

Act together - effect together

Collaborations of Guenter Brus
with friends since 1970

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After his actionist period, Brus continued to work with other artists. Since the early 1970s, numerous joint works were produced with his artist friends including Christian Ludwig Attersee, Dieter Roth, Arnulf Rainer, Gerhard Rühm and Dominik Steiger. In addition to collaborations working in the visual arts, many literary, musical and cinematic dialogues took place. The exhibition provides an overview of collaborative works, covering the period of his exile in Berlin until the present day, including works with artists from the next generation such as Wolfgang Becksteiner and Enrique Fuentes.

The Berlin Group

In order to escape a prison sentence that he had received following one of his actions *Kunst und Revolution*, Günter Brus fled with his family to Berlin in 1969 where he stayed illegally until 1976. During this time, Brus belonged to the group of Austrian artists that met in Oswald Wiener's restaurant "Exil". It was within these circles that in 1972 the "1. Berliner Dichterworkshop [1st Berlin Poetry Workshop]" was held with the results published in the 9th issue of *Schastrommel*, the "central organ of the Austrian government in exile". Following the literary works shops, there

were drawing workshops in 1973 and 1975 where Christian Ludwig Attersee, Günter Brus, Hermann Nitsch, Dieter Roth, Gerhard Rühm, Dominik Steiger and Oswald Wiener worked together in often spontaneous and eruptive gestures. The combination, interweaving and entanglement of different forms of artistic expression and temperaments dominated his works at this time. In 1974, the leather-bound *Schmale Renaissance 18 / Die sensible Phase* was published in "Exil". It contained notes and drawings by the artists as well as comments from people who had randomly been on hand.

Christian Ludwig Attersee

* 1940 Bratislava (SK)
lives and works in Vienna and Semmering

From 1975 to 1978, Brus and Attersee exchanged drawings with each other by mail while Brus was in Berlin and Attersee in Vienna. The resulting correspondence shows both how they influenced and reacted to each other while at the same time showing how they maintained their own individual style. While Attersee's drawings are more vitalist and erotic, Brus's work dwells more in the realm of dark and fantastic narratives. The works were at first clearly delineated, co-existing alongside each other as separate articulations, only to later be woven together in increasing mutual conviction and trust. Especially along the edges of the pages, this process produced unforeseeable moments and associations.

Dominik Steiger

* 1940 in Vienna (A)
lives and works in Vienna

The creative dialogue between the two artists is based on an idea that they first came up with while writing a postcard together on a trip they were on in Italy: They both decided to send each other a page every Wednesday that was then to be transformed by the other artist. They sent each other 120 pages with an equal emphasis on text and images. The images are always ink drawings of books lying open that are illustrated with surrealistic scenes, sketches of everyday objects or versions of Steiger's *Knöchelchenzeichnungen*. The illustrations in the open books are often accompanied by at first glance incoherent texts, sometimes only captions and other times corny puns or dadaesque sound poems typical of Brus's picture poetry. The drawings were finally collected together in the book *Jeden jeden Mittwoch. Ein Zwoman*. Through generous donations, BRUSEUM today owns 99 pages from this unique collaboration.

Arnulf Rainer

* 1929 Baden (A)

Lives and works in Vienna, Enzenkirchen and on Tenerife

Arnulf Rainer and Brus began working together in 1984. Rainer, who since the mid-1950s had pursued a strategy of painting over pictures and who like Brus had already collaborated with numerous other artists, left some pictures for Brus to transform where Rainer felt that he “did not know where to continue”. Following the impulse of Rainer’s work, the images are nature prints with drawings on top of them and overpainted photographs to which Brus spontaneously added images and text. A poetic dimension is opened that sometimes tends towards the magical-mythical and other times towards associative abstraction. The final collective works were completed in 2008 and presented the following year at the Albertina in Vienna at the exhibition *Am Horizont der Sinne – Am Horizont der Dinge*.

Günter Schimunek

* 1942 in Graz (A)

Lives in Graz and Southeast Asia

“What is staring at us?” is one of the questions that Brus often poses in the texts that he adds to Schimunek’s works. Four lines of text describe the impressions that Schimunek’s reptilian creatures make upon Brus. These at times absurd associations with masked figures articulate in words what Schimunek tried to express in his work *Blockwart*. The overlapping of reality and this vision of a dark yet vivid dream world can cast a spell on the viewer.

Jörg Schlick

* 1951 in Graz (A)

† 2005 in Graz

After seeing Schlick’s exhibition *J. B. SLIK: Projektion und Schizophrenie* in Berlin, Brus asked him if he would like to collaborate with him. One year later, they completed the work *Spiralnebuloöse Gedanken*. Using eleven LP covers and ten same-sized sheets, the work is based on the shape of the circle. While Schlick drew coiling spirals in ink, as if the needle of the record player had ridden out of control across the page, Brus added pictorial commentary and handwritten texts. The interplay of the two formal languages makes it seem as though Brus’s drawings emerged from Schlick’s nebulous spirals, appearing almost as if the birth of the idea were captured on paper.

Wolfgang Becksteiner

* 1972 in Graz (A)

Lives and works in Graz

Betonierte Gedanken, the works from 2011 made together with the conceptual artist Wolfgang Becksteiner have a title that could be interpreted in many different ways. Using a process specially developed by Becksteiner, casts of photographs are applied to concrete, resulting in gray-black wooden frame monuments that Brus then modifies and transforms. Based on private, often mundane photographs, Becksteiner’s motifs form the backdrop for Brus’s narrative and pictorial interventions that place the works into a different context. This results in a dramatic staging that is further emphasized by the unusual use of material.

Enrique Fuentes

* 1980 in Mexico City D. F. (MX)
lives and works in Vienna, Graz
and Paris.

The Mexican artist Enrique Fuentes situates the representational in his painting in the interstice between form and dispersion. Figurative objects appear again and again in works that are covered in a process that continually applies layers of paint which are then partially exposed again.

The expressive quality of the artist's application of paint to the canvas, where he often uses his bare hands, or throws the pigments onto the wet surface, is reminiscent of Günther Brus's works that pushed the artist to his own physical limits. In the 21-part work *Todscharze Aufzeichnungen*, Fuentes worked with Goya's three great series *Los Disparates*, *Los Caprichos* and *Los Desastres de la Guerra*. He removed the narrative elements from Goya's work, instead focusing more on subjective perception. Günther Brus then composed texts as associative interpretations that further modify the pictures.

Music und Film

Selten gehörte Musik was the title of an informal series of concerts in which Günther Brus, Gerhard Rühm, Christian Ludwig Attersee, Dieter Roth, Hermann Nitsch and others made music together in various constellations. In dealing with instruments, whether ones they had learned to play or not, they came together to dabble and explore within the disharmonious and accidental. The recordings reveal their common interest in improvisation and experiment along with their almost child-like joy of making noise.

During the 1980s, Brus's diverse talents came to the fore in several film projects. Terese Schulmeister created and directed the films *Vincent*, *Picasso* and *Back to Fucking Cambridge* at Otto Muehl's commune in Friedrichshof. In addition to Brus, not only members of the commune but also numerous other artists were involved with the films including Maria Lassnig, Hermann Nitsch, Theo Altenberg, Oswald Oberhuber, Orlan and Nam June Paik.

Accompanying Program (in German)

Tues, 22.05., 7pm

Kollaborative Eskapaden

Standard-Kunstgespräch

Fri, 08.06., 3.30pm

Curator's tour

Fri, 20.07., 6pm

Film screening Vincent

Introduction: Terese Schulmeister (director)

Fri, 27.07., 7pm

Film screening Picasso

Introduction: Werner Hertel (camera/editing)

Fri, 03.08., 7pm

Film screening Back to Fucking Cambridge

Introduction: Theo Altenberg (actor)

Fri, 10.08., 3.30pm

Curator's tour

Fri, 31.08., 7pm

Artist talk

Christian Ludwig Attersee,
Günter Brus and Gerhard Rühm

Sat, 01.09., 3.30pm

Curator's tour

Guided tours (in German)

Sun, 10.06., 3.30pm

Sun, 08.07., 3.30pm

Sun, 12.08., 3.30pm

Meeting Point:

Foyer

2,50 € (excl. admission)

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