

Maria Lassnig – Works from the Klewan Collection

Curated by Brigitte Hausmann

September 16, 2022 to February 26, 2023

Opening: Thursday, September 15

6pm

Welcoming address

Tim Richter, District Councillor for Citizens' Services and Social Affairs; Dr. Brigitte Hausmann, Head of the Steglitz-Zehlendorf Office of Culture

Introduction

Prof. Dr. Christiane Lange, Director of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

7pm

Dance fest “Rock around Lassnig”: El Klewan and Buffalena present, live from Morocco, Rashida Schneider

1997 was the last time a solo exhibition in Berlin was dedicated to the work of Maria Lassnig (1919–2014), who is now considered one of the most important women artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. Her work consists primarily of self-portraits. The majority of these self-portraits have their genesis not in a careful observation of her mirror image or in imagined or remembered images of herself, but instead – and precisely this gives them their unique nature – in her experience of bodily sensations. Maria Lassnig explored the traces of her bodily experience and translated her awareness of her own body into pictures. “In these body-feeling pictures, I have to fight against remembered images from the very beginning. I wipe out the remembered image – not to mention mirrors – as a hindrance. In order to perceive an entirely pure body feeling, you have to shut off your memory” (Maria Lassnig). The palette also corresponds to a sensory reality – they are semantic colors: “The decision for a color is made just like that for a form: arbitrarily. But that doesn’t mean indifferently; instead, it is my will, I fight for this. It doesn’t depend upon anything that already exists. It’s my decision. [...] the forehead is given a thought color; the nose, a smell color; arms and legs are given a flesh color; there are colors for pain and colors for agony, colors for pressure and fullness, colors for stretching and pressing, colors for hollowing out and bulging forth, colors for crushing and burning, colors for death and decay, colors for fear of cancer – these are the colors of reality” (Maria Lassnig).

The paintings from the 1960s shown in this exhibition – the armchair self-portraits and the works Lassnig herself referred to as the Monster pictures – which were so decisive for her development, immediately and vividly illustrate this.

The exhibition’s works on paper – drawings, watercolors, and prints – are from the 1970s to 1990s. Very diverse in terms of technique, the focus here is also on the self-portrait, along with impressions from the period spent in New York (1968–79), experiences from her travels, and so forth. The bronze sculpture *Sexgöttin* (Sex Goddess; 1979) represents a lesser-known aspect of Maria Lassnig’s oeuvre.

In 1978/79 a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) enabled her to live in Berlin for a year, where she particularly focused on perception studies. Maria Lassnig first gained international recognition following the renewal of interest in figurative painting beginning in the 1980s: in 1980 she presented her work (together with Valie Export) at the Austrian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, in 1982 she participated in documenta 7 and in 2013 she was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale.

The exhibited pieces were selected from among the Klewan Collection's much more extensive holdings of Lassnig's work. In 1981 the art collector Helmut Klewan presented the first Lassnig exhibition at what was then his gallery in Munich. "Thirty years of friendship with Maria Lassnig were a constant struggle. One had to wheedle every picture out of her. She preferred to give me oil paintings on consignment rather than sell them to me outright. The idea that she might not be able to retrieve a painting was unbearable to her. Fortunately, she lived to the age of almost 95 and got to enjoy her international fame" (Helmut Klewan).

A catalogue featuring texts by Stefanie Heinzl and Jenny Graser will be published by Kerber-Verlag to accompany the exhibition.

Gutshaus Steglitz

Schlossstr. 48, 12165 Berlin

www.kultur-steglitz-zehlendorf.de

Opening hours: daily, 10am–6pm

Free admission

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