

DIRECT, IRONIC, LOUD: THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT PRESENTS AN EXTENSIVE AND SURPRISING EXHIBITION ON GERMAN POP ART OF THE 1960s

GERMAN POP

NOVEMBER 6, 2014 – FEBRUARY 8, 2015

PRESS PREVIEW: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2014, 11:00 A.M.

This fall will be under the sign of Pop Art. In a large-scale exhibition, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt presents from 6 November 2014 a broad panorama of Pop Art in its unique German variation – an art-historical phenomenon that has been largely neglected to date. Pop, which began in Great Britain and the USA and was quickly established there as a universal culture across genres, took on an original artistic expression in the 1960s in the then still young Federal Republic of Germany. In contrast to the often sensationalist and glamorous vocabulary of their Anglo-American colleagues, artists living in West Germany such as Thomas Bayrle, Christa Dichgans, K. H. Hödicke, Konrad Klapheck, Ferdinand Kriwet, Uwe Lausen, Sigmar Polke, and Gerhard Richter grapple in their works with the less grandiose banalities of everyday life in Germany, ironically commenting on the ideals of petit-bourgeois taste and the oppressive and deceptive coziness of the 1960s. Germany's economic miracle was followed by an attempt to come to terms politically with its recent past. Processes of democratization were also found in the fine arts, along with a search for a new identity and a redefinition of the concept of art.

The exhibition's concept throws light on the four crucial centers of Pop Art in Germany: **Düsseldorf, Berlin, Munich, and Frankfurt am Main**. During its key phase, they shaped Pop Art into an independent urban art form. "German Pop" brings together around 150 works of art and documentary materials by 34 artists, among them both established as well as long-forgotten and largely unknown protagonists of German Pop Art. The exhibition includes striking and surprising works, some of which have not been exhibited for decades or have never been shown publicly at all. "German Pop" is intended as an archaeology of a decade — the 1960s to the early 1970s — that uses paintings, objects and sculptures, films, collages, and graphic works to take stock of German Pop Art. The assembled works stem primarily from private estates and collections, but also from numerous well-known art institutions such as the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, or the ZKM in Karlsruhe.

"German Pop" is supported by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain. Additional support is provided by Novomatic AG.

"Pop Art is not only a unique chapter in art history. Pop is an attitude toward life. German Pop in particular characterizes a subversive transition in society that continues to be felt in our everyday lives as well as in art. Our large-scale survey exhibition brings together the various manifestations and roots of German Pop Art for the first time in an extensive presentation here in Frankfurt," says Max Hollein, director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.

The curator of the exhibition, Martina Weinhart, adds: "There it was, German Pop – in the Rhineland, with Düsseldorf as its center, but also somewhat later in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich. And each center 'spoke' it with its own dialect. The Pop generation of the 1960s to the early 1970s aimed directly at the sensitivities of the consumer society that was taking shape in a massive way in what was then still a young Federal Republic of Germany. If you will, Pop in Germany was a kind of rebellion in that context, a youth movement. It toppled the old values and struggled with the new ones."

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In Germany, Pop culture became an instrument to express cultural difference, seeking to disassociate itself from the escapist Art Informal of the postwar years as well as from National Socialist value structures. Beginning with Konrad Klapheck, who was one of the first artists to show renewed interest in representational painting, Pop emerged in **Düsseldorf** in 1963 in the spirit of “Capitalist Realism,” with Manfred Kuttner, Konrad Lueg, Sigmar Polke, and Gerhard Richter. At the same time, a scene developed on the Rhine with the artists HP Alvermann, Peter Brüning, and Winfred Gaul. Because of its exceptional situation during the period of the economic miracle, the Rhineland played a key role in the art scene of the time. An exhibition organized by Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg in 1963 in a former butcher’s shop – billed as the “first exhibition of German Pop Art” – can be referred to as one of its beginnings. It was within this context that Gerhard Richter used the term “German Pop” for the first time.

Wolf Vostell, KP Brehmer, and Herbert Kaufmann, all graduates of the art academy in Düsseldorf who moved to **Berlin**, brought the German Pop wave to the so-called island of the free world. Berlin, which in terms of culture led more of an introspective existence, tied in with the new movement with two notable initiatives: in 1964, K. H. Hödicke, Lambert Maria Wintersberger, and several other painters founded the artist-run gallery Großgörschen 35. It united artists in their rejection of Art Informel and Tachisme and in their desire for representationalism in painting. That same year, twenty-two-year-old René Block opened his gallery with the programmatic exhibition “Neodada, Pop, Décollage, Kapitalistischer Realismus” and presented young Germans such as KP Brehmer and Wolf Vostell. Block, who saw his gallery as a kind of instrument of correction, said himself that he deliberately dispensed with an international program, and in doing so propagated equal rights with American Pop Art, albeit with only modest means.

At the time, **Frankfurt am Main** was not really an art city. However, with the European headquarters of the United States Army, the first Amerika-Haus, the first shopping mall based on the American model, its bustling shopping street called Zeil, its airport, banks, and stock market it was somehow more American than other cities. And so German Pop quickly gained acceptance in Frankfurt as well. However, with the two artists Thomas Bayrle and Peter Roehr – two of the most important and influential representatives of German Pop Art – it clearly disassociated itself from the centers of Düsseldorf and Berlin. Roehr and Bayrle dedicated themselves to the ornament of the masses and to serial arrangements of strict composition. They shared an analytical look at advertising – at shampoo, instant coffee, household appliances – which they exposed as a propaganda machine for philistine ideology.

All-encompassing in nature, Pop also influenced existing art movements such as the **Munich**-based groups SPUR, WIR, and GEFLECHT. Although they were highly suspicious of this new movement, at the same time they were incredibly fascinated by it. Thus they definitely had an affinity for specific artistic elements such as, for instance, comic-book-like speech balloons, and furthermore called into the question the role of the classic artist as an isolated genius. Yet they advocated more communication and discussion as unifying elements. By 1965, Lothar Fischer, Heimrad Prem, and Helmut Sturm experimented along these lines with the motifs and aesthetics of Pop Art. Artists Uwe Lausen and Michael Langer also explored the new movement.

The scenes in Düsseldorf, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich – highly divergent and yet united through Pop as an artistic principle – were all primarily dominated by men. Yet there were also women in Pop. The large-scale exhibition at the Schirn places the female protagonists of the scene in the context of the overall German Pop movement for the first time, and presents works by Christa Dichgans, Bettina von Arnim, and Ludi Armbruster.

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Far from any “Coca-Colonization,” German artists developed a distinct variation of Pop Art that represented a break with German high culture, so to speak. The formal language of an arbor was reworked into an abstract pattern, and ironing boards became motifs worthy of portrayal. Pop was directly and immediately accessible to anyone. Pop was everyday life and reflected it, above all the capitalist culture of commodities and consumption and its forms of presentation. Although America was the center of the art world at the time and everyone’s eyes wandered in that direction, with its historical and cultural background German Pop remained distinct.

FEATURED ARTISTS Hermann Albert, HP Alvermann, Ludi Armbruster, Bettina von Arnim, Thomas Bayrle, Werner Berges, KP Brehmer, Peter Brüning, Gernot Bubenik, Christa Dichgans, Lothar Fischer, Winfried Gaul, Reinhold Heller, K. H. Hödicke, Herbert Kaufmann, Konrad Klapheck, Florian Köhler, Ferdinand Kriwet, Manfred Kuttner, Michael Langer, Uwe Lausen, Konrad Lueg, Heino Naujoks, Wolfgang Oppermann, Sigmar Polke, Heimrad Prem, Gerhard Richter, Helmut Rieger, Peter Roehr, Klaus Staeck, Helmut Sturm, Wolf Vostell, Lambert Maria Wintersberger, HP Zimmer.

CATALOG German Pop. Edited by Martina Weinhart and Max Hollein. Foreword by Max Hollein, introduction by Martina Weinhart, essays by Selima Niggel and Dietmar Rübel, interviews with Thomas Bayrle and René Block. German-English edition, ca. 240 pages, ca. 160 illustrations, 31.5 x 31.5 cm, hard cover; graphic design Moiré. Marc Kappeler, Dominik Huber, Ruth Amstutz, Zurich; Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 2014, ISBN 978-3-86335-648-4, Price: 34€ (Schirn), 48 € (trade edition).

ACCOMPANYING BOOKLET *German Pop. Eine Einführung in die Ausstellung.* Edited by the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, texts by Laura Heeg and Max Hollicki. German edition, 40 pages, ca. 25 illustrations, soft cover, stapled; graphic design formfellows, Frankfurt; Rasch Druckerei und Verlag, Bramsche, 2014, ISBN 978-3-89946-233-3, price: €7.50 each, classroom set €1.00 per booklet (15 or more).

SUPPORTING PROGRAM The exhibition is being accompanied by an extensive supporting program: lecture by the radio host, journalist, and disc jockey Klaus Walter on November 20 at 7:00 p.m.; Children’s Night of Art on November 29, beginning at 4:00 p.m.; Schirn at Night on December 6, beginning at 8:00 p.m. More information is available at www.schirn.de.

VENUE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, 60311 Frankfurt **DURATION** November 6, 2014 – February 8, 2015 **INFORMATION** www.schirn.de **EMAIL** welcome@schirn.de **TEL** +49.69.29 98 82-0 **FAX** +49.69.29 98 82-240 **ADMISSION** €9.00, reduced €7.00, family ticket €18.00; children under eight free of charge **ADVANCE TICKET SALES** Tickets are available online at www.schirn.de/tickets **GUIDED PUBLIC TOURS** Tue 5:00 p.m., Wed 11:00 a.m., Wed 8:00 p.m., Thu 7:00 p.m., Sat 3:00 p.m., Sun 5:00 p.m. **CURATOR** Dr. Martina Weinhart **CURATORIAL ASSISTANT** Lea Schleiffenbaum **SUPPORTED BY** Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain **WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BY** Novomatic AG **MEDIA PARTNERS** Interview Magazine, Journal Frankfurt

SOCIAL MEDIA The Schirn will be communicating in the social web with the following **HASHTAG** #germanpop **ONLINE MAGAZINE** www.schirn-magazin.de **FACEBOOK** www.facebook.com/Schirn **TWITTER** www.twitter.com/Schirn **YOUTUBE** www.youtube.com/user/SCHIRNKUNSTHALLE **INSTAGRAM** @schirnkunsthalle

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