

Michael Werner 4 East 77 New York New York 10075

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A.R. PENCK

5 October 1939 - 2 May 2017

It is with great sadness that Michael Werner Gallery announces the death of Ralf Winkler, known as A.R. Penck. The artist, who was 77, died 2 May 2017 in Zürich.

A.R. Penck was one of the most internationally celebrated artists to emerge from post-war Germany, known for his politically-charged, pictographic imagery. He was part of a generation of post-war German artists including Markus Lüpertz, Georg Baselitz and Jörg Immendorff and his influence can be seen in many contemporary artists working today.

Born Ralf Winkler in Dresden in 1939, A.R. Penck displayed prodigious artistic talent from an early age. He lived in East-Berlin and upon being denied admission from the Association of Artists of the GDR was forced to develop his artistry independently. In 1968, he adopted the pseudonym A.R. Penck (a name chosen after the geologist and glacial research scientist Albrecht Penck) to counter persistent difficulties with East-German authorities who had essentially banned the artist's works from public exhibition.

Starting in the early 1960s, A.R. Penck developed a pictorial vocabulary he called "Standart", deriving from language, mathematics and cybernetics. He used this concept to address social, economic, and political situations. With the aid of friends in West-Germany - notably Michael Werner, whose eponymous gallery has represented the artist since the 60s - A.R. Penck smuggled works to Cologne, gaining his first exposure outside of the repressed East-German state. His work garnered immediate attention. Although he was unable to travel outside of the GDR, his first solo museum exhibition occurred in 1971 at Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld. The following year he participated in documenta 5 and would go on to contribute major works to three subsequent stagings of this important international survey exhibition.

In 1975, though still a citizen of East-Germany, A.R. Penck was awarded the prestigious Will Grohmann Prize of the Academy of Arts in West-Berlin. In 1977, A.R. Penck underwent what he called a "crisis," which, following the East-German government's earlier discovery of his pseudonym in 1973, finally resulted in his emigration to West-Germany in 1980.

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A.R. Penck's career spanned more than five decades during which he worked ceaselessly in painting and sculpture and as a writer and musician. He was a major figure in the groundbreaking exhibitions *Zeitgeist* (Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 1982) and *New Art* (Tate, London, 1983), events that confirmed his status as one of the most important, groundbreaking and internationally revered artists.

He has presented numerous solo exhibitions worldwide including Kunsthalle Bern; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, is currently presenting *Rites de Passage*, a major retrospective on view through 18 June.

A.R. Penck's works are in public and private collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate London, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Neue National Galerie Berlin, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. He is survived by his wife and children.

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