

MARTIN KIPPENBERGER  
HEAVY MÄDEL

February 11 – March 18, 2023

‘And not only the work of ‘art’ is recycled; the artist is, too. It will not happen again.’  
Stuart Morgan, 1991

Clear outlines, filled-in surfaces, and a muted color palette in pastel tones characterize the 52 *Heavy Mädel* (*Heavy Gal*) drawings. Created in 1990, they were executed in pencil and oil pastels on stationery from Cologne’s Hotel Chelsea—or their mirrored copies. The collage-like motifs present a sketched retrospective of Kippenberger’s oeuvre. We can discern familiar set pieces from Kippenberger’s paintings, drawings, and sculptures – including many stemming from his 1987 *Peter* sculptures. We can read the titles of works and exhibitions, names and slogans, and even recognize Kippenberger himself along with a few fellow artists like Jeff Koons and Albert Oehlen. Mixed into this artistic and biographical kaleidoscope, we also find corporate identity logos such as Barbie, BMW, Chanel, and Marlboro, as well as the slogan from a famous band t-shirt that reads ‘I went Crazy with Kiss’.

*Heavy Mädel* adopts the strategy of transference, repetition, and transformation employed in the 1989/90 installation *Heavy Burschi* (*Heavy Lad*), which was made shortly before, and adapts this approach to a different medium, counterbalancing the earlier works on several levels.

It all began with a job application: Merlin Carpenter was interviewing for a job as Martin Kippenberger’s assistant when Kippenberger commissioned him with resampling the artist’s image cosmos into paintings taken from illustrations in all of Kippenberger’s artist books and catalogues published up until that point. When Kippenberger saw the finished paintings, he found them too painterly, too good, too kitsch. He decided that they had to become double-kitsch. The paintings were destroyed and distributed between a total of three containers. The originals were photographed beforehand, printed in its original size as an edition of two, framed, and exhibited alongside the respective container.

The container formed the sculptural center of these presentations as a kind of isolated painting archive. In 1991, Kippenberger presented *Heavy Burschi* in several venues at once: at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, the Wiener Festwochen, and the Kölnischer Kunstverein.

Like the original paintings in *Heavy Burschi*, the *Heavy Mädel* drawings were also realised by Carpenter. Made as mirror images, the drawings seem to reference the medium of photography, and thus the reproductions of the original paintings. This work is a stellar example of how Kippenberger was able to harness an initial idea to develop a whole performative and conceptual universe.

Taken together, *Heavy Mädel* and *Heavy Burschi* stage a short circuit of conceptual and medial derivations as well as a synthesis of creation, destruction, and resurrection. It is one of Kippenberger’s most radical inquiries into the role of the artist, the artwork’s aura, and the art world as a whole. He undermines common notions of authorship, originality, and reproducibility, while making himself an essential part of such dismantling. This delegated biographical and artistic reconfiguration collides with a system designed to validate artistic and social hierarchies as well as ideas of status.

Questions about what was labelled ‘high’ or ‘low’ art and how hard or easy it was to digest this clash of motifs, fragments, genres, and value systems were fundamental issues subverted by artists of this generation.

The *Heavy Mädel* complex is being exhibited alongside a selection of sculptures from 1987–1989. The *Worktimer* from the series of the *Peter* sculptures from 1987 consists of a mint-coloured, skeleton-like vehicle. Two briefcases hang from the front, a short ladder at the back leads upwards, but to nowhere. The complete dysfunctionality of the apparatus transforms the dictum ‘time is money’ and the efficiency and optimisation efforts of the working world into a hollow symbol of stagnation and futility.

# GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

*Bergwerk II* ('Coal Mine II'), also from the series of the *Peter* sculptures from 1987, recalls the coal and ore mining of the Ruhr region with its collieries and winding towers and thus connects with Kippenberger's biography: He was born in Dortmund, his father Gerd Kippenberger became director of the Katharina Elisabeth colliery in Essen-Frillendorf, where the family later lived. A disco platform boot in black and gold takes the place of the winding tower at *Bergwerk II*. It stands on a two-storey block of foam and chipboard covered by a metal plate and a small bourgeois carpet. This mine also has a winding shaft inside, but there is no black gold here, only macaroni.

The *Sozialkistentransporter* ('Transporter for Social Boxes') from 1989 is a replica of a Venetian gondola. Instead of the showcased happiness of couples, it transports the framework of a box. In German colloquial language there is the term 'Beziehungskiste', which could be translated with 'relation box' and connotes to challenged or troubled love relationships. The terms 'social' and 'pasta' hang from the frame rails of the 'transparent' cargo, as if they knew the recipe for the right melange of this 'social pasta'. Here, Kippenberger not only plays with the myth of Venice and a kitsch version of the city of lovers, but he also comments on the contradictory nature of the art market with the sign 'Monkey Business'.

Kippenberger would have turned 70 on February 25, 2023. In honor of this occasion, the second volume of the catalog raisonné of Kippenberger's paintings covering the years 1983 to 1986 will be published.

*Martin Kippenberger. Heavy Burschi* is on view at Capitain Petzel in Berlin until February 18.