

## Xenia Hausner

### True Lies

30 April – 8 August 2010

The ALBERTINA MUSEUM presents the work of Xenia Hausner—one of the important contemporary Austrian painters, in a wide-ranging retrospective. Fictional visualizations play a pivotal role in the work of this artist, who was born in 1951. The present selection, entitled *True Lies*, points to the significance of staging as a creative and compositional principle in Hausner's output.

For her large-format paintings, Hausner begins by constructing elaborate spatial settings — Installations that she then photographs as models for her paintings. Sliced-up cars or train compartments fashioned from cardboard serve as a “rehearsal room” where her figures, like actors, explore a variety of relationships. This creative process closely interweaves painting and photography, forming a dialectic: intense color and the two-dimensionality of painting, in a sense “contradicting” the photo previously taken.

In turn, Hausner's actual painting process is characterized by filmic and photographic methods. Her selection of motifs and fields of view, the fragmentary, the overall montage-character, the lighting implied by the colors employed—all this contributes to the atmospheric quality of these images. The scenarios created by Xenia Hausner remain puzzling and irritating. Like fragments of a story, comparable to film stills whose plot has gone missing, they defy clear interpretation.

While centuries of art history were characterized by the male gaze, Xenia Hausner situates her stagings in a female counter-world: It is primarily women who embody Hausner's themes and stories, acting as proxies for all gender identities. She juxtaposes stereotypical male views with strong, contradictory, and complex female figures.

For the most part larger than life, in a highly characteristic and intense palette of colors applied with a broad brush, her figures, boldly three-dimensionalized, become representatives of universally valid situations and existential questions.