

mumok Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna

Exhibition dates
February 3 to June 3, 2018

Press conference
February 2, 2018, 10 am

Opening
February 2, 2018, 7 pm



Bruno Gironcoli, Untitled, approx. 1964, Metal-powder color, india ink and gouache on paper
121,5 x 76,5 cm
Private collection, Vienna
© BRUNO GIRONCOLI WERK
VERWALTUNG GMBH / ESTATE
BRUNO GIRONCOLI /
GESCHÄFTSFÜHRERIN CHRISTINE
GIRONCOLI

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Bruno Gironcoli Shy at Work

Bruno Gironcoli (born 1936 in Villach; died 2010 in Vienna) is one of the most idiosyncratic artists of the twentieth century. He gained public recognition with the large-scale sculptures he began exhibiting in the mid-1980s, in which archetypes and trivial elements meld to form futuristic conglomerates. Yet his career started much earlier, in the 1960s, when Gironcoli, aware of international trends in art, developed his own radical and independent perspective. It is less well known that alongside his work in sculpture, Gironcoli also produced an extensive body of graphic works. Right from the beginning, these often large-format pieces, which became more and more painterly over the years, were not just mere sketches for sculptures. Working on paper, the Austrian artist instead took his own spatial ideas into dimensions that by far transcend any concrete work on physical materials. On paper, Gironcoli animates his own sculptural work: Divorced from real sizes and dimensions, as well as from the laws of physics and the limits of bodies, his schematic figures, animals, symbols, and apparatuses enter into hypothetical connections. They merge to form fantastic and surreal constellations and scenes. Gironcoli's works on paper are literally "surfaces of considerations" (Gironcoli), in which sculptural options unfeasible in space are played out. *Bruno Gironcoli. Shy at Work* will for the first time focus on the painter and draughtsman Gironcoli. On two exhibition levels, works on paper from the 1960s to the 1990s will enter into dialogue with outstanding examples of the artist's wire sculptures, polyester objects, installations, and monumental sculptures. This confrontation will also open up new perspectives on Gironcoli's sculptural work.

The Painter and Draughtsman Gironcoli

When Gironcoli's graphic and sculptural works are placed side by side it becomes evident that his concept of sculpture—of thingness and materiality—was crucially developed on paper. It is on paper that the artist reflects on the properties of various states of matter and different materials as well as on the relations between equal and unequal bodies and of these to surrounding space. Ways of connecting, linking, and sequencing play a key role. Also conspicuous is the artist's keen interest in the schematic—in a form of expression that does not come from depth but is effective on the surface. This is manifested in a repeated repertoire of motifs that Gironcoli serially varies and often reuses after long interruptions, so as to "format" them anew. And it is shown in the formulaic encounters between different perspectives and means of expression—constructive and expressive elements, spatial projections and atmospheric effects, accurate lines and undisciplined gestures.

Gironcoli's works on paper become ever freer as his career progresses, thus seeming to move away from the sculptural work. In the 1980s in particular, strong colors like pink, violet, and turquoise break out of graphic parameters and develop a painterly autonomy. The excessive use of paints—most notably metallic paints—lends the large-format pieces a sense of something distinctly physical. Yet sculpture and drawing remain closely interlinked in Gironcoli's later work. In both disciplines he negotiates questions of piling and layering; in both he uses a deliberately mannerist formal and material idiom.

Gironcoli's Repertoire of Forms and Themes

The themes that the artist recurrently addressed throughout his career seem to anticipate urgent issues of the twenty-first century: the relationship between nature and technology; individual and social coercion (in sexuality, political ideologies, or religion); a fetishistic approach to objects and commodities; seduction by surface, etc. This exhibition shows that Gironcoli's work not only had a pioneering position in the context of Austrian and international art in the second half of the twentieth century, but also offers remarkable points of reference for today's social and artistic developments. This retrospective featuring around 150 works on paper presents the sculptor Gironcoli as an inventor of images who found remarkable visual solutions beyond the contested field of painting—as an artist who used templates, clichéd formulae, and repetitions to open up unprecedented possibilities in pictorial representation.

It is in this context that Gironcoli's interest in kitsch and decoration as a “frozen” collective formal idiom should be understood, and also his use of dated religious and political symbols and not least his fascination for technical apparatuses and electricity. His figures and objects seem to be arrested in motion or stuck, strung into formulaic chains. It is only through repetition that movement enters into this fixed repertoire of figures and objects, which cannot escape their entanglement and yet, from picture to picture, can enter into different and new alliances. Again and again and in varying combinations we see crouching men, dogs, monkeys, skulls, ears of corn, lamp bulbs, the Madonna, swastikas, hearts, toilet bowls, shovels, and combs: fragments seized from everyday life and its emblematic shallows, scattered across Gironcoli's stages of considerations like props.

The exhibition is accompanied by the hitherto most comprehensive publication on Gironcoli's works on paper. In addition to an essay by the curator, it features texts by Peter Gorsen, Edith Futscher, Bettina Busse, Charlotte Matter, and Karin Steiner, as well as photographic takes on Gironcoli's artistic practice by Margherita Spiluttini, Elfie Semotan, and Loys Egg.

Curated by Manuela Ammer

We wish to thank the exhibition sponsor, Dorotheum, and our media partners Der Standard, Falter, Wien live, and Ö1.

Fact-Sheet

Bruno Gironcoli. *Shy at Work*

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Opening	February 2, 2018, 7 pm
Press conference	February 2, 2018, 10 am
Exhibition venue	mumok, MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna Levels 0, 2
Curator	Manuela Ammer
Exhibition production	Claudia Dohr
Exhibition catalogue	<i>Bruno Gironcoli. Shy at Work: Works on Paper</i> Ed. by Manuela Ammer, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. Preface: Manuela Ammer and Karola Kraus, essays by Manuela Ammer, Edith Futscher, Peter Gorsen, Charlotte Matter and Karin Steiner. Hard cover, 400 pages, 240 x 288 mm, 400 ill. mostly in color, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, 2018, German/English. English edition: ISBN (mumok) 978-3-902947-50-5 ISBN (König) 978-3-96098-295-1 Price: € 38,-
Opening hours	Monday: 2 to 7 pm, Tuesday to Friday: 10 am to 7 pm Thursday: 10 am to 9 pm
Admission	Normal € 12,-, reduced € 9,- / € 8,-
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