# Program

Opening Thu, 10.7.2025, 7 pm

5 pm Preview Plant Talks Guided Tour and Conversation with the curators, artists and guests

6 pm

Botanical Bites
a buffet based on the plant repertoire
of Stefan Bertalan
by Sarai Rose Duke

Bar with DJ Angeles from 9 pm

Further information on the *Plant Talks* series on our website.

Curator's Tour Wed, 17.9., 6 pm

Guided Tours Sat, 2.8., from 6 pm (Karlsruher Museumsnacht) Wed, 15.10., 6 pm Wed, 12.11., 6 pm

With kind support by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung.



This exhibition was made possible with great support by Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul and The Estate of Ştefan Bertalan as well as Georg Lecca / Collection Lecca, Munich.



We would like to thank Esther Schipper Gallery, Georg Lecca, Georg Schöllhammer and Ileana Pintilie.

Badischer Kunstverein is supported by





Badischer Kunstverein is located in a historic buildingfrom 1900 under monument protection and the exhibitions are only partially accessible. Exhibitions in the Atrium are accessible with no step barrier. A gender-inclusive washroom with step barriers is located on the second mezzanine floor of our building. Our wish is to ensure that visitors have access without barriers as far as possible, and we are interested on improving and re-evaluating our structure. For further information and your suggestions regarding the accessibility at the Kunstverein, please contact us at info@badischer-kunstverein.de or +49 (0)721 28226..

# Stefan Bertalan

# I have lived with a sunflower for 130 days

We are pleased to present an extensive solo exhibition in Germany devoted to Stefan Bertalan (\*1930, Răcăstie - 2014, Timisoara), one of the most extraordinary and pioneering Romanian artists. The presentation encompasses several decades of his artistic production, with a focus on the years in Timisoara (beginning 1962) and Sibiu (1982—85) before Bertalan immigrated to Germany with his family (he was able to visit Romania again only after 1989). The exhibition is organized into various chapters that highlight specific pictorial themes, materials, and approaches in Bertalan's practice, relating these to one another from diverse angles.

Stefan Bertalan's artistic work is both research and process-oriented. His central area of interest was nature, in particular the growth of plants, but also the anatomy of animals (insects), the structure of stones, shells and minerals, the topology of landscapes, the movements of clouds and wind, and the description of anatomical bodies and cosmological interconnectedness. To record his investigations, Bertalan worked with various media, especially with drawings, whereby the exhibition turns its attention in particular toward his experimental photographs, actions and happenings in public spaces, as well as performances.

During extended walks in and around Timișoara, and in everyday encounters with the garden next to his studio, Bertalan explored the forms in nature as inspiration for his research and art. The result was a multifaceted cosmos consisting of sketches, journal-style (poetic) notations and mathematical calculations, through which he followed morphological processes—from the seed capsule and all the way to the blossoming and withering away of plants. Bertalan's home was simultaneously a laboratory, studio and gathering place, with an interior characterized by his passion and appreciation for the nature that surrounded him, and a sense of curiosity about it. The artist continued to conduct his experimental observations as a founding member of the group Sigma, which engaged in collective and interdisciplinary work with findings from

the areas of cybernetics, information technology, mathematics, bionics and psychology. His approach to nature became the subject of an innovative teaching concept he introduced at the Fine Arts Highschool and the Department of Architecture of the Polytechnic Institute, and was thus able to encourage the students to become actively engaged in a sustained way on behalf of nature. Produced within the same context were a number of actions and happenings, where forms developed from nature were transferred onto formable materials (cables, fabrics, transparent foils)—as a model of perpetual transformation that exemplifies Bertalan's intermedial approach.

Stefan Bertalan was preoccupied with plants that visualize extraordinary geometrical structures, or a certain vegetal resistance, such as the tall sunflower, with its striving toward the light, or the apricot tree, whose branching crown forms a network, or the common jimson weed, with its funnel-shaped blossom in the form of a pentagon. Cauliflower fascinated Bertalan by virtue of its fractal structure, which he analysed on the basis of markings and colours and presented as a work in an exhibition in 1977. All of these works illustrate an analytical interest that was oriented toward mathematical and biological processes, but above all, a subjective sensibility for nature as an ally on equal terms in a universal (art) system, with plants as its agents.

Bertalan's communication with nature on a basis of equality was shaped by the principles of bionics, systems theory, and more particularly by a holistic perspective of the world as a network of indissoluble relationships between lifeforms in space and time. The more closely the artist drew toward the plants, the more clearly he was able to visualize a relation, although he regarded plants as superior to humanity, since they sustain the ecosystem rather than decomposing it. Bertalan began communicating with nature, personifying the plants (like the sunflower in the performance that gives this exhibition its title), until he inscribed himself directly into nature, growing together with it, and finally Opening Thu, 10.7.2025, 7 pm

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disappearing with it in exile (self-portrait with potato in its subterranean existence). In their consistent nonconformity, Bertalan's works are subtly critical, and his life together with plants was pure anarchy. His increasingly noticeable turn toward mysticism and transcendence is equally radical in its conscious withdrawal from the reality in communism. Bertalan's symbiotic approach to nature is still relevant today, and is linked together on a variety of levels with the artistic positions of Plants\_Intelligence, presented in the atrium of the Kunstverein.

Curated by Anja Casser

With kind support by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung.
This exhibition was made possible with great support by Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul und The Estate of Ştefan Bertalan as well as Georg Lecca / Collection Lecca, Munich.
We would like to thank Esther Schipper Gallery, Georg Lecca, Georg Schöllhammer and Ileana Pintilie.

# 11.7.-23.11.2025

Badischer Kunstverein Waldstraße 3, 76133 Karlsruhe +49 (0)721 282 26 info@badischer-kunstverein.de badischer-kunstverein.de badischer-kunstverein.de tue – Fri 11 am – 7 pm Sat, Sun & holidays 11 am – 5 pm Closed on Mondays

# Small Gallery

# 2

# Large Gallery

**Large Gallery** 

Untitled. ca 1970-1980

(Exhibition copies)

40 × 30 cm

Photo reproductions of slides

Untitled (Dandelion), 1988

Pentagonale Formen, 1977

Pencil and ink on paper

Pencil and ink on paper

Pencil and ink on paper

 $32,5 \times 46 \text{ cm}$ 

35 × 41 cm

(May 22)

 $35 \times 50$  cm

4c

Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Charcoal and watercolour on paper

and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Photographies (Exhibition copies)

Elderflower (Floare de soc), 1978

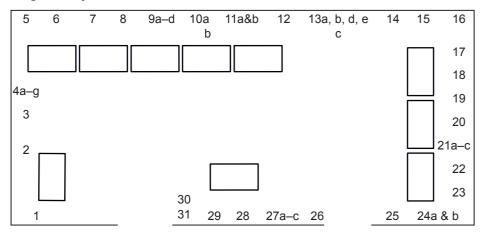
Elderflower (Floare de soc),1978

Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/

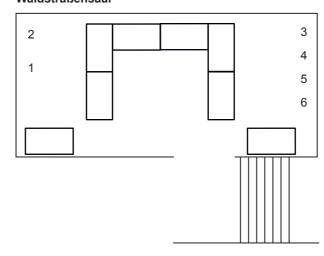
Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Elderflower (Floare de soc), 1978 (June 16)

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul



# Waldstraßensaal



# 4d

Elderflower (Floare de soc), 1978 (May 31)
Pencil and ink on paper 33,5 × 37,5 cm

# 4e

Elderflower (Floare de soc),1978 (May 30) Pencil and ink on paper 35 × 50 cm

# 4t

Elderflower (Floare de soc),1978 (May 30) Pencil and ink on paper 35 × 41 cm

# 4g

Elderflower (Floare de soc),1978 (May 29) Pencil and ink on paper 35 × 50 cm

# 4a-g:

Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 5

Das Holunder Wunder, 1989–1991
Felt-tip pen and pencil on paper
75 × 54,7 cm
Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 6

Pentagonale Formen, 1977
Photography (Exhibition copie)
Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/
Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 7

Daturablüten, 1974–77 Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 8

Installation im Jagdwald, 1976
Photography (Exhibition copie)
Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/
Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# Waldstraßensaal

1 Untitled, 1967–1969 Ink on primed cardboard 100 × 70 cm

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 2

Geometry (111), 1967 White ink on Cardboard 70 × 100 cm Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 3

Untitled, ca. 1970-1980 Slides Exhibition copies Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 4

Untitled, n.d.
Pencil on paper
44 × 62,5 cm
Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 5

Untitled, n.d.
Pencil on paper
70 × 50 cm
Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 6

Untitled, n.d.
Pencil on paper
63,4 × 46 cm
Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Ştefan Bertalan (\*1930, Răcăștie, † 2014, Timişoara, ROM) lived and worked mainly in Timişoara, ROM, and from 1986 to 2012 in Öhringen, GER. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts 'Ion Andreescu' in Cluj-Napoca, ROM (today: University of Arts and Design). From 1962, Bertalan himself was professor at the Timisoara Fine Arts Highschool. In 1965, he cofounded Group 111, the first artists' collective for experimental art in Romania; from 1970, he was a member of the pioneering artists' group Sigma. In the same year, he began teaching at the Department of Architecture at the Faculty of Engineering in Timişoara until he moved to Sibiu, ROM, in 1981 and then to Germany in 1986.

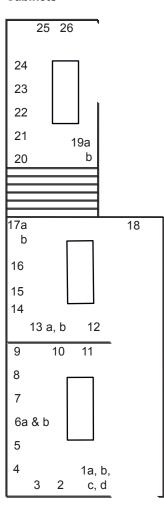
At the 46th Biennale di Venezia, ITA (1995), the artist's works were shown in the Romanian Pavilion and in Palazzo Correr. His other most important solo and group exhibitions include:

In Tune With The World, Art Encounters Foundation, Timişoara, ROM (2025, solo exhibition); Stefan Bertalan (1930-2014), Major Works. A proposal by Bernard Blistène, Esther Schipper, Paris, FRA (2025, solo exhibition); The Picasso Effect, MARe, Bukarest, ROM (2023); Lost in the Moment that Follows: The Ovidiu Sandor Collection, Kunsthalle Praha, Prag, CZE (2023); Things we sense about each other, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, GER (2021); Parlament der Pflanzen, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, LIE (2020); Ex-East. Past and recent stories of the Romanian avant-garde, Espace Niemeyer – Siège du Parti communiste français, Paris, FRA (2019); La Brique, The Brick, Cărămida, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, FRA (2019); Dissolve into a red dwarf, Islands, Brussels, BEL (2017); The Encyclopedic Palace, La Biennale di Venezia, ITA (2013); Stefan Bertalan, Muzeul de Artă, Timișoara, ROM (2012, solo exhibition); The Self-Punishing One, Mogosoaia Palace, Muzeul de Artă, Timișoara, The Bánffy Palace, Cluj, ROM, and Neuklosterburg, AUT (2009, with Florin Mitroi and Ion Grigorescu).

# Small Gallery

1–4
Untitled, ca 1970–1980
Slides
Exhibition copies
Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

# ········



Untitled, 1988 Ink and felt-tip pen on paper  $41,4 \times 29,7$  cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 19b

Untitled, 1988 Ink and felt-tip pen on paper 47,9 × 37,9 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 20

Untitled, 1986 Coloured crayon on paper 48 × 38 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Sunt un artist fractal / I'm a Fractal Artist, 1994 Ball pen on paper 29 × 42 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 22

Die Fractale Geometrie eines Baums, 1986/1991/1993 Gouache, charcoal, chalk pencil and pencil on paper  $65 \times 49,7 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Eiche, 1975 Photographies (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 24

In the Forest, 1977 Ink, felt-tip pen and coloured crayon on paper Double page 32,5 × 46 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Meine Kindheit, 1987 Gouache, ink, oil crayon and charcoal  $72,5 \times 50,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Der Sinn der Welt (Descoperă sensul vieții), 1986-87 Ink and pastel on paper  $65,5 \times 50,5$  cm Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

Untitled, 1985 Charcoal, chalk and ball pen on paper  $42 \times 29,5 \text{ cm}$ 

Untitled, 1986 Charcoal on paper  $42 \times 29,5 \text{ cm}$ 

# 9c

Untitled, 1985 Charcoal on paper  $42 \times 29,5 \text{ cm}$ 

# 9d

Untitled, 1985 Charcoal on paper  $42 \times 29,5 \text{ cm}$ 

# 9a-d:

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 10a

Installation im Jagdwald, 1976 Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 10b

Spinnennetz, 1977 Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 11a

Untitled, 1977 Felt-tip pen, India ink, fountain pen and pencil on paper Double page each 50 × 35 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

The apricot tree from the front of the house (Caisul din fata casei), 1977 Ink on paper  $50 \times 70 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

*Membrane 1–3,* 1976 Photography (Exhibition copy) 20 × 30 cm Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 13a

Untitled, n.d. Ink on paper Double page each 25 × 35 cm

# 13b

Untitled, n.d. Ink on paper  $30 \times 42 \text{ cm}$ 

# 13c

Untitled, n.d. Ink on paper 30 × 42 cm

## 13d

Nukleinsäuren, n.d. Ink on paper 42 × 30 cm

# 13e

Nukleinsäuren, n.d. Ink on paper 42 × 30 cm

# 13a-e:

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Nukleïnsäuren (Bohnenkeimung), o. J. Pencil on paper 46 × 32,5 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Relatie formala zugleich aus Symbol / Formal Relation zugleich aus Symbol, o. J. Ink and pencil on paper  $35 \times 50$  cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Untitled, 1976 Felt-tip pen, pencil and ballpoint pen on paper  $70 \times 51 \times 4$  cm (framed) Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Untitled, 1966 Charcoal on paper Double page each 35 × 50 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Play of the Clouds 2 & 3 (Jocul norilor 2 & 3),1977 Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Cane I, II, III (Trestie I, II, III), 1975-77 30 × 24 cm Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Structures - Cane (Structuri - Trestii),1977 Ink on paper 40 × 20 cm Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 21a

Untitled, 1975-1976 Charcoal on millimetre paper  $34 \times 48$  cm

# 21b

Untitled, 1975-1976 Kohle auf Millimeterpapier 34 × 48 cm

# 21c

Untitled, 1975-1976 Charcoal on millimetre paper 34 × 48 cm

# 21a-c:

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Philippinen Pinatubo Vulkan, 1972/1987/1991 Charcoal, ball pen, marker pen and pencil on paper Double page 38,5 × 56,6 cm and 56,6 × 38,5 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Untitled (zborul) / Untitled (the flight), 1972 Pencil on paper  $44.5 \times 59.5 \times 3.5 \text{ cm (framed)}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Starflügel, 1978 Photographies (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 24b

Untitled, ca. 1970-1980 Photo reproductions of slides (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Arctium lappa, 1987 Felt-tip pen, ink and gouache on paper  $30 \times 40 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 26

Sunflower, 1980 Chalk, felt-tip pen, watercolour  $46.3 \times 65.3 \times 4 \text{ cm (framed)}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

and graphite on paper and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Sunflower I (Planta de floarea soarelui),1979 24 × 18 cm Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Sonnenblumenperformance Bukarest, Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Detail (Detaliu), n.d. Photographies (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

# Untitled (Sun Flower), 1980/1994

Coloured crayon and opaque white on coloured Paper  $70 \times 50 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Sunflower, 1978 Watercolour, coloured crayon and felt-tip pen on paper  $50 \times 32,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Faza I - Luminarea la chip a bolții / Phase I - The Lightening of the Face of the Canopy, Watercolour, coloured crayon and

felt-tip pen on paper  $46,3 \times 32,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# Lumina de pretutindeni - Atitudinea / The Surrounding Light - The Attitude, 1979

Watercolour, felt-tip pen and wax crayon on paper  $50,2 \times 32,6$  cm

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris, Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# **Cabinets**

Casa de piatră / Stone House, 1975 Felt-tip pen and pencil on paper 30 × 42 cm

Untitled (Drumul ce duce dela c. de piatră / The way that leads to the stone house), Pencil on paper 30 × 42 cm

Untitled (C. de piatră / Stone house), 1975 Pencil on paper 30 × 42 cm

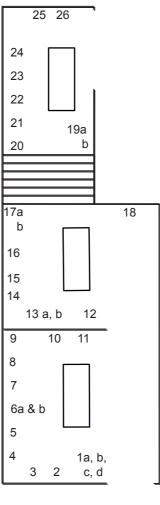
Untitled (C. de piatră / Stone house), 1975 Pencil on paper 30 × 42 cm

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Untitled, ca. 1970-1980 Photo reproductions of slides (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Kartoffelexperiment, 1977 Photographies (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# Cabinets



Untitled, (Germminated Potato), 1980-1982 Charcoal on paper 26 × 21 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Bohnen, 1972-1976 Photographies (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan and Lecca Collection, Munich

# 6a & b

Onion (Ceapa), 1976 Ink on paper each 35 × 50 cm Loans: Lecca Collection, Munich

Regressum ad via allum cepa / Return to Onion, 1985 Charcoal on paper  $43 \times 30,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Regressus ad alium cepa / Return to Onion, 1985 Charcoal on paper 42 × 30 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

Zwiebel, 1974-1977 Photography (Exhibition copie) Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/ Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 10

Untitled, ca. 1970-1980 Photo reproductions of slides (Exhibition copies) Courtesy: Lecca Collection, Munich

Untitled (Cabbage), 1981 Red chalk, felt-tip pen and ink on paper 46 × 32,5 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 12

Untitled, n.d. Watercolour and ink on paper and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 13a

Knospe, 1989 Pencil, watercolour and ink on cardboard 54.8 × 24.8 cm

Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 13b

Selbstbildnis zum Frühjahr/Self-Portrait on Spring, 1986/1988 Ink and pencil on paper  $55 \times 30,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 14

Untitled, 1988 Gouache, ink, felt-tip pen and ball pen on paper 48 × 38 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

selbt-bedauern/mitleid, 1980 Pencil and ball pen on paper  $50 \times 35 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

CATHARTIC RELASE FROM SELF-PITY.

Untitled, n.d.

Watercolour on paper on cardboard  $65,3 \times 49,6 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 17a

Society Exploited human (Societate Omul manipulate), 1979 Watercolour ink on paper 46 × 42 cm Loan: Lecca Collection, Munich

# 17b

Untitled, n.d. (1979?) Felt-tip pen on paper  $41,5 \times 29,5 \text{ cm}$ Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

# 18

Untitled, n.d. Charcoal and watercolour on paper on canvas on cardboard 89 × 67 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul and The Estate of Stefan Bertalan

62 × 44 cm Loan: Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul