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In memoriam Elisabeth Biasio (1941–2022)

Ilaria Zorzan, Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

Elisabeth Biasio, a distinguished cultural anthropologist and long-serving research assistant and curator at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich (UZH), passed away on 21 June 2022. Born in Zurich in 1941, Biasio initially trained as a medical laboratory assistant and later pursued a correspondence course to earn her Matura in 1970. After completing her secondary education at

AKAD in 1970, Biasio continued her studies at the University of Zurich from 1972 to 1978. There, she focused on cultural anthropology, psychology, and the history of religion, learning from esteemed professors such as K. H. Henking, L. Löffler, D. von Uslar, and V. Maag. Biasio graduated from the University of Zurich in 1978, presenting a master's thesis on the intriguing subject of *Masks and Boys' Initiation among the Yaka, Suku, and Tshokwe in the Congo Region.* Biasio's passion for cultural studies and museum curation drove her to key roles at the University of Zurich's prestigious Ethnographic Museum, where she made lasting contributions to the preservation and study of global cultures. In 1974, while still completing her studies, she began working part-time as an assistant at the museum, marking the start of her lifelong dedication to cultural heritage. From 1974 to 1979, Biasio worked as a freelancer and assistant, contributing her expertise in various regions. Her deep knowledge of social and cultural anthropology and commitment to the field led her in 1979 to the position of Assistant Curator and from 1986 until her retirement in 2006 as Curator in charge of Ethiopia, North Africa, and Middle East department. In retirement, Biasio remained deeply committed to cultural preservation and was frequently consulted on projects related to cultural anthropology and museum studies, continuing to be a cherished member of the UZH community.

Biasio made a lasting contribution to the study of Ethiopian art history. She approached different cultures with respect and helped build a deeper understanding of human cultural diversity. During her tenure, Biasio curated numerous exhibitions and conducted in-depth research on the cultural heritage of the regions where she specialized. Her work contributed to the academic field and enriched the museum's collections, leaving a lifelong legacy. As a cultural anthropologist, Biasio was driven by a deep scientific curiosity, and she ventured to remote regions that enriched her research and her personal life.

Biasio's fieldwork was integral to her extensive research in Ethiopian art and culture, as well as her studies in the Negev region. Her scholarly pursuits began in the 1980s with an investigation into 'Volksmalerei im sozialistischen Äthiopien' in 1986, where she conducted interviews with prominent Ethiopian painters, including Wändəmmu Wänd, ʿAlämu Ḫaylä Maryam, *Qäññ Geta* Gäbrä Ḫaylu, and Bərhanu Yəmänu, during a five-week stay in Addis Abäba. These interviews laid the foundation for her understanding of the artistic movements within socialist Ethiopia. Three years later, in 1989, Biasio continued her fieldwork with more artist interviews, this time engaging with Zärihun Yätəmgeta (= Zerihun Yetmgeta), Wärqu Gošu (= Worku Goshu), and Gərmay Hiwät (= Girmay Hiwet). She spent three weeks in Addis Abäba again, documenting the creative output and the unique perspectives of these influential artists. Her work in the early 1990s focused on documenting the biographies of artists, further expanding her research in Addis Abäba with an in-depth study of their lives and artistic journeys. This

work, conducted over six weeks in 1993, was an effort to understand the historical and cultural context of the artists' contributions. Between 1994 and 1998, Biasio shifted her focus to the Bedouin of the Negev, where she spent eighteen weeks researching material culture and changes in craftwork. Biasio's return to Ethiopia between 1999 and 2001 allowed her to continue her research on Ethiopian history, specifically focusing on the Ethiopian collection of Alfred Ilg, the renowned figure who served at the court of Emperor Mənilək II. She spent six weeks in Ethiopia, documenting the collection and furthering her understanding of the cultural exchanges during this period. In the early 2000s, Biasio continued her research into modern Ethiopian painting, conducting studies on 'Magische Rollen in der modernen äthiopischen Malerei' in 2002 and interviewing artists on the role of magic in contemporary Ethiopian art. She spent two weeks in Addis Abäba for this work. The same year, she also explored the life and impact of one of Ethiopia's most famous painters, Gäbrä Krəstos Dästa (= Gebre Kristos Desta). This study involved interviewing artists who had studied under him, providing deeper insight into his influence as a teacher. In 2004, Biasio's work took her back to the study of contemporary Ethiopian painting in traditional styles. She spent three weeks in Addis Abäba, where she focused on souvenir shops, the Ethiopian Tourist Trading Enterprise, and two prominent artists involved in the preservation of these traditional forms. Her work in 2009 involved interviews with the Ethiopian artist Getaččäw Yosef (= Getachew Yossef), a key figure in the Ethiopian art scene. During her two-week stay in Addis Abäba, Biasio documented his biography and artistic personality, capturing numerous works of Getaččäw that were also photographed by Peter R. Gerber. This research offered a deep dive into Getaččäw's impact on contemporary Ethiopian art. In 2013, Biasio collaborated with Peter R. Gerber on research related to the return of the crown of Käfa from Switzerland to Ethiopia. Their work, which included research in archives in Bern, Zurich, and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University, was presented at the 9th International Conference on the History of Art and Architecture in Ethiopia at the University of Vienna. The research provided valuable insights into the restitution of cultural heritage and Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to reclaim significant cultural artifacts. Her most recent work in 2015, again with Peter R. Gerber, involved interviews with the artist Təbäbä Tärfa (=Tibebe Terffa). This work focused on documenting his artistic biography and personality, which led to the presentation 'The Artist Tibebe Terffa – From Ethiopia to the World' at the 10th International Conference on the History of Art and Architecture in Ethiopia, held at Mekelle University. During a three-week stay in Addis Abäba, Biasio's research contributed to the growing recognition of Təbäbä's significant impact on Ethiopian and global art. She had hoped to return to the Negev with her partner, Peter R. Gerber, to revisit the Bedouin she wrote about in her 1998 book and exhibition. However, the resurgence of COVID-19 and the return of the cancer

she had battled since 2012 interfered with these plans. She is survived by a close circle of friends and colleagues who admired her intellect, dedication, and kindness. Biasio's contributions to cultural anthropology, museum studies, and cultural preservation will continue to be felt for generations to come.

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In memoriam David. A Turton (1940–2023)

Echi Christina Gabbert, Lands of the Future Initiative

David Turton opened spaces with his research, his engagement, his teachings, and his relentless fight for justice, peace, and understanding. Spaces to explore, lasting well beyond his passing. He created supportive environments for grounded and