

Rendezvous

Masterpieces from the Essl Collection

19.02.16 – 22.01.17

- Press Conference:** Wednesday, February 17, 2016, 10 a.m., with curator Andreas Hoffer, Prof. Agnes Essl and Prof. Karlheinz Essl
- Opening:** Thursday, February 18, 2016, 7.30 p.m.
- Curator:** Andreas Hoffer
- Venue:** The Galleries, Essl Museum

Masterpieces from the Essl Collection are presented in the exhibition *Rendezvous*. As part of the major collection presentation in 2016 central works and artistic positions from the Essl Collection have a date with one another – Max Weiler, for example, with Cecily Brown, Martha Jungwirth with Asger Jorn or Kurt Kocherscheidt with Antoni Tàpies.

Rendezvous in New York

A rendezvous with consequences marks the beginning of the Essl Collection and is also the starting point for this exhibition. Agnes and Karlheinz Essl meet one another for the first time in 1959 in New York and become lovers. In the subsequent months, they immerse themselves in the gallery and museum scene of the pulsating world capital of art and in this process, they discover their love for art, which will soon become a life-long

passion. Back in Austria, they start to build an exhibition, which today is one of the most important in Europe and is the only one of its kind to show the Austrian art scene since 1945 in an international context.

A French love story

Maria Lassnig / Arnulf Rainer, Georges Mathieu / Hans Hartung / Hans Bischoffshausen

In the early 1950s, Maria Lassnig and Arnulf Rainer, two of the most important Austrian artists, went to Paris as lovers. During this time, marked by the aftermath of World War II and the European dictatorships hostile to art, the concern in the European art metropolis was with philosophies from the Far East. Reduction and concentration on the essential were major themes that also influenced the two young artists. These reflections can be sensed in particular in the *Zentralisationen* (Centralisations) works by Arnulf Rainer from this period.

In Paris in the 1950s Georges Mathieu was a star. He too was influenced by the elegant concentration of Asiatic calligraphy. Mathieu painted theatrically in front of an audience, in the theatres or in the open. When he painted one of his calligraphically oriented line compositions in front of an audience in the Viennese theatre at the Fleischmarkt in 1959, his demonstration of the artistic act inspired the Vienna actionists. In the exhibition Mathieu encounters Hans Hartung, a German in Paris whose works inspired by Chinese ink painting were also attributed to the *Informel* art movement. In addition his works are joined by the poetic, painterly reductions by Bischoffshausen.

Encounter by the bonfire: basic questions of existence

Antoni Tàpies / Kurt Kocherscheidt, Hermann Nitsch / Eduardo Chillida

The Catalan artist Antoni Tàpies encounters Kurt Kocherscheidt, Hermann Nitsch and Eduardo Chillida. In this encounter, one senses the affinity of the four otherwise quite different artists with the archaic, with simplicity, with the original and with the existential. As a young artist the penniless Kocherscheidt went to South America. He was fascinated by the forms of nature, whose uncanny power he transformed in a painterly way. Since the early 1960s Hermann Nitsch has been working at his *Orgies Mysteries*

Theatre, a hedonistic existence theatre that transcendently addresses all the senses, with painting and its artefacts playing an important role in it. Tàpies employs simple materials from nature such as sand, gypsum and clay, which also determine the reduced earthy colourfulness of his paintings and objects. The cross appears in many of his works as an archaic symbol of human existence and of a determination of one's own standpoint in the universe, beyond its Christian connotation.

Tryst in nature:

Max Weiler / Per Kirkeby / Cecily Brown

Max Weiler has little in common with Per Kirkeby, or so it seems at first glance, and just as little with the paintings of the New York artist Cecily Brown. But Weiler, the deeply religious painter from Austria, and the trained geologist Kirkeby from Denmark both share the certainty that it is not enough to depict or copy the surface of nature if one really wants to approach the secret of creation and painting. Weiler transforms nature observation into the creative process of painting, he allows the picture to grow; the painting forms out of the seen, the sensed, the perceived, the coincidence. Kirkeby's starting points for his compositions are layers and graphic structures, which, however, are always reminiscent of nature. The younger Cecily Brown is rather connected with Max Weiler through the painterly process of transformation of the seen – a rendezvous whose outcome still seems to be completely open.

A celebration of painterly intensity:

Cobra and Realities

When Karlheinz and Agnes Essl started collecting art on an international level at the end of the 1980s, they built on the Cobra group, because they knew that it had exerted a major influence on some of the artists in their collection. Shortly after the terror of World War II, in the western European cities of Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam the Cobra artists had embarked on a search for an artistic new beginning. They found it in all externalisations of untrained art, as for example in the uninhibited pictures by children. The attitude was to take up the act of painting in a similar impulsive, intensive and

genuine way. Though this group quickly dissolved again, this attribution remained with its artists all their lives. An artists' group in Vienna had a similar experience in the late 1960s. They too had only come together for the *Wirklichkeiten* (Realities) exhibition in the Secession, yet this description stayed with the artists forever. Artistically, Franz Ringel, for example, was influenced by the Cobra group; other affinities emerge in the exhibition presentation in the course of encounters between Asger Jorn, Karel Appel, Antoni Saura and Martha Jungwirth. The painting is furious, emotional, gestural and spontaneous, the painterly act is always decipherable in the work, it can be seen, experienced, it is a celebration of painterly intensity.

Surprising dates

Alternating rendezvous encounters with uncertain outcomes constitute the form of the large collection presentation. To this end, several times in the course of the exhibition friends of the Essl Collection are invited to select two works from the depot and get them to encounter one another in an exhibition space.

Artists

Pierre Alechinsky, Karel Appel, Enrico Baj / Asger Jorn, Hans Bischoffshausen, Herbert Boeckl, Cecily Brown, Eduardo Chillida, Corneille, Adolf Frohner, Hans Hartung, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Asger Jorn, Martha Jungwirth, Andrea Kasamas, Alex Katz, Per Kirkeby, Kurt Kocherscheidt, Maria Lassnig, Markus Lüpertz, Georges Mathieu, Josef Mikl, Hermann Nitsch, Arnulf Rainer, M.J.M. Ringel, Antonio Saura, Pierre Soulages, Hans Staudacher, Antoni Tàpies, Andreas Urteil, Max Weiler und Fritz Wotruba

Press information, Essl Museum, January 2016

Art Education

The art education team offers guided tours and workshops on the exhibition. Further offers on the exhibition can be found at www.essl.museum

Press images

Press images can be obtained on request or from essl.museum/en/press/press_pictures

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Opening hours: TUE – SUN 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., WED 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Admission: adults 9 Euro and concessionary prices 7 Euro

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