



Hans Schärer: *Madonnas and Erotic Watercolors* November 18 – February 07, 2015

Swiss Institute is delighted to present the first US solo exhibition of Hans Schärer (b. 1927, Berne, d. 1997, St-Niklausen). This landmark exhibition pairs two of the artist's most significant bodies of work, the *Madonnas* and the *Erotic Watercolors*, recently seen in an extensive exhibition at Aargauer Kunsthaus in Aarau, Switzerland, this summer.

From the late 1960s to the mid 1980s, Schärer made over 100 paintings entitled *Madonna*, each featuring the head and body of an isolated figure, often with a framing silhouette around the head and shoulders suggesting long hair, a veil or a cloak. Painted with thick layers of oil paint, and incorporating objects such as stones, hair, shells and keys, the *Madonnas* are both menacing and mesmerizing—typified by unnerving gazes and prominent, tooth-filled mouths that grimace and gape.

During the same period Schärer painted over 150 *Erotic Watercolors*, which, by contrast, are joyfully carnivalesque scenes in which bodies lustfully cavort and play. In settings that suggest a circus or a garden of earthly delights, sensual, statuesque women gaily take pleasure in their own company and from diminutive male figures. Taken together the two series are complex explorations of faith, spirituality, vitality and eros.

An artist, musician, composer and writer, Schärer was an influential figure in the Swiss art scene of the 1970s and 1980s. In recent years his work has received increased international attention, most prominently in the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. Almost 20 years after his death, Swiss Institute is thrilled to exhibit these singular bodies of work for the first time to audiences outside of Europe.

Hans Schärer's work has been exhibited extensively throughout Switzerland including major solo exhibitions at Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau in 1982, 1993 and 2014, and the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne in 2005 and 2001. In 2014, his *Erotic Watercolors* were the subject of a solo exhibition at Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris. Major international exhibitions include the 55th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia in 2013 (*The Encyclopedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, when Cindy Sherman included a suite of *Madonnas* in her installation), and Biennale São Paulo in 1981. His work is featured in prominent museum collections such as: Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau; Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne; Museum im Lagerhaus, St. Gallen; Kunsthaus Zug, Zug.

Hans Schärer: *Madonnas and Erotic Watercolors* is organized in collaboration with the Aargauer Kunsthaus. Swiss Institute thanks Marion Schärer, Max Christian Graeff, Madeleine Schuppli, Nicole Rampa, and the lenders to the exhibition: Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne; Fonds cantonal d'art contemporain, Genève; Kunsthaus Zug; Kunstsammlung Kanton Luzern; The Museum of Everything; Museum of Porn in Art, Zurich; BSI Art Collection, Switzerland; Collection ALH; Charles de Montaigu; Beat Furrer; Galerie Anton Meier, Genève; Gertrud Haldemann-Schärer; Sammlung Ugo Rondinone, Zurich; Agnes Wigger Sigrist und Kurt Sigrist; Collection Tanner, Teufen; Anton Zwysig and private collections.

SWISS INSTITUTE PROGRAMMING IS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART WITH PUBLIC FUNDS FROM PRO HELVETIA, SWISS ARTS COUNCIL, THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE, AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY COUNCIL. MAIN SPONSORS INCLUDE LUMA FOUNDATION AND FRIENDS OF SWISS INSTITUTE (FOSI), LEADING PARTNERS INCLUDE UBS AND VICTORINOX. SWISS INSTITUTE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES SWISS AS TRAVEL PARTNER, AND CHELSEA HOTELS AS HOSPITALITY PARTNER.

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