

## Press release

*Karin Kneffel*  
*Face of a Woman, Head of a Child*  
(23.03.2024 – 01.09.2024)

**Monumental paintings with picture-filling, ripe apples and grapes have made Karin Kneffel internationally famous. At the Franz Gertsch Museum, the German artist is presenting her new series of Madonnas, which deal with the religiously and art-historically charged theme in a modern and complex way. Other works are dedicated to Jesus and Joseph, fruit, candles and fire.**

Monumental paintings dominated by ripe apples and grapes (which were already on display at the Museum Franz Gertsch during a presentation of the collection in 2013/14) brought Karin Kneffel international fame. More than presentations of mere fruit, they are frugal temptations and bewitchments. Her approachable works speak to viewers on an intuitive level and evoke symbolic associations of seduction and fecundity. Defined by clear messages, strong colours, and extreme realism, Karin Kneffel's pictures have allowed her to become one of the most successful and independent contemporary artists in Europe.

After the initial showing at the Museum Kurhaus Kleve (2023/24), Karin Kneffel's new series of works will be on display in Burgdorf. Created in isolation during the years of the Covid pandemic, these pieces now await their first museum presentations. Preceded only by a few exceptions, this is Karin Kneffel's first thematic exploration of the human image. She created paintings of uniquely polychromed 15th- and 16th-century statues of the Virgin Mary she found at home and abroad, mainly in Italy and Romania.

Without exception, her representations focus on the figures' faces and heads. Her new works are conceived as diptychs with the countenance of the Virgin and the head and bust of the appendant Infant Jesus. An array of connections between the seemingly sculpted faces becomes apparent: the ecstasy or also rapture of the Virgins as they look down at the Infant Jesus with a gaze that reflects not only their role as the Mother of God but also compassion and mercy in light of their child's fate. The infants, in turn, express childish mirth, loving devotion, or prophetic foresight. Karin Kneffel's new group of works featuring Virgin Marys presents a modern, complex exploration of this both religiously and art historically charged subject.

This central group is supplemented with other works by the artist, thereby infusing the presentation with seemingly religious, but also existential components. We thus find pictures of fruit, but also of figures of Jesus, candles, fire, drops, and more. For the first time, Kneffel's depictions of Joseph will be on display. She says she chose the subject, not because of the Christian connotations, but because he "brought up an illegitimate child".

Born in Marl (D) in 1957, Karin Kneffel lives and works in Düsseldorf. Before turning to visual art, she studied German philology and philosophy in Münster and Duisburg-Essen, where she acquired the thematic equipment to create her complex pictorial worlds. She then went on to study at the Düsseldorf Art Academy with Johannes Brus and Norbert Tadeusz. Kneffel concluded her studies as a master student with Gerhard Richter, whose motifs she copied as fragments or referenced with art historical expertise. Early on, the artist received awards and distinctions, such as the Lingen Art Prize and a scholarship from the Villa Massimo in Rome. She has taught at a range of institutions including the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik, Iceland, the University of the Arts in Bremen, and the Academy of Fine Arts Munich.

# museum franz gertsch

An exhibition by the Museum Kurhaus Kleve – Ewald Mataré Collection, Kleve (D) in cooperation with the Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (CH).

The show was curated by Valentina Vlašić and Anna Wesle in collaboration with the artist. It is accompanied by an opulent catalogue with a cloth binding and a slipcase, as well as an edition of 12 unique pieces. The edition is already sold out.

Supported by SCHÖNEWALD, Düsseldorf.

The exhibition is under the patronage of the German Embassy in Switzerland.

## **Media conference**

Thursday, March 21st, 2024 at 10.30 am

## **Opening**

Friday, March 22nd, 2024 at 6.30 pm

## **Further information**

[www.kneffel.de/](http://www.kneffel.de/)

<https://www.mkk.art/>

[www.museum-franzgertsch.ch](http://www.museum-franzgertsch.ch)