

Press Release

2 x KIPPENBERGER: Museum Folkwang and Villa Hügel present the work of Martin Kippenberger in two exhibitions

Essen, 1 October – From 7 February to 2 May 2021 Museum Folkwang and Villa Hügel will be showcasing the work of artist Martin Kippenberger. Kippenberger's rarely shown masterpiece *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'* will be on display in Museum Folkwang's large exhibition hall in the impressive dimensions of its "original version" from 1994. Meanwhile, Villa Hügel will present his artist books and posters in the exhibition *Forgotten Interior Design Problems at Villa Hügel*. Both exhibitions will open to the public on 6 February 2021.

The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika' is one of Martin Kippenberger's key works. He spent three years planning, researching and producing this piece, in which he integrated works by numerous other artists, including Cosima von Bonin, Ulrich Strothjohann, Tony Oursler, Jason Rhodes, Diedrich Diederichsen and Michel Würthle. The large-scale installation with the dimensions of a sporting arena refers to the final chapter of Franz Kafka's incomplete novel *Amerika*. Its theme is the individual's experience of having to make one's way in the face of a foreign and alienating society. Kafka's character, the young Karl Roßmann, is sent to America by his parents and has to try to make it on his own until one day he encounters the great "Nature Theater of Oklahoma". Whether his hope for a better life is eventually fulfilled remains unanswered both in Kafka's unfinished work and in Kippenberger's piece – despite the "happy ending" in its title.

Kippenberger translated Kafka's literary vision into a three-dimensional image that is both an arena and an exhibition. Fifty chair-and-table ensembles – including icons of furniture design, found objects, and some of his own artistic objects – conjure the image of an improvised, outdoor open-plan office as the scene of numerous job interviews taking place simultaneously. Between individual mythology and incisive social analysis, the installation unfurls Kippenberger's unique artistic cosmos like no other of his works and confronts the viewer with current social questions regarding the mechanisms of integration, repression and power.

Forgotten Interior Design Problems at Villa Hügel will showcase around 120 books and 140 posters created by Martin Kippenberger between 1979 and 1997. The title is borrowed from an exhibition by Kippenberger, which was shown at Villa Merkel in Esslingen in 1996. Kippenberger's artist books will be on display in the historical library on the ground floor of Villa Hügel. For the duration of the exhibition, Kippenberger's experimental, highly distinct and sometimes provocative books will stand in striking contrast to the classic book collection of the impressive library of the Krupp family. The poster exhibition in the former living quarters located on the first floor will focus mostly on different forms of self-representation by the artist, as well as his position within the network of his artist friends. The books and posters on display belong to Museum Folkwang's collection, which has been considerably expanded in recent years thanks to the generous support of the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation.

Martin Kippenberger (1953–1997) was one of the most important artists of the late 20th century. The wide range of artistic media and materials he used – from painting and sculpture, drawing, photography and performance to posters and books – is as impressive as the biting irony

and analytical incisiveness often present in his works, which made him a close observer of social and political phenomena.

Martin Kippenberger grew up in Essen, where his father worked as a mine manager and his mother as a doctor. The family regularly visited Museum Folkwang and Villa Hugel. This art-loving household was an early source of inspiration for Kippenberger's later artistic work, which contains numerous allusions and hidden references to his childhood and adolescence in Essen and the Ruhr region.

Villa Hugel is owned by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation, which has been supporting exhibitions about historical topics and showcasing contemporary issues and artists at the Villa for years. Along with science, education, sport and health, art and culture are among the main areas sponsored by the non-profit foundation, which made a significant contribution to the Martin Kippenberger exhibition.

The exhibition at Museum Folkwang is supported by the Kunststiftung NRW.

2 x KIPPENBERGER

The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika' (at Museum Folkwang)

Forgotten Interior Design Problems at Villa Hugel (at Villa Hugel)

7 February – 2 May 2021

Press conference: Thursday, 4 February 2021

10:30 a.m. at Museum Folkwang, followed by a visit to the exhibition at Villa Hugel.

Joint opening: Saturday, 6 February 2021

Martin Kippenberger (in the installation
The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'), 1994
Photo: Wubbo de Jong / MAI (Maria Austria Instituut)

