

# Arnulf Rainer bends Color

30 April until 18 June 2016

Reception on Sunday 29 May, 11 – 12.30 pm in the presence of  
Arnulf Rainer, Rudi Fuchs and Ina van Zyl

For this exhibition Ina van Zyl made a selection of the work by Arnulf Rainer and wrote the following text.

## At the End of the Rainbow

Arnulf Rainer has an immense palette. With this I'm not only thinking of his varied use of color, but also of the wide range of materials that he uses and the diverse ways in which paint or drawing implements are employed.

This freedom is something I greatly admire about his artistic approach. All the more, perhaps, because an artist doesn't get that far with freedom alone. The point, after all, is to arrive – within that freedom – at the highest level of concentration, and this requires a great deal of energy. By limiting the freedom of choice, many – and that certainly includes myself –

are actually more able to find the required focus. Rainer, on the other hand, allows himself everything and yet still manages to reach the peak of concentration.

My first acquaintance with the art of Arnulf Rainer involved worked-on photographs of himself. I encountered them in a book; the photographs gave the impression of being *mutilated*. They had an enormous appeal to me, and I could identify with the expression, their sense of wild abandon.



2012, ink wash, acrylic on paper, 50 x 35 cm

Voiced in them was a combination of disgust, discord, helplessness, self-effacement and humor. They were very direct and seemed to have come about in a fairly uncomplicated way. Not until later did I find out that these works make up only a small part of Rainer's oeuvre.



2014, acrylic on paper, 42 x 30 cm



undated, acrylic on paper, 42 x 30 cm

The drawings from which I've been able to make a selection have a completely different appearance, more tranquil. With the exception of the small black works from the series 'Reste' (*zugemalte Übermalungen 1953-1978*), they were produced during a later period (2006-2014). Although these works are calmer, they are just as direct and probing; strong in their liveliness, presence and aura. The drawings are composed of various layers. It's as though each work promises – with each layer – access to something that lies behind it. Sometimes a color comes into view, while in other places the texture remains more impenetrable. All of this has a mysterious playfulness, which can almost be called cunning.

Rainer once wrote that he had the notion that nude ladies in paintings or sculptures were looking at him in a 'very friendly' way or were, at other times, 'teasingly' playing hide and



2012, acrylic on paper, 50 x 35 cm



2012, acrylic on paper, 50 x 35 cm

seek with him. The latter is what I experience on observing these drawings: beneath the surface there's something seductive that you can't quite get at, like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Some drawings are ecstatic with color. They make me think of flowers or a summer scene: summer dress, bright day, beautiful woman laughing. The vividly colored, transparent layers in these drawings bring to mind transparent petals of flowers, a transparent blouse or skirt. Or the veils of paint in Rainer's own *Overpaintings*. Similarly, the 'keyhole motif' and the 'leg motif' are, to me, soft echoes from Rainer's own body of work. Resonating in the more harsh 'scratchings' are aggression and disturbance, which also make up part of his palette.

Black is the color most often associated with death, but in Rainer's work black is something extremely lively. In nature I discern that very quality with dark, black water; I have a particular fondness for this. Also in the black drawings, he applies many layers on top of each other. When you look at these works with floodlighting, you can see that – as a result of the underlying layers – a texture emerges. Sometimes these underlying marks seem to have been made in a color, but the order in which the layers have been applied is not always clear.

The small black works from the series 'Reste' (*zugemalte Übermalungen 1953-1978*) are like little blocks of concentration. They could almost be called *desperate*, as though life itself depends on them. About the series Rainer himself has said: 'My ideal is the utterly dark picture, pregnant with an overwhelming silence.' These little paintings are just as rich in black as some drawings are rich in color. Alongside each other in a single space, the black works virtually come across as *negatives* of the colorful drawings. On seeing photo negatives I'm always struck by a kind of disbelief: how is it possible that these small dark pieces of film contain all the information of a shimmering, colorful image? A similar kind of astonishment affects me on seeing 'Reste': color and representation are gone, and yet every bit of that is present. Rainer's work is distant, but warm and inviting at the same time. It's a contrast that I cherish and that has guided me in selecting his drawings.

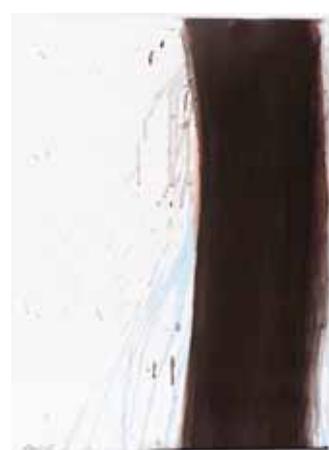
Ina van Zyl

translation: Beth O'Brien

In connection with this exhibition a publication has been published which consists of two booklets: Rudi Fuchs, *Arnulf Rainer bends Color* and Ina van Zyl, *At the End of the Rainbow*



undated, oil on photo on aluminium, 27 x 20 cm



from left to right: 2009/10, 2009/10, 2011, 2006, acrylic on paper, 59 x 42 cm