



To the press

Sylvia Sleigh

6 October – 2 December 2012

With an exhibition design by Martin Leuthold (Art Director, Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gallen)

Press preview: Friday, 5 October 2012, from 11 a.m. on

Opening: Friday, 5 October 2012, 6 p.m.

The most comprehensive retrospective to date by the painter Sylvia Sleigh (1916–2010) presents works spanning more than sixty years. A broad selection has been made in order to showcase the totality and complexity of Sleigh's artistic endeavour. In addition to portraits, the exhibition features a number of still lifes and landscapes, such as the rarely displayed paintings of statues in the park landscape near Crystal Palace in 1950s London. It is unusual for Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen to present the first retrospective of an artist but today Sleigh's position is particularly interesting for a younger generation of artists. Furthermore the passionate attention that Sleigh paid to textiles and decorative details in her works fits well into the context of St. Gallen and its world-famous textile tradition. Responsible for the exhibition design is Martin Leuthold, the famous textile designer and Art Director of Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gallen. With a special design he underlines this aspect of Sleigh's work and lends particular project character to the retrospective at Kunst Halle.

Sylvia Sleigh was born in Wales, but moved to the United States in 1961 and settled in New York, where she lived for the rest of her life. Upon the emergence of feminism in the United States in the early 1970s, Sleigh established herself as a prominent artist, in particular by painting portraits of male and female models, both nude and clothed which are characterised by strong colours and a love of decorative details. She found her models among writers, actors, musicians, and her fellow artists: hence her paintings serve also as a map of the dynamic art scene of the 1960s and 1970s in New York. In these portraits she combined bold sensuality with a personal feminism that placed her at the heart of a discourse on power, representation, and gender. This discourse, which can be considered as an exploration of the traditional, academic painting's fundamental guidelines, also entailed a break with an apparently deadlocked power relation between a portrait's artist and subject.

Even though Sleigh's art and motifs are characterised by a cautious conservatism, in that the motifs are primarily portraits and model studies, they all represent various radical statements: Sleigh often relates her nudes to the Great Tradition, both as an assertion of continuity in scope and ambition and at the same time as a witty and ironic reminder of values that have been rejected, or in her case deliberately stood on their heads (Linda Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye* (2003)). Of particular importance is Sleigh's endeavour to improve the recognition and financial situation of female artists, as well as her commitment to artist-run galleries in New York in the 1970s. It is only recently that Sylvia Sleigh's art has in earnest been included in an increasing number of shows – mainly due to the fact that it has only been in the last decade that major exhibitions of feminist art have been mounted. An example is her participation in the influential «WACK! Art and the Feminist Movement» travelling exhibition in 2007.

The retrospective at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen is the second stop of a travelling exhibition that was developed in coproduction with Kunstnerne Hus, Oslo, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux CAPC and Tate Liverpool. It is intended to draw greater attention in Europe to Sleigh's work and present her important position in recent art history to a broad public.

Biographical information:

Sylvia Sleigh (*1916 Llandudno, Wales/UK; †2010 New York/US) studied at the Brighton School of Art in Sussex, England. Solo exhibitions took place at the following institutions and galleries (amongst others): Kunstneres Hus, Oslo (2012); Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts, Zurich (2010); I-20 Gallery, New York (2009/2007); The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York (2006); SoHo20, New York (2004/1999/1985/1980/1973); Milwaukee Art Museum (1990); A.I.R. Gallery, New York (1978/1976/1975). Further, she participated in various group exhibitions (amongst others): de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam; Freymond-Guth & Co., Zurich (2011); MoMA PS1, New York (2010/2008); Musée National des Beaux-Arts, Quebec (2009); A.I.R. Gallery, New York (2008/2000/1999/1998/1997); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington (2007); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (1982); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1977/1974). www.sylviasleigh.com

Martin Leuthold (*1953, Hegi-Winden, Switzerland) trained as an embroidery designer. He has been a textile designer at the company Jakob Schlaepfer in St. Gallen, an internationally renowned producer of innovative textiles for fashion and interior decoration. As part of the management and Creative Director since 1989 he has among other things participated in the creation of numerous new processes in textile design and the development of laser and inkjet procedures for printing on fabrics. Leuthold also made a name for himself with the innovative use of metal threads with textiles. His work has already won him the Swiss Design Award and the famous American Cotton Design Award. www.jakobschlaepfer.com

Events and educational program:

Guided tours

Tuesday, 23 October 2012, 6 p.m.
Sunday, 25 November 2012, 3 p.m.

Art Lunch

Thursday, 22 November 2012, 12 noon
Guided tour through the exhibition followed by lunch
Guest cook: Martin Leuthold, Art Director, Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gallen
Admission: CHF 25/members CHF 22; please sign up at info@k9000.ch

Workshops for school classes

From 22 October we are offering workshops at the exhibition free of charge.
More information: www.k9000.ch (Art Education/Workshops for Schools).

High-resolution images can be found in the press kit on our website (Information/Press). For further questions please contact Giovanni Carmine (carmine@k9000.ch) or Maren Brauner (brauner@k9000.ch).

The exhibition is made possible by the Marie Müller Guarnieri Foundation, the Office of Public Affairs, Embassy of the United States, Bern, Switzerland, as well as the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA), New York, USA. With special thanks to Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gallen.

The Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen is supported by St. Gallen City Council, Kulturförderung Kanton St. Gallen, Swisslos, Migros-Kulturprozent, Kulturförderung Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Martel AG, St. Galler Tagblatt. The educational programme is made possible by Raiffeisen.

Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen
Davidstrasse 40
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Tel: +41 (0)71 222 10 14
Fax: +41 (0)71 222 12 76
info@k9000.ch
www.k9000.ch

Opening times:
Tuesday to Friday 12 noon–6 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m.