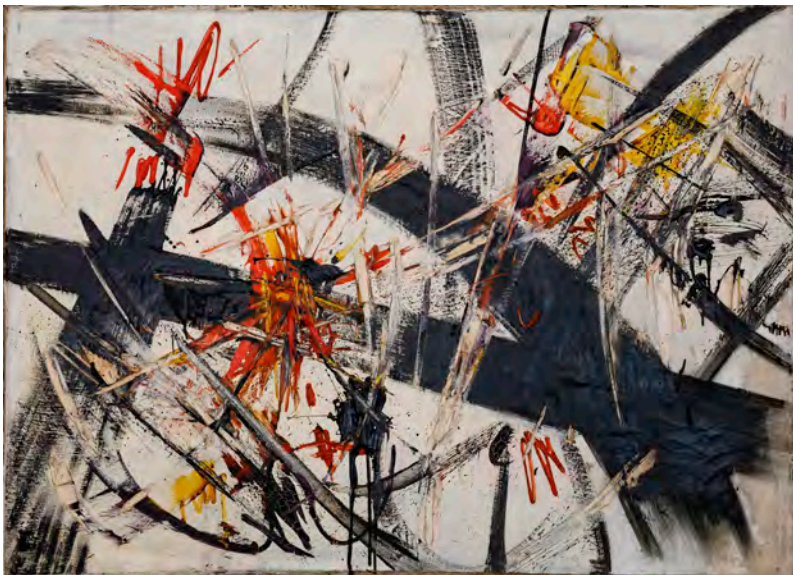


JUDIT REIGL: ANNUS MIRABILIS, ANNUS HORRIBILIS WORKS FROM MAY 1954—JUNE 1955

ON VIEW THROUGH FEBRUARY 27, 2015



Judit Reigl, Untitled, (Precursor to *Outburst* Series, 1955-1957), November-December 1954. Ink on paper, 8 5/8 x 11 inches (24.1 x 30.5 cm)



Judit Reigl, *Outburst*, 1955. Oil on canvas, 41 1/2 x 56 3/4 inches (105.4 x 144.1 cm)

Ubu Gallery is pleased to present *Judit Reigl: Annus Mirabilis, Annus Horribilis. Works from May 1954—June 1955*, an exhibition of drawings, collages and paintings made in the course of a single year.

JUDIT REIGL (b.1923) escaped from her native Hungary in March 1950, made her way across Europe in three months—stealing across seven borders—and settled in Paris, where she made the acquaintance of André Breton and the Surrealists. She is now acknowledged as one of the most original figures of post-World War II art, recognized for having discarded artistic boundaries and rules once deemed absolute, obliterating the distinction between the recto and verso of the canvas (by painting on both sides.) Reigl mediates the antagonism between the figurative and the non-objective, all the while reconciling Surrealism and abstraction.

For her biographers, 1954 is considered the *annus mirabilis* in Judit Reigl's career, the year of her discovery by André Breton. Moved by Reigl's 1950 painting, *They Have an Unquenchable Thirst for the Endless*, Breton declared the work a Surrealist masterpiece and presented the artist's first solo exhibition in Paris in November 1954 at the Surrealist gallery, L'Étoile scellée. Touted by Breton as the great hope for the future of painting—with Max Ernst lending support from the wings—her presence was finally hailed by the notables of the art world. Breton's famous letter to Reigl became the *laissez passer* that enabled Reigl's work to be exhibited and seen internationally. Reigl, however, remembers 1954 as *annus horribilis*: a year of personal drama, the only bleak period of her life, which she writes off as chaos—a void that she had to fill with work just to get through alive.

Judit Reigl is often referred to as the last living member of the Surrealist group, a fact Reigl disputes, because even though André Breton demanded her membership, she never joined. She only went to a few meetings and considers the whole decade after World War II—her Surrealist period included—as her “student years.” In 1954, Reigl's art caught up with real time and she produced dozens of collages and canvases and a series of ink on paper drawings one could describe as surrealist “spacescapes.” The paintings, collages and drawings of the current exhibition show how in a single year Reigl went beyond Surrealism using—in her words—“the very tools of Surrealism.”

The 1954 drawings—a series rarely seen and never before exhibited comprehensively—are pivotal to the Reigl oeuvre. Reigl never used preparatory drawings, but these drawings can be seen as mock-ups for the series she was to do next: the 1955 *Outburst* “gestural” paintings. Much of Reigl's work is often compared to musical scores, so it is tempting to see the 1954 drawings as dance notation—short-hand choreography for the eventual gesture revealed in her paintings. While Reigl's collages edit reality, she paints as she dreams—in a state that at once dwarfs and magnifies the worldly one in which we actually live. One can see the paintings as her waking dreams, induced by her drawings, which can be considered the dreams that she has forgotten.

A number of the works on view at Ubu Gallery were first shown at and have not been seen since Reigl's legendary exhibition at Breton's L'Étoile scellée.

For visuals or further information, please contact Caitlin Suarez at Ubu Gallery – 212 753 4444 or suarez@ubugallery.com.

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with Janos Gat Gallery, New York.