

MARIA LASSNIG *Body Awareness*

Prints from New York

September 9–October 14, 2017

For OPEN ART the gallery will be showing silkscreen prints by Maria Lassnig from her time in New York. This exhibition draws attention to a playful, experimental facet of Lassnig's work that has received little notice until now. Animated films from the same period, as well as etchings from the 1980s will round out the show.

In 1968, after seven years in Paris, the artist moved into a studio in New York, the throbbing capital of art, "where the women are strong." Her painting was considered "strange" and "morbid" in the United States, so, inspired by Pop Art, she began studying the then popular technique of silkscreen printmaking, at the Pratt Institute. She was attracted to experimenting with colors and playing with different variations on a theme. In contrast to the then more common method of basing prints on photographs, Lassnig was interested in using the new technique to vary her own drawings and paintings.

The subjects of her large screenprints produced around 1969 differ from those of Pop Art. Instead of consumer goods, Lassnig turned her body into the subject, which she blended with objects, such as an easel, a razor, or a city map. Her images are based on bodily sensations—the physical perception of herself in the world. In New York she coined the term "body awareness", which in her prints she translated into abstract, concise forms, like those found in *Ladyplant*, *Group Sex*, or *Mother and Child*. Humorously, seriously, and mercilessly, she captured on paper the things she felt or imagined. She employed the new technique to variegate famous "body awareness" drawings from the 1950s in a painterly manner: the silkscreen *Man in the Garden* is based on the drawing *Knödelsebstportrait*, while *Konservenmann* derives from her work *Verankerung*. *Sink* und *Chair* are realistic references to her New York studio, the luxury of a sink, and the filth of the city.

In 1970 Lassnig took a course in animated film at the School of Visual Arts. She bought a 16-mm camera, co-founded Women Artist Filmmakers Inc., and began producing her witty, feminist, animated films. In them she transformed objects like a chair into a body (*Chairs*), shed an ironic, narrative light on the relationship between the sexes (*Couples*), or took a look at herself in the role of the artist (*Selfportrait*).

Returning to Vienna in 1980, Lassnig once again devoted herself to printmaking. In 1986 she created a series of black-and-white etchings, which freely allude to earlier Surrealist and narrative works. In 1988 the Barbara Gross Galerie published the etchings, along with a catalogue that showed the diversity of the artist's prints from 1949 onward.

Maria Lassnig, * 1919 in Kappel am Krappfeld, Austria; † 2014, Vienna, Austria

Solo shows (selected): Kunstmuseum Basel (2018); National Gallery, Prague (2018); Albertina, Vienna (2017); Museum Folkwang Essen (2017); Zacheta - National Gallery, Warsaw, (2017); Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (2016); Kunsten Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg, (2016); Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, (2015); MoMA PS1, New York, (2014); Deichtorhallen/ Halle für aktuelle Kunst, Hamburg, (2013); Museum Dhondt-Daenens, Deurle, (2013); Neue Galerie Graz/ Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz (2012); Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, (2010); Museum Ludwig, Cologne, (2009); Serpentine Gallery, London (2008).