ALMINE RECH

The Beauty of Diversity

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'The Beauty of Diversity' leads a highly charged existence between an established understanding of art and its renewal. This exhibition manifests a compelling force in its juxtaposition of renowned artists who broke out of the canon before becoming canonized themselves with new discoveries as well as those who have disrupted accustomed ways of seeing, swum against the current, shaken the foundations of high culture, and violated norms, thereby laying the foundation for an aesthetic of the diverse.

Above all, however, 'The Beauty of Diversity' serves to resituate a collection. Museums with multiple centuries of collecting history and institutions that bring together the most important icons and masterpieces of the distant and recent past are all currently faced with much the same dilemma. Recent developments including the present-day postulate of diversity and inclusion have shone a brighter light than ever on the one-sided collecting focuses that long determined collections' substantive orientations. As a result, mechanisms of exclusion have become dramatically evident.

New Identities Outside the Canon

Today's art world is inhabited by a deep interest in identity politics and the attendant issues of class, race, and gender. The resulting broad spectrum of artistic, stylistic, and substantive approaches entails a necessary expansion of that historical artistic canon which is represented at the ALBERTINA Museum by artists ranging from Michelangelo and Raphael to Dürer, Rembrandt, and Rubens and on to Goya, Schiele, Picasso, and Warhol.

The call to expand and diversify museum collections goes hand in hand with unconditional claims to equal rights and freedom of expression. The exhibition 'The Beauty of Diversity' therefore features the ALBERTINA Museum's post-1945 holdings including recent new acquisitions in order to present the diversity of its collections, defining their richness in terms of heterogeneity and in light of an unequivocal desire for the diverse. It also underlines how essential it is to lend visibility to other perspectives and thus to women, LGBTQIA+ artists, people of color, indigenous artistic stances, autodidacts, and outsiders who stand out against the contrasting foil of the Old Masters.

This exhibition manifests an aesthetic of the diverse that upends the ideality of classicist stylistic and formal strivings: it pursues the beauty to be found in the grotesque, impure, and repressed, shining a light on that which exists on the fringes and diverges from the norm. The hybrid mixing and recombination of distinct systems and genders plays as prominent a role here as does the presentation of the marginalized.

Inclusion of artists from continents such as Australia, Africa, Asia, and South America is a central priority, serving to counteract the exclusive character of Eurocentric thought and action as well as Western art and culture.

Autodidacts exemplify a pronounced will to do what one must, proving their authenticity in how they affirm art's internal necessity, and individuals who probe and transcend boundaries call to mind art's role as an anthropological constant while also exemplifying nonconformist strategies by which to live and work in their deviation from the norm.