

Mapping the 60s

Art Histories from the mumok Collections

The 1960s were a watershed era shaped by radical social, political, aesthetic, and intellectual upheavals: the civil rights movement and student revolts, anti-colonial liberation struggles and protests against the Vietnam War, emancipation and the global triumph of pop culture and consumer society, rapid technological and media progress. The enduring, growing impact of transformations during that decade are still felt today. At times, the demands and strategies adopted in contemporary anti-racist and feminist struggles, such as Black Lives Matter or #metoo, directly reference those earlier emancipatory movements. Many of the current discussions and debates about war, mediatization, technology, consumerism, and capitalism likewise have their roots in the 1960s.

From the perspective of art history, it is virtually impossible to overstate the significance of the 1960s. In Western countries in particular, Pop Art addressed the consequences of a society increasingly focused on consumption and mediated by the mass media. Fluxus, Happenings and Nouveau Réalisme bid farewell to the conventional art object and postulated a new relationship to reality; in performance works, the body took center-stage, while process-based and material-driven practices finally left the conventional concept of art far behind, giving precedence instead to procedures, instructions, and actions. Against the backdrop of the enormous political and social sea-changes of this decade, systemic questions were also raised in the visual arts, established mechanisms and power structures were criticized, and there were resounding calls for a new beginning.

The 1960s are also central to mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, albeit for entirely different reasons. The museum was opened in 1962 as the Museum of the Twentieth Century – and at the time was the only art museum in Austria dedicated exclusively to contemporary art. The acquisitions from this period form the basis of the mumok collection. However, the Peter and Irene Ludwig Collection and the Wolfgang Hahn Collection, which significantly extended the museum's inventory in 1979, also give pride of place to artistic trends of the 1960s.

As a presentation of the collection, *Mapping the 60s* concentrates on the various new beginnings and upheavals that shaped this period, tracking down their traces within mumok's holdings. In the spirit of the mapping cited in the title, i.e. cartography and surveying, the exhibits on display are contextualized within the setting in which they came into being. Key exhibitions and events of the 1960s are referenced, while in a further strand exemplary publications from this period turn the spotlight on significant discursive connections. This makes it possible to hone in on various aspects of that era as if setting them under a magnifying glass. Historical nodes of overlapping and intersecting socio-political concerns, aesthetic currents, and differing approaches are rendered visible – existing simultaneously, entering into exchanges yet also in opposition one to another.

Exhibition levels -2 and -3

Exhibition level -4 with Fluxus, Happening, Vienna Actionism and Nouveau Réalisme will open in December.

Kurator*innen | Curators: Manuela Ammer, Marianne Dobner, Heike Eipeldauer, Naoko Kaltschmidt, Matthias Michalka, Franz Thalmair

Ausstellungstexte | Exhibition Texts: Dominikus Müller

Ausstellungsarchitektur | Exhibition Architecture: Wilfried Kuehn

Ausstellungsmanagement | Exhibition Management: Dagmar Steyrer, Chiara Juchem

Diese Ausstellung wurde aus Mitteln der Peter und Irene Ludwig Stiftung finanziert.

This exhibition was funded by the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation.

After years in which abstraction held sway, in the late 1950s artists turned their attention back to representational art, in the process encountering a contemporary reality in Western countries that was defined by an economic upturn, burgeoning consumerism, and all-encompassing mass media. In the context of Pop Art, images were now thematized as media-mediated material that circulated in newspapers, magazines and, above all, on television.

Whereas Pop Art initially engaged with the sleek surfaces of the brave new world of commodities, advertising, and the associated structures of desire, during the 1960s it turned its gaze on the cracks in the façade of prosperity, fault lines within society, and the dark flipside of progress – sensationalism, violence, racism. However, Pop Art did not address these issues with a stance of outright opposition, instead always remaining aware that it formed part of precisely the media-oriented, economic, and social dispositive that it reflected.

In the early 1960s, Andy Warhol turned his attention to violence and death in US society in what was known as his Disaster series. He relied on press photos – in *Orange Car Crash* (1963), which is shown here, an image of a car accident – and thus focused in particular on how media representations of cruel and violent events. The accident remains catastrophic, yet occurs on the same media level as the glittering depictions of stars and celebrities that Warhol in parallel found so fascinating. Death and violence are rendered visible as fundamental components of a society fixated on consumerism, the media, and progress.

Against the backdrop of the increasingly bitterly contested Vietnam War, a sculpture like Douane Hanson's *Football Vignette* from 1969 does not address the presence of physical violence and brutality in US society directly but instead encodes it, in the form of three figures playing American football, frozen in motion in this depiction of a quintessentially American sport. Finally, Robert Indiana's *Love Rising / Black and White Love (For Martin Luther King)* from 1968 is a statement against incessant racism and picks up on one of the critical defining events of US history in the 1960s: the assassination of Black civil rights activist Martin Luther King.

Criticism of Pop Art, which was also accused at the time of being pro-consumerism and uncritical, does not do justice to the complex relationship between image, reality, and politics, as becomes particularly apparent in art such as the work by Corita Kent that has only recently entered the mumok collection. Kent, who was a Catholic nun in California for many years in the Order of the "Immaculate Heart of Mary," understood the accessible language of Pop Art and the relatively easy-to-use screen printing techniques inter alia as a means of conveying political messages to the people. Kent's often colorful works, which rely on typographic elements and texts, quote Martin Luther King or Albert Camus; in the fraught political climate of the US in the 1960s, their advocacy of collective values like responsibility, devotion and charity represents an astonishing encounter between Catholic social philosophy and the rhetoric of a hippie movement that critiqued the ethos of individual achievement and the Vietnam War.

A different relationship between art, politics and reality is rendered visible in the following room, where works by Lee Lozano are displayed alongside a work by Jo Baer. Lozano played a part in what was known as the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC); Baer was also involved in debates in circles around the AWC. In the late 1960s, the AWC demanded reforms from art institutions in New York, also advocating for greater attention to be paid to Black artists and women in the art world. Lozano, initially a painter, created a series of what she called Language Pieces with written instructions and guidelines towards the end of the 1960s. A work like *General Strike Piece* focuses on her role as an artist within the art world, although she increasingly turned her back on that context.

Aspen and 1¢ Life

To an even greater extent than books or catalogs, which are designed to be long-lasting and serve as documentation, magazines offer a cross-sectional perspective thanks to their often periodical production and focus on current events at the time of publication. They create a public realm, provide space for public opposition, depict discussions and controversies, and, given that they are intrinsically collective in nature, are always an expression of social contexts and particular scenes.

Magazines enjoyed a huge boom during the 1960s, especially in Western societies characterized by growing prosperity, rising consumption and ever-intensifying media communication. They were also an important medium for artists, with magazines' specific traits increasingly becoming the focus of attention. Against the backdrop of a general shift within art towards the mass media, magazines and publications gave artists a chance to move beyond the closed, elitist circles of museums and galleries in order to reach a broader audience.

Aspen is a prime example of this kind of magazine designed by artists. Ten issues were published at irregular intervals between 1965 and 1971; founder and editor Phyllis Johnson described the publication as a "magazine in a box", as it was made up of a number of unrelated contributions in a wide range of media, bundled together in a cardboard box. *Aspen* was thus a kind of reproducible, mobile mini-gallery – another expression of the blurring of media boundaries during that era.

Johnson gave the participating artists and authors free rein in compiling and designing the various issues. Andy Warhol and his then studio assistant, rock critic David Dalton, were for instance responsible for *Aspen 3*, published in late 1966. Pop Art, circles around Warhol's Factory, underground film, American counterculture, rock music, and the emerging Californian LSD culture came together in a box that imitates detergent packaging.

In a media-reflective vein, the *Aspen 3* box also contains the only issue of a newspaper entitled *The Plastic Exploding Inevitable*. Warhol and director Paul Morrissey organized a series of multimedia events under this title in 1966 and 1967, at which The Velvet Underground also performed. In the adjoining room, a film by Ronald Nameth documents one of these shows that played a pioneering role in use of light and media for musical stage performances.

Further issues of *Aspen* focus on various other themes and scenes. Issue no. 4 from 1967, for example, was designed by Quentin Fiore, who also produced the graphic design for the groundbreaking *The Medium is the Massage* co-published in the same year with media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Finally, issue no. 7, from 1970, addressed the art scene in the United Kingdom, bringing together pieces by Eduardo Paolozzi, David Hockney, Ian Hamilton Finlay, J. G. Ballard, as well as by Yoko Ono and John Lennon.

The *1¢ Life* portfolio, on the other hand, stems from an extraordinary collective collaboration between New York and Paris, uniting trends as diverse as Abstract Expressionism, CoBrA, and Pop Art. Shanghai-born artist and poet Walasse Ting, who had spent time in Paris before moving to New York in the 1950s, where he associated with artists like Pierre Alechinsky, Karel Appel and Asger Jorn, teamed up with the painter Sam Francis for the 1964 publication. Together, the two organized contributions from a grand total of twenty-eight artists, including Enrico Baj, Öyvind Fahlström, Allan Kaprow, Kiki Kogelnik, Joan Mitchell, Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol, and Tom Wesselmann. The artists they invited to participate often responded directly to Ting's poems, which make up a significant part of the publication. Reproductions of advertisements and postcard motifs were also incorporated into the visual program.

documenta 4

The fourth documenta was held in 1968, and the events shaping that turbulent year, with its student uprisings and demonstrations against the Vietnam War, continued to unfold against the backdrop of the “World’s Art Fair” in Kassel. In that spirit, there were repeated protests and heated discussions during the opening. The Milan Triennale and the Venice Biennale had faced similar controversies a little earlier. Artists including Jörg Immendorff and Wolf Vostell used the press conference in Kassel to critique the absence of current developments such as Fluxus, Happening and Performance in the exhibition. They lambasted documenta, perceiving it to be too close to the market and overly complacent and in addition alleging that it predominantly included works from the USA, particularly from the Pop Art context, rather than from Europe, especially West Germany. That accusation earned documenta 4 the nickname “Americana.” In fact, artists from the USA made up around one-third of the exhibition. From today’s point of view, however, it seems more striking that there were only five women among the 150 participating artists: Jo Baer, Chryssa, Marisol, Louise Nevelson, and Bridget Riley.

The sometimes fierce criticism levelled at documenta even led to a magazine being found, *Interfunktionen*: published until 1975, it developed into one of the most influential European art publications, with Friedrich W. Heubach and later Benjamin H. D. Buchloh as its editors. The first issue primarily documented reactions to documenta: a number of typewritten articles and pamphlets, correspondence, and newspaper clippings.

Despite these reactions and the antagonism expressed, documenta 4 was a great success. It was the last time that founder Arnold Bode, was at the helm of this major international art exhibition; he had launched documenta in Kassel in 1955, when the traces of World War Two were still glaringly apparent in the city. Younger members had already joined the documenta Advisory Council after a number of prominent figures from the founding phase, notably art historian Werner Haftmann, had stepped down. The artists were to be selected by a committee guided by principles of grassroots democracy and ultimately comprising twenty-six members. After the three previous editions with their largely retrospective thrust, documenta 4 also faced a changed focus content-wise. The exhibition began to concentrate solely the present, self-defining as presenting a survey of contemporary artistic production since the previous edition. That meant documenta was also increasingly perceived internationally as a “World’s Art Fair” (from today’s perspective, however, this claim is relativized) unfurling an overview of current artistic work.

Somewhat belatedly, Pop Art, particularly from the USA, arrived in Kassel, while other emerging trends such as Color Field Painting, Op Art, and Minimal Art were also shown. Furthermore, Bazon Brock organized the first “Visitors’ School” in 1968, aiming to teach the general art-loving public about contemporary art using performative and didactic means – an approach that decisively influenced the art education programs of later documenta shows. All in all, documenta 4 succeeded in connecting with contemporary and international art production, albeit at the price of abandoning a safe historical distance (however that might have been established) and ending up instead in the throes of the trench warfare emblematic of the fraught present, with all its conflicting voices and currents.

This polyphony can be readily detected in the works from the mumok collection shown here, created by artists who participated in documenta 4, for instance Öyvind Fahlström, Domenico Gnoli, Konrad Klapheck, Roy Lichtenstein, Bridget Riley, and Paul Thek. Walter Pichler’s *Fusion of Spheres (Prototype 2)* was exhibited in Kassel in 1968, on loan from the museum. Christo’s *200,000 Cubic Feet Package*, a gigantic over 85-meter-high column of air contained within synthetic fabric that became one of the documenta 4’s emblematic works, is represented here as a model.

documenta 4

A Film by Jef Cornelis

Director Jef Cornelis made more than 200 films in over 30 years that he worked for Belgian broadcaster BRT. Many addressed the visual arts, especially his initial works before the early 1970s. In 1968, Cornelis made one of his films about documenta 4 in Kassel. Many of the key players at the time have an opportunity to comment in the film, such as documenta founder Arnold Bode and Jean Leering, the young director of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, who had been appointed to the documenta Advisory Council to help rejuvenate the exhibition. In addition, the film shows art critics such as Pierre Restany, gallery owner Denise René, and curator Harald Szeemann, who was at the helm of the following documenta 5 in 1972. Above all, however, Cornelis gave artists participating a chance to have their say.

Impressions of the exhibition being set up are captured in the film along with the controversies sparked by documenta 4. In one-to-one interviews with Christo, Joseph Beuys, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Rauschenberg, Cornelis focused on some specific voices in the exhibition. These conversations with the artists also reveal their underlying approaches, methods and, in some cases, production contexts. A nuanced picture of the mood emerges, as Cornelis also captures how disgruntled some artists felt. Over and above obvious sources of strife, such as arguments about better placement and purported preferential treatment, the overarching fault lines of the era also become visible, emerging above all in relation to politicization of art. Where some advocated arguing in the narrower political sense and jockeying for position, others tended instead to deploy smoothly ironic and sometimes subtly critical affirmations.

Broader structural challenges repeatedly emerge clearly too, for instance the impossibility of defining water-tight criteria when evaluating emerging and contemporary art coupled with the ensuing precarious status of decisions to invite particular artists, the changing role played by museums, persistent criticism of certain practices as too market-friendly, and the influence of the art market more generally. Many of these points sound astonishingly topical. Cornelis' film provides a unique time document, deploying artistic production and its presentation to render the period's conflicting positions and burning issues tangible.

The Museum of the Twentieth Century in Vienna During the 1960s

On September 20th, 1962, the Museum of the 20th Century, later known as mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, opened in Vienna. At the time the museum, soon known as the “20er Haus,” was the only art institution in Austria that focused exclusively on twentieth-century art. It was housed in a functional, modernist building, originally designed by Austrian architect Karl Schwanzer as a pavilion for the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels and subsequently slightly modified for its reconstruction in the Schweizergarten in Vienna.

During the early years, the museum’s exhibition and collection policy was significantly influenced by founding director Werner Hofmann, who was at its helm until he moved to Hamburger Kunsthalle in 1969. Three years before the new museum’s official opening, Hofmann had already begun building up an appropriate collection of modern art. These acquisitions and the exhibition history for his time as director (1962–1969) display a particularly striking focus on sculpture that was quite unusual at the time.

Hofmann organized large-scale overview exhibitions of sculpture such as *Plastiken von Rodin bis heute* (Sculpture from Rodin to the Present) (1966–1967) or *Plastiken und Objekte* (Sculptures and Objects) (1968), which directed attention to international developments in sculpture, and in addition regularly showed individual presentations of Austrian sculptors such as Fritz Wotruba (1963), Rudolf Hoflehner (1963), Wander Bertoni (1964) and Roland Goeschl (1969).

From today’s perspective, however, another aspect is particularly noticeable: the glaring absence of female artists – in both the exhibition history and the collections. All twenty-nine solo exhibitions under Hofmann’s aegis during his directorship concentrated solely on male artists. Works by female artists such as Lygia Clark, Marisol, Louise Nevelson and Germaine Richier likewise only appeared occasionally even in the large group exhibitions. During the Hofmann era, however, work by only seven female artists entered the collection.

An exhibition like *Mapping the 60s* cannot leave this state of affairs unquestioned. A collection is always an expression of the circumstances under which it was created. This can and must bring relevant shortcomings into focus, addressing how they arose, along with ongoing efforts to remedy them.

With this in mind, *Mapping the 60s* on the one hand draws on ephemera to explore the historical origins of the museum’s collection in the 1960s and the museum’s exhibition history during the era of founding director Werner Hofmann. Alongside an architectural model of Schwanzer’s “pavilion,” posters for exhibitions from that era are displayed, complete with the intertwined logo for the Museum of the Twentieth Century designed by Georg Schmid, while all the catalogs from this phase have been made available in digital form too, accompanied by a fully accessible acquisition list for purchases during this period.

On the other hand, the exhibition focuses on the glaring gaps in the collection. The only originals shown are the handful of works from that era by female artists. This first and foremost means the seven female artists whose work Hofmann purchased: Mathilde Flögl, Tess Jaray, Olga Jančić, Germaine Richier, Bridget Riley, Teresa Rudowicz and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. These are complemented by works from that period that have since entered the mumok collection thanks to the Austrian Ludwig Foundation’s support and that are little by little filling in some of the gaps in the existing inventory – pieces such as an early painterly work by performance pioneer Carolee Schneemann, which was acquired in 2013, but also works by female proponents of Pop Art, for instance Evelyne Axell, Sine Hansen, Jann Haworth or Kiki Kogelnik.

When Attitudes Become Form – Concepts, Materials, Processes

In 1969, an exhibition was held at Kunsthalle Bern that is ranked as one of the most important in recent art history: *Live in Your Head – When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information*. Curator Harald Szeemann brought together a new generation of artists such as Hanne Darboven, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Richard Long, Richard Serra, and Franz Erhard Walther who distanced themselves from the social and mass-media focus of Pop Art and from the purist and self-referential Minimal Art of previous years. These artists concentrated on concepts, processes, and changeability, on ephemeral events or even solely on linguistic, photographic or numerical instructions or information.

This new understanding of art emphasized above all the artistic idea and artistic action. Art was viewed as a temporary process with an open-ended outcome that was largely determined by the materials used and did not necessarily result in a completed and “commodified” work. Or, as American sculptor Robert Morris put it, an “activity of change, of disorientation and shift, of violent discontinuity and mutability, of the willingness for confusion even in the service of discovering new perceptual modes.”

In hindsight, the spirit of the second half of the 1960s with its political, social, and economic upheavals seems to be condensed in this new art, which, depending on the focus, soon became known as “Conceptual Art,” “Process Art,” “Post-Minimalism,” “Anti-Form,” “Performance Art,” “Land Art” or “Arte Povera”: freedom of expression, open-ended and experience-based action, and hence, last but not least, an emphasis on individual subjectivity. The focus shifted from the primacy of the medium to personal feelings and behavior, in short, to an individual “practice”: provisional forms were rooted in a unique stance, an “attitude.” A perspective which remains valid today.

Although *When Attitudes Become Form* was by no means the only exhibition dedicated to this radically new art, it is considered a key event in the history of exhibition-making and the advent of the modern concept of curating; in 2013, restaged was even restaged at the Fondazione Prada in Venice. The exhibition played a pioneering role in developing process-oriented forms of production and presentation, with the exhibition space functioning as a kind of collective and open studio where many of the works came into being for the first time. However, *When Attitudes Become Form* entirely failed to fulfill today’s diversity standards; almost all the artists originated from the USA or Western Europe and the sixty-nine artists listed in the catalog included just three women: Hanne Darboven, Eva Hesse, and Jo Ann Kaplan.

The works from the mumok collection presented here are all by artists who were involved in *When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969. They are emblematic of that historic moment of radical change and the artistic approaches that emerged from it. As was also the case in 1969, the works establish sometimes surprising affinities and discursive communities that extend beyond art-historical classifications and illustrate artistic production as a relational practice that remains “in motion.”