

Austrian Cultural Forum New York

Press Release



Vally Wieselthier in her studio, ca. 1928

Courtesy of the FIT Special Collections and College Archives | Gladys Marcus Library | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York.

Vally Wieselthier: Sculpting Modernism – Spotlight Sascha Mallon

October 15, 2025 – February 9, 2026

Opening Reception: Wednesday, October 15, 2025, 6 – 8 PM

Spotlight: Sascha Mallon

Curated by: Dr. Stephanie Buhmann

Director ACFNY: Dr. Susanne Keppler-Schlesinger

[The Austrian Cultural Forum New York \(ACFNY\)](#) is pleased to present *The Girl with the Green Apron*, a site-specific installation by [New York-based Austrian artist Sascha Mallon](#). Inspired by the life and work of [Austrian-American ceramicist Vally Wieselthier \(1895–1945\)](#), this poetic installation coincides with [Vally Wieselthier: Sculpting Modernism](#), the first institutional retrospective dedicated to the artist in the United States, [curated by Dr. Stephanie Buhmann](#).

In *The Girl with the Green Apron*, Mallon draws on biographical fragments, sculptural motifs, and personal correspondence from Wieselthier to create an installation that interlaces memory, myth, and modernism. At its heart is a central figure, a young girl longing for a green apron, based on a childhood story Wieselthier described

as her first profound moment of pain. Through this intimate lens, Mallon constructs a fantastical universe that both honors and imaginatively reinterprets Wieselthier's legacy.

Mallon's installation functions as a visual poem, traversing themes of migration, identity, and the radical possibilities of form. References to Wieselthier's early career as a swimmer, her emigration to the United States, and her symbolic use of flora and fauna populate this richly imagined landscape. Planetary forms, ceramic figures, and hand-painted wall elements converge in a dreamlike setting inhabited by poppy-covered dreamers, serpentine scarves, a dog named Niki, and a unicorn – motifs that echo Wieselthier's own subversive and satirical aesthetic.



The Girl with the Green Apron, 2025
Courtesy of Sascha Mallon | Image: Sascha Mallon

At its emotional and conceptual core, *The Girl with the Green Apron* poses questions that transcend biography: How do we reclaim the fragmented, often invisible narratives of women artists who defied conventions and reshaped the visual language of their time?

Sascha Mallon notes: “It begins with an apron. More precisely: a green apron that a little girl desperately wants. But her family says the shops are closed. So she decides to go her own way. Wieselthier described this moment in her short biography as her first true pain. This story is the starting point for my installation, a fictional visual poem in ceramics and wall painting that flows like a fairy tale, a dream, or a current through the life, work, and cosmos of Vally Wieselthier.

I begin with a scene in which a young girl, a swimmer, is caught in the moment before diving into the unknown. Wieselthier was in fact a professional swimmer in her youth. In my story, her dive into cold water symbolizes the leap to America – a journey through space, memory, emotion, and time.

The installation's cosmos is a delicate yet defiant world of porcelain and wall painting. Planets tell fragments of this journey: The Planet of Flora, inspired by Wieselthier's Flora sculpture, features a poppy-covered figure symbolizing dreams, freedom, pain, and longing. The Planet of Animals recalls the recurring creatures in her work. The Planet of Wings and Roots imagines dreams that both lift and remain grounded.

At the center stands the girl with the green apron – a seeker, an echo, perhaps an allegory for Wieselthier herself. Her apron becomes a mirror, an archive of encounters, desires, fears, and moments in which she was seen, hurt, loved, and forgotten.

Photographs, letters, and Wieselthier's brief autobiography appear in a display case, grounding the dreamscape in history. The installation asks: How can we make the unspeakable visible? How do we shape memory – not only in clay, but also in line, emptiness, and silence?

Wieselthier's work challenged prevailing notions of beauty, femininity, and décor – embracing contradictions of lightness and heaviness, playfulness and critique, wildness and form. *The Girl with the Green Apron* is not a biographical retelling but a poetic response. It is an invitation to consider: What does it mean to lose a home – or never have one? How do we find connection in a world of isolation? What does it mean, as a woman, to assert one's body, voice, and form?

At the journey's end, tucked under the stairs, a photograph of Wieselthier's plaster-cast hands hangs above a small boat carrying the girl and her green apron. And in this final scene, she receives the apron she longed for. Perhaps it is a happy ending. Or perhaps only a new beginning. This work is both homage and conversation. A gesture of listening, responding, and continuing to dream.



Windborn, 43" x 15" x 15 Stoneware, Wooden Stool, 2024
Courtesy of Sascha Mallon | Image: Sascha Mallon

About the Artist

Sascha Mallon is an Austrian-born artist whose work has been exhibited in Austria, the United States, Taiwan, and Germany. She has recently presented solo exhibitions at Front Room Gallery in Hudson, New York, and at Kentler International Drawing Space in Brooklyn, New York. Mallon's work has been included in exhibitions at Albany International Airport; the Katonah Museum of Art, New York; Gormley Gallery at Notre Dame of Maryland University, Baltimore; Gallery Anna25, Berlin; Attleboro Museum, Massachusetts; Penn State University, State College; and A.I.R. Gallery, New York. In addition to her studio practice, Mallon serves as a Hospital Artist-in-Residence for The Creative Center at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, working in the Oncology/BMT and Hematology departments.