

Karel Appel

Late Nudes, 1985 – 1995

Berlin: Goethestraße 2/3, 15 November 2019 – 11 January 2020



Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to announce its first solo exhibition with late nude paintings and drawings by Karel Appel at Goethestraße 2/3.

A founding figure of CoBrA (1948-1951), which developed from the Dutch Experimental Group (1948), Karel Appel began his career in the aftermath of the Second World War. Over the course of six decades, the artist experimented widely, across painting, sculpture, drawing, and stage design, distinguishing himself for his astonishing capacity to innovate; Appel never settled in a signature style, media or subject. Going beyond his classical,

academic training at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam, the artist looked at folk art, as well as the uninhibited work of children and the mentally ill, whilst also drawing from jazz's spirit of improvisation. Alternating between abstraction and figuration, Appel adopted a material-oriented approach in his practice, and promoted a genuine form of expression, an art which writer and curator Klaus Ottmann describes as "divorced from any political or didactic purpose".

"In 1994, in his New York studio, Karel Appel started a new series of nudes - female and male. [...] The paintings have a vertical format and are narrow, so that the upright human figure only fits tightly within, as if placed in a box. The surface is strongly dominated by the figure that appears in each painting in a different, expressive position. The standing, frontal nude is a recurring topic in Appel's oeuvre. Although he also made reclining nudes, usually in the traditional or classical connection with landscapes, he prefers the standing nude, that is, the figure who is not at rest. Reclining nudes are almost always idyllic and dreamy, that is their aesthetic role. The upright nude can move at any moment and change position. This movement could be abrupt, slow, dramatic, violent, aggressive; the painter can derive and develop a number of different expressions from this figure. This seemed to be also the artist's intention.

To get a clearer picture of movements and to better direct expressions, Appel has worked with models. The contact with the living, moving model (opposite the artist's lurking and measuring eyes) has given these new nudes a great freshness. This is mainly due to the attractive mobility of the nudes; it would have been said, at Rembrandt's time, to be a very 'graceful leap'. This mobility, lifelikeness, can be seen as a logical translation in the way the nudes are painted: with passionate, powerful strokes in bright colors. The painter's movements are compressed on the narrow surface, making them appear all the more intense. Created within the focused atmosphere of the studio, these paintings are pure, freely executed studies – exuberant paintings from a painter who, [as he got older, only grew]." (Rudi Fuchs, 1995)

"I paint the nude not in order to imitate nature, nor to come as close as possible to nature. I use the nude as inspiration for making a painting which is called a nude. For all that freedom that I won after fifty years of painting – freedom and technique, color and design – is then suddenly concentrated in the form of a nude. And every nude gives it yet another vibration, another emotional association, and this leads to a painting which is different in color and form. I look very much for a form which is more or less different. There's not a whole lot you can do with a nude. We all have two arms, two legs, two eyes, a head, so that's what you've got to work with." (Karel Appel, 1995)

Karel Appel (1921-2006) alternately lived and worked in Paris and New York, among other places. Retrospective exhibitions of the artist's work were held by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2017 and the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague in 2016. Further solo exhibitions were held at important institutions worldwide, such as the Emil Schumacher Museum Hagen; Phillips Collection, Washington D.C. (both 2016); Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); Museum Jorn, Silkeborg (2013); Cobra Museum, Amstelveen (2008); Albertina, Vienna (2007); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague (2005); National Museum, Belgrade; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (both 2004); Kunstforum Wien, Vienna (2002); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2001); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent (2000), among others. Appel's work was included in group exhibitions at the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao; and Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (all 2018); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2016); Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart (2015); Tate St Ives, St Ives (2014); Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (both 2013); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2012); Bridgestone Museum of Art, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo (2011); Hermitage, St. Petersburg (2003); The Royal Academy of Arts, London (2002); Tate Gallery Liverpool, Liverpool (2000), among others.

Karel Appel's work is represented in public collections internationally, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Tate, London; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, among others. And of course in all major Dutch museums, in particular the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague.

We would like to thank the Estate of Karel Appel for their generous support.

Further exhibitions, fair participations and events:

26 October – 21 December 2019

Toby Ziegler

There's a ghost in my house

57, rue du Temple 75004 Paris

21 November 2019 – 11 January 2020

Robert Holyhead

No movement, no colour

41 Dover Street W1S 4NS London

23 November 2019 – 11 January 2020

Carroll Dunham | Michael Williams

Drawings curated by Cornelius Tittel

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

5 – 8 December 2019

Art Basel Miami Beach

Booth F21

Press contact:

Galerie Max Hetzler

presse@maxhetzler.com

Berlin: +49 30 346 497 85-0

www.facebook.com/galeriemaxhetzler

www.instagram.com/galeriemaxhetzler

www.twitter.com/hetzlergallery