

## Arnulf Rainer

### *Ex nihilo*

17 March – 7 May 2022

Opening on Thursday 17 March  
From 11am to 7pm

13 rue de Téhéran  
75008 Paris



Untitled, 2015/16  
Acrylic and chalk on paper mounted on wood, 52 x 37 cm

The Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer is renowned for his “coverings” – works created through drawing and painting over his own canvases and those of others. Over his six-decade-long career, he has layered brushstrokes over existing artworks to highlight, protect or erase underlying motifs in an iconoclastic gesture. His new exhibition, which assembles around 40 paintings from the ‘*Ex-Nihilo*’ series (2015 and 2016) continues Rainer’s research. The white background of the paintings can merely provide a hint to the observer of what lies beneath. “What has absolutely disappeared becomes the content of the painting,” the artist says.

This series reveals a new departure in Rainer’s oeuvre, as the gesture made to execute the paintings was more focused on wrist movements than large arm movements. What also distinguishes these new works is that they have been realized in smaller formats than the large formats for which the artist is known. The change of scale nevertheless retains a power of expression, the spatial organization of the canvases being characterized by the superposition and juxtaposition of large, slender forms and plays of transparency.

According to Corinna Thierolf, former director of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and author of the catalogue text accompanying the exhibition, this “quasi-verticality of these features makes us feel the unshakeable physical presence of the painter in the face of the placeless void.”

In Austria in the 1950s, Arnulf Rainer developed a particularly obsessive way of drawing and painting. In 1951, with the artist Maria Lassnig, he visited André Breton in Paris. His work, initially influenced by surrealism, evolved towards a sort of informal, radical art. In the early 1960s, he worked on his own image, furiously modifying photo booth shots, photographic self-portraits where he adopted deliberately grotesque poses. He thus became one of the main protagonists of Viennese Actionism. Then overpainting (Übermalung) became his trademark: his works are made from successive layers of paint that cover an initial image, sometimes to such an extent that it is no longer visible. This is not just a simple game, but a sort of intense ritual mobilising all the painter’s energy.

The *Ex nihilo* exhibition gathers the most recent paintings from the artist, today aged 92. A series of prints is also displayed at the bookstore. The catalogue is introduced by Corinna Thierolf, former director of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich.

Arnulf Rainer was born in 1929 in Baden (Austria) where a museum dedicated to his work opened in 2009. He lives and works in Austria and Tenerife.

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