

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder

4.2. – 29.5.22

Concurrently to the solo exhibition that Kunsthalle Bern is organizing on the major Swiss artist Jean-Frédéric Schnyder (February 25 – May 15, 2022), Kunstmuseum Bern is presenting a display from its own collection that has been arranged by the artist himself.

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, who was born in Basel in 1945 and grew up in Bern, arrived on the 1960s art scene as an autodidact, subsequently being shown, at the age of 24, in Harald Szeemann's epochal exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*. As a trained photographer, Schnyder's approach to art has always been a conceptual one. The present exhibition at Kunstmuseum Bern is predominantly a presentation of the artist's early works, documenting the development of his concept of art and his differing approaches. These include producing objects in materials alien to conventional art (plastic, tin, chewing gum, incense sticks), employing handicraft techniques (Lego, pin pictures), and presenting his works in the form of folk art or as visual jokes. Such an exploration of the limits of kitsch is not, however, intended to be ironic. Schnyder is, instead, seeking the "normal," a catalyst for authentic feelings that could also be perceived as "beautiful" in a wider sense.

After starting out in sculpture, represented in our collection by tin figures, a handicraft skeleton, and pin pictures, Schnyder turned to painting in the early 1970s. Together with his wife Margret Rufener, he began the series of works *How to Paint (1973)* (> Wall C) based on Walter T. Foster's do-it-yourself painting course of the same name. Schnyder and Rufener conscientiously rendered scantily clad women, sad clown faces, and sultry sunsets, working their way through the course. Schnyder's career as a "serious" painter did not start until 1982, when he bought a racing bicycle and an easel and began to explore the surroundings of Bern. Employing a daily routine, he painted 126 *Berner Veduten* (> Wall A and B) at a scale that he could transport on his bicycle. In contrast to Bern's 18th century Kleinmeister (masters of small-scale landscapes), to whom he loosely refers in terms of both his work's motifs and scale, the artist not only focused on picturesque views, but also portrayed shopping centers, office buildings, and street underpasses. He likewise sought the beautiful in the average, banal, and quotidian.

In the 1980s and 1990s when, for many, painting had "died," Schnyder pursued further permutations of painting's possibilities by simultaneously employing naturalistic, expressive, and non-representational painting styles. Here, too, the artist had no hesitation in depicting sentimental or banal motifs such as a floral still life of tulips or a plastic fabric-softener bottle. In doing so, he seized the liberty of always choosing the pictorial language he felt most appropriate to the motif. This could entail styles that were factual and realistic, Pop Art-like, geometrically abstract, or expressively gestural. The artist would seem to have deemed everything

as being worthy of becoming a painting. Consequently, the exhibition which he has staged as an expansive installation at Kunstmuseum Bern evokes a cabinet of curiosities involving various groups of works and creative periods, reflecting his view of art as something non-elitist. The removing of all partition walls at the artist's request enables Schnyder's oeuvre to be presented as a carefully choreographed compendium of 85 works, centering around five free-standing objects, which are accompanied on the walls by his various series of paintings.

The eight-part group of works *Dritchi (1985/86)* (> Wall D) makes it evident that beyond the banal and everyday Schnyder is also engaged in the depiction of the sublime and spiritual. *Dritchi*, the Tibetan temple dog owned by the Schnyder family, poses, jumps over the Rhine Falls, sits in the cinema, keeps watch over his sleeping master, or trots between snow-covered trees towards the rising sun. The culmination of the large-scale paintings is the allegory of the dog as painter, standing frontally in a work coat with a human torso and a halo. Schnyder is here referring to the art-historical tradition of portraying the artist as a "singe peintre" (the artist as God's ape, aping nature), while simultaneously symbolizing the artist as a being who has access to a divine energy through his creativity.

The exhibition concludes with *Kleine Bilder* ("Small Images" > Wall D), produced between 2015 and 2019, comprising two groups out of a total of 26 series representing each letter of the alphabet, and each entailing 6 small-scale paintings. All the *Kleine Bilder* were painted employing a grid, giving the impression of digitally pixelated subject matter rendered at low resolution. In their simplicity they are reminiscent of pictograms, arousing expectations of a schematically represented object or instruction. What is being represented is not always clearly discernable but, due to the enlargement, may look at first glance like decoratively abstract ornamentation. Schnyder has once again chosen a means of representation that would seem better ascribed to the realm of handicrafts or "painting by numbers." Such a strategy permits him to create a link to his early pin pictures and "painting course" attempts, once again proving his endless ability to detect the idiosyncratic appeal of the most mundane and simple sources and to employ them in a reflection on art.

Schnyder has participated in such major international exhibitions as the Biennale di Venezia 1993 and 2013, Biennale de Paris 1985 and 1971, as well as Documenta 5, 1972, and Documenta 7, 1982. Solo exhibitions at important museums include ones at Kunsthaus Zürich, 2014; Kunstmuseum Bern, 2013; Ca'Corner della Regina Venice, 2013; Le Consortium, Dijon, 2012; and Swiss Institute, New York, 2011. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions in both Switzerland and abroad. He lives and works in Zug.

All works in the exhibition are by Jean-Frédéric Schnyder and were donated to the collection of Kunstmuseum Bern in 1983 and 1993 by the gallerist Toni Gerber. Any exceptions are noted.

Display case



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| 1 | 11 geschnittene Hölzer , 1971-1972, Diverse Hölzer, geschnitten, 1971 × 8 × 112 cm | 6 | Marsmensch , 1974, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 15,4 × 14 × 3 cm |
| 2 | Ohne Titel , 1974, Zinn, 6,5 × 4 × 4 cm | 7 | Tannenbaum , 1976, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 13,4 × 10,5 × 3,3 cm |
| 3 | Ohne Titel , 1974, Zinn, 5,6 × 3,4 × 2,4 cm | 8 | Der Schrecken von Damaskus , 1976, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 13,5 × 13,5 × 3,7 cm |
| 4 | Rentner , 1974, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 10,5 × 12,5 × 3 cm | 9 | Tod , 1977, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 13 × 13 × 3,7 cm |
| 5 | Kaminfeger , 1974, Kunstharz auf Zinn, 13 × 14 × 3 cm | 10 | Totenkopf , 1979, Keramik, Engobemalerei, glasiert, 4 × 3,5 × 3,8 cm |

Wall A

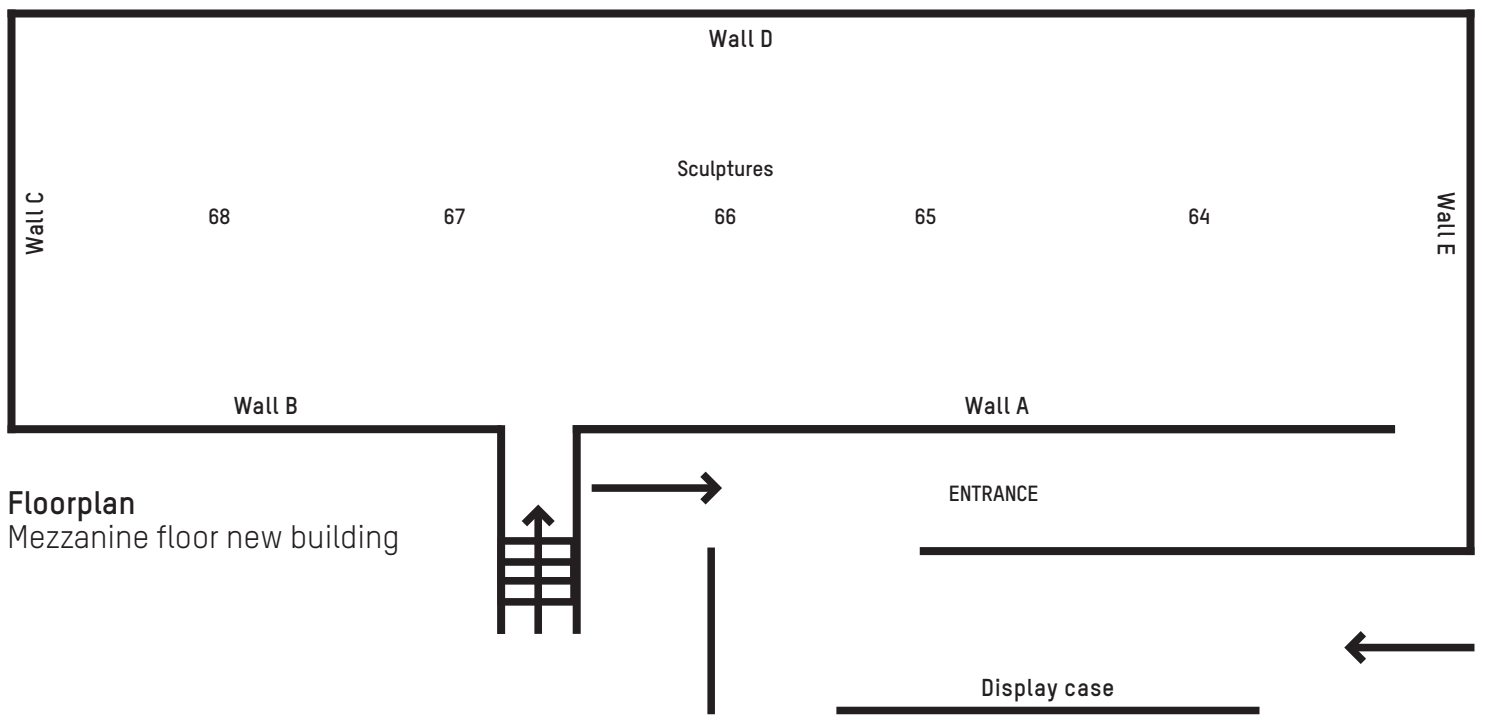


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| 1 | Herz (die Sicht von 68) , 11.10.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 60,1 × 60,1 cm | 11 | 3 Blumen b, r, g , 11./12.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80,4 × 60,2 cm |
| 2 | Egelmösl , 16.9.1982, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 65,3 × 48 cm | 12 | Hunzikenau , 2. 2.1983, Öl auf Leinwand, 51 × 36 cm |
| 3 | Sonnengesicht , 11./12.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80 × 60,2 cm | 13 | Krieg , 2. – 4.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 50,3 × 50,2 cm |
| 4 | Bethlehemacker , 23.9.1982, Öl auf Leinwand, 36,2 × 51 cm, Schenkung der Stiftung Kunst Heute | 14 | Allmend , 15.2.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 42,1 × 57,1 cm |
| 5 | Teddy douce , 9.1984, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80 × 60 cm | 15 | 3 Blumen , 11./12.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80,2 × 60,4 cm |
| 6 | Bern , 5.1.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 45 × 60 cm | 16 | Murtenstrasse , 21.2.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 45,2 × 60,2 cm |
| 7 | Unordnung , 1.1984, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 60,4 × 60,4 cm | 17 | Jockey , 16.4.1984, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 51,2 × 64 cm |
| 8 | Bundeshaus , 10.1.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 45 × 60 cm | 18 | M Breitenrainplatz , 24.2.1983, Öl auf Leinwand, 51 × 36 cm, Schenkung der Stiftung Kunst Heute |
| 9 | Stilleben mit 6 Blumen , 10. – 12.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 100,2 × 80 cm | 19 | Schuhe und Schirm , 11.4.1984, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 48 × 60,2 cm |
| 10 | SBG , 27.1.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 45 × 60 cm | | |

Wall B



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| 20 | Unterführung Schönburg , 1.3.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 42 × 57,2 cm | 26 | Egelmösl , 2.6.1983, Öl auf Leinwand, 36,2 × 51,2 cm, Schenkung der Stiftung Kunst Heute |
| 21 | Micky , 2.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 50,2 × 50,3 cm | 27 | Das Abendläuten nach Jean-François Millet , 12.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80,4 × 100,2 cm |
| 22 | Morgenstrasse , 14.3.1983, Öl auf Leinwand, 36 × 51 cm, Schenkung der Stiftung Kunst Heute | 28 | Lorrainebrücke , 28.7.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 60 × 42 cm |
| 23 | Portrait , 3.1984, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 48 × 64,2 cm | 29 | Rotes Gitter , 2. – 5.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 50,5 × 50,5 cm |
| 24 | Münster , 17. Mai 1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 65 × 48 cm | 30 | Niesen (am Uebesichsee) , 19.10.1983, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 48 × 64 cm |
| 25 | Schwarz vertikal , 3./4.1985, Öl auf vorgrundierter Leinwand, 80,5 × 40,2 cm | | |



All works by **Jean-Frédéric Schnyder** and **Margret Rufener**

They are painted in oil on cardboard covered with canvas, the frames are made from tin can lids.

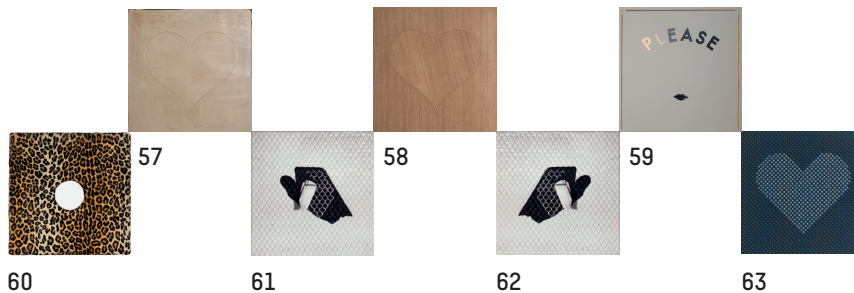
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| 31 | Clown, 1973, 72,5 × 55,1 cm | 39 | Akt mit Weinflasche, 1973, 75 × 27,6 cm |
| 32 | Eingeborenenhütte mit Musikern, 1973, 40 × 55 cm | 40 | Rückenakt, 1973, 75 × 27,5 cm |
| 33 | Stilleben mit gelben Rosen, 1973, 58,5 × 50,1 cm | 41 | Clown, 1973, 58,8 × 50 cm |
| 34 | Bauchtänzerin, 1973, 55 × 40 cm | 42 | Geisha, 1973, 75 × 27,6 cm |
| 35 | Zigeunerin, 1973, 40 × 30,3 cm | 43 | Südseelandschaft mit Segelschiff, 1973, 39,9 × 55 cm |
| 36 | Stilleben mit Chiantiflasche, 1973, 59 × 50 cm | 44 | Südseestrand, 1973, 39,7 × 55 cm |
| 37 | Felsen und Meer, 1973, 39,6 × 55 cm | 45 | Clown, 1973, 72,5 × 55,2 cm |
| 38 | Flamencotänzerin, 1973, 55 × 39,8 cm | 46 | Stilleben mit Buch, 1973, 58,8 × 40 cm |

Wall D



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| <p>47 Kleine Bilder (J), 2015 – 2019, Öl auf Sperrholz, verschiedene Masse, Ankauf zum 100-jährigen Jubiläum des Vereins der Freunde</p> <p>48 Dritchi I, 1985, Öl auf Leinwand, 120 × 159,8 cm</p> <p>49 Dritchi II, 1985, Öl auf Leinwand, 119,7 × 160,3 cm</p> <p>50 Dritchi III, 1985, Öl auf Leinwand, 120 × 160 cm</p> <p>51 Dritchi IV, 1985, Öl auf Leinwand, 120,2 × 160,4 cm</p> | <p>52 Dritchi V, 1986, Öl auf Leinwand, 160,3 × 120 cm</p> <p>53 Dritchi VI, 1986, Öl auf Leinwand, 120 × 160 cm</p> <p>54 Dritchi VII, 1986, Öl auf Leinwand, 120,1 × 160,2 cm</p> <p>55 Dritchi VIII, 1986, Öl auf Leinwand, 159,7 × 120,1 cm</p> <p>56 Kleine Bilder (R), 2015 – 2019, Öl auf Sperrholz, verschiedene Masse, Ankauf zum 100-jährigen Jubiläum des Vereins der Freunde</p> |
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Wall E



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| <p>57 Herz Spiegelimitat, 1968, Graviertes und verchromtes Messingblech auf Hartfaserplatte, 60,5 × 60,5 × 5,2 cm</p> <p>58 Herz Holzimitation, 1968, Plastikfolie auf Hartfaserplatte, 60,2 × 60,2 × 3,3 cm</p> <p>59 PLEASE, 1967 – 1971, Assemblage: Holz auf Spiegel auf Hartfaserplatte, 60 × 60 cm</p> <p>60 Ich liebe mich, 1967 – 1968, Nylonplüsch und Spiegel auf Hartfaserplatte, 60 × 60 cm</p> | <p>61 Fäuste I, 1968, Filzstift und Baumwolltuch auf wattiertem Plastik-tuch auf Hartfaserplatte, 60,2 × 60,7 × 7 cm</p> <p>62 Fäuste II, 1968, Filzstift und Baumwolltuch auf wattiertem Plastik-tuch auf Hartfaserplatte, 60,5 × 60,8 × 8 cm</p> <p>63 Herz genagelt, 1968, Sternnieten und Öl auf Hartfaserplatte, 60,2 × 60,2 × 3,5 cm</p> |
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Sculptures



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| <p>64 Skulptur, 1982, Öl auf Weymouthkiefer (Skulptur); Öl auf Holz (Sockel), 165 × 30,5 cm</p> <p>65 Torso, 1980, Holz, teilweise mit Ölfarbe bemalt auf Glas-/ Chromsockel, 47,2 × 32,2 × 9,6 cm</p> <p>66 Figur, 1977, Tannenholz, polychrom bemalt, auf Sandsteinsockel, 155 × 9 × 10 cm</p> | <p>67 Kapitän, 1973/74, Weinkorken, Knochen, Draht und Mütze, 220 × 47 × 31 cm</p> <p>68 Empire State Building, 1971, Legobausteine, Kaugummi, Rauchstäbli und Neoninstallation auf Metallkoffer mit Hochspannungstransformator</p> |
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Information on the accompanying programme at
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