

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

KIKI KOGELNIK: *Women*

534 West 26th Street, New York

June 1 – July 8, 2022

Opening Reception: Wednesday, June 1 from 6 to 8 pm



NEW YORK – MAY 19, 2022 – Mitchell-Innes & Nash is pleased to announce its second solo presentation of the work of Kiki Kogelnik. *Women* includes 10 paintings and 21 works on paper that date from 1962 to 1985. The exhibition will be on view from June 1 through July 8, 2022, with an opening reception from 6 to 8pm on Wednesday, June 1.

Kiki Kogelnik's relationship to, and depiction of, women is founded in personal narrative. At the age of 21, she was engaged to the artist Arnulf Rainer, only to find in the house they were going to share his formal studio occupied a floor, while she was only given the attic to paint in. This established the conflicting pattern of dependency and self-determination that would shape her life. Marilyn Monroe appeared to Kogelnik an exemplar of a woman who had achieved this balance and she painted three paintings with the title *Marilyn* as homages to her idol. One of these three works, *Marilyn* (1962) in the present exhibition

features the actress' abstracted torso and legs. The figure's voluminous proportions recall timeless symbols of fertility such as the Venus of Willendorf, while the green lingerie reinforces the body as an object of desire.

Following the unexpected death of Monroe she wrote in a letter to her mother in Austria on August 15, 1962: "I am really very sad about Marilyn – she died not far away from here – and on this night at about 1 till 4, I could not sleep and was very depressed. When I told this to Sam [Francis] the next day, he told me Marilyn killed herself. [...] Well, poor Marilyn – I collect all the papers – and I have to paint to her glory."

The sudden awareness of the fragility of the human body becomes one of the key tenets of her work in the 1960s as she explored ideas of the fragmented body and its augmentation. From 1966 to 1967, she made a series of drawings entitled *Robots* that utilized anatomical rubber stamps employed by doctors to make reports of diagnoses. Some show a form of utopian freedom as they blasted off into space while others depict vulnerability, trauma and pain. Coinciding with her own pregnancy she wrote in her diary: "Maybe there will come a time where the female bodies won't be [necessary] for that process anymore and life could be created aside. I would not mind."

Drawing on the images found within the pages of fashion magazines, in the 1970s she embarked on a series of paintings that showed their subjects as both empowered and absurd as they performed their assigned roles. Stripped of the context of a photoshoot, dressed in fiercely patterned dresses and

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bathing suits, augmented by the occasional prop, their dynamic poses contrast with their painted faces, and eyes that no longer appear to harbor any emotion. Echoing her interest in the idea of the cyborg from the previous decade, they are in her own words: “beautiful, rich, worldly, superficial, bored, neither happy nor unhappy, no deep thoughts, no sentiment, no feelings.”

In the series *It Hurts*, 1974-76, Kogelnik depicted a succession of women dressed in black who appear to be the subject of physical abuse conducted with a range of items found in the home. The women themselves appear impervious to the pain that is being inflicted on them as if they have no choice but to stoically ignore the flowers that are being offered as an apology. By the 1980s she employs simplified representations of the female face which become mask-like in a series of fixed expressions that evolve to become a motif that reoccurs throughout her late work and across a range of media. She said towards the end of her life: “For me, the mask is nothing that takes place in front of the face but it is the face. It doesn’t conceal anything. It *is* it.”

Kiki Kogelnik (1935-1997) is currently included in: Cecilia Alemani’s *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy; *Future Bodies from a Recent Past—Sculpture, Technology, and the Body since the 1950s*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich, Germany; *Amazons of Pop! Women Artists, Superheroines, Icons 1961-1973*, Kunsthau Graz, Austria; and is the subject of *Kiki Kogelnik: This is Your Life. An Archive Account* at the Werner Berg Museum, Bleiburg, Austria. A retrospective exhibition beginning at the Kunstforum Wien, Vienna, Austria in February 2023 will tour to Kunstmuseum Brandts, Odense, Denmark, and Kunsthau Zürich, Switzerland.

About Kiki Kogelnik

Kiki Kogelnik transcended the movements of European abstract modernism and American Pop art to create a unique, forward-looking oeuvre that addressed new technologies and feminism. Incorporating a variety of often synthetic materials, irony and humor, her paintings and sculptural work typically took their point of departure in the human body, presenting it as variously ebullient, stylized, interchangeable, fragmentary or skeletal.

Born in Austria in 1935, Kogelnik studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna before traveling widely in Europe, where she became closely involved with a group of American artists including Joan Mitchell and Sam Francis. Following her move to New York in the early 1960s, she abandoned her abstract expressionist style in favor of paintings and assemblages directly inspired by recent advances in robotics and space travel. Working alongside a group of artists loosely associated with the Pop art movement— Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol were among her friends— Kogelnik became widely known for her series of *Hangings*, in which silhouettes of friends were cut out and hung on hangers and rails, or stenciled onto canvas as hollow skin. Later works increasingly addressed fashion and the way women were portrayed in advertisements.

About Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Founded by Lucy Mitchell-Innes and David Nash, who previously headed the worldwide Contemporary and Impressionist & Modern Art divisions of Sotheby’s, Mitchell-Innes & Nash places exemplary contemporary artists within a historical context, revealing a continuity of ideas and

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aesthetic virtuosity from the Modern era through the present day. Lucy Mitchell-Innes is also a member of the selection committee of Art Basel and a former president of the Art Dealers Association of America. Mitchell-Innes & Nash's renowned exhibition program fosters excellence within artistic practice, while forging an informed dialogue between emerging and established internationally recognized artists. From acclaimed surveys of 20th century masters, such as Jean Arp, Anthony Caro, Jay DeFeo, Willem de Kooning, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth Noland, Roy Lichtenstein, and Nicolas de Stael, to solo exhibitions of Sarah Braman, Keltie Ferris, Daniel Lefcourt, Eddie Martinez, Pope.L, Martha Rosler, and Jessica Stockholder, Mitchell-Innes & Nash has proven expertise in both advancing the careers of emerging artists and maintaining the superior standard set by established artists.

Caption: Kiki Kogelnik, *Marilyn*, 1962, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 89 3/4 by 59 3/4 in. 228 by 151.8 cm. © Kiki Kogelnik Foundation.

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