

Universalmuseum Joanneum Press

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Who Are You? Two Centuries of Portraits

Neue Galerie Graz, Joanneumsviertel, 8010 Graz

Opening: 24.05.2017, 7 pm

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Curated by Gudrun Danzer and Günther Holler-Schuster

Information: +43-316/8017-9100, www.neuegaleriegraz.at

Ever since people have created pictures, they have drawn, painted or formed portraits, too – images of those around them and of themselves. The exhibition *Who Are You? Two Centuries of Portraits* in the Neue Galerie Graz has not set itself the task of preparing the various types of portraits throughout art history and of then putting them on show – nor could it afford to. However, the museum’s collection, which covers the period from 1800 to the present, houses a wide range of portraits and depictions of people in the various media, from painting, sculpture, graphics and photography through to video. Undoubtedly, most of the objects in the collection belong to the portrait genre, along with that of the landscape. This exhibition has set out to explore their many references, as well as question the cultural-historical and social messages they may contain – always with a fresh eye and in unexpected combinations.

The legend of the origins of painting and sculpture has been linked to the portrait since antiquity: Pliny the Elder reports in the first century A.D. that both Egyptians and Greeks lay claim to inventing painting, and that this was created as a resulting tracing shadows. Pliny ascribes sculpture to the Greek potter Butades: the latter is said to have been the first to form portrait-like images from clay, using the contour of a shadow that his daughter produced of her lover who was embarking on a journey. Thus, one of the most important functions that the portrait fulfilled in the course of its long history in the various media of fine arts, and continues to fulfil, has been identified: to make present someone absent, meaning it serves both to represent and to recall another. Soon representative tasks were added, such as are seen in portraits of rulers and society. Since the Modern Period, the portrait has also sought to reproduce, whether in painting or sculpture, the individual to include his or her psychological characteristics, his or her inner life.

Questions of identification and self-perception

The long period under consideration of over 200 years enables present phenomena to be contrasted with historical ones, and vice versa, resulting in the potential for unimagined insights: Can Andy Warhol's *Red Lenin* (1987) draw out new messages from the *Portrait of Count Saurau* by Heinrich Füger (1797)? Which communalities and contradictions are there between Josef Kriehuber's portrait lithographs of Austrian society around 1850 and Andy Warhol's screen print series *Ladies and Gentlemen* from 1975?

What we describe as our 'self' has many causes. The various levels of meaning and functional modes of the visual play a major role in the issue of identification and self-perception. They are time-specific and as such dependent upon social dynamics, too. Taken together, these are the constituent parts that the construction of a human image consists of. A person's exterior contributes essentially to the formation of identity. Yet such data as writing or numbers can also enable messages to be conveyed in this regard. So in this exhibition, we investigate not only the narrow category of 'portrait', but also the numerous attempts by people to form an image of themselves, those around them, and the setting in which they live. This is a need, however, which exists for just as long as there are self-reflecting people. The story of the depiction of people is ultimately also the story of their self, rendered visible on the images through such details as clothing, hairstyles, jewellery, etc.

The portrait: A multi-facetted theme

In around fifteen rooms and the staircase of the Gründerzeit museum, the exhibition is dedicated to themes such as the portrait of rulers and aristocrats, citizens and other individuals, society portraits, links between the portrait and territory, portraits of artists and self-portraits, masques and role plays, the decline of the self-contained image of a person and its segmentation after the Second World War, the dissolution of the image into text, language, and digital data, the medial and serial portrait, as well as the interactive portrait. The names of the artists selected range from local to international – with the remarkable, large-format paintings and printed graphics of American Pop Art, gifted to the museum from the Suschnigg Collection in 2016, on show for the first time. A 136-page publication accompanying the exhibition is available at the shop in the Joanneum Quarter for € 9.50.

The following are represented: Friedrich Aduatz, Friedrich Amerling, Max Aufischer, Gottfried Bechtold, Guillaume Bijl, Herbert Boeckl, Hans Brandstetter, Leopold Bude, Claude Cahun, Tony Cragg, Walter Eckert, Sylvie Fleury, Herms Fritz, Heinrich Füger, Felix Harta, Romuald Hazoum , Valeria Heisenberg, Peter Gerwin Hoffmann, Alwine Hotter, Alex Katz, Gustav Klimt, Kiki Kogelnik, Oskar Kokoschka, Anton Kolig, Johann Peter Krafft, Josef Kriehuber, Richard Kriesche, Elke Krystufek, Leopold Kupelwieser, Maria Lassnig, Roy Lichtenstein, Hans Mauracher, Josef Mikl, Henri Michaux, Rudi Molacek, Ernst Christian Moser, Franz Motschnig, Otto M hl, Shirin Neshat, Karl Neubacher, Oswald Oberhuber, Julian Opie, Josef Pillhofer, Peter Pongratz, Arnulf Rainer, Franz Ringel, Gerhard R hm, Egon Schiele, Michael Schuster, Cindy Sherman, Hans und Rudolf Szyszkowitz, Gabi Trinkaus, Timm Ulrichs, Alfons Walde, Andy Warhol, Peter Weibel, Alfred Wickenburg, Manfred Willmann, Robert Wilson, and many others.