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MARTHA JUNGWIRTH

OPENING: May 29, 2015, 7pm

DURATION: May 30 – July 11 2015

Opening speech by Jörg Heiser (Co-chief editor *frieze*).

Martha Jungwirth will be present.

The exhibition is presented within Destination Wien Extended and the Vienna Gallery Weekend 2015.

For the first time Galerie Krinzinger shows the work of Martha Jungwirth with selected series out of the last ten years.

*„Martha Jungwirth (born in 1940) has occupied an important position in Austrian art history since the 1960s...[...]
After her studies at the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna from 1956 to 1963, Jungwirth appeared in public with works in various media, such as pencil drawings, watercolors, and works in oil and ink. In 1968 she was the sole woman among the founding members of the loose “Wirklichkeiten” [“Realities”] group of artists, yet even then she pursued her own, distinctive path, oscillating between gesturally abstract and formal compositions. [...] Jungwirth’s painting process emerges from a combination of intuitive spontaneity and control of her aesthetic principles at the same time. This tension between the unconscious and the calculated, between gesture, form, trace and color, provides the environment for the artist not only to examine mirror images of her inner moods, but also the essential basic principles of painting. Her creative process is, in effect, one of continuous experimentation with an open outcome: Reacting to sudden impulses, Jungwirth places energetic, colorful marks on canvas or paper that then, through layering, overlapping and blurring, all at once recede, as the ambivalent act of showing and hiding sets the pictorial plane in motion. Her resolutely impulsive working method, however, always comes through. Coincidence and energetic intuition, with all the corrections, stains and streaks they bring to the painting process, remain visible and create a richly varied atmosphere in works that range from the seemingly ephemeral, transparent to the dense and pastose.*

Martha Jungwirth’s characteristic compositions, which perform an elegant balancing act on the thin line between realism and abstraction, and distinguish themselves through their eruptive, gestural style as well as their powerful colors, are poetic and dramatic representations of experiences, emotions and memories that convey a deep awareness of the immeasurableness of reality.“

Hans-Peter Wipplinger in: Martha Jungwirth. Retrospective, published on the occasion of the exhibition at Kunsthalle Krems.

„[...] we can draw parallels to two eminent painters from the mid-twentieth century: Joan Mitchell and Asger Jorn. Mitchell is certainly the more obvious source of reference, although rather in terms of spiritual kinship and affinity than of concrete influence by this artist, who had established herself in New York as early as in the 1950s. Her City Landscape from 1955, for example, shows a central, rhombic zone of swift interwoven lines in (above all and at first glance) dark blue, yellow and red shades, surrounded by gray-beige fields, layered and tiled in a Cézannesque manner. It is as if we were looking through an airplane window, misted up with condensation, and through swathes of fog at a city nightscape. Without the descriptive title, however, we would probably only recognize it as a city landscape because a yellow-white shape rises from the rhombus like a church tower or a skyscraper. Thus, impression is driven into dissolution, only to be reintroduced into the spatial concept by a discreet hint in the title, and a few, casually placed lines. At the same time, a few “color minorities” – such as pink beneath red, greenish blue between all the almost black blue shades – save the ensemble from becoming dull and simplistic. Jungwirth has a similar approach to color minorities and dominances, which, in turn, are in a carefully weighted proportion to sprawling, inter twined lines and surfaces. The parallel becomes even more evident in Mitchell’s works from the early 1960s, created after her move from the USA to France: they almost immediately become lighter, swifter in an elegant way, achieving more with less. An untitled work from 1961 (ill. 8) measuring 228 by 205 centimeters (yet another parallel: no fear of using challenging, almost square or other unusual formats) is dominated by three striking fuchsia-colored areas, grouped around a tangle of green, blue, turquoise, ochre and other shades in the center of the picture. All too superficial associations with flower hedges or the like are prevented in the lower part of the fuchsia area by trails of droplets that explicitly underline the painting process. Toward the edges, a few loose stripes, dabs and small clouds drift over a primed canvas left otherwise empty. While Mitchell possibly drew this new, elegant freshness from an almost exile-like change of locality, a slower development is discernible in the work of Jungwirth, who consistently returned to Vienna. As with her large-format drawings from the 1970s, her oil paintings from the 1980s seem to be the result of something long re heard. Given this slow development, Jungwirth’s painting – and here another developmental strand comes into play that can be illustrated quite well using the example of Asger Jorn – is probably more multi-faceted than Mitchell’s in a crucial way: while the latter, despite all her enthusiasm for pictorial experiments, always in the end pursued a well-balanced overall tone, a general harmony even in the wildest, most detailed entanglements and complex structures, Jungwirth is prepared to make room for the unflattering and disrespectful. In other words: Jorn. [...]“

Jörg Heiser in: Martha Jungwirth. Retrospective, published on the occasion of the exhibition at Kunsthalle Krems.

Based on a text published in *Frieze* d/e12/2013