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Inspired by Pop Art, a Viennese Painter Explored Radical
Change in 1960s New York

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Kiki Kogelnik

Portrait of an Attractive Man, 1964

KÖNIG GALERIE

All artwork, it could be argued, is a product of the artist's particular time and place. Rarely is the concept so evident as in the works of Austrian-born painter Kiki Kogelnik (1935–1997), who left Europe for New York at a pivotal moment in modern American history: the early 1960s.



Kiki Kogelnik

Ich Kogelnik möchte gern..., 1963

KÖNIG GALERIE

After a stint in California, Kogelnik—already a relatively accomplished abstract painter by her mid-20s—relocated to New York in 1961. It was a life-changing move. Not long after settling in her adopted city, Kogelnik met and befriended Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg, whose collective influence on her was profound. While Kogelnik didn't become a Pop Art painter herself, she took inspiration from many of the genre's defining elements: figurative compositions, bold colors, and subjects that reflect contemporary culture.

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH



Kiki Kogelnik
Untitled (Pump for heart), 1965
KÖNIG GALERIE



Kiki Kogelnik
Maschinenhände, 1965
KÖNIG GALERIE

Warhol, of course, chose Campbell's soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles as symbols of consumer culture. Kogelnik captured the zeitgeist from a different angle. She arrived in America at a time of great political change and technological advancement, including the space race. Her works from this period, a selection of which is currently on view at König Galerie in Berlin, are rich with references to scientific exploration and its relationship to human existence. In *Maschinenhände* (1965) and *Untitled (Pump for heart)* (1965), for example, she imagines body parts as machines and vice versa, all in stark black and white with just a hint of color.



Kiki Kogelnik
Gemini Control, 1966
KÖNIG GALERIE

The cheerful color palette is almost enough to distract from the ominous positioning of Kogelnik's human figures. An aggressive crowd consumes the central subject in *Portrait of an Attractive Man* (1964), while a paper doll-like figure lies defenseless beside an alien creature in *Gemini Control* (1966).



Kiki Kogelnik
Untitled (Small Hanging), 1968
KÖNIG GALERIE

In *Untitled (Small Hanging)* (1968), a flattened body is bent over a bar, the human silhouette looking emptied out, even disposable. The *Hanging* piece actually belongs to a series of the same name, one for which Kogelnik is still well-known. Early in her time in New York, the artist started using her friends—including Lichtenstein—as models, tracing the contours of their bodies on paper, cutting out the silhouettes, and using the flattened forms in her compositions.



Kiki Kogelnik
Moon Baby, 1968
KÖNIG GALERIE

Elsewhere in her work, figures are headless or nude, phantom hands grasp for things, and dismembered body parts float through space. Human beings, Kogelnik seems to suggest, are no match for the greater forces at play.

—Bridget Gleeson