

WALTER PICHLER *Schmetterling Gebäude und Frau aus Metall*

18.11.2017 – 24.03.2018 INNSBRUCK

Opening: Saturday, November 18, 2017, 12:00

Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, after many projects realized together with Walter Pichler, is proud now to present in Innsbruck the exhibition *Schmetterling Gebäude und Frau aus Metall* (*Butterfly Building and Woman in Metal*), which comprises five autonomous sculptures, the artist's earliest figurative sculpture *Kleine Figur* (1960), the two plaster sculptures *Schmetterling* (1962) and *Gebäude* (1963, both shown at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg in 2016), and the sculpture *Alte Figur* (1960–63). All four of these works were created at his Vienna studio. The sculpture *Frau aus Metall* (1990), on the other hand, was made already in St. Martin and originally was destined for the vestibule of the *Türmchen* (little tower) for the women. As often with his sculptures, Pichler in drawing developed various versions of them and their housing and here finally decided on the free positioning of *Frau in Metall*. The sculptures are accompanied by groups of drawings that show Pichler's drawing imagery in its highly differentiated variety over the decades. They testify to the artist's unceasing artistic ambition to break routines, and continuously to start anew and differently, to draw thoughts, and to think through drawing.

With his radical and utopian architectural and artistic designs, Walter Pichler became one of the most idiosyncratic artist personalities of his time. Early groups of works, like the iconic *Prototypen*, the first free sculptures, as presented in the exhibition, and the sculptures inside their individual buildings in St. Martin, created from the nineteen-seventies onwards, as well as the realized or projected buildings from the middle of the nineties, cement his influence to this day.

Walter Pichler was born in Deutschnofen, South Tyrol, in 1939. The same year, his family opted to go to Austria (to Telfs, Tyrol). He studied at the school of arts and crafts in Innsbruck and then the University of Applied Arts in Vienna until 1959.

His first exhibition *Architektur*, together with Hans Hollein, at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, in 1963, was one of the most influential Austrian contemporary art exhibitions of the post-war years. Study visits to Paris, New York, Mexico and the social and technical innovations of the sixties shaped Pichler's early works.

In 1967, MOMA New York presented the *Visionary Architects* Raimund Abraham, Hans Hollein, and Walter Pichler.

In 1968, Arnold Bode invited him to the Documenta IV in Kassel. At the beginning of the seventies, Pichler acquired a little farmstead in St. Martin an der Raab in Southern Burgenland, which served him both as workshop and home, but also as an exhibition space for his sculptures.

In 1972, he exhibited at Hamburger Kunsthalle, and with *Projects* paid another visit to MoMA New York in 1975. In the following years he exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London (1977), the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Haus der Kunst in Munich (both 1978). Under Commissioner Hans Hollein, Pichler also exhibited at the Venice Biennial in 1982.

In 1984, Pichler was the first recipient of the Tyrolean State Prize for Art, which he immediately passed on to Max Peintner.

In 1985, he was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize for Visual Art.

In 1998, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam showed *Drawings: Sculpture: Buildings* and the Generali Foundation in Vienna *Prototypen 1966–1969*, and in 2002 Architekturzentrum Wien presented *Das Haus neben der Schmiede*.

In 2001/02, Walter Pichler returned to Tyrol with a large outdoor sculpture, *Drei Vögel* (1975–79), at the exhibition *Unter freiem Himmel* organised by Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman at the park of Ambras Castle (catalogue: *Unter freiem Himmel*, ed. Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck 2002).

In 2004, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman in Innsbruck presented Walter Pichler *Skulpturen, Zeichnungen*, including *Drei Stäbe* (1998), *Kleiner Rumpf* (1993), *Gerüst für die Schädeldecke* (1982), *Doppelkopf* (1987), as well as the then new sculpture *Schädeldecke* (2004) and many drawings (catalogue: Walter Pichler *Skulpturen, Zeichnungen*, ed. Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck 2004).

The exhibition *Es ist doch der Kopf*, conceived for CFA Berlin and the Tyrolean State Museum Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck, in 2008 (catalogue: Walter Pichler *Es ist doch der Kopf*, eds. Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck, Nicole Hackert, Berlin, Günther Dankl, Innsbruck, 2007), and the artist's last exhibition during his lifetime at the Museum of Applied Arts MAK in Vienna, in 2011, were important retrospectives of Pichler's oeuvre.

The permanent exhibition *Zeichnungen: Für meine Mutter*, to be seen at Schloss Tyrol near Merano since 2010, is considered a very special legacy. It presents the historical situation of South Tyrol from 1936 onwards with numerous intensive drawings from a very personal perspective. The work series, split in two parts, today are included in public collections in the two parts of Tyrol (catalogue: Walter Pichler *ZEICHNUNGEN: Für meine Mutter*, eds. Siegfried de Rachewiltz, Meran, Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck, 2010).

Walter Pichler died in Vienna on July 16, 2012.

In 2013, curator Massimiliano Gioni brought Pichler's sculptures *Bewegliche Figur* (1982), *Zusammengesetzte Figur* (with Diether Roth, 1999), and *Stele I, Stele II* (1962–76) to the rotunda of the International Pavilion at the 55th Biennale di Venezia.

Simultaneously, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman at its Vienna premises showed the exhibition *Zwei Tröge, Wasserrinnen* as a compact project presentation, including the 1:10 model of the water channel on its granite troughs and a large number of drawings for the *Haus für die zwei Tröge* with the water channel, as well as many other projects in which the artist dealt with water courses, springs, fountains, basins and water rims.

In 2014, curator Max Hollein selected, among other things, Pichler's *Schlafsaal* (1968), together with Hans Hollein's *Sigmund Freud Couch* (1984) for the exhibition *Little Nemo* (presented on the occasion of *curated by_vienna 2014: The Century of the Bed*) at Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman Vienna.

In 2016, the Museum der Moderne Salzburg showed *Pichler. Radikal: Architektur & Prototypen*.

In 2017, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman presents *Schmetterling Gebäude und Frau aus Metall*, on the occasion of which a publication appears at Snoeck Verlag with texts by Katia Baudin and Bart Lootsma.