

CENTURY PICTURES

1329 WILLOUGHBY AVE, NEW YORK, NY 11237

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

A.R. Penck
Marks of Dissent
September 14–October 27, 2018
Opening Reception: Friday, September 14, 6-9pm

Century Pictures is pleased to announce a solo presentation of lithographs by the late A.R. Penck made between 1979-80.

Hidden within the borrowed name of a German glacial geologist (Albrecht Penck) is the initial R. This letter stands as the only intimation to the artist's given name, Ralf Winkler. Indeed, A.R. Penck employed a constellation of monikers including A-Y, Mike Hammer, Mickey Spilane, T.M., Tancred Mitchell, and Theodor Marx, amongst others. Though this act may seem a playful duplicity to current viewers, these pseudonyms were also a practical necessity to the artist whose career began in the former GDR. While the government at the time espoused a culture of "diversity and vastness," it had in fact stridently censored, edited and ultimately dictated the output and stylistic inventions of its artists. Both to more easily facilitate the transport of his artworks to patrons and friends in the west, and also to skirt the intense scrutiny of the GDR government's harassing gaze, Penck continuously invented oftentimes witty or poetic designates. The singular R retained the artist's identity amidst an involuntary, albeit eventually embraced, schizophrenic existence.

The lithographs in this exhibition convey an exuberant contrast between his figurative renderings and his experimentation in developing a visual language of simplified figures, patterns, and neo-primitive symbols. Though little in this series of works would outwardly suggest a radical or explosive ideology, they still earned him the scorn of the Secret Police of East Germany who raided his studio in 1979 when many of his works were destroyed. The artist who sought to create a set of codified images that would easily convey an emotion or subjective reality was perhaps a target because of that very codification. Rough lines, intersecting figures, arrows that point to a direction opposing the pre-determined path or viewed as a weapon, were marks that could be seen as aggressive, unyielding to norms, and perhaps conveying a secret message that could only be understood by his peers.

What is evident in this group of works is a prodigious output against the odds of constraint, a mix of studied, mechanical means of production that also includes the individualistic expressive touches of paint application to make each work unique. A voice that is insistent yet colored by a mood or idea that surfaces no matter how one

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tries to subsume it, the obstacles that Penck faced in his formative years would evidently amplify his work in the future.

A.R. Penck (1939-2017) was born in Dresden, Germany and worked between Berlin, London, Düsseldorf, Dublin, and New York City. His work belongs in numerous permanent collections including the Tate Gallery, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Neue Nationalgalerie SMPK, Berlin, and was included in the 1984 Venice Biennale and Documenta V, VI, VII and IX. Solo exhibitions of his work have been presented worldwide at Galerie Michael Haas, Berlin; Kunsthalle Bern; Michael Werner Gallery, The Brant Foundation, Connecticut; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. He was a prominent jazz drummer and co-founder of the group Triple Trip Touch (TTT). His estate is represented by Michael Werner Gallery.

Century Pictures is located at 1329 Willoughby Avenue in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The gallery is open Thursday-Saturday, 11am-6pm. For more information please visit our website at www.century-pictures.com. The gallery can be reached by phone at (212) 334-7866 or by email at info@century-pictures.com.