

ARNULF RAINER – KUNST.SALON SALA TERRENA SALZBURG

August 3 - 25, 2019, Preview: August 3, 11:00 a.m.

I see art as a means of expanding people's consciousness...

Arnulf Rainer, 1972

When I'm drawing, I feel excited. I talk to myself, pull faces, and swear at people. I am constantly moving and transforming my body, character and person. It was these side effects of artistry that I wanted to lend a life of their own.

Arnulf Rainer, 1971

Photography by itself, however, is not able to convey moving or statically concentrated tension in an adequate manner. In order to get closer to the desired result, I draw over the photo. This doesn't mean that I retouch it, however. I rather accentuate to re-dynamize a frozen moment.

Arnulf Rainer, 1973

In theater and dance, bodily expression has always existed, but it was conceived as part of a greater concept, as the idea of a role or as a form of grace and charm.

Arnulf Rainer, 1973

In a special presentation in the Sala Terrena, the 2019 **Art Salon** shows selected **Face Farce** and **Body Pose** works by **Arnulf Rainer**. The above quotations give a vivid description of his idea and its artistic connotation.

This group of works, following the early overpaintings, has a special significance in Arnulf Rainer's oeuvre. *Cross Overpaintings* and *Face Farces* were shown at documenta 5 (1972), and first gained international acclaim in the Austrian Pavilion at the 1978 Venice Biennale. In his self-portraits, which appeared concurrently with Viennese Actionism, Rainer carried out an open and intensive exploration of his face and body, with grimaces and contortions. Accentuating these through*distortions, swellings and drawing lines over them, he puffed himself up like a turkey ...* result in momentary combinations of *extremes of the serious and the ridiculous*.¹

Of special note is a large-scale work – 120 x 80 cm, mixed media and silver-gelatine print on cardboard on wood (1969). The comparatively few works of this size in the extensive group are now in museum collections, including the Albertina in Vienna, and in several prestigious private collections (including those of Helmut Zambo, Burda, and Duke Franz of Bavaria).

¹ Cf. Arnulf Rainer, *Schriften, Ostfildern*, self-interview 1972, p90

Besides its format, this work is distinctive for its intense colouration and dynamic expressiveness. The photograph which serves as the basis is one of the earliest taken in an automatic photo booth.

During the 1960s, Rainer made an intensive study of drawing all manner of faces and grimaces. As he drew, these caricatures were reflected in his own features. In 1968 he started overpainting faces (documented by Peter Baum). His own body became a means of expression, first physically, then through photography. After initial photos taken in an automatic photo booth in Vienna's Westbahnhof (train station), Rainer worked with various photographers, who pressed the shutter release at just the right moments. Disappointed with the desired intensity of the image of his distortions, he began to rework the photos of his grimaces by drawing over them. This process represented for him both an accented self-reproduction and a symbolic transformation and self-obliteration. With his *Face Farces* and *Body Poses*, Rainer combined the theatrical and the graphic medium of expression into a single art form. He was interested in the intensification of physical, bodily expression. His poses are a quest for the possible and the impossible human being inherent in all of us.

On display are twenty "overworkings" based on diverse photo sessions and dating from between 1968 and 1975. Complementing the presentation are photographs by **Elisabeth Mejchar** and **Peter Baum**, who document Arnulf Rainer's work. Numerous publications and catalogues from the principal museum exhibitions illustrate the variety of this group of works.