

ARNULF RAINER

13. 11. 2026 – 25.4. 2027

Arnulf Rainer numbers among post-1945 Austrian and international art's most significant and uncompromising personalities. This artist, who was born in Baden (near Vienna) in 1929 and passed away in Upper Austria in late 2025, left an indelible mark on international art history as an innovator who spent over seven decades probing the outer limits of painting.

From the very beginning of his artistic career, fired on by his resolute resistance against all of National Socialism's brutal restrictions, Rainer consistently strove for independence and autonomy. It was with his radical "overpaintings" of the 1950s that he became known internationally and rose to occupy an important place in the post-1945 artistic pantheon. These works testify impressively to his personal stance as an artist, which defied all conventions.

It was a group of photographic (self-)portraits, his late-1960s "soliloquies in front of the camera," that gave rise to the fascinating series *Face Farces*—impressive examples of which clearly show just how broad a range of approaches to images' manipulation and reworking he employed, not to mention the intensity and dynamism of the attendant dialog with the ground. Between these and his final works in 2017, the artist would return to this dialogic approach again and again.

Rainer's oeuvre extends across painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, and performative works. The Albertina is home to one of the largest public collections of his art, totaling approximately 600 works representing all phases of his career. These holdings form the basis for the selection to be shown in the present retrospective, a tribute fully in keeping with the esteem and close ties that he and his family shared with the Albertina over many decades. This presentation hence bears renewed witness to a collecting principle upheld by the Albertina ever since its founding 250 years ago: that of enriching the institution's holdings based on direct relationships with contemporary

artists as well as the acquisition of entire collections. It was in this context that the Albertina integrated the important holdings of the Essl Collection alongside its own continual collecting efforts. On view in this exhibition will be around 70 masterpieces from Rainer's timelessly relevant output that draw a both fascinating and multifaceted arc from his early overpaintings to the *Face Farces* and crosses as well as the *Veiled Pictures* of his late oeuvre.