

Press Release

HERWIG KEMPINGER

Exhibition dates: March 20 – Mai 23, 2015

Based on his early involvement with film and video, Herwig Kempinger's artistic practice has been focused on photography and painting, marked by a media-reflective and conceptual approach. In his work he addresses our experience of space and the relationship between perception and reality. As a photographer he created with his camera abstract works that lack a concretely discernable object. Since his turning to painting, his motives became increasingly concrete, as already with the earlier series *Heavy Metal* for which Kempinger depicted massive settings of metal production.

In the artist's latest series of paintings titled *TMI*, an abbreviation of the American parlance for "too much information", it is now for the first time that the human figure finds entry into Kempinger's imagery world – though he only focuses on the female figure. *Vampirella – daughter of Dracula*, a fictitious vampire-comic-heroine becomes the star of his surreal composition.

For the first time appearing in 1969 in the black-and-white comic strip of the same title, Vampirella became in the 1990s the prototype for "bad girls"-characters such as *Witchblade* and *Lara Croft*. Over the years, numerous draughtsmen dabbled at representing her figure and there exist many different variations and styles of drawings that Kempinger uses for his paintings.

With their cool comic-aesthetic his works raise connotations to American Pop Art with its allusions to everyday life, technology, and commodities. In analogy to the ideas of Pop Art, Kempinger's "women" do not reflect on real human models, but rather on the image of the woman in the aesthetic of comics. Even fragmented, amplified, scaled down, alienated, and manipulated, they are always young, beautiful, sexy, ineffably female, and provocative, so that on a first glimpse there is the impression of a perfectly staged male fancy. Kempinger reflects the superficiality and mediatisation of the individual through media, and plays with political incorrectness – not with a critically wagging finger, but with delight and self-evidence. He likes to work, as he put it himself, "against the grain."¹

In his provocative comic-paintings Herwig Kempinger playfully addresses different levels of signification and meanings. The superimpositions of various images and the richness of motives, symbols and forms, provide his paintings with an almost chaotic appearance and create the effect that the viewer can get lost in details of the imageries that become visible. With the work title "TMI" the artist strengthens the expressive power of his paintings and opens up a broad field of interpretation: "too much information."

Text: Karin Dornbach
Translation: Julia Loeschl

¹ Interview with Maren Lübbke-Tidow, in: „Herwig Kempinger – Digital Sky and Flat Space“, exh.cat., Lentos Linz, Vienna 2006, p.144

G E O R G K A R G L F I N E A R T S

Born 1957 in Steyr, Austria

1976 to 1980 studies at the Academy of Applied Arts, Vienna

1984 to 1994 lector for media art at the Academy of Applied Arts, Vienna

Participation at numerous exhibitions, such as the Neue Galerie Graz (2008), the Museum der Moderne Salzburg (2006), the MUMOK Vienna (2005, 2006) or the Biennial São Paulo (1994); in 2007 Lentos Kunstmuseum in Linz acknowledged his work with a comprehensive retrospective exhibition; since 2013 president at the Vienna Secession.

The artist lives and works in Vienna.

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Opening hours:

Tue - Fr 11 am – 7 pm

Sat 11 am – 4 pm

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