

## **Exhibition**

### **Christian Ludwig Attersee**

June 19th to September 6th, 1986

Neue Galerie of the City of Linz

In coordination with and timed to match Ars Electronica, which this year takes place in June for the first time, the Neue Galerie of the City of Linz shows a comprehensive exhibition of the painter and graphic artist Christian Ludwig Attersee from June 19th to September 6th.

Due to important exhibitions in museums \* and contributions to biennale festivals, the artist has gained international reputation in the last years, which in turn emphasizes his position as a sufficiently integrated outsider of the scene. His individualism, his sculptural ingenuity and his artistic versatility capture a heterogeneous and large public for his work, which in spite of its artificial pretension smoothly blends art and life.

The versatile painter, graphic artist, object maker, commercial printing artist and occasional photographer (various series of self-portraits prove this), who quite frequently also presents himself as parodying singer, piano player and cabaret-type ad-hoc actionist—once he got past his beginnings which were influenced from different sides but never lacked originality—since about a dozen of years has found his own, unmistakable style making use of the potential of painting as well as of drawing and which, due to the continuous development of very specific abilities and views, underlines the artist's position as prominent outsider of the international scene.

Attersee was born in Bratislava in 1940, grew up in Linz and in Upper Austria and now lives in Vienna (with a second home at St. Martin/Raab, Burgenland). The artist exhausts and emphasizes with great virtuosity a rich store of emotional and often ambiguous associations and fantasies creating—in spite of all his being an outsider—a very Austrian view and synopsis of things. In its tendency towards sexual persiflage and thematic banality his work substantially takes into account their fascination and the sculptural techniques and media.

Christian Ludwig Attersee is a poet making rich use of association, a borderland artist between fantasy and reality, who in the final analysis of his rather critical and collectively relevant drawings and paintings touches on conditions and symptoms with which we all are daily confronted. If we called him Herzmanovsky-Orlando or our times the description might fit, but to be exact, might even define him too narrowly, and frequently be found wanting. The relevance of his extreme subjectivity, which is present in the idiosyncratic features of his style of painting and drawing as well as in the thematic interlinkings and caprioles of his works, lies in his adequate artistic translation of a highly complex social situation certainly not lacking in absurdities. In this respect Attersee has started early to put forward his sculptural marginalia and squibs with clowesque pungency.

The sexual symbolism developed by Attersee, which in its artificiality and grotesquerie conveys the impression of detached engagement in the sense of the "depressive cheerfulness" formulated by Peter Grosen, corresponds to a meanwhile well proved reality and urgency. The symptomatic with which the artist has found his role and his conception of this role, with which he questions artistic standards, styles and trends, touches on taboos and answers with an imagery all too obviously oriented on its outward appearances, which gaily, daringly and with witty, baroque aggressiveness refers to the trivialities and to the behaviour of a society which meanwhile clearly tends to react in an alternative way, of course is rather an ally of vital poetry than of pure intellect and speculative ratio, both of which are unknown to Attersee.

The accessibility of Attersee's work, which with the spontaneous expressivity of a highly associative ambivalent imagery also holds an important forerunner position in the late and latest development of art history in this country, still today—after a discernible peak of

artistic consolidation and individualization within the last stage of his work—is disturbed by creative difficulties and insecurities: a fact which in consequence is proof and guaranty for a further development which permits the translation of the original talents of a narcissistically disposed ego—as was the case up to now—from group of works to group of works into an imagery which is not only intent on variation but also on enriching expansion and which in a refreshing way undoubtedly hints at social conditions.

Peter Baum