dora Koster created texts of great power. Her language was wild, untamed, direct and poetically powerful. She wrote and spoke incessantly — literature was a necessity of life for her.

Her debut work, 'Nichts geht mehr' (Nothing Works Anymore, 1980), in which she recounted her childhood as a child in care and a servant, as well as her experiences as a prostitute, became an unexpected success. Around 25,000 copies were sold. But success also brought conflict: her royalties were seized, legal disputes with publishers ensued, and her anger at the literary world grew. Koster's uncompromising attitude and her social background made her an outsider in a scene that celebrated her on the one hand but shunned her on the other.

Her later books — poetry collections and prose texts — were published by various small publishers, often self-published. She wrote with an unmistakable voice, oscillating between tenderness and anger, between the cosmos and the street. Her themes: love, betrayal, social hypocrisy, survival. Her best texts are poetic, vivid and sharply witty.

Dora Koster was deeply rooted in the Zurich scene of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1981, she ran for office on the list of the youth movement 'Schnitz und Drunder' and listed her occupation as 'whore'. As a cultural creator, she was simultaneously a writer, performer, organiser and seller of her own works.

Her life was marked by contradictions: creative energy and self-destruction, generosity and anger, closeness and mistrust. She moved between milieu, art and politics — unwavering, stubborn, often on the edge of what was reasonable.

She remained a controversial figure in society. Her uncompromising attitude led to conflicts with publishers,

authorities and funding institutions. Nevertheless, she was an important voice for literary and social marginalisation in Switzerland, an author who challenged bourgeois cultural institutions and blurred the boundaries between life and art.

In her later years, she became increasingly reclusive, suffering from poor health, but continued to write. Dora Koster died in Zurich in 2017.

She left behind no traces of compromise, but a contradictory, powerful body of work — testimony to a life between resistance, vulnerability and an unconditional desire for expression. Text: Based on Stefan Howald, 2018, abridged and revised

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