

**JÜRGEN KLAUKE** *Klauke der Zeichner*

11.11.2017 – 27.01.2018 VIENNA

Opening: Saturday, November 11, 2017, 12:00

The artist will be present.

With more than one hundred works, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, in its fourth solo exhibition with Jürgen Klauke, presents a stringent overview of the development of the artist's work as a draughtsman.

Since the seventies, Jürgen Klauke (\*1943) has been closely examining socially standardised gender identities and patterns of behaviour and has thus anticipated current gender discourses. He is among the most important protagonists of staged photography and regarded a pioneer of Body Art and performance. What the “intermediary actionist,” as Jürgen Klauke calls himself, aims for to this day is the questioning of thought and image constructs. The human body is at the heart of his entire oeuvre, which he describes as an “aestheticisation of the existential” and which is characterised by a provocative power.

*In his early photo series Transformer, Physiognomien and Selfperformance (1972/73), Klauke, as Schöne/r der Nacht (lit. beauty of the night), confronts us as a queer (long before the term) hermaphrodite with his masks, veils, sanitary pads and requisites full of erotic prostheses. In those days, Judith Butler had not even begun distinguishing sex and gender in her book Gender Trouble, and Luce Irigaray was only just writing about the gender that is not one. But the grand dame of Surrealism, Meret Oppenheim, paid him the following compliment: “Klauki, you are a little beautiful and a little dirty.” (Thirty years later, Peter Sloterdijk in the catalogue for the exhibitions in Karlsruhe and Salzburg was to speak of “wicked reason.”) The seventies, in a special way, freed sexuality from many taboos and thus normalised it, brought the sexes closer to each other, and also legitimised minorities. In partly grotesque parodies, full of irony, the other and the strange moved closer to an existence praised as normal, while becoming ever more absurd. Scornful dissolution of the self is the companion of gender peregrinations, the beautiful failure and the philosophy of the meaningless stand up to the saturation of post-war consumerism. In this context Klauke spoke of the aestheticisation of the existential. (Brigitte Borchhardt-Birbaumer, from her speech at the opening of Jürgen Klauke 1970&2010 KÖRPERKUNST KUNSTKÖRPER, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman Vienna, 2012)*

Series of drawings have been a crucial part of Klauke's oeuvre since the seventies. Drawing for the artist is a catalyst, the most original and direct means of expression. *Ich & Ich* (erotographic daily reports, 1970/71) and *Tageszeichnungen* (1972/73) are radical examinations of the sexual. Beings made up of body fragments devoid of any personality here are exposed to obsessive urges. The ornamentation of drawings, from *Sekunden* (1975/76) and *Ziemlich* (1979 to 81) onwards, testifies to a sensual and exuberant creativity. From the middle of the eighties, Klauke created large gouaches in intensive

colours. “Shining mongrels” the artist calls these amorphous, hovering bodies, that merge psychological constitution and moment in psychedelic colourfulness. In his works of the nineties, Klauke once more lets time and condition freeze in the moment. In *Körperzeichen/Zeichenkörper*, since 2011, he has been fathoming the bipolarity of the black-and-white contrast. In an irritating manner, he deploys black and white fields, mirrored shapes, and fine contour lines around black or white fields, which always depict physical configurations, and places them hovering in the middle of the sheet. The wide scope of possible interpretations here emerges not from a variation of greys, but from the concise deployment of black and white fields and lines.

*The prevailing mood, the basic noise, the sound of my entire work deals with the shortcomings of our existence, with the irresolvable conflicts with ourselves, and with the “lovely failure” they entail. This return of the ever-same under constantly changing conditions inspires me to make sure of the world and of myself, through the poetical reflex and in ever new images. World as imagination. Images of the invisible. It is always also a conceptual and artistic re-examination of traditional ideas and visual concepts, though. Mixed in with this at times melancholy view, as a fragrance, are humour and irony.*  
(Jürgen Klauke)

*Klauke's drawing impresses with an originality that combines formal mastery and consciousness of style. In certain creative phases, it hovers between moments of alienation and poetry as well as elements of ambivalent sexuality. These graphic symbols and interpretations add new facets to Jürgen Klauke's photographic works.* (Jürgen Wilhelm „Zum Geleit“, in: Achim Sommer (ed.), *Jürgen Klauke Selbstgespräche. Zeichnungen 1970–2016*, Cologne: Wienand Verlag. Catalogue to the exhibition at Max Ernst Museum Brühl 2017.)

Jürgen Klauke (\*1943) lives and works in Cologne. First public exhibition at the Bonner Kunstverein (drawings) in 1972; 1984 to 2008, professor for artistic photography at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne; 1977 and 1987, Documenta 6 and Documenta 8; 1980, Venice Biennial, Arsenale, curator Harald Szeemann; 2001, retrospective at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany, the State Museums in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the Kunsthalle Hamburg, Germany; numerous international museum exhibitions since, most lately, in 2017, *Jürgen Klauke Selbstgespräche Zeichnungen 1970–2016* at the Max Ernst Museum in Brühl, Germany.

Note: photographic works from the early seventies are also presented under the title *KÖRPERZEICHEN. Jürgen Klauke & Arnulf Rainer* at Galerie Ruberl, Himmelfortgasse 11, 1010 Wien, 11.11. – 09.12.2017