

# Markus Prachensky

## A Tribute

18 January – 19 March 2017

Markus Prachensky's radiant, dynamic, and contrast-rich red brushstrokes virtually dance through his oeuvre. His individual works, at turns wild in their gestures and serene in their composition, are at once energetic and meditative.

Prachensky, whose strong anchoring in Austria's art scene dates back to the 1950s, is among today's best-regarded Austrian artists internationally. And the Albertina, with its tribute on what would have been his 85th birthday, is bringing together prominent works from its own collection with hitherto unknown works from Prachensky's extensive artistic estate. This exhibition also presents Prachensky's generous gift to the Albertina of four important paintings—key works in his oeuvre—as well as a number of outstanding drawings.

Markus Prachensky was born in Innsbruck in 1932 and began studying architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 1952. The mid-1950s saw him become acquainted with Arnulf Rainer, Josef Mikl, Wolfgang Hollegha, and Otto Mauer, the legendary figures behind Galerie St. Stephan, and he consequently decided to pursue painting himself. Prachensky quickly became one of the most important protagonists of post-war Austrian painting—not least because he succeeded in forging his own path, going beyond the horizon of the group connected with Galerie St. Stephan. His paintings, initially geometric in character and reminiscent of architectural plans, proceeded to develop toward the abstract and gestural, with unmistakable elements of his style being strong, contrasting colours and dynamic brushstrokes.

The Austrian painter drew inspiration for his colour-compositions from his numerous trips to California and Mexico, as well as to Italy and Asia. But the paintings' titles, though they lead us to the centre of his art, simultaneously lead us astray. They refer to the places that inspired them and thus to the painter as an eternal nomad—but they are never portrait-like depictions of topographic reality, rather being more of a reaction to that which was seen, a transformation of personal experience into the medium of painting and drawing. Brush and paint suffice to convey the artist's experiences and moods: Prachensky's works are witnesses to his travels as well as to his fascination with architecture, construction, and proportion. And above all in his late works, there thus arose a type of monumental painting that reflects Markus Prachensky's experience of nature and, at the same time, becomes a symbol of life itself.