

## **Start of the “Alte Freunde” exhibition series**

### **Drago j. Prelog**

In the triangular, special exhibitions room, during the season changing retrospectives will be held that will present artists (“Old Friends”) with whom Herbert Liaunig has enjoyed amicable ties that have been maintained for over 50 years, from the beginning of his collecting activities until the present day. The “Alte Freunde” series will commence with Drago j. Prelog (1 May – 26 June 2016), who Eva und Herbert Liaunig met in the 1960s and through whose connections they obtained access to the many artists in the orbit of the “Zum roten Apfel” and “Nächst St. Stephan” galleries in Vienna. The friendships established at that time mark the launch and provide the foundations of the Liaunig collection of contemporary Austrian art, which Herbert Liaunig already started to acquire during his student days.

The Liaunig collection contains seminal works from all the creative phases of Drago j. Prelog, who was born in 1939 in Celje, Slovenia and grew up in Upper Styria. By means of selected pieces, the exhibition, which has been curated by Peter Liaunig, demonstrates the enormous diversity and clearly defined development phases in the multifaceted oeuvre of the artist. This includes drawings, paintings and prints and can be divided into four independent work phases.

Having finished a course in the Decorative Painting Department of the Graz School of Arts and Crafts, in 1958 Prelog started studies at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts under Albert Paris Gütersloh. The “QUR-AN” manuscript, which was completed in just six weeks during the same year using a cryptology developed by the artist, already indicates Prelog’s fascination with lettering and lines that had begun during his childhood.

From these student years at the end of the 1950s, during which the artist approached the implementation and depiction of lines, strokes and characters in a variety of ways, there are early, block-like life drawings next to abstract, central formations inspired by Wols and Rainer, which consist of underlying and superimposed lines. Prelog also experimented with various materials, comprised frequently by used and crumpled paper. Collages resulted that subsequently led to the development of his tapestries.

From 1960 onwards, Prelog filled his picture grounds with marks in lines and abstract typographic characters that extend down to a free bottom area, which provides an insight into the underlying, structured material. These works marked the beginning of a scriptural work phase that lasted a decade and which forms one of the focal points of the exhibition. A concentrated, meditative working methodology resulted in increasingly dense, multi-layered images, which in a subsequent development phase, the artist interrupts and reopens. This process also involves the use of powerful colours, initially in a horizontal and later, in a vertical direction. At the start of the 1970s, these “openings” led to the representational “bomb and explosion” pictures in which the

typographic characters of the scriptural phase are increasingly pushed into the background. Initial topographic and landscape-architectonic pieces follow and include maps and images of mountains, as well the “towers of St. Stephen’s” that were extrapolated from motifs of the Cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna and for which Prelog employs both graphic and painterly elements.

Having overcome a creative crisis, in 1975 Prelog developed an independent group of works called the “circulatory pictures”. During their production the artist laid the pictorial ground on a table and then approached it from all four sides, which for him were of equal importance. He then applied lines, frequently with several pencils in one hand, using his left-hand as a right-hander and also employing a remote controlled toy car, or a syringe, in order to lend chance adequate space within his working process.

In 1986, the artist then created “Prelography”. In these “skin and scale” images, Prelog again played with the principles of randomisation, using stencils and Iris printing on pictures and prints to produce structures in graduated colours that are reminiscent of snakeskin.

In later work phases, Prelog continually returns to individual elements from past creative periods and combines them in new images. However, the line is and remains the determining element in his oeuvre.

A richly illustrated catalogue with an introduction by Dieter Ronte accompanies this Museum Liaunig retrospective.

The “Alte Freunde” series of exhibitions, which begins with the personal development of Drago j. Prelog, will continue with shows of Hans Staudacher (2 July – 28 August 2016) and Josef Mikl (3 September – 30 October 2016).

Special exhibition “Alte Freunde“: Drago j. Prelog  
May 1 to October 30, 2016 · Museum Liaunig · 9155 Neuhaus/Suha 41 · Austria  
[www.museumliaunig.at](http://www.museumliaunig.at) · [office@museumliaunig.at](mailto:office@museumliaunig.at) · 0043/4356/211 15  
Wednesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm · guided tours at 11 am and 2 pm

## PRESS PHOTOS



Drago j. Prelog

Ohne Titel, 1964

Ohne Titel, 23.11.1967

Blaugrüner Steffl, 1971

Im Zeichen der Schlange, 1975 and 1986

Quadratnest im Winter, 2015

Exhibition views with throne (also called "Bauern-Schwitters"), 1976

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