

## Martin Kippenberger

*heute denken - morgen fertig*

Works from private collections from the 80s and 90s.

Photographs by Wilhelm Schürmann and Andrea Stappert.

Curated by Josephine von Humboldt

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

13 January – 25 February 2023

Opening: Friday, 13 January, 6 – 8pm

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to announce *heute denken - morgen fertig*, an exhibition of works by **Martin Kippenberger** (1953–1997) from the 1980s and 1990s from private collections. In addition to paintings, sculptures and drawings by Kippenberger, the exhibition will present photographs by Wilhelm Schürmann and Andrea Stappert. Archival material and publications by the artist are also on view in vitrines.

This is the sixteenth solo exhibition of Martin Kippenberger's work at the galleries of Max Hetzler, Samia Saouma, and Luhring Augustine Hetzler since Kippenberger's first exhibition at Galerie Max Hetzler in Stuttgart in 1981. These include the landmark exhibitions *Die I.N.P Bilder* (1984), *Peter - Die russische Stellung* (1987), *Fred the Frog* (1991), and *Hand Painted Pictures* (1992), each of which was accompanied by a publication.

In the following text, a letter written in retrospect at the end of 2022, Kippenberger's former gallerist Peter Pakesch recalls his encounters and impressions of the artist from the 1990s:

Dear Martin,

What a lovely surprise it was to see you and Elfie<sup>1</sup> at the party for Krischanitz in the Secession yesterday! It has been a long time since we last met. There is something about seeing you together with Elfie. It's always nice to see friends from very different corners coming together. Two years ago at Michel's<sup>2</sup> birthday I could not have imagined it like this. Now, on a completely different path, you have immersed yourself in Viennese waters.

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<sup>1</sup> Elfie Semotan, photographer and, from 1995, romantically involved with Kippenberger.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Würthle, artist and landlord of the 'Paris Bar', friends with Kippenberger since the days of the legendary 'Exil', Würthle's former pub with Oswald and Ingrid Wiener.



Martin Kippenberger, *heute denken - morgen fertig*, 1983, © The Estate of Martin Kippenberger, Gisela Capitain Gallery, Cologne, Photo: Courtesy Private Collection.

Remember what it was like when you – I had only just opened my gallery – turned up in Vienna with Max after the fair in Basel, where we had first officially met? Somehow another world broke into our grey Viennese idyll. Loud and boastful, refreshing and fast. Two days of intense conversations and explorations of the night. I knew that was the way to go for me, too, if I wanted to stir up the scene here. I admired your strategic thinking, your will to turn the art world upside down. The rest is history. We had arranged exhibitions and a meeting at Albert's opening to be held later that summer in Stuttgart at Max's. There our conversations deepened, we discovered many things in common. Albert, Werner, Markus and you, we had a lot in common. A telephone call I arranged for Albert with Wolfi Bauer in Graz hit the nail on the head.

A few months later you came to Vienna to exhibit *Schwerter zu Zapfhähnen* (Swords into beer taps) in my space. A printer at Rema-Print refused to run a poster with this slogan. Rema stood for Revolutionary Marxists. The print shop was on its way from reproducing leaflets to becoming Vienna's leading art print shop. The poster was printed and attracted quite a bit of attention in the city's pubs. Then came the moment of your arrival. You were well prepared. Your friend Michel Würthle ensured your path from Berlin to his friend Kurt Kalb<sup>3</sup> in Vienna's Bäckerstrasse would go smoothly. The party started immediately. The fact that the pictures came and had to be hung was almost secondary. The days leading up to the opening were timed. Kurt was ecstatic, you outbid yourselves. The Viennese looked on wide eyed. There was suddenly something different. I had enjoyed it and was very pleased. The exhibition and the collaboration got off to a good start. Besides all this, you were in the middle of telling me all your strategic thoughts about how Vienna could be rebuilt and what the German market would need, etc. I was very pleased. For me, that was just the right thing to reinforce my already ambitious plans. This eventually turned into an ongoing dialogue. Your need to interfere just had to be channelled. I admired how you complemented Max, how you organised the all-around of the gallery, or thought you had done so. Somewhat later, and quite differently, something comparable happened to me here in Vienna with Franz West. Franz, so similar to you and yet so different – like Mike (Kelly) later in Los Angeles, a brother in spirit and a counterpart. As similar as you were, you always kept a respectful distance. Quite a contrast to your dealings with others. I, too, always had my difficulties in keeping you at a measured distance when necessary. Many could not, which contributed to your moderate popularity with many curators.

What comes to mind is your great sympathy and commitment to other artists, when you liked them and appreciated what they did. It was different when someone didn't convince you. Then you were merciless

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<sup>3</sup> Kurt Kalb, art dealer and host of the legendary restaurant 'Oswald & Kalb'.

and let the whole world know it. Your long speeches about the qualities of the others, the admired and the despised, were legendary. They could be irritating, but they could also offer deep insights. You always had a very precise eye for other works. You were the best proof of an analysis of art beyond art history, a testimony of free contemplation and unusual judgment. There was a lot to be learned, if one was open to it.

I owe many a beautiful exhibition to your commitment to others and the suggestions that followed. Somehow it hadn't yet gotten around that artists could also curate. The concept of curating was still young. Anyway, you came shyly with the idea of exhibiting your friends Förg, Herold, Kiecol, Meuser and Mucha. This turned into a wonderful joint experience. The catalog took two forms, one conventional, the second, produced a year later when you were back from Brazil, in drawn form. You never got over the fact that you left the drawings to me.

During the preparation of the exhibition, a mishap occurred, the overcoming of which showed me your great knowledge of human nature and diplomatic skills, which one might not have suspected in you. I had bought a great work by Reinhard Mucha from Max the year before. It was called Bonn, a key work. It was delivered with the other works in the exhibition. Fortunately, a second work by Mucha came with it, because one of the glass panes with the lettering had a corner broken off. I decided, pragmatically, to have a duplicate made by a glazier and lettering painter, and was proud of this. When I told you about it, you immediately explained that this was quite wrong, and that Mucha should not be deceived in this way. I had intended to swindle him out of the broken pane and pass the new one on to him. You explained to me that Reinhard would see through this immediately, because the typeface painter would certainly not have managed the subtleties of the typography in this way. Mucha, whom you once called Schrauben-Peter, had a long record of damages, much to his misfortune and certainly coupled with his precise, if not meticulous, handling of things. So I was warned not to make the mistake of trying to fool Mucha, and in doing so you explained to me in brief words precisely your view of his work and impact, in a way I would not otherwise have heard. This one work was only restored a year later for Harald Szeemann's exhibition *De Sculptura*. But that is another story.

Another story speaks to your sensitivity and diplomatic skills. Later, when I had two gallery spaces in Vienna, two exhibitions had been scheduled in parallel, one with Otto Zitko in the Ungargasse, and your Peter 2 exhibition in the Ballgasse. A big event. I warned Otto in advance that it might be difficult for him to open on the same evening and offered him to start his exhibition a week before or after. No, he said, it was fine that way. As it happened, you naturally got more attention from all sides and afterwards your friends occupied the best seats in the restaurant. When Otto arrived late with his friends, there was no table left. Later we also learned that the restaurant had assigned tables differently due to the

delay. Anyway, Otto was angry and left the restaurant ranting. I rushed after him to prevent a scandal, which only made the situation worse. In front of the 'Oswald & Kalb' restaurant, in front of the entire Viennese art public, I had to endure a tirade from Otto about all the things I had done wrong in the years of our collaboration and how I had treated him badly. Once I displayed enough disappointment in myself, he ran out of steam, and we could go back to the restaurant, where, in the meantime, a new table had been set up for us. But the mood remained depressed. Then you came along and started with a similar lament. Not him too, I thought for a moment. But I soon realised that you were humorously mocking Otto's performance. Soon everyone, including Otto, was doubled over with laughter and the situation was resolved in a wonderful way. We were able to celebrate unconstrained until late at night.

Peter 2 was a very important moment in your career and in the reception of your work. Before that, Max and I had always talked about which work, which artist, was to be assessed and how. With this exhibition, I was sure that you would be at the top, an assessment that bewildered even Max at the time. You had previously considered yourself to be in the second tier, behind Albert, Werner or Reinhard. Some time later you told me about a fortune teller who had predicted that you would make it big – a prediction which promptly came true. According to your retelling, giants of the Pop world including Mick Jagger or Keith Richards had visited this Parisian fortune teller to receive prophesies. To be in their company, of course, pleased you. It was also a striking sign of how much you had begun to think ahead. The New York version of the Peter exhibition brought us – I happened to be there at the time of the set-up and the opening at Metro – intense conversations which lasted two long nights, during which time we used up all provisions that the gallery had provided you with for the set-up. You had forced the two gallery owners to get you something, as a support and to compensate for the late arrival of the works, so that everything would be ready on time.

I was once again impressed by your broad vision, which at that time already went beyond Europe and the known art world. Your stays in various places, especially the one in Brazil, were characterised by a previously unknown approach. The way you surveyed and appropriated places, be it Vienna, Seville or Los Angeles, was unique. We were getting closer to the global village. This would then be reflected primarily in your late great Metro Net project. In Syros, Dawson City, and Kassel, nodes emerged to form a new network of a world in which everything was connected.

Your manic production with pictures, multiples, sculptures and large-scale projects knew hardly any limits. You were very serious, as you simultaneously questioned everything through grotesque gestures of humour. In this way you were able to point out possibilities that clearly showed what the function of art, of your art, is. You increasingly became an actor in a large system. You were able to connect so much, with

amazing generosity. You had such a special sensibility about the use and function of the institution of art. Museum of Modern Art Syros – hardly ever have the current institutional practices been expressed so succinctly. Criticism and project at the same time.

It is obvious that this also led you down some misguided paths. However, these mistakes always had a special charm, and who knows if we will see a deeper meaning in them someday? In the rubber pictures, perhaps?

In all this, it was sad to see how little the institutional world of museums and large exhibition houses were able to deal with you. They should have been beating down your doors, but they hardly did. Too great was the fear of your clarity, your sharpness and impetuosity. You were also excluded from many large exhibitions. You were hurt, but you knew how to respond, as you did in Berlin at Metropolis. Many of your friends were present at that exhibition, only you were not. So you withdrew to your base in Berlin, the 'Paris Bar' owned by your friend Michel, and built a counter-exhibition in this location. Your collection, which was always important to you, helped you, as did the generosity of your artist colleagues. In the morning, Julian<sup>4</sup> painted a portrait of Juana de Aizpuru<sup>5</sup> for the exhibition in his hotel. The night of the Accrochage is still clear in my memory. Again, you amazed and impressed me as a curator, as well as a collector.

You collected not only art but also people, which increasingly became evident in your poster production. There you were able to interweave your work with the work of others in various ways. And again, a network of a very unique quality and an extraordinary understanding of this medium was created. What a joy it was to make posters with you. It just flowed without unnecessary meanderings. Relationships were defined, history was written, and reflections were made on how spaces were created. In 1991, when I wanted to hang large posters in the streets of Graz for the Steirischer Herbst, you came up with the wonderful idea of paying homage to the Viennese custom of hanging current exhibition posters in the coffee houses. You chose the rather archetypal 'Café Alt Wien', which you loved. The place was filled with a historical selection of the most important posters of the last decade. This space became a large poster in the city. Interior versus exterior space, varying forms of publicity, the history of a place – you had grip on all these concepts. The interconnectedness of these fields of action came across to you easily. Again, you displayed an expansiveness and clear vision.

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<sup>4</sup> Julian Schnabel

<sup>5</sup> Juana de Aizpuru, Spanish gallerist who promoted and exhibited extensively the work of Kippenberger and other German artists in Spain. In 1987 and 1988 she provided Albert Oehlen and Martin Kippenberger with an Atelier near Seville.

Some people were stunned by your impatience. There was incomprehension as well as boundless admiration. Your dynamics and the dynamics around you did not leave anyone indifferent, as if all this was also part of the work. Dynamics, as they are becoming increasingly rare, where we experience streamlined pleasure. That was never your way. As much as you embraced the world, you were always certain where your centre was, namely with yourself, whether pleasing or displeasing, with all possible contradictions.

In light of my new situation in Basel, which has recently become known, I was very curious to see when a meeting between us would take place. I was a bit afraid of this, since I knew you as someone who never missed an opportunity to demand exhibitions with a certain insistence. And now, I have to tell you, I am relieved and looking forward to our project for the Kunsthalle! – By the way, do you still remember how you grumbled at the opening of the Young German Painting in the restaurant of the Kunsthalle, 13 years ago, because once again you were not there? You let everyone know how stupid you thought it was. For our meeting now, in view of this memory from Basel more than a decade later, I had already worked something out. I certainly didn't want the usual Kippenberger exhibition. And really, those self-portraits from 1988 that you showed at Juana's in Seville at the time triggered something in me that lasted for a long time, which was then reinforced again by the Greek paintings that were on view at Max's in Cologne in '92. It was nice to see how you, after you had made the expected advances, briefly swallowed and paused after my remark about the pictures of '88. Your somewhat belated comment that this might be a good idea, with which you returned to me the same evening, has greatly brightened this for me. Now I am already thinking intensively about this project. I think that it is good for you now, if a part of your work is considered quite classically. Maybe you will also manage to paint something new for the exhibition? Now that I hear you have moved back into the Austrian vicinity and are working in Jennersdorf in Kurt's<sup>6</sup> old studio. With such an exhibition we can increase attention to your work to the extent you need. The Kunsthalle is the place to look at this body of work on a new level, completely without hullabaloo. Now we just have to find a date.

Sincerely, Peter

Basel / Vienna, December 1995

P.S. The exhibition, which took place posthumously in 1998, one year after Martin's death, permanently changed the reception of Kippenberger's work. A new cycle, Das Floss der Medusa, was also

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<sup>6</sup> Kurt Kocherscheidt, Austrian painter who died at an early age and Elfie Semotan's first husband.

created for the exhibition to crown the project. This cycle also represents a late premonition of death.

**Peter Pakesch** was born 1955 in Graz, where he curated his first exhibitions and performances between 1976 and 1979, as part of the Forum Stadtpark and the Steirischer Herbst. 1980: Study visit to New York. 1981–1993: Gallery Peter Pakesch, Vienna. 1985: Founded the Grazer Kunstverein with important exhibitions for the Steirischer Herbst until 1993. 1994–1995: projects for the Prague National Gallery. 1996–2003: Director of the Kunsthalle Basel. From 2003: Director of the Universalmuseum Joanneum and Founding Director of the Kunsthaus Graz until 2015. From 2015: Director of the Maria Lassnig Foundation in Vienna.

#### Further exhibitions and events

##### Berlin:

13 January – 23 February 2023

##### **Karel Appel**

*Encounter in Spring and what follows*

Curated by Franz W. Kaiser

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623

25 January – 25 February 2023

##### **Carroll Dunham**

*Selected Drawings*

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623

3 February – 11 March 2023

##### **Barry Flanagan**

*Imaginary Solutions*

Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785

##### Paris:

14 January – 25 February 2023

##### **Ai Weiwei, Leilah Babirye, Simone Fattal, Adam Pendleton**

*Distant Voices*

46 & 57 rue du Temple, 75004

##### London:

19 January – 25 February 2023

##### **Jeremy Demester**

*Ram Muay*

41 Dover Street, W1S 4NS

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