

## Balancing act between hate and salvation

Isabelle Müller gave insights into her deprived childhood in her autobiography "Phoenix Daughter"

At the Abtsgmünd Library, author Isabelle Müller presented her autobiography "Phoenix Daughter." Her insights into Vietnamese culture, her portrayal of her childhood, which was marked by poverty, marginalization, and sexual abuse, as well as the positive attitude of the likeable author, touched and captivated the audience at the reading.

Sabine Raab



*Isabelle Müller presented her autobiography "Phoenix Daughter" at the Abtsgmünd Library. (Photo: rb)*

Abtsgmünd. Amidst the well-filled rows of chairs in the Abtsgmünd library sits an attractive woman with long dark hair and a strikingly colorful dress.

She attentively follows Werner Schittenhelm's slide show about a trip to Vietnam. As she takes a seat at the reading table shortly afterwards, Isabelle Müller can't resist recommending that the audience also visit Cu Chi, an underground tunnel city near Saigon. "You have to see it," she says with captivating enthusiasm before picking up her book.

Isabelle Müller was born in Tours, France; her mother is from Vietnam. After studying languages, she worked as an interpreter and translator in Germany, later setting up her own business as an art dealer. The author is married and has two children. In "Phoenix Daughter," the 47-year-old has written her life story.

The first chapter of her book begins in Vietnam in the 1930s, the time in which her mother grew up. "She was clever and wise and unwilling to submit to the strict customs of the time," Müller says. Finally, she begins to talk about her own childhood, which was marked by extreme poverty. "Clothes, mattresses, toys—we got everything from the dump."

The author also talks about the exclusion and discrimination her family experienced in the French provinces, about the teasing from classmates because her shoes were two sizes too big. She talks about the hatred and anger she felt towards society and especially towards her father, whose sexual abuse she witnessed for nine years.

had to endure for a long time.

She repeatedly interspersed her stories with humorous anecdotes and also had some pleasant things to share. These included her deep connection with her mother, her gratitude for the scholarship granted by the French government, her professional successes, and her happy relationship with her husband.

“The bottom line is that the good outweighs the bad,” says Isabelle Müller, the “daughter of the phoenix,” the mystical bird that dies in fire and rises again from the ashes, looking contentedly at her life.

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