



**Drawing 85 in Folder 15, National Gallery,
Budapest, Hungary**



**Drawing 90 in Folder 15,
National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary**

**In Search of and Obsessed
with the Self**

**A Selection from the Self-
Portraits of
Ilka Gedő
(1921-1985)**

**Dávid Bíró is the son of Ilka
Gedő. He has the copyright of
all the drawings published in
this selection. This statement
applies also to those works on
paper that are in public
collections.
(Budapest March 10, 2021)**

Compiled by Dávid Bíró

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1. Preface: In Search of and Obsessed with the Self

The Hungarian painter and draughtswoman Ilka Gedő (26 May 1921, Budapest – 19 June 1985) drew incessantly even as a child. She began her art studies with Viktor Erdei. Prevented from being admitted to the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts because of the anti-Jewish laws enacted in 1938, she enrolled in the private drawing schools of Tibor Gallé and István Örkényi-Strasser. While her early mentors became victims of the Holocaust, Gedő miraculously escaped a similar fate, and her 1944 sketchbooks of children and old people from the Budapest Ghetto comprise a moving and powerful pictorial diary. By 1945, when she was eventually admitted to the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, Gedő was already a mature artist with a pictorial language of her own. She therefore left the Academy within a year and, and up to 1949 carried on almost exclusively with works on paper. Based on the digitized oeuvre catalogue of the artist, the number of Ilka Gedő's drawings in the folders exceeds three thousand, and the number of juvenilia drawings is around 1700. The number of drawings produced between 1944 and 1949 is 740, while in the public collections there are 385 drawings. The total number of self-portraits on paper is about 370. There are eight self-portraits in oil.

From 1949 on she stopped creating art for fifteen years. This is partly due to the the onset of Communist dictatorship and partly due to the lack of friends who could have supported her art in Ilka Gedő's own subculture. But the main reason for stopping artistic activities was the fact that Ilka Gedő did not want to become an imitator of the artists of the classical avant-garde.¹

In the period during which she stopped creating art, she intensively studied art history and colour theory, making extensive notes and translations of her readings. In 1965, following a studio exhibition of her drawings, Gedő started to work again, initially using pastel, then oil on canvas. The year she spent painting in Paris (1969–1970) gave a further impetus to her work, and during her second creative period Gedő completed one hundred and fifty paintings.

Gedő died at the age of 64, a few months before her discovery abroad. The scene of the breakthrough was Glasgow where the Compass Gallery presented her paintings and drawings in 1985. This was followed by a major retrospective at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre at the turn of 1989-1990.

¹ The recognition that the path that until then had been regarded as negotiable (to put it another way, the further pursuit of classical modernism) could only lead towards cramping up, or merely add to the sterile waste-tip of epigonism. Ilka Gedő too was one of those for whom a glimpse of this cul-de-sac signalled an order to halt. To be sure, it would not have been as dramatic, or as radical as this suggests. Equally, there may well have been other reasons—personal or family considerations, for instance—for falling silent. Yet looking back from the perspective of half a century, one cannot help feeling that it was some major ethical impulse that led her to lay down her pencil. (...) I feel that Ilka Gedő's withdrawal was an act that was made within the artistic arena. On reaching a point beyond which the sole path open to her lay in the direction of sterile planning or proliferation of copycats, she turned away and fell silent, because that was the only way she could remain true to herself and to the world of her earlier drawings." Géza Pernecky: "In the Rose Garden/ The Art of Ilka Gedő" *Holmi*, Vol. 45, Autumn 2004, pp. 32-33

Ilka Gedő's thematic series (Ghetto Drawings, Ganz Factory Drawings, Self-Portraits, Pregnant Self-Portraits, and Tables) won her worldwide renown and her work can now be found in major museums throughout the world: Albertina, Vienna; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin; Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig; Israel Museum, Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem; British Museum; Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Jewish Museum, New York; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Cleveland Museum of Arts. In Hungary, she is represented at the King St. Stephen Museum, Székesfehérvár, which had the distinction of mounting the first survey of her work in 1980; the Jewish Museum, Budapest, which showed a large selection of the Ghetto drawings in 1995; and the National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary, which held a retrospective exhibition of the oeuvre in 2004.

There are 335 drawings in public collections (National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary: 26; British Museum: 15; Israel Museum: 6; Hungarian Jewish Museum: 12; Jewish Museum in New York: 3; Yad Vashem Art Museum: 144; Berlin Kupferstichkabinett: 8; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf: 8; Albertina, Vienna: 15, Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH): 10; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo: 3; Metropolitan Museum, New York: 3; Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig (Haum), Braunschweig, Germany 21; Cleveland Museum of Art: 3, MoMA, New York: 7).

2. Viewing the Drawings of Ilka Gedő with the Eyes of a Museum Curator

The curator tried to unravel the secret of these drawings. "Are these drawings the manifestations of realism?" he asked. One could easily challenge this view, because already a superficial glance at these drawings would show them to have been drawn incorrectly. The eye of an expert would immediately recognise the distorted proportions. When, for example, the lines were running upwards, they yielded to a vertical magnetism, and generally the lines were lengthened. When they slid out sideways, they were casting loops, and started to wave, and sooner or later they petered out into dense and mysterious shadings. But because of this, the figures did not, for example, become simply more gothic. Rather, they became bodiless in a dreamlike manner. But even this observation seemed to be incorrect, because sometimes these figures revealed that they could collapse under their own weight. Finally, the curator, recognised that, in addition to the vertical forces, there are gravitational forces in these drawings that pointed to the depths, to the third dimension located behind the drawings.

It seemed as if there were an exit behind each drawing. However, these back doors were closed or they have been deleted with rubber. Because of this, the figures appeared at the sides of the drawings, as the greatest part of the space shown remained empty. It seemed as if this emptiness permeated the figures that sought refuge at the sides of the paper in the manner of a draught.

(...)

The avant-garde of the 20th century began, as a matter of fact, when the artists abandoned the safe harbours that had been in existence since the Renaissance, and started to face the dangers that rendered their human and artistic existence fragile. The collection and imitation of the wooden sculptures of African peoples and those of Oceania, the paradox inexplicableness of geometric presentation or adventurous journeys into the subconscious, all these attempts were, in fact, experiments that brought these artists into a near-death condition. This is at least sure in the aesthetic and moral sense, as the society surrounding these artistic attempts regarded these attempts to be absurd and even immoral. When, in due course, some really sinful things did happen, then the artists no longer needed these artificial means of creation. Every-day reality had become so much absurd that its support systems simply collapsed, and on the reflection of every-day phenomena nothingness and death had become visible.

Ilka Gedő came to experience such situations already in her youth. The folders show those men and women, together with Ilka Gedő, to have been in this dangerously fragile situation. What is interesting here, is that Ilka Gedő as a graphic artist, did not need the isms to create something which makes you hold your breath when viewing her works on paper. In these works on paper no acrobatics is needed, because tension becomes unbearable even without acrobatic tricks. It is enough to open a folder, and one can see this immediately. Géza Perneczky: "A rajzmappa" (The Folders of Drawings), *Holmi*, Volume 19, No. 8 August 2007, pp. 1042-1043.

3. Works in Public Collections

- National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary, Budapest, Hungary
- Hungarian Jewish Museum, Budapest, Hungary
- King St. Stephen's Museum, Székesfehérvár, Hungary
- Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, UK
- Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Jewish Museum, New York, USA
- Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings), Berlin, Germany
- Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, USA
- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA
- Albertina, Vienna, Austria
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
- Duke Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany
- Cleveland Museum of Fine Arts, Ohio, USA
- MoMA, New York, USA

4. Solo Exhibitions and Retrospectives

- 1965: *Sudio Exhibition*
- 1980: *Gedő Ilka festőművész kiállítása* (Exhibition of Ilka Gedő), King St. Stephen Museum Székesfehérvár, Hungary
- 1982: *Ilka Gedő*, chamber exhibition of the Budapest Palace of Arts at the exhibition venue of Dorottya utca
- 1985: *Ilka Gedő (1921-1985)*, Gallery of the Szentendre Art Colony
- 1985: *Ilka Gedő (1921-1985) Retrospective Memorial Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings*, Compass Gallery, Glasgow
- 1987: *Ilka Gedő (1921-1985)*, Palace of Art, Budapest
- 1989: *Gedő Ilka festőművész rajzai* (The Drawings of Ilka Gedő), the Museum of Szombathely, Hungary
- 1989: *Ilka Gedő: Paintings, Pastels, Drawings, 1932-1985*, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow
- 1994: *Ilka Gedő (1921-1985)*, Janos Gat Gallery, New York
- 1995: *Ilka Gedő (1921-1985) Drawings and Pastels*, Shepherd Gallery, New York
- 2001: *Gedő Ilka rajzai 1948-1949-ből (Drawings by Ilka Gedő from the Years, 1948-1949)*, Municipal Picture Gallery and the Kiscelli Múzeum
- 2003: *Ilka Gedő*, Gallery of Raiffeisen Bank, Budapest
- 2004-2005: *Gedő Ilka (1921-1985) festőművész kiállítása* (Memorial Exhibition of Ilka Gedő /1921-1985/), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary
- 2006: *Könnye kovászba hull--Gedő Ilka (1921-1985) kiállítása ("Weep Bitter Tears into the Dough!" Exhibition of Ilka Gedő /1921-1985/)*, Collegium Hungaricum, Berlin
- 2013: *Ilka Gedő*, the Lobby of the Hungarian National Theatre in Budapest

5. Group Exhibitions (a Selection)

- 1940: *Az OMIKE második kiállítása* (Second Exhibition of OMIKE, the Hungarian Jewish Educational Association), Jewish Museum, Budapest
- 1943 *Az OMIKE ötödik kiállítása* (Fifth Exhibition of OMIKE, the Hungarian Jewish Educational Association), Jewish Museum, Budapest
- 1942: *Szabadság és a nép* (*Freedom and the People*), the Headquarters of the Metalworkers' Trade Union, Budapest
- 1945: *A Szociáldemokrata Párt Képzőművészeinek Társasága és meghívott művészek kiállítása* (The Exhibition of the Society of Artists of the Social Democratic Party and of Invited Artists), Ernst Museum, Budapest
- 1947: *A Magyar Képzőművészek Szabad Szervezete II. Szabad Nemzeti Kiállítása* (The Second Free National Exhibition of the Free Organization of Hungarian Artists), Municipal Gallery of Budapest
- 1964: *Szabadság és a nép, 1934-1944* (The Group of Socialist Artists, 1934-1944), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary, Memorial Exhibition
- 1995: *Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey*, Jewish Museum, New York
- 1996: *From Mednyánszky to Gedő—A Survey of Hungarian Art*, Janos Gat Gallery
- 1995: *Áldozatok és gyilkosok/Gedő Ilka gettó-rajzai és Román György háborús bűnösök népbírósági tárgyalásán készült rajzai/ Victims and Perpetrators* (Ilka Gedő's Ghetto Drawings and György Román's Drawings at the War Criminal People's Court Trials), Hungarian Jewish Museum, Budapest
- 1996: *Victims and Perpetrators /Ilka Gedő's Ghetto Drawings and György Román's Drawings at the War Criminal Trials*, Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem
- 1997-1998: *Diaszpóra és művészet* (Diaspora and Art), Hungarian Jewish Museum, Budapest
- 1998: *A Levendel-gyűjtemény* (The Levendel Collection), Municipal Museum of Szentendre
- 1999: *Voices from Here and There (New Acquisitions in the Departments of Prints and Drawings)*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem
- 2000: *Directions, Fall Season*, Janos Gat Gallery, New York
- 2002: *20. századi magyar alternatív műhelyiskolák* (Alternative Hungarian Workshop Schools of the 20th Century), the joint exhibition of the Lajos Kassák und the Viktor Vasarely Museums
- 2003: *A zsidó nő* (The Jewish Woman), Hungarian Jewish Museum, Budapest
- 2003: *Nineteenth Century European Paintings Drawings and Sculpture*, Shepherd Gallery, New York
- 2003: *Das Recht des Bildes: Jüdische Perspektiven in der modernen Kunst* (The Right of the Image: Jewish Perspectives in Modern Art), Museum Bochum

- 2004: *Az elfelejtett holocaustt* (The Forgotten Holocaust), Palace of Art, Budapest
- 2005: *Der Holocaust in der bildenden Kunst in Ungarn* (The Holocaust in Fine Arts in Hungary), Collegium Hungaricum, Berlin
- 2014: *A Dada és szürrealizmus. Magritte, Duchamp, Man Ray, Miró, Dalí. Válogatás a jeruzsálemi Izrael múzeum gyűjteményéből* (Dada and Surrealism. Magritte, Duchamp, Man Ray, Miró, Dalí. A Selection from the Collections of the Israel Museum), joint exhibiton of the Israel Museum and the National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary, Budapest
- 2016: *Kunst aus dem Holocaust*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin
- 2019: *In bester Gesellschaft--Ausgewählte Neuerwerbungen des Berliner Kupferstichkabinetts, 2009-2019* (In the Best Company--Selected New Acquisitions of the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, 2009-2019), Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings), Berlin

Group Exhibition Catalogues

1. *Reform, alternatív és progresszív rajziskolák (1896-1944)*, (Reform, Alternative and Progressive Drawing Schools), Budapest, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, 2003
2. István Hajdu: „The Work of Ilka Gedő”, pp. 85-106 In: *The Jewess—Exhibition at the Jewish Museum of Hungary*, Budapest, Jewish Museum and Archives of Hungary, 1992
3. Hans Günter Golinski és Sepp-Hiekisch Pickard (szerk): *Das Recht des Bildes*, Bochum, 2003, a drawing on page 21 and biographical info
4. Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg Walter Schmerling (Eds.): *Kunst aus dem Holocaust*, Köln, Wienand Verlag, 2016; there are three drawings in the volume by Ilka Gedő
5. Thomas Döring & Jochen Luckhardt: *Meisterzeichnungen aus dem Braunschweiger Kupferstichkabinett*, Dresden, Sandstein Verlag, 2017; there is a drawing by Ilka Gedő on page 18
6. *In bester Gesellschaft Ausgewählte Erwerbungen des Berliner Kupferstichkabinetts 2009-2019*, Herausgeber: Andreas Schalhorn, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 2019. (A drawing by Ilka Gedő on page 52)

6. Juvenilia Self-Portraits

At the age of 17, she travelled to a mountain village called *Bakonybél*. She spent a few weeks at the house of the elementary school teacher of the local school. On 2 July 1938 she wrote to her mother: *“My dear Mother / I am here, and thanks God I can say that we have a really wonderful and simple life here. It is a pleasure for me to watch this life, but I can also do what I want to. Yesterday afternoon was spent with packing and looking around, and, like the first afternoon, it was long. I and my very young and lovely roommates slept well at night. There is a five-year-old boy with his seven-year-old sister and an eleven-year old girl with her sister aged 8. I had breakfast very early at five thirty and then I walked into the village. The village has broad streets and clean houses and all around you can see the sloping fields at whose edge already the «jungle» starts. I could see the trees of the abbey park only behind the park fence, and the large-sized croft with huge stalls is also behind the fence. Two girl children led me to the potato field in the vicinity, where I drew a woman hoeing weeds. I came home with her; she spoke about the owls of which there are very many here. (She has lived in a manor for 18 years, and whole groups of owls are attracted by light.) I’m writing this letter in the afternoon: this is the time of rest and I’m writing, while I’m sitting on my «nice» white bed. My things are in my suitcase under the bed and there was ample room in the wardrobe for the other things. I have already been to the open-air swimming pool; and never in my life have I enjoyed water so much as today. Our host, Márk Bakonyvári is a nice young chap of marriageable age. But he is good-willed to people. Our house is at the very end of the village. The final part of the voyage was very beautiful. The other parts were insignificant, the only exception being the town of Székesfehérvár. The part around the church is quite old and you can see quite a lot of beautiful horse-drawn carriages and peasants with a swaggering walk. Aunt Vali asked me to tell her how long I would stay, because there is someone to replace me if I wanted to leave and she would have to inform her. I replied that I would definitely stay for another two weeks. To be sure, that does not necessarily mean that another four weeks could also be possible.”*

She prepares a large number of drawings (Folder 40) and she writes to her parents almost on a daily basis. On 4 July 1938 she writes: *“I already know a lot more about things here than yesterday. Behind the house and beyond the bridge there are meadows and a lot of things to draw, you do not have to walk far to draw. The wheat harvest will start in two weeks. Then I will really have a lot to draw. But even until then I can find people hoeing the weeds or peasant kids. If you walk through the village at about three o’clock, it is completely deserted. At half past six, however, the hay carts are coming through the streets and perched on them you can really see very good drawing models. I have never seen a peasant in the streets during the day. Everybody is working. They say there is so much work that everyone who is not lazy can make a living. There is also some charcoal making going on and lime burning deep down in the middle of the forest. People say that at night you can see the smoke above the forest and, in the case of lime burning, the flame. I’ve only brought two aquarelle papers, you could send some of them along with the apron and the strong*

drawing pins that Lenke is going to send anyway. (Granulated drawing paper: 4 fillérs. It is surely available everywhere.)”



Drawing 12 of Folder 37, 1939, pencil, paper, 150 x 163 mm, marked lower right. „1939”, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_18_M37_012.jpg



Drawing 13 from Folder 37, 1939, pencil, paper, 338 x 209 mm, marked lower right: „1939”, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_19_M37_013.jpg



Self-Portrait, around 1940, pencil, paper, 452 x 287 mm, private collection, exhibited as item 102 at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_102_\(MNG_kiallitas_20\).jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_102_(MNG_kiallitas_20).jpg)



Drawing 2 from Folder 21, 1938, pencil, paper, 236 x 215 mm

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/21/images/Gedo_M21_002.jpg



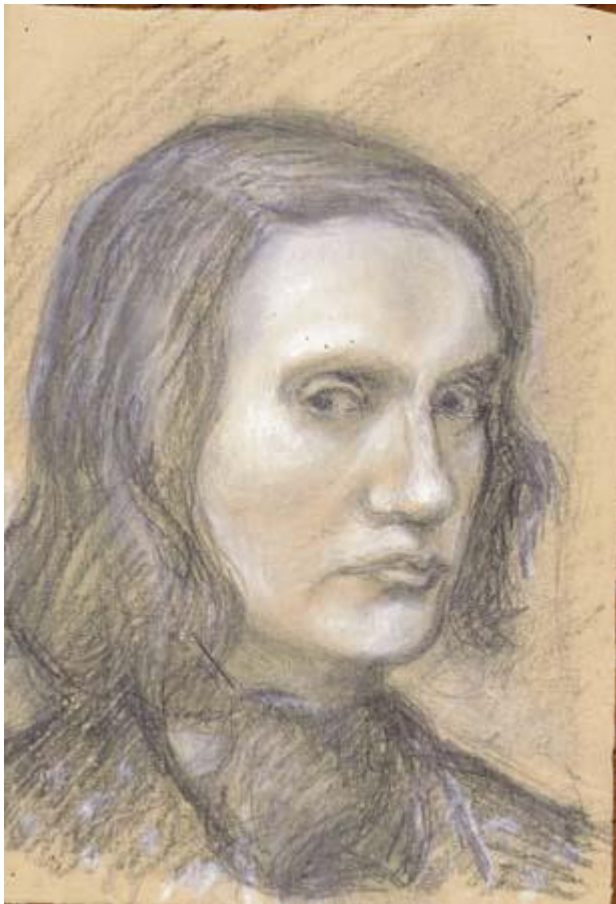
Drawing 3 from Folder 21, 1938, pencil, paper, 236 x 215 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/21/images/Gedo_M21_003.jpg



Drawing 4 from Folder 21, 1938, pencil, paper, 236 x 215 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/21/images/Gedo_M21_004.jpg



Drawing 1 from Folder 37, 1938, black, brown and crimson chalks, 252 x 173 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_001.jpg



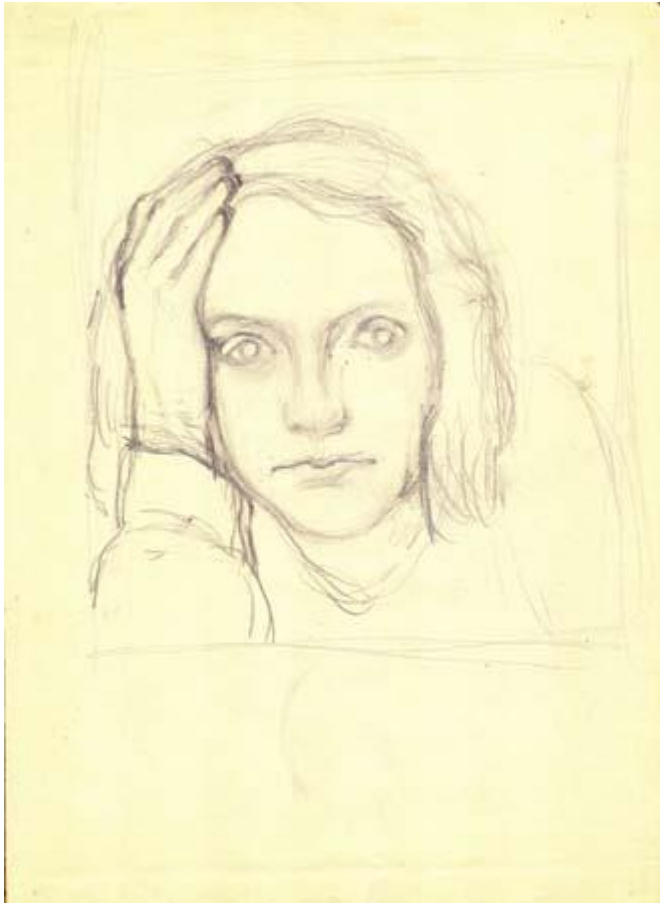
Darwing 2 of Folder 37, 1941, black chalk, paper, 214 x 184, mm, marked upper right: „1941?“, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_002.jpg



Drawing 3 of Folder 37, 1938, 213 x141 mm, charcoal, paper, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_003.jpg



Drawing 4 of Folder 37, 1938, 303 x 210 mm, pencil, paper, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_004.jpg



Drawing 5 of Folder 37, 1938, 283 x 221 mm, coal, paper, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_005.jpg



Drawing 6 of Folder 37, 1938, pencil, coal, paper, 313 x 221 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_006.jpg



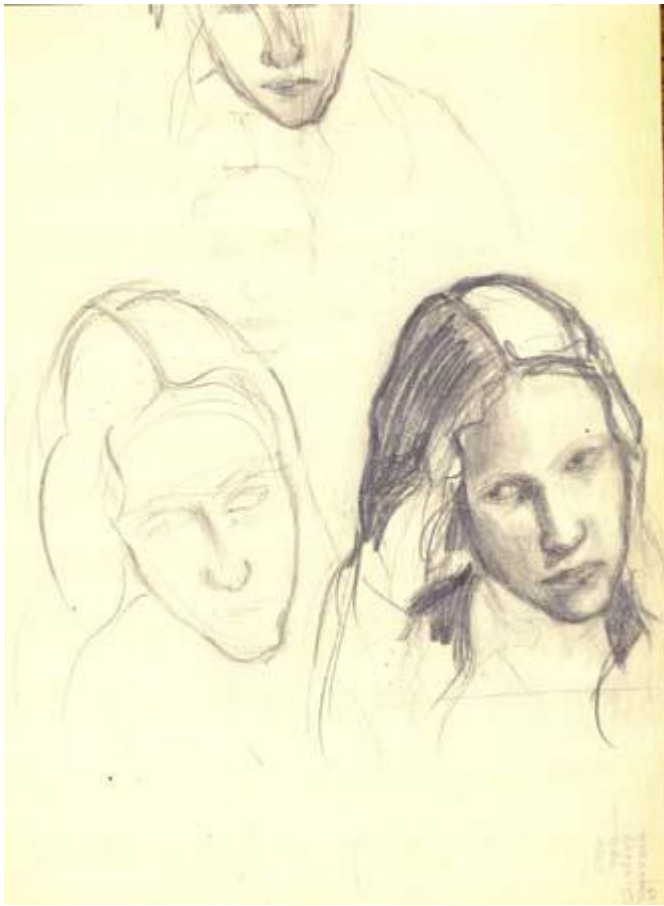
Drawing 7 of Folder 37, 1938, pencil, paper, 313 x 241 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_007.jpg



Drawing 8 of Folder 37, 1938, pencil, paper, 170 x 150 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_008.jpg



Drawing 39 of Folder 37, 1938, charcoal, paper, 366 x 263 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_039.jpg



Drawing 41 of Folder 37, 1938, charcoal, pencil, paper, 313 x 240 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_041.jpg



Drawing 45 of Folder 37, 1938, coal, charcoal, paper, 313 x 240 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_045.jpg



Drawing 46 of Folder 37, 1938, black chalk, paper, 403 x 302 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_046.jpg



Drawing 112 of the Glasgow Exhibition (Third Eye Centre), 1938, pencil, paper, 220 x 172 mm

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_112.jpg



Drawing 113 of the Glasgow Exhibition, 1938, pencil, paper, 339 x 199 mm

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_113.jpg



Drawing 114 of the Glasgow Exhibition, 1938, pencil, paper, 305 x 217 mm

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_114.jpg

7. Self-Portraits in the Budapest Ghetto, 1944

On March 19, 1944, eight German divisions invaded Hungary. The persecution of Hungarian Jewry began in earnest. At unparalleled speed, almost all of Hungary's provincial Jews were deported to concentration camps in Poland, where most of them were killed. (The Hungarian Jewish community lost 564,500 lives during the war including 63,000 before the German occupation.)

In the summer of 1944 Ilka Gedő was forced to move to a yellow-star house at 26 *Erzsébet körút* (a house very close to where the ghetto was located) and this is where she stayed until January 18, 1945 when the Pest side of Budapest was liberated by the Red Army. At first, this building was part of the emergency ghetto hospital located at 44 *Wesselényi utca*, which later became a shelter for abandoned children. These orphaned or deserted children appear in Ilka Gedő's ghetto drawings.

After 15 October 1944, the situation of the Jews living in Budapest got worse. All Jewish men aged 16-60 and all Jewish women aged 18-40 were mobilised. According to estimates 25,000 men and 10,000 women were deported. On November 3 a decree was issued drafting all Jewish women who could sew. On November 3 a decree ordered the registration of all Jewish women aged 16-40 for doing service in connection with "national defence". It cannot be reconstructed exactly how the artist had survived these mobilisations. There is a short reference to this in the recollections of the artist's husband: "Ilka was in great danger twice. Once she and her girlfriend had to go to a railway station. They escaped deportation because there were not enough railway carriages. They were told to go home and come again the following day. (...) Ilka went home and thought to herself: I would be a fool if I went there again, and she did not go there any more. (...) The other: once there was a police raid and she hid under the eiderdown, and when Ilka's name was called, an old rabbi, with a thin female voice, shouted «present». The police searched through the flats, and did not find Ilka."

The Budapest ghetto was set up 29 November 1944, and *Erzsébet körút* 26, the place where the artist lived, was in the direct vicinity of the ghetto border. Conditions in the ghetto and the yellow star houses were horrible during the siege of Budapest, and the dead could no longer be buried in the cemetery during the last days of the siege. They were placed at the end of the yard of the huge tenement house and they were covered with cardboard.

Four self-portraits were made in the ghetto.

1. On the self-portrait drawing that is preserved at Yad Vashem Art Museum the artist is still 23 years old, but an ageless person looks back on us or rather a person who has grown old. The eyes reveal that her spirit has already been broken, but the compressed lips and the line descending from the curve of the lips show that the artist still has the strength to fight for her life.

„This self-portrait is characterized by the blurring of the figure, which cancels her identity. The artist, just twenty-three years old, depicted herself as an old woman. Her shaded face and eyes and her stopped shoulders express fatigue and depression. In her post-war self-portraits, Ilka Gedó continued with this expressive approach to her painful introspection.”²



Self-Portrait in the Ghetto, 1944, pencil, paper, 22,5 x 21, 5 cm, marked lower right: „Önarckép a gettóban” (Self-Portrait in the Ghetto), Yad Vashem Art Museum

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/5/3243_74.html

² Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg, Walter Smerling (Hrsg.): *Kunst aus dem Holocaust*. Wienand Verlag, Köln 2016, [ISBN 978-3-86832-315-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-86832-315-3), pp. 188–189.

2. On the self-portrait that is to be found in the Hungarian Jewish Museum we see the artist from a three-quarter profile, that is so common on Ilka Gedó's self-portraits. The artist depicts herself sitting in front of a drawing board, and she emphasises her dignity.



Self-Portrait in the Ghetto, 1944, charcoal, paper, 161 x 157 mm, marked lower left: „Önarckép a gettóban” (Self-Portrait in the Ghetto), Hungarian Jewish Museum

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/1/images/92_10_161x157cm.jpg

3. On drawing 31 from Folder 10 she depicts herself leaning on her elbow: from a head resting on the artist's palm an old woman is looking back straight into the eyes of the viewer.



Self-Portrait in the Ghetto, 1944, pencil, paper, 231 x 154 mm, marked lower right: „Önarckép a gettóban” (Self-Portrait in the Ghetto), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/10/images/Gedo_M10_031.jpg

4. On drawing 64 from the Addenda folder the artist's head is propped up on her elbow and the eyes, so it seems, stare into nothingness. The ego looks for support in her own self.



Drawing 66 of the Addenda Folder, 1944, pencil, paper, 238 x 205 mm, marked lower right: "1944 őszén" (in the autumn of 1944), Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_21_65GedoAddenda1944.jpg

8. Confronting the Traumas of the War

"The «Sitter Ilka Gedő», in most cases, is sitting with her hands in her lap, sometimes she tilts her head to the side or rests her elbow on the table. There are drawings showing only her head and bare neck, while in other drawings she is represented with a light shawl tied under the chin as if she were a working or a peasant woman. There are also self-portraits with strange hats, in which she is as mysterious and elegant as the heroines of middle-class novels, secretly adored and beloved. (...) This introverted concentration and ascetic attitude of repetition manifested in her series of self-portraits is unparalleled. In European drawing it may be compared to Giacometti's series of self-portraits. Her art can also be compared with Antonin Artaud's self-portraits drawn with colourful and entangled lines. Antonin Artaud openly confessed that the human face cannot be represented in art via symbolic forms, but it must be drawn from morning till night in the state of two hundred thousand dreams because the human face is the body of the Ego; it is the power of life in the body, which is the cave of death. Ilka Gedő did not know Antonin Artaud's concepts, conceived in 1947, but she drew and painted her smaller and larger self-portraits with similarly stubborn and exclusive attention. These works are masterpieces, but besides her family and a few friends, no one saw them at the time they were made." Júlia Szabó: "Ilka Gedő's Artistic Activities" In: *The Art of Ilka Gedő* (Budapest: Új Művészet, 1997) pp. 52-53

These drawings reveal such an intense suffering and pain that one is inclined to say: had the artist not been able to make these drawings, she could easily have suffered a mental breakdown. We could say in connection with the self-portrait series that these drawings are "narrative in terms of recording those of the artist's impressions that she, at those times, had obtained in terms of the various role definitions that she had largely not expressed in words."³

3 István Hajdu, "Half Image, Half Veil – The Art of Ilka Gedő" In: István Hajdu–Dávid Bíró: *The Art of Ilka Gedő* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2003), p. 15



Sadness, 1946-1947, black ink, paper, 145 x 88 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_085.jpg



Drawing 3 in Folder 15, pencil, paper, 238 x 195 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_003.jpg



Wistful Self-Portrait (Drawing No. 102 in Folder No. 15), 1946-1947 Pencil, paper, 156 x 97 mm, New York, MoMA, USA

http://www.ilkgedo.hu/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_102.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947-49, pencil, paper, 240 x 210 mm, Robert Kashey's Collection, New York, USA



Drawing 18 from Folder 23, 1947, pencil, paper, 204 x 291 mm, marked lower right: „1947 nyara”, the summer of 1947, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_01_M23_018.jpg



Drawing 3 from Folder 54, 1947, black chalk, pencil, paper, 201 x 152 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_02_M54_003.jpg



Drawing 27 from Folder 45, 1947, black chalk, pencil, paper, 356 x 229 mm,
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_03_M45_027.jpg



Drawing 13 from Folder 45, 1947, charcoal, paper, 349 x 257 mm, marked lower right: „1947 tavasza” (the spring of 1947), Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_04_M45_013.jpg



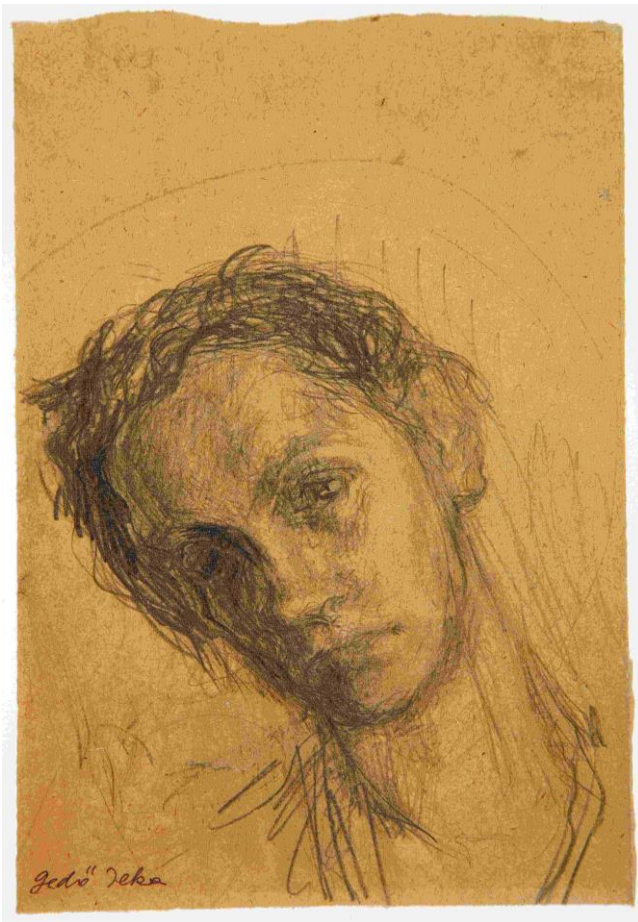
Drawing 9 from Folder 22, 1947, pen, paper, 390 x 280 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_05_M22_009.jpg



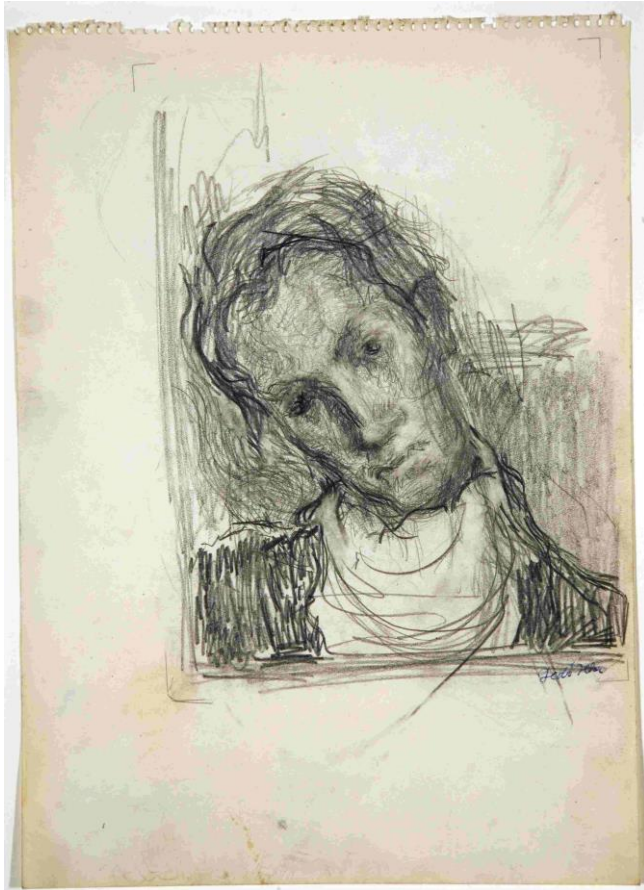
Self-Portrait, 1946, pencil, paper, 200 x 190, mm, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_01.jpg



Pensive Self-Portrait, 1946, pencil, paper, 215 x 130, mm, marked lower left: „Gedő Ilka”, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_03.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1946, pencil, paper, 220 x 160 mm, marked lower right: „Gedő Ilka”, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_04.jpg



Ilka Gedő: Self-Portrait, 1947, black ink, paper, 160 x 100 mm, marked upper left: „Gedő Ilka”, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_05.jpg



Ilka Gedő: Sorrow, 1947, pencil, paper, 275 x 205, mm, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_07.jpg



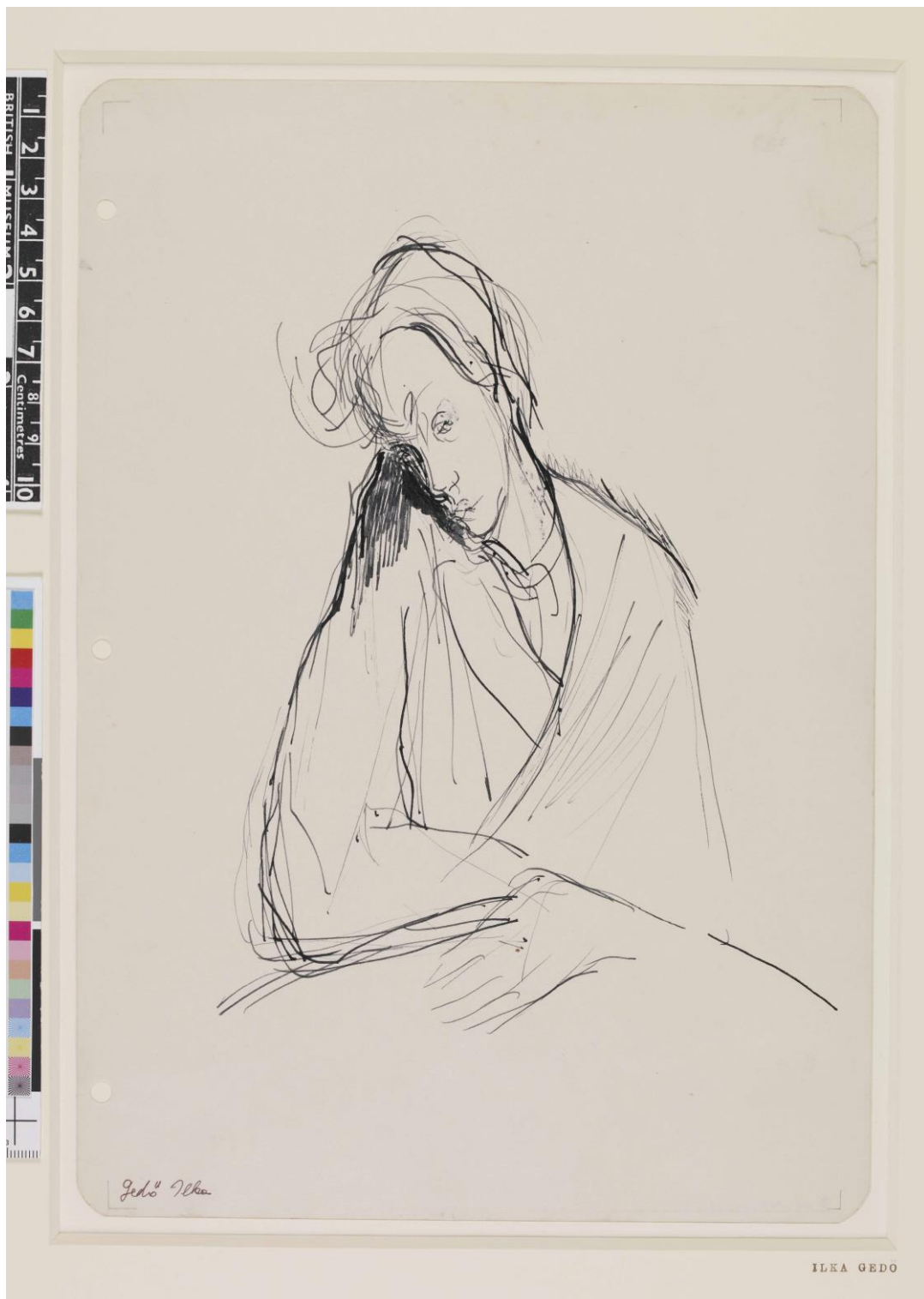
Ilka Gedó: Self-Portrait, 1948, chalk, pencil, paper, 215 x 130, mm, marked lower right: „1948 nyár?” (the summer of 1949?), Israel Museum, Jerusalem

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/4/images/Ilka_Gedo_Israel_Museum_03.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1948, pencil, paper, 285 x 207, mm, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/4/images/Ilka_Gedo_Israel_Museum_05.jpg



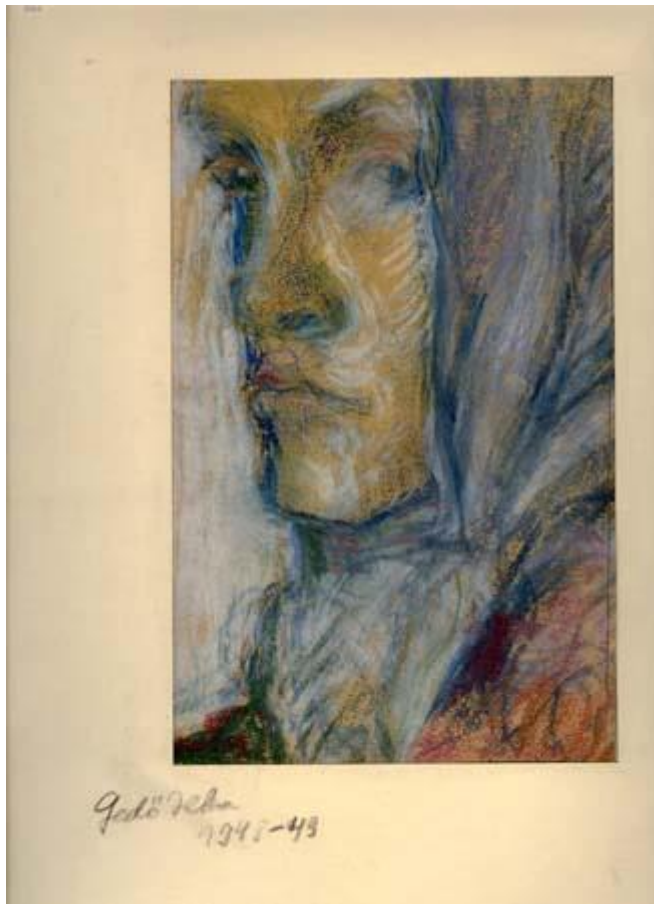
Self-Portrait, 1947, black ink, paper, 280 x 216 mm, marked lower left:
„Gedő Ilka”, British Museum

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/
images/Gedo_British_01.jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/images/Gedo_British_01.jpg)



Drawing 19 from Folder 42, 1949, pen, paper, 288 x 305 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_07_M42_019.jpg



Drawing 13 from Folder 54, 1948-1949, pastel, paper, 223 x 146 mm,
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_08_M54_013.jpg



Drawing 1 of Folder 12, 1947, pencil, paper, 125 x 108 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_001.jpg



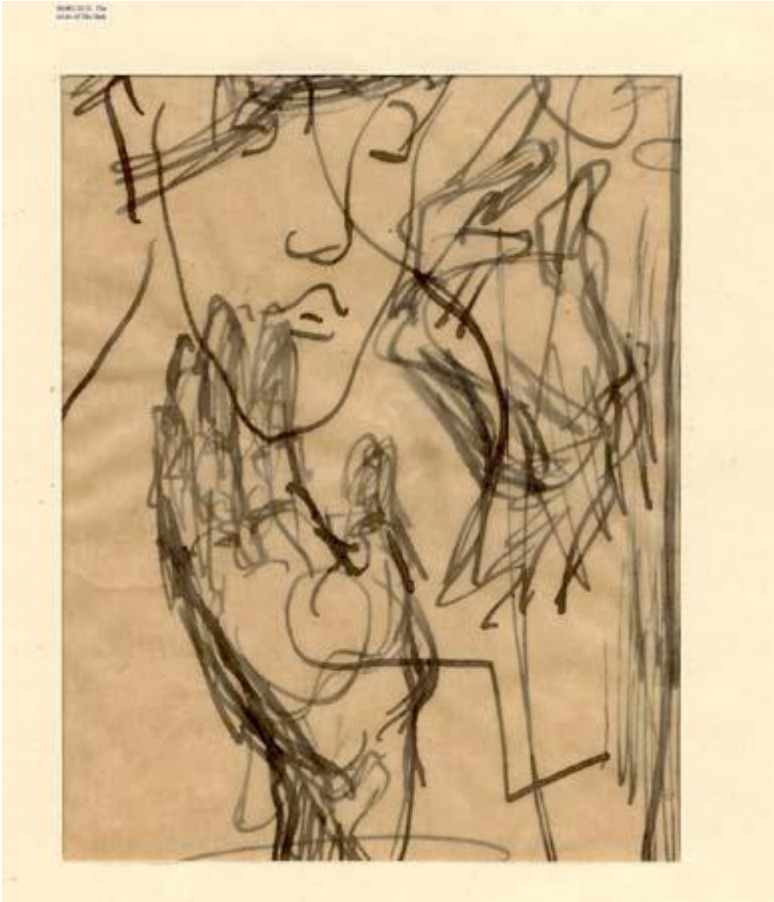
Drawing 2 of Folder 12, 1947, black ink, paper, 64 x 103 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_002.jpg



Drawing 3 of Folder 12, 1947, black ink, paper, 64 x 103 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_003.jpg



Drawing 4 (Portrait with Hand) of Folder 12, 1947, black ink, paper, 86 x 63 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_004.jpg



Drawing 5 of Folder 12, 1945-1946, black chalk, paper, 241 x 190 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_005.jpg



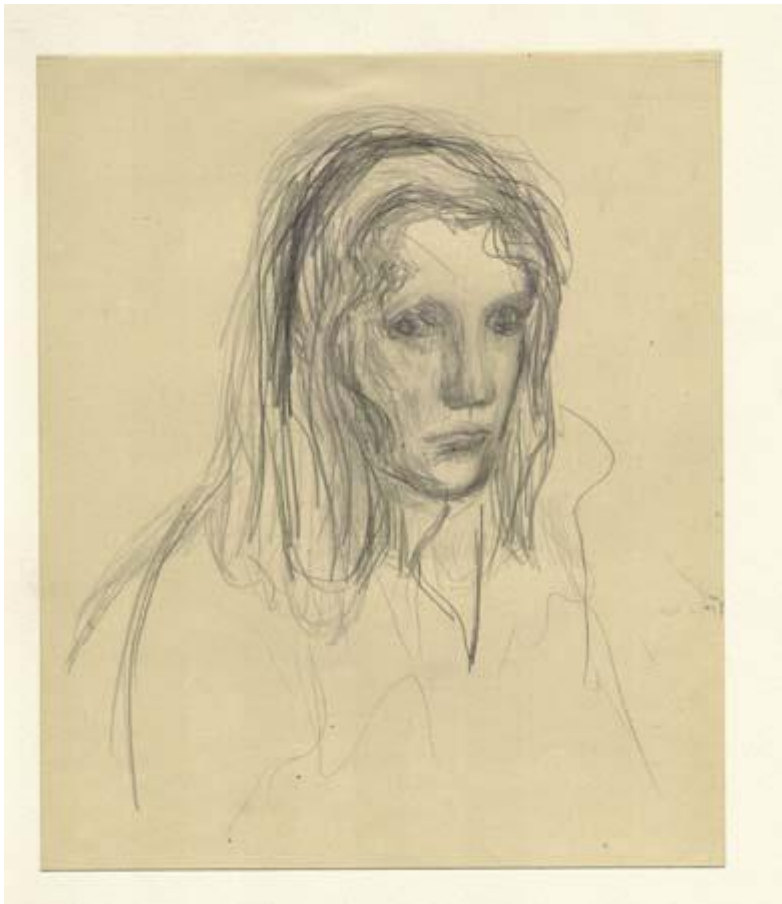
Drawing 6 of Folder 20, 1945-1946, pencil, paper, 111 x 87 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_006.jpg



Drawing 8 of Folder 20, 1945-1946, pencil, paper, 263 x 210 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_008.jpg



Drawing 12 of Folder 20, 1945-1946, pencil, paper, 223 x 171 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_012.jpg



Drawing 19 of Folder 20, 1945-1946, pencil, paper, 281 x 220 mm, marked lower left: „Gedő Ilka” private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_019.jpg



Drawing 22 of Folder 20, 1945-1946, pencil, paper, 281 x 220 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_022.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, charcoal, paper, 350 x 240 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_14_a_41.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, crayon, paper, 318 x 297 mm, marked lower left: „1948 nyár?”, (the summer of 1948?), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_03.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, charcoal, paper, 365 x 280 mm, the National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_10_album_37.jpg



Self-Portrait, ca. 1947, pastel, paper, 356 x 261 mm, drawing 101 of the Glasgow Exhibition (Third Eye Centre), private collection

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_101_\(MNG_kiallitas_20\).jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_101_(MNG_kiallitas_20).jpg)



Self-Portrait 18, ca. 1947, pencil, paper, 235 x 189 mm, marked lower left:
„Gedő Ilka”, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_115.jpg



Self-Portrait 19, ca. 1947, pencil, paper, 182 x 177 mm, drawing 116 of the Glasgow Exhibition (Third Eye Centre), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_116.jpg



Self-Portrait 27, ca. 1947, pencil, paper, 343 x 248 mm, drawing 134 of the Glasgow Exhibition (Third Eye Centre), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_124.jpg



Drawing 22 in Folder 19, the winter of 1946-1947, black ink, wax paper, 278 x 215 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/19/images/Gedo_M19_022.jpg



Drawing 10 in Folder 12, 1948, pencil, paper, 168 x 223 mm, marked lower left: "48 nyár?" (the summer of 1948?), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_010.jpg



Drawing 21 in Folder 12, 1947, pencil, paper, 310 x 120 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_021.jpg



Drawing 22 in Folder 12, 1946, pencil, paper, 295 x 210 mm, marked lower right: "*Fillér utca, 1946 tavasza*" (Fillér Street, the spring of 1946), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_022.jpg



Drawing 24 in Folder 12, 1948, pencil, tissue paper, 238 x 195 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_024.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, pencil, black crayon, paper, 239 x 161 mm, drawing 106 of the Glasgow Exhibition (Third Eye Centre), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_106.jpg, 239 x 161 mm



Self-Portrait, 1944, pencil, paper, 108 x 75 mm, private collection

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/09/images/Gedo_M09_002.jpg



Drawing 91 from the Addenda folder, 1947, pencil, paper, 156 x 145 mm,
National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

9. The Artist Depicts Her Dignity

The drawings of the Fillér utca self-portrait series have an impact on the viewer due to their cruel honesty and authentic artistic power. For the artist creating self-portraits, there is not a more co-operative model than his or her own portrait looking back on the drawing artist from the mirror. The image of the artist as reflected by a mirror is always at hand. But for the woman artist it is also true that „one must attempt to seduce the mirror, since failing to do so results in seeing one's malevolent double suddenly emerge from it, a grimacing devil, the fantastic projection of the inner demons. The authority of the reflection is imposed primarily on women who, at least at a certain stage of cultural development, construct themselves under the gaze of the other. Civilization can now offer women means of fulfilment outside the beauty-seduction-love paradigm, but the mirror still remains this privileged and vulnerable site of femininity. A tribunal without pity, each morning it summons her to take account of her charms until it is said one day that she is no longer the fairest of them all.”⁴

Some art historians compared these drawings with the works of Alberto Giacometti. However, one must see that one of the reasons why these “self-probing, self-tormenting and self-questioning self-portrait series of the 1940’s” cannot be “alleged to be connected with Giacometti’s drawings” is that Ilka Gedő could not have known them back in the 1940’s, while the other is that Ilka Gedő’s drawings “are to a larger degree existentialist, if this term has any meaning in this context”. Furthermore, “in order to avoid shrugging off the significance of these drawings with comparing them to Giacometti’s works, we must simply view these graphic self-portraits with the awareness of their huge number and the fact that they are a heart-rending series of self-torment.”⁵

It is much more instructive to compare Ilka Gedő’s drawings with those of Egon Schiele, because one of the ways of interpretation in the case of both artists is that the self-portraits can be interpreted also as a role play. (According to Kirk Varnedoe, on his self-portraits Schiele “invented a surrogate self housed in his own body, a self as a poseur in both literal and positive senses, to play out an identity acknowledged to be acted as much as experienced. What seems most tellingly modern about these works is not the directness of communication, but its obliqueness, not the sense of revelation, but the sense of performance.”⁶)

4 Sabibe Melchiro-Bonnet, *The Mirror (A History)* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 271-272.

5 Gyula Rózsa, “Az életmű ára” [The Price Paid for the Oeuvre] *Népszabadság* (29 January 2005)

6 Kirk Varnedoe, *Vienna 1900 (Art, Architecture and Design)* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1987), p. 174.



Drawing 90 from Folder 15 (Self-portrait with Hat), 1946-1947, black ink paper, 173 x 145 mm, private collection, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_090.jpg

Artists, sitting in front of the mirror, take up a pose even if, while creating the self-portrait, they have to lean forward to the canvas or the paper sheet. Creators of self-portraits are artists and models at the same time. They are the creators and the subjects of creation, the viewers and also critics. Artists do not only depict the visual image. They necessarily reflect something from the personality, because they also know the person that lives behind the eyes and in the body. In the self-portrait the artists confront their own self. To prepare an image of ourselves is often a painful process, but it also involves the expansion of the self. Artists who create their self-portraits also make their internal forces visible. Artists challenge their own self, they construct and deconstruct their own self. "There are hardly any self-portraits from mediaeval art. However, self-conscious artists, who were no longer craftsmen, and who regarded themselves of equal rank with the philosophers, writers and scientists of their times, have, since the time of the renaissance, created a monument for their own self. In addition to confronting their own physiognomy as a ubiquitous and cheap model, self-portraits bear witness to the artists' internal confrontation with their own minds, with their changing moods and with their own mortality."⁷

7

<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selbstbildnis>



Self Portrait from Folder 6, 1947, charcoal, pencil, paper, 470 x 430mm, marked lower left: „1947 (ősz/tél?)”, (autumn or winter of 1947?), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_09_album_36.jpg



Drawing 4 from Folder 49, 1947, charcoal, paper, 290 x 205 mm, marked lower left: „1947 őszének végén?” (The end of the autumn of 1947?), Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_16_M49_004.jpg



Drawing 21 from Folder 45, 1947, charcoal, paper, 437 x 349 mm, marked lower left: „1947 tavasz?” (Spring of 1947?), Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_13_M45_021.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, black ink, paper, 220 x 231 mm, marked lower right:
„Gedó Ilka”, British Museum

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/
images/Gedo_British_03.jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/images/Gedo_British_03.jpg)



Self-Portrait, 1947, black ink, paper, 300 x 210 mm, marked lower right:
„Gedő Ilka”, British Museum

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/
images/Gedo_British_04.jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/images/Gedo_British_04.jpg)



Drawing 7 from Folder 12, pencil, paper, 98 x 204 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_007.jpg



Drawing 19 from Folder 54, pencil paper, 493 x 351 mm, marked lower left:
„1948 nyár” (the summer of 1948), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/54/images/Gedo_M54_019.jpg



Drawing 2 From Folder 58, charcoal, paper, 502 x 350 mm, marked lower right: „1947 ősz tél?” (the autumn or winter of 1948?), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/58/images/Gedo_M58_002.jpg



Drawing 82 from Folder 15, 1946-1947, pencil, paper, 153 x 113 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_082.jpg



Drawing 2 from Folder 54, 1947, pencil, paper, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/54/images/Gedo_M54_002.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1946 Pencil (Drawing No. 14 in Folder No. 35), paper, 148 x 121 mm, New York, MoMA, USA

http://www.ilkgedo.hu/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/35/images/Gedo_M35_014.jpg

10. The Artist at Work



Drawing 16 from Folder 20, black ink, paper, 277 x 201 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_016.jpg



Drawing 4 from Folder 51, 1947-1948, pastel, paper, 345 x 247 mm, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/9/images/Albertina05_Gedo_M51__004.jpg



Drawing 5 from Folder 51, 1947-1948, pastel, paper, 359 x 225 mm, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/9/images/Albertina06_Gedo_M51_005.jpg



Drawing 12 from Folder 51, 1947, pastel, paper, 355 x 255 mm, Albertina, Vienna, Austria

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/9/images/Albertina08_Gedo_M51_012.jpg



Self-Portrait (Drawing No. 13 in Folder No. 52), 1947 Charcoal, paper, 427 x 292 mm, New York, MoMA, USA

http://www.ilkagedo.hu/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/52/images/Gedo_M52_013.jpg



Self Portrait, 1946, pen, black ink, 169 x 122 mm, marked lower right: „Ilka Gedő”, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_02.jpg



Drawing 10 from Folder 22, 1947, pen, paper, 286 x 146 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_02_M22_010.jpg



Drawing 34 from Folder 22, 1947, charcoal, paper, 358 x 184 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_03_M22_034.jpg



Drawing 21 from Folder 23, 1947, pen, charcoal, paper, 269 x 147 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_05_M23_021.jpg



Drawing 3 from Folder 45, 1947, charcoal, paper, marked lower right: „*1947 ősze*” (the autumn of 1947), Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_11_M45_003.jpg



Drawing 26 from Folder 45, 1948, pencil, paper, 396 x 286, marked lower left: „Gedő Ilka 1948” (the autumn of 1947), Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_14_M45_026.jpg



Self-Portrait, 1947, black ink, paper, 280 x 256, marked lower left: „Gedő Ilka 1948” (the autumn of 1947), the British Museum

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/6/images/Gedo_British_02.jpg



Drawing 23 from Folder 20, 1945-1946, pen, paper, 280 x 218 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_023.jpg



Self Portrait III from Folder 35, 1948, pencil, charcoal, paper, 490 x 270 mm,
National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/
images/MNG_Gedo_lista_06_album_33.jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_06_album_33.jpg)



Self Portrait V from Folder 35, 1948, pencil, charcoal, paper, 348 x 277 mm,
National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/
images/MNG_Gedo_lista_08_album_35.jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_08_album_35.jpg)



Drawing 18 from Folder 19 (Self-Portrait with Drawing Board). the winter of 1946-1947, black ink, paper, 273 x 225 mm

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/19/images/Gedo_M19_018.jpg



Drawing 19 from Folder 19 (Self-Portrait with Drawing Board). the winter of 1946-1947, black ink, paper, 273 x 225 mm, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, Germany

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/8/images/1_2011.jpg



Drawing 1 (Self-Portrait with Drawing Board) from Folder 19, winter of 1946-1947, black ink, paper, 273 x 225 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/19/images/Gedo_M19_001.jpg



Drawing 18 from Folder 12, 1948, black ink, paper, 216 x 129 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_018.jpg



Drawing 19 from Folder 12, 1948, black ink, paper, 120 x 117 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/12/images/Gedo_M12_019.jpg



Drawing 40 from Folder 37, 1938, pencil, paper, 366 x 263 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/37/images/Gedo_M37_040.jpg



Drawing 41 from Folder 37, 1938, charcoal, pencil, paper, 338 x 285 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, Germany

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/13/images/Gedo_Braunschweig_20_M37_041.jpg



Drawing 2 from Folder 54, 1947, pencil, paper, 151 x 113 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/54/images/Gedo_M54_002.jpg



Drawing 28 from Folder 45, 1949, charcoal, paper, 393 x 286 mm, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/10/images/Gedo_Houston_06_M45_028.jpg



Self Portrait X from Folder 49, 1947, charcoal, paper, 485 x 340 mm, marked lower right: „1947 ősz-tél” (autumn-winter of 1947), National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_13_album_40.jpg



Drawing 18 from Folder 20, 1945-1946, pen, paper, private collection

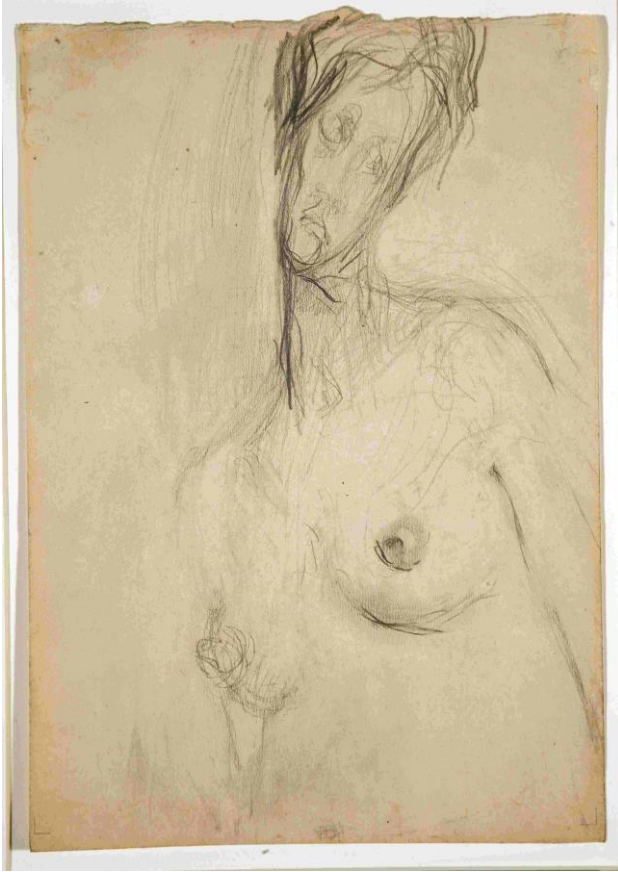
http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/20/images/Gedo_M20_018.jpg



Drawing 1 From Folder 58, charcoal, paper, 486 x 340 mm, marked lower right: „1948 nyár” (the summer of 1948), private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/58/images/Gedo_M58_001.jpg

11. Nude Self-Portraits



Nude Self-Portrait, 1946, pencil, paper, 200 x 190 mm, Museum Kunstpalast, No. 1

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/3/images/Ilka_Gedo_Dusseldorf_02.jpg



Nude Self-Portrait, 1947, pencil, paper, 285 x 195 mm, Israel Museum, No. 2

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/4/images/Ilka_Gedo_Israel_Museum_02.jpg

12. In Love



Drawing 58 from Folder 15, 1946-1947, pencil, paper, 229 x 173 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_058.jpg



Detail of Drawing 58 from Folder, 15, 1946-1947, pencil, paper, 229 x 173 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/15/images/Gedo_M15_058detail.jpg

13. Self-Portraits in Pregnancy



Self-Portrait in Pregnancy, 1947, pastel, paper, 415 x 295 mm, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/4/images/Ilka_Gedo_Israel_Museum_01.jpg

In another series of self-portraits she draws herself in pregnancy. In the drawing held by the Israel Museum she depicts herself in a sculpturesque way. Where the eyes are we see just hatched lines, the eyes look blindly into the world. This drawing is “not an expression of the conflict between her vocation as a painter and motherhood”⁸, but it rather expresses the anxiety over the future of the child that is to be born.



8

Júlia Szabó, "Ilka Gedő's Paintings" *The New Hungarian Quarterly* No. 4 of 1987

Drawing 1 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 358 x 185 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_001.jpg



Drawing 2 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 348 x 240 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_002.jpg



Drawing 3 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 358 x 230 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_003.jpg



Drawing 4 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 348 x 205 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_004.jpg



Drawing 5 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 350 x 240 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_005.jpg



Drawing 6 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 345 x 195 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_006.jpg



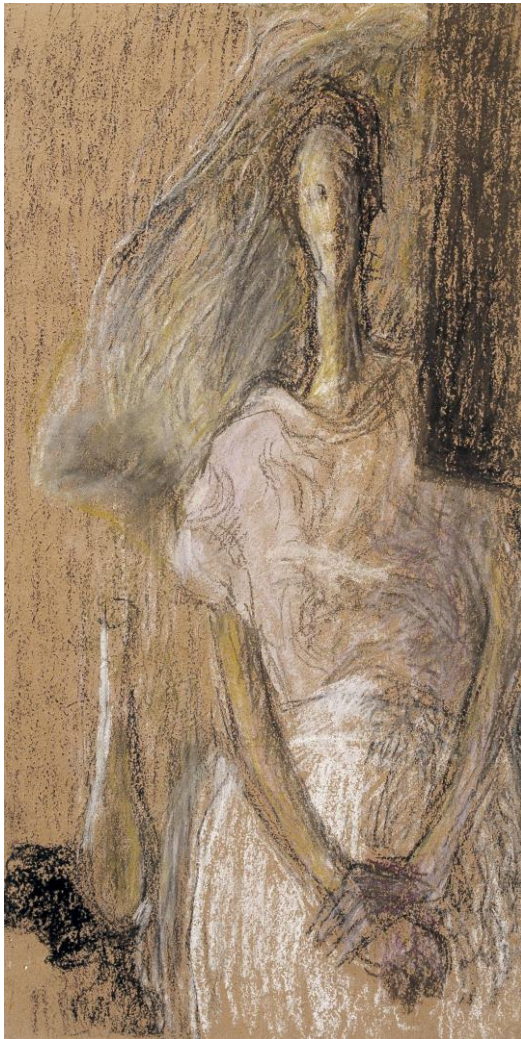
Drawing 7 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 319 x 218 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_007.jpg



Drawing 8 from Folder 26, 1947, pastel, paper, 350 x 200 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/26/images/Gedo_M26_008.jpg



Self-Portrait in Pregnancy I from Folder 51, 1947, pastel, paper, 405 x 220 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_19_album_45.jpg



Self-Portrait in Pregnancy II from Folder 51, 1947, pastel, coloured paper, 490 x 340 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_20_album_46.jpg



Self-Portrait from the Glasgow Exhibition, pastel, coloured paper, 365 x 255 mm, item no. 97 of the Glasgow exhibition, private collection

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_097_\(MNG_kiallitas_16\).jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_097_(MNG_kiallitas_16).jpg)



Pregnant Self-Portrait, No. 19, item 99 from the Glasgow Exhibition, pastel, coloured paper, 428 x 305 mm, private collection

[http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_099_\(MNG_kiallitas_19\).jpg](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/framedworks/1/images/Glasgow_099_(MNG_kiallitas_19).jpg)

14. The Last Two Self-Portraits of the First Artistic Period

On her last self-portrait drawing from 1949, above the hard, swirling, almost independent drawing of the skirt, an almost expressionless, neutrally crude face leans on a hand with upward-pointing fingers, as if in a short dense summary of Lajos Vajda's motifs and signs. In connection with these two drawings, the artist's husband recollects: "Ilka must not have been working for a worrying length of time and we were talking about it. The shape of the skirt was somewhat similar to the great charcoal-whirls of Vajda's last period. «But if these pictures of Vajda, that represent nothing in themselves, are works of art, then why does complying with the demands of depicting a model on paper require such a brain-wracking concentration and effort? And why did I draw the skirt in exactly this way? Why did I not use points... or any of the countless other ways?» In other words, the terrible conflict springing from outgrowing the child prodigy in fact occurred at a deeper level. It was not rooted in the uncomprehending reception, nor in the atmosphere in our circle".⁹

Both drawings show sculpturesque features and both seem to aim at monumentality. These drawings show the creator and the created and the mystery. How can this be possible? In his letter sent to Wassily Kandinsky Arnold Schönberg points out, "We must recognise that we are surrounded by mystery, and we must be brave enough to confront these mysteries without cowardly searching for the «solution». It is important that our souls should not try to solve these mysteries but to disentangle them. In the course of this process, not a solution must be born, but a new code and a method for code-breaking. This method is in itself without any value, yet it provides material for the creation of new mysteries. Namely, mystery is nothing else but the mirror image of the inexplicable. However, once we regard the inexplicable possible, then we approach God, because then we no longer demand to understand God. In this case, we no longer interpret God with our intellect, we no longer censure or reject God, because we are no longer capable of merging God with the human error that is our lucidity."¹⁰

⁹ Endre Bíró: "Recollections of the Artistic Career of Ilka Gedó" In: István Hajdu—Dávid Bíró: *The Art of Ilka Gedó* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2003) p. 249

¹⁰ Jelena Kahl-Koch (ed.), *Arnold Schönberg – Wassily Kandinsky, Briefe, Bilder und Dokumente einer außergewöhnlichen Beziehung* (Berlin: DTBV, 1983), p. 69. Quoted by: Milly Heyd: *Selbstporträts: zur Frage der jüdischen Identität* In: Hans Günter Golinski and Sepp-Hiekisch Pickard (eds.), *Das Recht des Bildes* (Bochum: Edition Braus, 2003), p. 90.



Pensive Self-Portrait I, 1949, pencil, coal, paper, 570 x 455 mm, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/publiccoll/2/images/MNG_Gedo_lista_15_album_42.jpg



Pensive Self-Portrait II, 1949, coal, paper, 705 x 448 mm, signed lower right:
„Gedő Ilka” Robert Kashey’s Collection, New York, USA

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/privatecoll/images/NewYork_Gondolkodo_Robert_Kashey.jpg

15. Self-Portrait Oil Paintings



Self-Portrait with Hat, 1948, oil on paper, 48,5 x 39 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_008.jpg

"*Self-Portrait with Hat* (oil, paper, 48.5 x 39 cm) was painted in 1948. It is a half-length self-portrait behind which a probably greenish-yellowish wall of the studio is visible. Yet on the wall only an empty painting, the frame can be identified. Somewhat to the left of the vertical axis the artist's hand appears; it is placed upon the chest as if the person shown on the painting were breathing heavily. We can see pronounced, uneven contour lines. The fingers are grey and blue, as if they had been frozen. The hands turning to the body are known from the Maria pictures of early Christianity and from Byzantine icons. The dropped shoulders indicate the painfulness of existence. The hat is unusually big. It similar to the broad-rimmed Rubens hats without displaying a rich ornamentation.

Maybe it is no over interpretation to regard this hat as an accessory of bourgeois existence, and it characteristic of the artist's personality. The creature-like brims whose original colour was cadmium yellow became self-contained forms of black in which some Berlin-blue spots appear. On the right, the hat swells up and becomes heavier than the other deep blue spots. In contrast to the bodiless upper part of the body and the fallen shoulders these, are really tangible. Somehow, they end up looking like also a halo. This conventional easel painting complies with the rules, yet there are several marks and references that are different from the usual, especially the hat.

The elongated, sunken cheeks constitute, due to the grey colour, also a death-mask, even though the strong details of the face reveal quite a lot from the artist's internal life. The mask covers. On this face, however, the eyes, the nose and the mouth are open and expressive. Light is coming from somewhere, as the right-hand side is under a shadow. We see a naked and ageless face, although, in 1948, Ilka Gedő was only twenty-seven years old. But she looks much older, and it cannot be determined how old she looks."

S. Nagy Katalin: „Gedő Ilka önarcképei” (The Self-Portraits of Ilka Gedő)
Liget, April 2, 2014 <https://ligetmuhely.com/liget/gedo-ilka-onarckepi/>



Self-Portrait Flower, 1971, oil on canvas, 48 x 33 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_058.jpg

"On the painting titled *Self-Portrait Flower* a single withered flower was shifted from the middle axis of the painting to the right. This withered flower is on multi-layered, contoured, coloured rectangles, possibly painting canvases. In 1971, when this painting was created, Ilka Gedő was fifty years old. The flower is the symbol of youth, love and spring: it is the symbol of overcoming death. The withered flower is the opposite of all the above. Its colour is black and brown, colours that are in harmony with the ochre-brown surface."

S. Nagy Katalin: „Gedő Ilka önarcképei” (The Self-Portraits of Ilka Gedő)
Liget, April 2, 2014 (<https://ligetmuhely.com/liget/gedo-ilka-onarckepi/>)



Self-Portrait with a Hat, 1983, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas, 60 x 48 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_Ilka_137.jpg



Drawing No. 5 from Folder No. 38, 1947, black ink, paper, 202 x 206 mm, marked lower right on the sheet of paper that the drawing was stuck onto: „1947, tél”, the winter of 1947, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/38/images/Gedo_M38_005.jpg



Self-Portrait Painted on Old Drawing, 1984, oil on paper laid down on drawing board, 22 x 14 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_142.jpg



Pink Self-Portrait, 1984, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas, 59 x 49 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_141.jpg



Drawing No. 6 from Folder 38, 1947, black ink, paper, 270 x 195 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/38/images/Gedo_M38_006.jpg



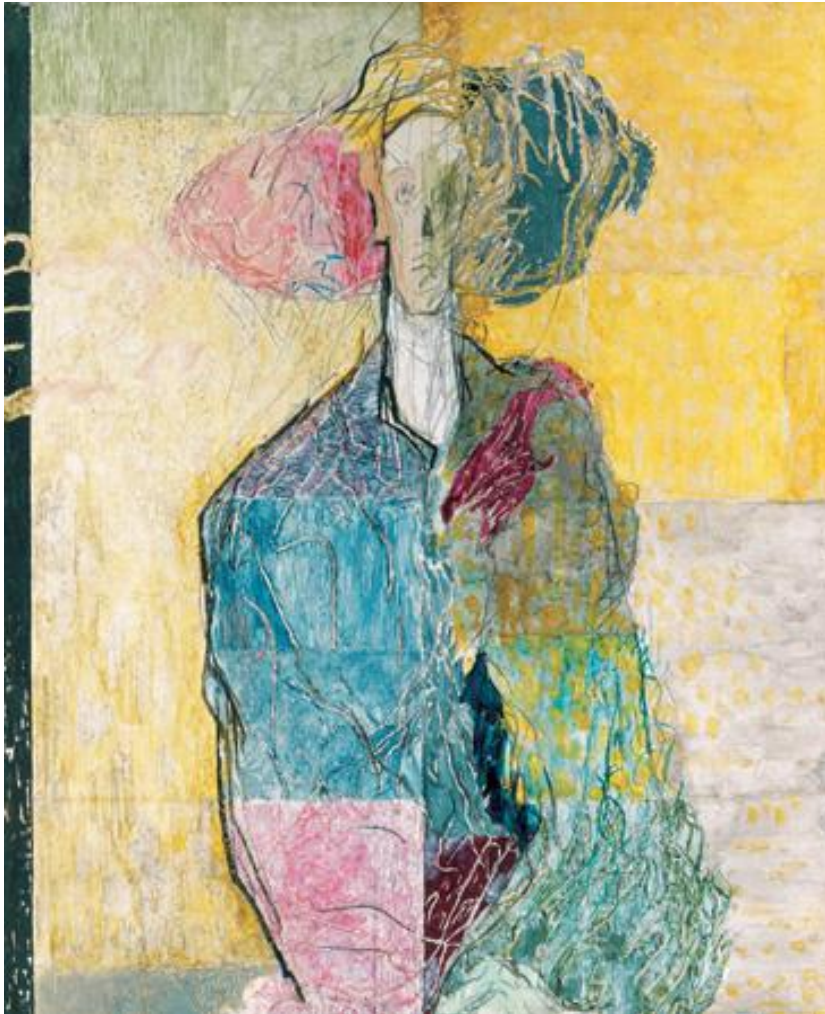
Self-Portrait with a Hat, 1985, oil mixed technique on paper laid down on canvas, 60x 48.5 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_150.jpg



Drawing No. 2 from Folder No. 38, 1947, black ink, paper, 182 x 134 mm, marked lower right on the sheet of paper the original drawing was stuck onto: „1947, tél, *Fillér utca*”, the winter of 1947, *Fillér utca*

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/38/images/Gedo_M38_002.jpg



Self-Portrait with Straw-hat, 1985, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas, 60 x 48.5 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_143.jpg

Self-Portrait with Straw-hat (1985, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas, 60 x 48.5 cm) was painted in 1984, a year before Ilka Gedő's death. The hat is perhaps the same as the one we can see in the painting with the same title painted 36 years before (*Self-Portrait with Hat*, 1948, oil on paper, 48,5 x 39 cm), as on both hats there is a yellow spot in the same location. In our climate, a straw hat is a summer wear. It is easy, defenceless and even a light breeze can blow it away. And yet it is associated with a feeling of light, sunshine and warmth. This is reinforced by the background's light colours: broken yellow, the yellow spots on broken white, blurred grey spots and the green-blue areas in the top and bottom left-hand corners. In the same way, as the straw hat, the background colours might also be a source of joy. However, the cadmium yellow colour spots and graphite marks create tension. The black and blue contours of the body are not even, which makes the main shape of the body edgy. It splits sharply from the background, from the body's background, and starts to live a life of its own. As soft, lyrical and almost emotional the background is, as strong and dynamic is the contour line. The divergence is continued. The body that turns somewhat to the right, and is shifted slightly to the right seems to be composed of several units, perhaps eight units. At the shoulders and the bottom of the painting, there are irregular shapes including rectangles. The component units of the body are very much different also in terms of colour. The colour of the largest part is called summer blue (pure blue, aniline blue), and it reminds us of the summer sky. This is the colour of limitlessness, and infinite, harmonious radiation. It is the favourite colour of mandalas and it is also associated with motherhood. The blue part of the hat is somewhat dull. On the right-hand side, blue lines interweave with the dress covering the body, and, further down, it seems as if we saw water waves.

Katalin S. Nagy: „Gedő Ilka önarcképei” (The Self-Portraits of Ilka Gedő)
Liget, April 2, 2014 (<https://ligetmuhely.com/liget/gedo-ilka-onarckepi/>)



Drawing No. 3 from Folder 38, 1948, pencil, paper, marked lower left: "*48 tavasza*" (spring of 1948), 346 x 240 mm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/38/images/Gedo_M38_003.jpg



Double Self-Portrait, 1985, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas,
58 x 42 cm, private collection

https://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_152.jpg

Double Self-Portrait (1985, oil on photographic paper laid down on canvas, 58 x 42 cm) which is the last one of the self-portraits is not about ageing, but about death. It is a picture in a picture. (This has been a favourite genre of painters since Netherlandish painters of the 16th and 17th centuries.) In the foreground, we can see the painter's head tilted to the left. According to the traditions of painting, this is the direction where the past is located. The painter is barely alive. Her thin face is interwoven with black and white lines almost changing the image into a photo. Although on all of her self-portraits the eyes are wide open, here the eyes are closed, and there is no gaze in the painter's eyes. There are blurred, disease-suggesting spots on the face, magenta spots on the forehead, chin and the right side of the face. This shows that Gedó is not dead yet. On top of the head, cadmium-yellow colour beams light up upwards, stretching upwards, becoming one with the off-white plane of the background thus losing their colour. These colour beams are restless, intersecting and troubled, yet they are still full of energy in contrast to the resigned and submissive movement of the head and the unresponsiveness of the face. We can see two colours in the clothing, and likewise, the crosshatching also has two directions. On the right side, on a white surface, light-blue narrow horizontal stripes can be seen, whereas on the left-hand side broad vertical reddish-brown stripes as well as random spots can be seen. These two surfaces on the same clothing create tension, thus increasing the sadness, wretchedness and solitude of the tilted head.

The right side self-portrait is a painting within the painting. In the history of self-portraits, we have known this way of representation since 16th-century Mannerism. We see a timeless face that is possibly more youthful than usual. The left eye is large, round, open and painted on a white area painted over with light blue, whereas the other eye located on a white area illuminated by pale yellow is barely visible. This duality of light and shadow is a characteristic of self-portraits. The hat, especially its rims, are smaller and it is blue. Similar to the face, the left-hand side of it is deep blue, whereas the right-hand side is of lighter blue. The hat and the big red mass of the hair are interwoven by black, white, red lines moving in all directions, showing the dynamics of life. The dress is also blue, and it is covered by an unusually bulky scarf.

In the background between the two self-portraits, there are fine blue, down-going zigzag lines. The multi-colour background is hectic and full of pastel tones in the same way as the background of Ilka Gedó's still-lives and artificial flowers, and her studio also provided a multi-coloured background. (Ilka Gedó was very familiar with colour theory. In the 1950's he translated most of Goethe's *Theory of Colour*, providing her translation with her comments.)

The two narrow vertical rectangles to the right of the painting's central axis play a role in the composition: they can be a door frame or window frame, or the frame of the right-hand self-portrait. It directs the viewer's gaze

upwards and beyond the painting. In addition to the vertical lines, the pale diagonal line in the background is also important, leading the viewer out of the picture in the top left-hand corner. On the right-hand side, there is also a diagonal line above the hat, thus an upside-down triangle is created in the background. The restless lines that cross and intersect the hats and clothing are balanced by these barely perceptible geometric shapes.

In 1985 Ilka Gedő was mortally ill. She knew she would not have much time left for painting. The left-hand eyeless self-portrait suggests the proximity of death, but without the fear of death. Given her loneliness and given the fact that Ilka Gedő lived a life outside society and outside any groupings of artists, she had an intimate relationship with death, and this is well-reflected also in her artificial flower paintings. The majority of her paintings have a closed space, even the paintings of the garden series. Ilka Gedő's studio was a closed space: a refuge and an island. In mythologies closed spaces are at the same time archetypal symbols of death.

The two self-portraits side by side represent therefore two types of existence. Ilka Gedő's *Double Self-Portrait* is the summary of all that the painter has been occupied with for decades: the relationship between existence and what makes things exist, the relationship between being and nothingness, and above all the relationship between an artist and artwork as material existence.

Ilka Gedő's self-portraits are the works of an authentic and genuine creator.

S. Nagy Katalin: „Gedő Ilka önarcképei” (The Self-Portraits of Ilka Gedő) *Liget*, April 2, 2014 (<https://ligetmuhely.com/liget/gedo-ilka-onarckepi/>)



Double Self-Portrait Detail No. 1

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_152_detail1.jpg



Double Self-Portrait Detail No. 2

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/oilpaintings/images/Gedo_ilka_152_detail2.jpg



Drawing No. 4 from Folder 38, 1985, black ink, paper, 276 x 240 cm, private collection

http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/gedo_ilka/galleries/worksonpaper/folders/38/images/Gedo_M38_004.jpg

16. The Number of Self-Portraits by Ilka Gedó

Folder Number	Number of Self-Portraits
9	2
10	1
12	19
15	12
19	10
20	23
21	23
22	1
23	42
26	8
27	7
35	12
37	24
38	5
40	3
42	13
44	1
45	35
49	5
51	15
52	17
54	7
58	2
Addenda	8
I. Number of Self-Portrait Drawing in the Folders	295
II. Private Collections	7
Antal-Lusztig Collection, Debrecen, Hungary	5
Robert Kashey New York	2
III. Number of self-portrait drawings in public collections	68
· National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary , Budapest	16
· Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem	1
· Israel Museum, Jerusalem	2
· British Museum	5
· Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf	6

· Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin	1
· Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas	8
· Albertina, Vienna	5
· Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, G	21
· MoMA, New York	3
IV. The Total Number of Self-Portraits	370
V. Number of Self-Portrait Oil Paintings	8