

PAUL FLORA

DRAWINGS

Ausstellungsdaten

Duration	29th October 2021 – 30th January 2022
Virtual Opening	28th October 2021 18.30 Uhr via Facebook-Live & YouTube
Venue	Basteihalle
Curator	Antonia Hoerschelmann
Works	102
Catalogue	Available in German (EUR 27,90) onsite at the Museum Shop as well as via www.albertina.at
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Annual partner



Partner



Paul Flora

Drawings

On the occasion of his 100th birthday, the Albertina pays tribute to the prominent Tyrolean artist Paul Flora with a retrospective of his most important drawings. The selection of the best works from a total of seven decades of his extensive oeuvre shows Flora to be a multi-talented artist, even more so a pure draughtsman. The presentation combines major works from the ALBERTINA with central loans from Paul Flora's estate and family possessions.

Paul Flora's world tells stories that are situated between dream and reality and are set in a past as a place of longing that has never been lived in this form. Old Austria and individual historical greats, such as Napoleon, become the main characters of bizarre events.

Nostalgia, wistfulness and melancholy, coupled with a humorous look at the trivialities of our human existence, determine the uniqueness of Flora's tragicomic portrayals. It is Flora's talent to analyse situations and capture them in his pictorial inventions in such a way that his figures mirror the meaninglessness and helplessness of our existence.

The drawings, executed in ink pen or pencil, captivate with their precise strokes, concretely reduced outlines and meticulously executed hatchings - stylistic characteristics that lend the sheets their special expressive power. The differentiated selection of works reveals Flora's extraordinary talent as a draughtsman and takes the viewer on an exciting journey through an imaginative and multifaceted pictorial world. Magical landscapes and mysterious figures are as much part of the artist's repertoire of motifs as black ravens or bizarre human figures, which underline the humorous side of his work. These works are joined by mysterious depictions of the lagoon city of Venice, which expand his imaginative canon of themes.

Flora's drawings not only achieve immediate accessibility, but are pictorial inventions of timeless permanence and relevance.

Paul Flora can also be seen at the Karikaturmuseum Krems, which will explore Flora's special relationship with caricature from 20 February 2022 under the title "100 Years of Paul Flora".

Wall texts

Universal language

In Flora's pictures we do not encounter loud laughter; rather the opposite, for quiet chuckling at human helplessness and fears emanates from them, located somewhere between melancholy and a subtle questioning of our small worlds. With his haunting and highly personal visual language, easy to recognize, Flora succeeds in depicting his subject, the story he is telling, on a single sheet of paper. Flora gives the viewer space for reflection, without defining everything down to the last detail. Herein lies the unique quality of his drawings, and just as his works are presented in a clear and conspicuous way, they are constructed in an equally refined way from meshed lines and contours that are mostly delicate and reduced.

Delicate lines and black surfaces

Around 1960, the concept of line in Flora's works changes. The inner surfaces of the contour lines are filled with fine parallel lines and shaded. This gives more volume and pictorial presence to both architecture and figures. From the 1970s on, the entire depiction is included in the design process. The sky and water, recalling Alfred Kubin's mysteriously gloomy architecture, are filled with Flora's rhythmic lines. This shift in form enables the artist to create aspects of content in a more differentiated way, with individual light and shadow direction determining the atmosphere of the works. The white of the paper can now become a special source of light in a foggy, gloomy, dusky or nocturnal scene, whether the moon is shining or a lantern spreading its cone of light.

Soft colors and varied accents

Around 1980, Paul Flora expanded his creative means by integrating delicate shades of color into his depictions. These are mostly sensitive veils of color on the background of the picture, opening the surfaces up to a further atmospheric plane of interpretation defined by the chosen coloring. Flora's drawings make it clear how much the artist transforms his pictorial objects into strictly geometric line structures by means of an initially imperceptible abstraction, in order then to re-form from them the objects in the picture: construction follows deconstruction. This complex process of transformation leads to what is special about his compositions, metamorphosing visible reality into Flora's extraordinary universe.

Venice

The romantic and at the same time sad Venice is always the stage for Flora's dark, often tragicomic stories. They tell of illness and death, but also of the colourful, exuberant hustle and bustle of the carnival. In his essay *The Withered Splendour*, Flora writes about Venice: "These lagoons, not land, not sea, muddy seas interspersed with islands, mostly abandoned, with the remains of walls of abandoned monasteries and farms, even asylums, are true places of melancholy."

Reduction and concentration

Around 2000, the horizontal line shifts entirely to the upper edge of the picture, the ground tilts steeply upwards, while soldiers resembling ravens move on the wide, white snowfield, as if lost. In his final years, drawings were created in which the reduction of the design lines shows the geometry of the pictorial structure. Flora's ravens become larger and more personified in his latter creative years, given character and turned into expressive bearers of feelings, such as in the works *Great Panic* or *Landscape with Three Old Ravens*.

Captions

The art of restricting oneself to delicate lines – which construct the illustration in terms of both form and content – and of putting them to paper through abstract reduction of forms and pictorial subjects brings Flora close to the artistic tradition of Classical Modernism; it links him conceptually with the groundbreaking artists Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and Lyonel Feininger – and closer to home, with Alfred Kubin, of course.

It was around 1950 that the individuality in Flora's lines emerged, and the drawings show the seemingly natural way he handled the delicate line. The basic shapes, eventually consisting of three circles and three rectangles, each connected by a line, use only a few hatchings to create the impression of space and the soundless floating of the balloons in timeless silence.

Quotes

»I am by no means a member of the avant-garde. I could lean back these days and play the arrièregardist, an avant-gardist in retrospect, as I was avant-garde in my head when it wasn't fashionable to be one in the '30s and '40s. At that time, when barbarians were ruling over us, Klee, Feininger and Picasso were my gods. Artists who at the time long held Picasso and Klee to be charlatans and tricksters, later on far surpassed me on the terrain of the avant-garde.«

Paul Flora

»There are no foreign languages for the illustrator. He writes in the native tongue of every nation. The illustrator is a writer in images. He is a man of letters.«

Erich Kästner

»After all, a picture is not primarily a depiction of a funny or serious scene, a landscape, a battle, an accumulation of abstract triangles or what have you, rather a composition of lines, colors and surfaces, one that ideally succeeds.«

Paul Flora

»In the final analysis the quality of a picture is also made up by how many thoughts or emotions it calls forth in the viewer. Every picture is a mirror and everyone sees in it what they want to see, they get as many answers as they pose questions. Let a monkey look in, and a monkey will look out.«

Paul Flora

»Jocular pictures are a serious subject and the artworks exhibited here are serious works of art. As such they are autonomous, that is, they do not exist due to their literary device, due to the 'gag' they contain. Their essence is their formal quality, the sublime conception, the assurance in the shorthand, the successful unification of form and content.«

Paul Flora

»Flora inscribes his lines on the paper so delicately and tenderly, as if he were afraid of hurting it. And wherever he can, he lets the undescribed, uninjured white space contribute in the most effective way. The most extreme element that he demands of the sheet of paper are lines, as fine and precise as hair. His pen breathes and whispers. It strokes when it creates strokes.«

Erich Kästner

ALBERTINA

»Without doubt, Flora performs magic with the stroke: he can even, by placing stroke upon stroke, render snow on paper and produce the effect of dazzling white using black ink.«

Karl-Markus Gauß

»Ravens are profound, gloomy, surrounded by an aura of misfortune and wisdom, and they serve ballad writers and other poets for many an inspiration.«

Paul Flora

»During the devastating plague of 1575 and 76, which carried off 50,000 inhabitants of the city, including the 100-year-old Titian, the University of Montpellier sent doctors to Venice to study the pestilence. Lest the diseased come too close, to prevent contagion, they wore grotesque beak-shaped masks, which were filled with medicinal herbs.«

Paul Flora

»The cradle of Venice stood in Torcello; however, today it is a deserted island. We can hardly imagine that this quiet, melancholy place was once during the early Middle Ages the seat of a bishop, a powerful trading city with 30,000 inhabitants, twenty churches, docks and harbors. All this died from the malaria that rose up from the lagoon, gradually turning to marsh. Around 1600, Torcello was abandoned marshland, and Venetian palaces were built from the stones of its ruins.«

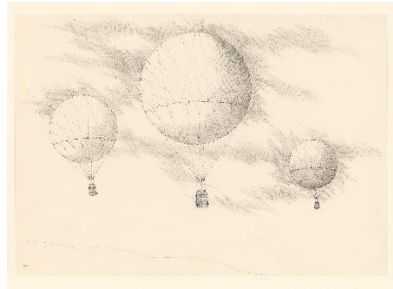
Paul Flora

Press images

The following images are available for download in the Press Area at www.albertina.at:



Paul Flora
In the Rain, ca. 1946
Pen drawing,
24.7 × 184 cm
ALBERTINA, Vienna
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Administration,
Salzburg, and Diogenes
Verlag, Zurich



Paul Flora
Untitled (Three Balloons), ca.
1950
Pen drawing,
38.5 × 56.5 cm
Collection Galerie Flora,
Innsbruck
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Administration, Salzburg, and
Diogenes Verlag, Zurich



Paul Flora
Several Tigers, 1954
Pen drawing, water colored,
40 × 55 cm
Collection Galerie Flora, Innsbruck
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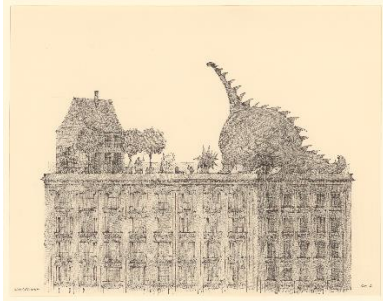


Paul Flora
Dr. Caligari, ca. 1965
Pen drawing,
48.5 × 62 cm
ALBERTINA, Vienna, on loan from Artothek des
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and Diogenes Verlag, Zurich



Paul Flora
Rat Catcher, 1975
Pen drawing,
38 × 53 cm
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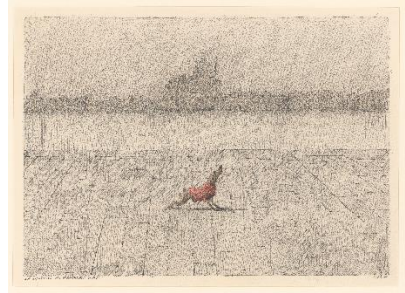
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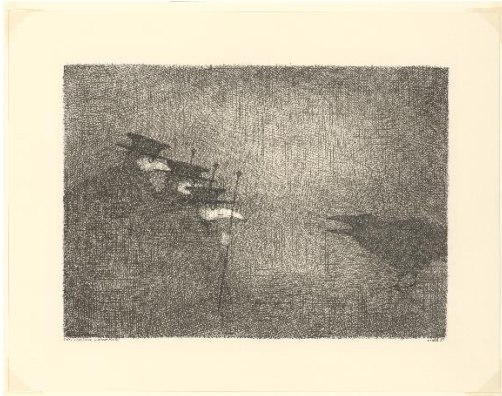
Paul Flora
Allotment Garden, 1976
Pen drawing,
38 × 53 cm
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Paul Flora
Wagner, at night in Venice,
1980
Pen drawing,
26.5 × 36.5 cm
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Paul Flora
La Giudecca with an Elegant
Dog, 1984
Pen drawing, crayon,
32 × 41.1 cm
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Diogenes Verlag, Zurich

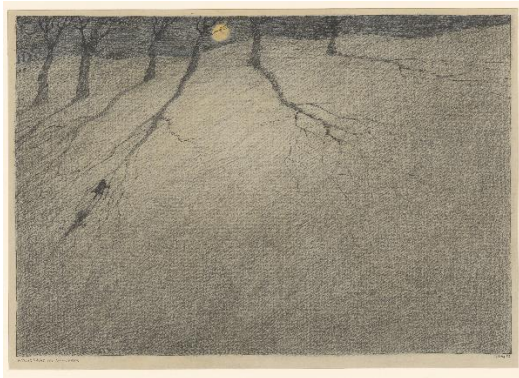


Paul Flora
Three Plague Doctors and a Raven, 1986
Pen drawing,
28 × 38 cm
ALBERTINA, Vienna – Haselsteiner Family
Collection
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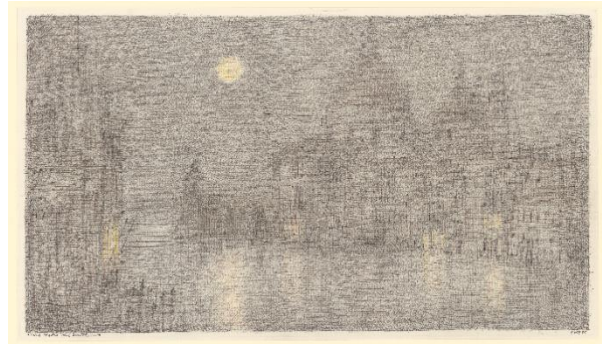


Paul Flora
La Peste, 1988
Pen drawing, crayon,
39.5 × 48.5 cm
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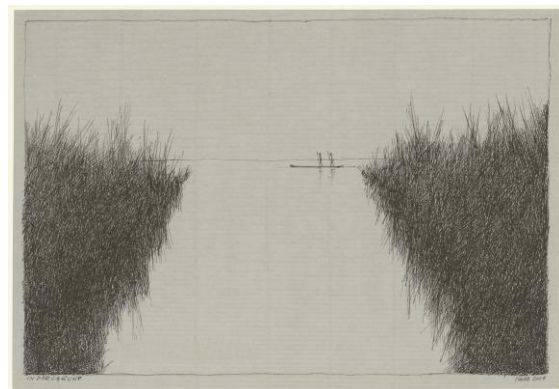
Paul Flora
Winter's Night with Wayfarer, 1992,
Pen drawing, crayon,
44.1 × 58.8 cm
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Paul Flora
Santa Maria della Salute, Luna, 1991
Pen drawing, crayon,
48 × 63 cm
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Paul Flora
Landscape with three old ravens, 2007,
Pen drawing, crayon,
24 × 33 cm
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Paul Flora
In the Lagoon, 2004, Pen drawing,
25.5 × 36 cm
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