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Die Kunst des Herrn Nestler The Art of Mr. Nestler

Neue Galerie, Graz, Joanneum Quarter, 8010 Graz

Opening: 23.10.2014, 7 p.m.

Duration: 24.10.2014-22.02.2015

Kurated by Katrin Bucher Trantow

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As a sculptor, graphic artist, performer and art teacher, Norbert Nestler (1942–2014) had a longstanding influence on the art world in Graz, Austria. In a retrospective developed in cooperation with the artist, featuring a final piece devised for the staircase, Neue Galerie, Graz is now presenting a chronological selection (1967–2014) of objects, installations and graphical works of the artist who passed away in January.

Originally a painter, Norbert Nestler explored the penetration of space. In terms of their design and concept of the image, his early works were informed by surrealism. His piece known as *Wohin geht ihr, fliegende Brüste* (Where Are You Off to, Flying Breasts), dealing with his lifelong exploration of the realm between abstraction and figuration, was the surprise, if not uncontroversial, winner of the Joanneum Art Prize in 1967. Participating in the *trigon* exhibitions of 1969 and 1971—that focused on architecture, its expansion and appropriation—he left behind the realm of depictive figuration, working to a greater extent in the field of graphical abstraction by means of serial multiplication. The surface became a layered sculpture, Nestler a maker of objects in the sense of object art across different media and kinetic, performative fusion.

His position, with which he began to explore urban cultural space as an artistic medium in the 1970s, led to him jointly running the visuals arts section at Forum Stadtpark (1973–76) together with Peter Gerwin Hoffmann and Hartmut Urban. Conceptually expanding dimensions, it was during this period that Nestler developed an oeuvre whose originality between concept and personal symbolism was based on translucent graphics, portable sculptures, and parasitic objects. His work is set in a context of international movements whose reduced, functional vocabulary of form was brought to international prominence by pioneering ‘boundary crossers’ from the history of Graz’s *trigon* including Eilfried Huth, Günther Domenig, but also Italian colleagues such as Gianni Colombo. Nestler’s longstanding close companion is Friederike Jeanne Nestler-Rebeau, who accompanied her partner’s artistic development and carried out a number of joint projects with him.

At a very early stage, Nestler concerned himself in his sculptural, but also graphical work with the motif of the hose, the penetrating tube, that he realised both in two and three dimensions. For example for *art play*, a folder of graphic works housed in the Neue Galerie Graz collection, or for the Percent for Art project fountain sculpture, that he designed for the Sigmund Freud Psychiatric Hospital in Graz in 1972-78. His entire oeuvre is closely linked to developments connected with the possibility of shaping translucent media such as light printing and advanced printing techniques and the materials acrylic glass and aluminium, whose permeable properties he tested continuously. The show, which brings together more than sixty works and work series, demonstrates the breadth of his work in the sense of the experiment that characterises Nestler's cross-media oeuvre.

In January 2015 De Gruyter are publishing a catalogue with exhibition views and texts by the artist, that he was able to prepare himself. Other contributors on his work as an artist who thought beyond regional borders, a culture worker, and art teacher include Elisabeth Fiedler, Günther Holler-Schuster, Edelbert Köb, and Katrin Bucher Trantow,