

The exhibition *BODY CHECK. Martin Kippenberger—Maria Lassnig* ventures an unexpected encounter: it is the first to confront the works of these two influential protagonists of twentieth-century painting with each other. Both artists undertake a searching painterly examination of their own physical existence. The frail and fragmented body serves them as a metaphor for social and psychological conflict. Pain and suffering, absurdity and humor are inextricably interwoven in these studies of the flesh. Maria Lassnig and Martin Kippenberger sought to cast the maladies of human life into artistic form by dramatizing the female and male bodies. Their theatrical creations are self-portraits in the classical sense, but without the air of heroism which is a hallmark of the genre. Both reveal their disfigurements and the ravages of illness in depictions that are alternately mocking and self-pitying—but never fall for the trope of the eminent artist and his traditional attitudes. The results are touching self-explorations; in Lassnig's works, they take on an aspect of obsession and introversion as she wrestles with the theme of the artist's role, framing what we can recognize today as a feminist perspective. Kippenberger's paintings, sculptures, and drawings signal a sense of humor that complements Lassnig's wit with a note of inscrutable grotesquerie. The exhibition is arranged to initiate intimate conversations between about one hundred selected works on loan from international collections that are rarely on public display. A dialogue commences that reveals intersections and shared concerns as well as differences between the artist's approaches to the theme of the body.

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