



GÜNTER BRUS

ACTION AND POETRY

May 7 – June 27, 2020

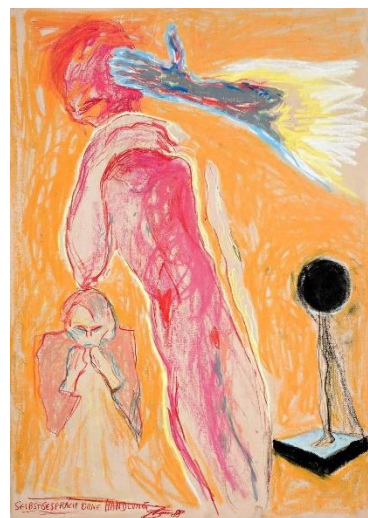
Shepherd W&K Galleries

58 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10075

Shepherd W&K Galleries are pleased to present, an exhibition with works by Günther Brus. Günther Brus counts among the most important and radical representatives of Viennese Actionism. With his art, Brus is regarded as a pioneer of Body Art, as the one who introduced the body into art as the exclusive medium of expression. In the 1960s, he consistently used the body as a means and setting for his art. His aggressively presented actionism intentionally disregarded conventions and taboos. He declares his body his only medium of art and from 1967 onwards renounces all other artistic materials - acting purely with his body and its functions. He turns his body into the arena of his revolt against antiquated social and artistic structures. After the 'Kunst und Revolution' (English: 'Art and Revolution') action at the University of Vienna in 1968 he is sentenced to 6 months in prison. Together with his wife Anna and his two-year-old daughter, he flees to Berlin in 1969, where he lives illegally for the years to come. In Germany he continues with his artistic work. His last action takes place 1970 in the Action Room 1 in Munich: the 'ZerreiBprobe' (English: 'Stress Test'). He slices himself with a razor blade, sews his wound up himself, beats himself with a whip and throws himself to the floor where he remains, exhausted. 'Brus breaks with everything that western art consists of, with the old form of painting, with the ideal of beauty, with the romanticised life and all the rest of it' (Peter Weibel).

After the 'Stress Test' in 1970 Brus began documenting his actions, to process the experiences of his actionist period with drawings and spontaneously writing texts about them. With 'Irrwisch' (English: 'Crazy Swipe') he creates one of the most radical works of Austrian literature. The picture-text novel shows a last anarchic acting out against the various institutions of power such as church, state, justice or army, an angry reckoning with everything that restricts the free development of man. In the 1970s, his style of drawing radically changes towards a supposedly naive and fairy-tale like mode of representation, which causes shock-like amazement in many viewers. If one reads the name Günter Brus, it is usually marked with the epithet "Viennese Actionist". But the Austrian drew for around 60 years and created an impressive oeuvre of over 30,000 works on paper. Within his graphic oeuvre, he deals with various themes such as music and romanticism, but also consistently explores the connection between text and image, coining the term 'picture poetry' – independent encounters between images and text. The key to understand Brus' drawings lies in the understanding of how Brus approaches the empty sheet of paper. What is thought, felt, and imagined is applied directly to the paper, without drafts, without reflection, directly, as an unsparing disclosure of one's innermost self in that moment, conscious of making mistakes and exposing oneself without protection.

The exhibition presents works from over 35 years of artistic activity. On the one hand, Brus the actionist is presented. The exhibition shows drawings, photographs and video material from the 1960s relating to actions such as 'Ana', 'Transfusion' and 'Stress Test'. The exhibition gives further insight into the other side of Günter Brus, who is an outstanding draughtsman, picture poet and writer. Drawings from 1970 through 1999 will be shown - from large, colourful pictorial poems as well as works that reflect his engagement with cultural and art history, especially the work of Caspar David Friedrich, Victor Hugo or William Blake.



About Günter Brus

Günter Brus was born 1938 in Ardning, Austria, and lives and works in the Austrian city of Graz. His importance is demonstrated not least by the numerous works and documents of his artistic work, which can be found today in international collections outside of Austria such as: MoMA, New York; The Metropolitan Museum, New York; Tate Britain, London; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Recent institutional exhibitions *Unruhe nach dem Sturm - Günter Brus*, Belvedere 21, Vienna (2018); *Günter Brus. Störungszonen*, Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2016); *Staging Action: Performance in Photography since 1960*, MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art, New York, (2011); *Ruptures and Continuities: Photography Made after 1960 from the MFAH Collection*, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2010); *Primal Secretions: A Günter Brus Retrospective*, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia (2006); *Into Me/Out of Me*, P.S.1. MoMa, New York (2006).

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FURTHER DETAILS

I) Details on the exhibition

Exhibition Title: Günter Brus – Action and Poetry

Curated by Roman Grabner (Head of BRUSEUM of the Neue Galerie Graz, Austria)

Opening Wednesday May 6, 6pm – 8pm

May 7 – June 27, 2020

Shepherd W&K Galleries

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This is the first solo show of Günter Brus since 2005.

II) Egon Schiele – Günter Brus – Marina Abramovic

The foundation for the internationally significant, psychoanalytical body-based art of Günter Brus and the Viennese Actionists Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler were the artists of the Fin de Siècle, above all Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka and Gustav Klimt. With fearless curiosity, they probed the human body as well as the multifaceted dimensions of physical and psychic experience. Unimpressed by the repressive social conventions of imperial Vienna, they examined the elementary functions of life such as birth and death and the broad spectrum of sexual longing. They were inspired and strongly influenced by the intellectual achievements of Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Arnold Schönberg.

Putting the two generations of artists in context produces exciting insights. For example, it was only long after the repressions of the Thirties, the Second World War and the immediate post-war years that a new, more extreme, very specific further development of the artistic concerns of Vienna around 1900 was able to arise in the form of Viennese Actionism. This completely new art was supposed to make it possible for people to overcome subjective and collective oppression in a therapeutic way. Analysis of the body is self-analysis as well as a picture puzzle of society. The liberated body and spirit were the goal towards which this psycho-dramatic and deeply independent art was striving. One essential motive was liberation from and dissolution of the traumatic experiences that the political and intellectual abysses of arch-conservative and Fascist history had caused in Austria and the rest of the world. Nowhere did this paradigm shift take on a more radical form than in Vienna.

Through its radical new possibilities for expression, the work of Günter Brus and the other Viennese Actionists Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler not only led to strong influence on and changes to the arch-conservative art and society of post-war Austria. With his actions and international exhibitions he either anticipated or influenced not only the performance art of Maria Abramovic but also the work of artists like Mike Kelley, Raymond Pettibon, Karen Finley and Paul McCarthy.

III) Selected individual and group exhibitions

Since the 1990s, Günter Brus has been exhibited repeatedly in the USA. Exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1996), the Slought Foundation, Philadelphia (2006), The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2010), and most recently at the MoMA in New York in 2011.

- 2020: Freedom will have been an episode ... @ Austrian Cultural Forum, New York (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2018: Unruhe nach dem Sturm - Günter Brus @ Belvedere 21, Vienna, AT (*Solo Exhibition*)
- 2016: Günter Brus. Störungszonen @ Nationalgalerie, Berlin (*Solo Exhibition*)
- 2014: Rite of Passage: Vienna Actionism @ Hauser & Wirth, New York (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2011: Staging Action: Performance in Photography since 1960 @ MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2010: Ruptures and Continuities: Photography Made after 1960 from the MFAH Collection @ The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2006: Primal Secretions: A Günter Brus Retrospective @ Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, US (*Solo Exhibition*)
- 2006: Into Me/Out of Me @ P.S.1. MoMa, New York, USA (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2005: Dirty Embellishments @ Mike Weiss Gallery, New York
- 2005: Nervous Stillness on the Horizon @ MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona, Spain (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2005: Viaggio intorno all'opera - Una retrospettiva dal 1960 al 1996 @ Galleria d'Arte Moderna I GAM, Bologna, Italy (*Group Exhibition*)
- 2004: Behind the Facts. Interfunktionen 1968 – 1975 @ Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain (*Group Exhibition*)
- 1996: "Out of Action", Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA (*Group Exhibition*)
- 1993: Retrospektive „Sichtgrenze – Limité du visible“, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (*Solo Exhibition*)
- 1986: Retrospektive „Der Überblick“, Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna, Lenbachhaus Munich, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany (*Solo Exhibition*)

IV) About the curator

Roman Grabner born 1979 in Graz, Austria.

- Studied art history, German and history in Graz
- 2005-2007 curatorial assistant at the Minoriten cultural centre, Graz
- 2007-2009 curatorial assistant at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany
- 2008-2011 freelance curator
- since 2012 director of the BRUSEUM at the Neue Galerie Graz am Universalmuseum Joanneum.
- Author of numerous texts on the art of the 20th and 21st century

V) About W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher

W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher has been in business for over 25 years and was founded by the two gallerists Lui Wienerroither and Ebi Kohlbacher. The gallery began its activity with Austrian art around 1900, but soon specialized in Expressionist art from Austria and Germany. In recent years the program has been continuously expanded and refined.

The gallery program ranges from Austrian and German Expressionism (Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Christian Rohlf, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff) to Viennese Actionism (Günter Brus, Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl) and selected contemporary artists (Franz West, Judith Reigl, Kurt Kocherscheidt).

W&K is the #1 gallery for Gustav Klimt worldwide, having 40+ original drawings available, from early works of the 1880s to important studies for portraits and the Beethovenfries. W&K are among the top 3 galleries for works by Egon Schiele worldwide.

In 2020 W&K will exhibit at TEFAF Maastricht for the 11th consecutive time. Other art fairs include Frieze Masters London, Salon du Dessin in Paris, TEFAF New York Spring or the Biennale internazionale di Antiquariato di Firenze and many more.

W&K works closely with museums worldwide and regularly supports them with loans and acquisitions.

- Albertina Museum, Vienna – Gustav Klimt
- Albertinum Dresden – Lyonel Feininger
- Art Institute of Chicago – Alfred Kubin
- Belvedere, Vienna – Gustav Klimt, George Grosz, Pablo Picasso, ...
- Barbican Center, London – Jean Michel Basquiat
- Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris – Egon Schiele
- Fundacion Juan March, Madrid – Feininger
- Fundacion Mapfre, Madrid – Gustav Klimt
- Kunsthalle Zürich – Oskar Kokoschka
- Neue Galerie, New York – Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Alfred Kubin
- Royal Academy of Arts, London – Paul Cezanne
- Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, Tokyo – Gustav Klimt
- The Metropolitan Museum, New York – George Grosz
- and many more...

To provide a better service to clients in the US and particularly on the East Coast, W&K teamed up with Shepherd gallery in NYC in 2013.

VI) About Shepherd W&K Galleries

Shepherd Gallery was founded at 84th Street in 1966 by Martin L. H. Reymert and Robert Kashey and has been in business for over 50 years now. The gallery focuses not only on European sculpture and paintings but also on drawings and other works on paper. Its directors are David Wojciechowski and Robert Kashey.

Since its foundation the gallery has been exploring the academic tradition in European Art, exhibiting works from 1780 through 1920. While the focus is on works from France, Germany and Austria, the gallery also regularly shows exhibitions with works from England, Italy and Eastern Europe. One of the first exhibitions was "Russians in Paris, 1900-30", in 1968.

Shepherd regularly presents exhibitions and has published over 125 accompanying catalogues with scientific essays since its foundation. More than 90 of these can be found at the MET's Thomas J. Watson Library and some of them were being used as teaching tools at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. In 1975 the gallery was awarded by the Art Libraries Society of New York for its catalogue on the exhibition 'Ingres and Delacroix, Through Degas and Puvis De Chavannes, The Figure in French Art, 1800-1870'.

"In every great city there is an art gallery that comes on like an old-style private house. When you walk in, people behave as if you lived there and did not need to be bothered. You can sit down, you can read the catalogue all day, the bustle of the world is stilled. It's the kind of place where you expect people to blot their letters with sand and send them by pony trap. As for the work on view, it results not from an up-to-the-minute marketing survey but from private and long-held passions that are quite independent of the taste of the day. A place in New York that corresponds to this general description is the Shepherd Gallery on East 84th Street." John Russell, The New York Times Magazine, Nov. 9, 1986

In 1998 the gallery moved from the brownstone-and-red-brick, turn-of-the-century townhouse in 84th Street to the new space of 58 East 79th Street – the house where Serge Sabarsky Foundation, who was not just an internationally known art dealer and leading authority on German and Austrian Expressionist art but also co-founder of the Neue Galerie New York, has its offices. In the same year, Shepherd Gallery teamed up with the Patrick Derom Gallery of Brussels, under the name Shepherd & Derom Galleries. In January of 2013, Shepherd Gallery formed a new affiliation with the Viennese gallery, W&K - Wienerroither & Kohlbacher, under the name Shepherd W&K Galleries. Since then the galleries have had numerous joint exhibitions, such as 'Gustav Klimt - Drawings', 'Feininger, Klee and the Bauhaus' or 'Body Extended', with works by Egon Schiele, Günter Brus, Franz West and Maria Lassnig.

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VII) Günter Brus - Biography

Born in 1938 in Ardning in Upper Styria. His graphic and literary talent is discovered early on.

In 1958 he starts studying at the University of Applied Arts Vienna but leaves without a diploma.

In 1960 he creates his first informal works. Brus meets Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch and his later wife Anna Steiner.

In 1964 Brus carries out his first actions entitled 'Ana' and 'Self-Painting'. The body subsequently becomes the sole means of expression in his art.

In 1965 the 'Wiener Spaziergang' takes place. He walks through Vienna's inner city as a living painting until he is stopped by police.

In 1966 he was with Gustav Metzger, Otto Muehl, Wolf Vostell, Yoko Ono and others a participant of the *Destruction in Art* Symposium (DIAS) in London.

In 1968 he stages his action 'Art and Revolution' in auditorium 1 of Vienna University. Brus is charged with 'vilification of Austrian symbols' and 'violation of morality and modesty' and is sentenced to the maximum punishment of 6 months imprisonment. In 1969 Brus flees with his wife Anna and their daughter Diana to West-Berlin.

In 1970 he carries out his last and most radical action 'Stress Test' at Aktionsraum 1 in Munich. In his drawings created during his time he aggressively addresses the repressive measures of church, state and the judiciary.

In 1972 Brus embarks on a new artistic path owing to his work for the edition 'Balcony of Europe'. The interconnection of image and text in his 'picture poetry', which is neither explanatory nor illustrating, gives rise to a new genre. He is invited to the documenta 5.

In 1976 the artist's prison sentence is commuted to a monetary fine following an audience of Anna Brus with the Austrian president Rudolf Kirchschläger. He gets his first big solo-exhibition in the Kunsthalle Bern.

In 1979 gets an exhibition in the DAADgalerie. The family returns to Styria, where they still live today.

From 1980 to 1982 he participates at the biennial in Venice, the documenta 7 in Kassel and the biennial of Sydney and receives solo-exhibitions inter alia at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, the Hamburger Kunstverein and the Kunstmuseum Luzern.

In 1984 the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven organizes his first retrospective.

In 1985 Brus designs the stage setting and the costumes for Gerhard Roths play 'memories of mankind' at the theater in Graz.

In 1986 Brus receives his first retrospective in Austria in the Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts. The exhibition travels to the Lenbachhaus in Munich and the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.

In 1993 the Centre Georges Pompidou exhibits the artists retrospective 'Sichtgrenze' in Paris.

In 1994 Brus designs the costumes for Leoš Janáček's opera 'The Cunning Little Vixen' at the Semperoper in Dresden.

In 2003 the retrospective 'Werkumkreisung' is hosted at the Albertina in Vienna, later continuing on to the Neue Galerie Graz, Kunsthau Zug, Galleria d'arte moderna in Bologna and the MACBA in Barcelona.

In 2008 the Neue Galerie in Graz dedicates the museum and research center BRUSEUM to the artist.




In 2016 Brus receives a retrospective in the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, a city he had lived in for 10 years.

In 2018 the belvedere 21 in Vienna hosts a great retrospective in honour of his 80th birthday.

VIII) Press Images – Günter Brus in New York @ Shepherd W&K Galleries

Download Images: <https://bit.ly/2uPf5hs> or <https://www.w-k.art/press?!=en>

	<p>Günter Brus Transfusion, action Vienna 1965/1999 Chromogenic color print Image 15.7 x 15.7 inch (40 x 40 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus "Ana", action Vienna 1964 Vintage photograph Image 19.1 x 15.3 inch (48,5 x 39 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus Action Drawing (Musikpfeifton), 1966 Indian ink on paper 11.6 x 8.3 inch (29.5 x 21 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus Action Drawing, 1966 Indian ink on paper 11.7 x 8.3 inch (29.7 x 21 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus Human Zipper, Statistical (Menschenreissverschluss, Statistisch), 1998 Pencil, colored pencil and collage on paper 15.4 x 11.8 inch (39 x 30 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>

	<p>Günter Brus Soliloquy Without Plot (Selbstgespräch ohne Handlung), 1988 Oil pastel on cardboard 39 x 27.6 inch (99 x 70 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus Review of Killed Time (Rückblick auf erschlagene Zeiten), 1988 Oil pastel on cardboard 39 x 27.6 inch (99 x 70 cm) © W&K – Wienerroither & Kohlbacher</p>
	<p>Günter Brus Portrait, 2019 © Photo by Nicola Milatovic</p>
	<p>Günter Brus and Anna Brus, 2018 © Foto by Christian Jungwirth</p>
	<p>Günter Brus and Hermann Nitsch in New York 1973 © Photo by Archiv f. Conz - Collection Sommer Graz</p>