

Kick-off of our new exhibition series *Invited by the ALBERTINA:* *The Wien Museum*

Three main works by Rudolf Hausner from the Wien Museum
can now be seen in the ALBERTINA show collection.

Press conference on 5 September 2018, 10 AM with
Dr. Matti Bunzl (Director, Wien Museum) and
Dr. Klaus Albrecht Schröder (General Director, Albertina)

Biography of Rudolf Hausner (Vienna 1914–1995 Mödling)

Rudolf Hausner ranks among the major proponents of the so-called Vienna School of Fantastic Realism—a style concept that was used to describe the surrealist group of painters only some time after it had been founded immediately after the end of the Second World War. Apocalyptic visions, motifs of the interpretation of dreams, and the search for identity in the native city of psychoanalysis determine their subjects. Technically, their works hark back to the old masters' style of fine painting, which stands in sharp contrast to the gestural expressive abstraction of the time.

Hauser's compositions are informed by ambiguous perspectives and puzzle pictures. Disconcerting figures from childhood seemingly lost in their dreams, odd objects from the past, and war memories populate the cosmic expanses of the universe or the desolate void of a barren landscape. Rudolf Hausner's early main works turn the traumata of his childhood into painting: his sufferings caused by the lack of his mother's love and the split between his self-image as a boy and young man and his suppressed female anima. Fear, forlornness, and desperation colour the atmosphere of his pictorial world.

His self-analytic tableaux juxtapose pyramids as symbols of eternity, uncanny aircraft, and cosmic phenomena to empty yarn bobbins as odd erotic representatives of his tailoring mother. The symmetric weighting of motifs provides a fragile check on the contradictory perspectives. Nothing is as it seems. The shadows of things live a life of their own, bewildering like the life of the adolescent boy. Hausner's identity is made up of memory fragments built on sand. The artist encounters himself as Adam, as the first man who came into the world. In his Adam pictures, he faces his own soul and torn time. It is the tension between the conscious and the unconscious, between the sharp representation of all objects and persons and the enigma of their meaning from which Rudolf Hausner's iconic work gains its strength.

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Quotes of Rudolf Hausner

'Looking into my face, I found the world in it.'

'Painting has taught me everything I know about the world and me. I am painting myself back to the causes, to my beginnings.'

I am id

The canvas is the terrain on which Hausner explores his identity. The contradiction between the ego and the id, the opposition of conscious and unconscious, runs like a thread through his work, constituting his pictures' actual content. According to Sigmund Freud, the subconscious wants to come to light. The id wants to become the ego. The id strives to recognize itself and thus ascend to the ego.

Hausner discovered his pictorial universe by focusing on his own intimate interior and its fantastic worlds.

Remnants of his childhood are strewn across the surface of the Earth: the empty yarn bobbins of his mother whose loss and lacking affection Hausner grieves; the snail shell as a symbol of time; the circle, which has neither beginning nor end, neither direction nor orientation, as an emblem of eternity; the sphere as an archetype that encompasses the possibilities of all other forms as a metaphor of the cosmos and the triumph over time and space: the anima mundi. The composition is again strictly symmetrical: The egg of origin and all beginnings finds its equivalent in a female figure's prolific wide pelvis that extends in a bony back into infinity where it tears the membrane-like sky to let the light of self-awareness shine in the cosmic dark of the night: *I am id*. The unconscious is not elevated into consciousness; it is the subconscious that constitutes the actual ego.

Ulysses's Ark

Ulysses's Ark is a painting of the century, a work of timeless value in its comprehensive view of the possibilities of human existence between birth and death, love and cruelty, dream and nightmare, the conscious and the unconscious. *Ulysses's Ark* is Hausner's densest work, a landmark of Austrian post-war art.

Two figures merge in the main character of the artist: the wandering homecomer Ulysses and the lifesaver Noah. The word 'Ithaka' on his cap refers to the beginning and end of the far journey of Ulysses, a symbol of man searching for himself. The description of the detours, difficulties, and setbacks of this voyage makes Ulysses a timeless archetypical figure. As Ulysses and as Adam, the primeval man, the artist carries the enigmatic fragments of his torn identity, his childhood, the recent global war, and the dissociation of the male and the female principle with him deep down in the bowels of the ship.

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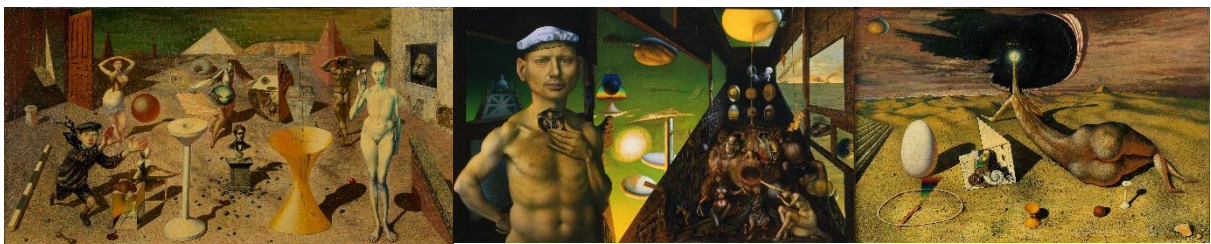
Egg and embryo, the origin of life, a birth under pains; St. Charles Church as a symbol of Habsburg catholic Vienna and the parents' rigid discipline; Noah's ark, which, without gaps, melts into the walls of the prison in which Hausner had to spend two agonizing years; the artist as an almost empty gown and elaborately draped plaything of women; the dissolution of the head, the mouth opened for a silent cry; life aboard a sinking ship as a nautical metaphor of existence: The wealth of motifs born from the subconscious and from nightmares makes this painting, which presents itself as a puzzle picture, a key work in the history of Austrian art immediately after the war.

Forum of Inward-Directed Optics

In Hausner's early major work *Forum of Inward-Directed Optics*, three figures catch the viewer's eye: An androgynous spiritual being balances two eggs like the alpha and omega of life on the fingertips. To the left, a turning female figure in a corset rendered in multiple views presents herself like a sphinx. A bodybuilder striding one-dimensionally into the depth of the picture provides a mirror image. Radically shortened, the artist as a boy in a sailor suit tries to catch the ball batted by the mother-like figure in the centre—in vain. Temples, pyramids, doors leading nowhere, gigantic yarn bobbins, and glass marbles at the foot of the father's bust complete the enigmatic assembly of figures and objects. The composition is strictly symmetrical; each motif has its mirror image, its inversion.

The disquieting pictorial world full of mysterious symbols and figures solidifies to an existential hidden-image puzzle: The grown artist looks into his childhood to find an answer to the eternal questions 'Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?' Nothing is what it seems to be. Each cast shadow disclaims its cause and in its odd form defies reason, as does the painting in its entirety.

The following images are available free of charge in the Press section of www.albertina.at:



Rudolf Hausner
Forum of Inward-Directed Optics, 1948
Oil on wood
Wien Museum
© Anne Hausner 2018

Rudolf Hausner
Ulysses's Ark, 1948–1950
Oil on wood
Wien Museum
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Rudolf Hausner
I am Id, 1948
Oil on chipboard
Wien Museum
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