

“The figures represent themselves. Everything else is interpretation.” –Miriam Cahn

The gallery is pleased to present recent paintings with a pivotal series of drawings produced in 1983 by Miriam Cahn (b. 1949) the new recipient of the 2013 Basler Kunstpreis Award.

Miriam Cahn emerged into the European political and cultural scene in the early 1970s from her hometown of Basel, Switzerland. Cahn enacted private performances and drawings that merged notions of gender, the body, endurance, and public dissent. Politically active, Cahn joined the women’s movement in Switzerland, working performatively and making drawings on the streets and highway underpasses of Basel where she was discovered by Jean-Christophe Ammann. She joined Galerie STAMPA, which at the time was as much a political affiliation as a gallery that was a hub for socially conscious innovations.

Cahn developed her work in the 1980s incorporating extremely large, black and rich drawings of warships, televisions, fighter jets and other seemingly male-dominated vernacular, that immediately engaged in discourse with Anselm Kiefer, Basquiat, Clemente and Immendorf, among others. She came to international prominence with three successive and unprecedented opportunities: an inclusion in Documenta 7 in 1982 (in which she removed her work out of protest), a solo show at Kunsthalle Basel, curated by director Jean-Christophe Ammann in 1983, and a solo presentation at the 41st Venice Biennale in 1984 representing her country of Switzerland. Decades later at age 50, Cahn made another radical move in her practice. She decided to leave the monumental drawings in which she became known, for an equally intuitive painting practice—a direct evolution and innovation of the result of 30 years of drawing and performing. Over the last 15 years Cahn’s extraordinary range and iconography have been supported by the emotive potential of painting.

Monumental in scale, each work in this exhibition focuses on thematic and critical subjects that have been present in Cahn’s work for over four decades. The body, human conflict, home, war, nature and landscape, both real and imagined are frequent themes. These archetypes serve as the core symbolic language for Cahn’s social critique, incorporating topics of world events, cycles and transformations in this extraordinary selection of work that parallels the 80s and the present.

The second gallery exhibits for the first time since its inception one of Cahn’s famous room installations from 1983 which has been installed by the artist. Entitled *feld fu ür waffenversuche* (beirut-beirut), this work was a reaction to events of the Lebanon War. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and subsequent Beirut occupation was a central reference for her war room installations of the period. The drawings have an immediate and dynamically performative approach, images of

tanks, nuclear warheads and early computers hum with electricity, power and tension that are central to Cahn's socially conscious drawing practice.

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