

Press Release
Zurich, 14 February 2008

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Europop'

From 15 February to 12 May 2008, the Kunsthhaus Zürich is showing masterpieces of European Pop Art arranged by motif, under the headings 'Consumerism', 'Spectacle', 'Media' and 'Leisure'. The exhibition offers proof of the proposition that Pop Art is not an American invention.

'Europop' traces the artistic attitudes and modes of expression typical of the 1950s and 1960s beginning in London, where the term Pop Art was coined around 1955, and proceeding to Paris, Düsseldorf and Milan. With over 80 major pieces from more than ten European countries, the Kunsthhaus Zürich makes a case for the continuing relevance of one of the most intensive and influential artistic schools of the 20th century.

A GENUINE 'EUROPOP' DOES NOT EXIST

In the mid-1950s, artists on both sides of the Atlantic began to think creatively about the visual culture of the mass media. The Kunsthhaus exhibition, curated by Tobia Bezzola and Franziska Lentzsch, examines the way European artists like Sigmar Polke, David Hockney, Niki de Saint Phalle and Gerhard Richter felt about this new concern, and how they dealt with it in their work. A detailed survey featuring pieces from both public and private collections demonstrates the broad spectrum of artistic reactions, whether idiosyncratic or born of a particular environment, to Pop's signal preoccupations: 'Consumerism', 'Spectacle', 'Media' and 'Leisure'.

IT'S THE ATTITUDE THAT COUNTS

As with Dada, its ancestor in the family tree of art history, Pop Art is not primarily a matter of technique, form or style, but rather of attitude. The range includes plain naïveté and admiring emulation; an ironic, caricaturist's way with the icons of billboards and glossy weeklies; critical, at times subversive commentary; and finally, the cynic's exploitative borrowing of the expressive vocabulary of commercial art.

POP IS THE PRODUCT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

The rise of Pop Art was a symptom of a completely new phenomenon, the mutual influence and dependency of western Europe and the USA in the postwar period. Contemporary art production on the two continents had achieved a level

of similarity that would have been unthinkable previously. American mass culture was pressed into military-industrial service during the Cold War, and soon Hollywood movies, jukeboxes, comic strips and rock 'n' roll records were as ubiquitous in France, Germany and other western European nations as were the paintings of American artists, increasingly on show in local museums. This wave of Americanization was reflected in the art of the era as a tension between the old world and the new, and it is not a coincidence that the expression 'Pop Art' was first used in London. As the Kunsthaus show proves conclusively, Pop was not and could not be an American invention. The art historians surveyed here make it clear that there would have been no Europop without American culture, and no American Pop Art without the avant-garde movements (Dada, Surrealism) of the old world. Pop Art is thus a side-effect of the far-reaching cultural fusion of two continents.

EUROPEAN ARTISTS FROM OVER TEN COUNTRIES

Works by the following artists were chosen to represent the spectrum of European Pop Art: Thomas Bayrle, Peter Blake, Pauline Boty, KP Brehmer, Erró, Öyvind Fahlström, Franz Gertsch, Domenico Gnoli, Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Alain Jacquet, Allen Jones, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Konrad Lueg, Eduardo Paolozzi, Peter Phillips, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Sigmar Polke, Martial Raysse, Gerhard Richter, Mimmo Rotella, Niki de Saint Phalle, Peter Stämpfli and Wolf Vostell. Celebrated single pieces by Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselmann and Roy Lichtenstein were selected as an index of the duality of Pop's trans-Atlantic career.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue (Dumont, 316 p., approx. 160 ill.). The contributors to this German-English bilingual publication (Tobia Bezzola, Walter Grasskamp, Catherine Grenier and John-Paul Stonard) go beyond a general definition of European Pop Art to examine German and British Pop Art, analyse the work of Richard Hamilton, and consider Nouveau Réalisme, a movement which prefigured much of Pop Art. The book is available at the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 65.-.

A contribution to culture by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich.

ART EDUCATION FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Public guided tours for adults (in Germany only): Sunday 11 a.m., Wednesday 6.30 p.m.

Private guided tours: apply on +41 (0)44 253 84 12 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–12 noon)

Workshops for children and young people (in German only):

'The World Goes Pop' (from age seven). Wednesday, 20 February, 10.30 a.m.–3 p.m.

'Meeting Europop!' (from age 12). Saturday, 23 February, 10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Wednesday, 12 March, 1.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

To register and for further information about fees and materials go to www.kunsthhaus.ch or call 044 253 84 84.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, 8001 Zurich, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Open: Sat/Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed–Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

Holidays: Easter 20–24 March, Ascension 30 April/1 May, Pentecost 10–12 May 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Admission: CHF 18.-/12.- concessions/CHF 14.- per head for groups of 20 or more.

Advance Sales: RailAway/SBB Kombi-Ticket, with reduction on rail travel and entrance to the museum. Available at local stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19 per min.), group rates possible. Magasins Fnac, tel. +33 1 4157 3212, www.fnac.ch.

For further information and visual material, please contact

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