

MIRIAM CAHN CREATURE

17.09 – 05.11.2015

From 17th September to 5th November 2015, Drawing Room will show the first solo exhibition of Miriam Cahn in Hamburg. Cahn's first public work *mein frausein ist mein öffentlicher teil* (being a woman is my public part), which she realized in winter 1979/80 in a nocturnal action as charcoal graffiti on the walls and columns beneath the newly constructed highway on the edge of the city of Basel, made her suddenly renowned.

This sensational beginning on the north bypass was quickly followed by Cahn's participation in many important exhibitions. In 1982 she was invited to take part in documenta 7, however she withdrew her works because she was not happy with the hanging. In 1984, Miriam Cahn represented Switzerland at the Biennale in Venice. In the 90s she sank into oblivion. However, some years ago Miriam Cahn's expressive work was rediscovered and she has since received one award after another (Basler Kunstpreis, 2013, Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis, 2014). Yet she has still remained true to herself and the nature of her work.



Miriam Cahn's motifs are humans, houses, animals, plants, landscapes, sometimes in glowing, bright colours, at other times in gloomy hues of grey. The works deal with emotions, violence, love, rejection. Her concentrated, impulsive method of working is reflected in her expressive painterly style. The figures are often surrounded by a shadowy strip of colour, which creates an intense atmosphere, like a diffuse, transitional zone between the creatures and the colourful, non-figurative background. These glowing body-aureolas flow into the surrounding area, charging it with energy.

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Adam Szymczyk (artistic director of documenta 14) describes Cahn's work aptly as "profound, radical and uncompromising". Her calling, according to Szymczyk, is to "portray the unportrayable" and to take a stand against "the unspeakable and against the act of forgetting." Miriam Cahn is a committed fighter for life, an artist with a seemingly inexhaustible will to create. Her works are narratives that can be defined between drawing and painting.

In her work, Miriam Cahn deals with the processing of the significant themes in the aftermath of the Second World War: the Holocaust, the battle against war and atomic overkill, as well as for women's rights. Hence the Swiss artist, born in 1949, was very much a child of her time. Yet her

drawings from the work series "Sarajevo", which deal with the suffering caused by genocide, flight and displacement during the Bosnian War at the beginning of the 90s, is now again highly topical in the light of the current refugee catastrophes



worldwide. In this system-critical furore, which exposes the despair over what people do to other people, Miriam Cahn is never too explicit, despite her concrete representation. The tendency towards understatement in her work titles, in connection with the associations prompted by what has been compellingly painted, allow her works to first unfold their full impact in the mind of the viewer. This interaction with the human counterpart, her plea in favour of all things living, is a deeply humanistic work. This is because for Miriam Cahn, all natural phenomena have a soul, every creature is worthy of protection, whether animal, human or plant.

Translation: Gillian Morris

Miriam Cahn, born in 1949 in Basel. 1968-1973 Grafikfachklasse Gewerbeschule Basel. 1978/79 Studio of the city of Basel in Paris. 1985 DAAD Scholarship Berlin. 1985-1989 Resident in Berlin. Various prizes and awards, including: 1998 Käthe Kollwitz Prize Berlin, 2001 Preis der Stiftung für grafische Kunst in der Schweiz, 2005 Meret Oppenheim Prize. 1982 documenta 7 in Kassel, 1984 Venice Biennale, 1986 Biennale in Sydney. The artist currently lives and works in Bergell / Graubünden.