

Media release
Zurich, 17 August 2023

Kunsthau Zürich presents 'Taking a Stand – Käthe Kollwitz. With interventions by Mona Hatoum'

From 18 August to 12 November 2023, the Kunsthau Zürich presents two female artists who critically observe the socio-political events of their time and, in their works, emphatically 'take a stand'.

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ

Raw, unembellished and decried in conservative circles as 'gutter art', the drawings, prints and sculptures of Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) are now more topical than ever. As armed conflict spreads even into Europe, her admonitory appeal 'never again war' could scarcely be more urgent. Marked by the experience of two global conflicts, Kollwitz used her works to highlight the misery and want of her fellow human beings. Employing various media, she empathetically portrayed her contemporaries in all their straitened circumstances, creating pieces 'that exert influence' – an influence which has lost none of its intensity today: people, shorn of anything anecdotal or decorative, are always at the heart of her work. She commits them to paper in uncompromising depictions of beleaguered and exposed humanity.

MONA HATOUM

The work of Mona Hatoum (b. 1952), winner of the 2004 Roswitha Haftmann Prize, also revolves around issues of social hardship and conflicts. Born in Beirut, she got stranded in London while on a short visit because of the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 that prevented her from returning home. Her works, here in the form of sculptures and installations, add a global perspective to the exhibition. Hatoum previously engaged with her fellow artist in the group exhibition 'In the Spirit of Käthe Kollwitz – Today'. In the presentation at the Kunsthau Zürich, she approaches the subject from her own individual perspective.

EXHIBITION COVERING 700 M2

Curator Jonas Beyer sets up a dialogue between some 120 works by Kollwitz and five large-format works by Hatoum – including highly regarded pieces such as 'Cellules', 'Remains of the Day' and 'Worry Beads'. Spread over two rooms with a

surface area of 700 m² in the Chipperfield building of the Kunsthaus, Hatoum's installations and sculptures are juxtaposed with the drawings, prints and sculptures by Kollwitz in individual sections.

'PAIN IS VERY DARK'

It is noteworthy that Kollwitz expressed herself in the medium of sculpture but especially in drawing and printmaking; works in oil are almost entirely absent from her oeuvre. She no doubt felt that the purist element of the print and the deployment of contrasts in black and white were best suited to the rigour and seriousness of her motifs; indeed, as she concisely and incisively noted in 1922, 'pain is very dark'. Hatoum likewise employs a reduced formal language and uses colour at best pointedly.

BODIES AND CELLS: ON A HUMAN SCALE

At the figural level, Kollwitz invariably remains faithful to her subjects' outward appearance. Yet in Hatoum's installations too, the human dimension is very present, at least to provide scale. That presence is very concrete: her 'Cellules' consists of a number of steel cages, in various sizes corresponding to average human dimensions. Displayed upright, the cages are slightly tilted, creating the impression of precariousness and instability. Inside each cage structure, one or two amorphous red glass objects, looking like unspecified creatures or unidentifiable body parts, are trapped within their anthropomorphic cage. Appropriately, the French word 'cellule' can denote both a component of a living organism and a place of incarceration.

THE PRIVATE BECOMES PUBLIC; THE PUBLIC PRIVATE

Both artists remind us that the private must always be understood as part of a larger social whole. Hatoum's 'Remains of the Day', for instance, is part of a series she developed in connection with her Hiroshima Art Prize exhibition in 2017. The work creates the impression that disaster has just struck a family home. Kollwitz, meanwhile, incorporated tragic events in her own life, such as the loss of her son Peter in the First World War, into her art. Nevertheless, neither of the two artists gives in to resignation: their works are active admonitions against suffering and oppression.

PARTNERS

An exhibition in cooperation with the Kunsthalle Bielefeld and in collaboration with the Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln. The works by Kollwitz are drawn from museums and private collections in Germany and Switzerland, while Hatoum's works are on loan from the Mona Hatoum Foundation, White Cube and Galerie Chantal Crousel.

The project has also been made possible thanks to financial support from UNIQA Fine Art Insurance, the Dr. Georg and Josi Guggenheim Foundation, the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation and a foundation that does not wish to be named.

ART EDUCATION: GUIDED TOURS, PUBLICATION

Public guided tours in German take place in August and September on Wednesdays from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.; and in October and November on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 12 midday. On Sunday 3 September the Kunsthaus is organizing a public guided tour in English from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The Kunsthaus will be happy to organize private guided tours in these and other languages at individually agreed dates and times, on request. For further information see kunsthaus.ch or contact kunstvermittlung@kunsthaus.ch.

A comprehensive catalogue with contributions by Jonas Beyer, Jacqueline Burckhardt, Hannelore Fischer, Françoise Forster-Hahn, Natascha Kirchner and Henrike Mund is being published by Hirmer in German and English. It is available from bookstores and the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 54.

EVENT

Conversation concert by the Zürcher Kammerorchester (ZKO) with works by Arnold Schönberg, Alexander Zemlinsky, Anton Webern and others. The accompanying conversation will be led by Lena-Catharina Schneider, Artistic Director ZKO, and Jonas Beyer, curator Kunsthaus Zürich. 8 November, 7.30 p.m. – 9 p.m., at the Kunsthaus Zürich. Tickets at www.zko.ch.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz, CH-8001 Zurich

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Fri–Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed/Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For special opening hours see www.kunsthaus.ch.

Admission incl. collection: CHF 23 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups). Children and young people under the age of 17 free of charge.

Free admission with a 2023 annual membership.

Advance ticket sales (optional): www.kunsthaus.ch/tickets

Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, info@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

CONTACT FOR EDITORS

Media releases and images to download as well as an overview of dates for media briefings can be found at www.kunsthaus.ch/en/medien-bereich.

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