

Ursula Sax – Unuhren + Frühe Werke (Unclocks + Early Works)

January 24 – March 1, 2025

Opening: January 23, 7 – 9.30 pm

The clock is ticking – or tempus fugit.

These are well-known words of wisdom that come to mind especially when there is a new year, either in terms of the calendar or biographically. Ursula Sax, the great German sculptor, will be 90 years old this summer!

Time is out of joint – there is no better way to describe current events in the (political) micro- and macro-world.

The *Unclocks*, the title of a group of works by Ursula Sax starting in 2007, are also formally out of kilter. They bring chaos and new meanings to the technical timepiece.

What a word: U n u h r!

It says it all and yet leaves enough room for interpretation. It plays with concepts and the literal, but also visual 'self-runners' from art and cultural history such as *A Rose is a Rose is a Rose* (a literary work with this title) from 1913 by Gertrude Stein, as well as the important work from 1927 by René Magritte *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. Once introduced to the narratives of art history – and the artistic world, they have accompanied generations of artists ever since and are a source of artistic recourse or inspiration.

Ursula Sax is radically unambiguous and ambiguous at the same time. The assertion lies in the statement that this picture is not a clock, which is undoubtedly the case with most of the motifs. They are visually deprived of their function, but refer to the image of the timepiece that has been handed down for centuries: a circle and mostly with the sequence of numbers from 1 to 12 in a clockwise direction and the two hands for the hours and minutes. The artist's visual interventions on the computer fill each individual clock with new life. The only unifying elements are the circle as the original form and the pictorial vocabulary of mostly numerals, Arabic, but also Roman numerals. But even these can be replaced and become a nonsense clock, an unlock.

Now that everyone is familiar with computers, it has long been forgotten that it wasn't so long ago that this device, which has come to dominate our lives, was introduced. Generation Z knows no time before. They can no longer imagine life without a computer.

Theoretically, the potential of images created on a computer is immeasurable. First of all - as has been the case for Ursula Sax since the beginning of her 75-year career as an artist - they are an expression of her curiosity and her desire to change, to grow as an artist. The urgent reason for creating a series of artworks produces a certain material, an artistic technique, up to the point where she can no longer continue working because the mission

has been accomplished. Testimony to this intensive work is a bundle of individual inkjet printouts of the single pictorial sign designed on the computer.

A colored figure appears very rarely. Mostly everything is in black and white and in A4 size. She also created some DIN-A0 prints in the copy store at the time. The remaining pictorial works as files (not all pictorial works have been preserved as files) are the starting point for the current creation of edition prints, including the production of metal signs with corresponding pictorial work. In the center, a hanging sculpture will probably dominate the gallery space - everything is still a vision of the artist two weeks before the opening – whose material is the signs, only kept monochrome. In the context of the *Unuhren* shield works, only the sign itself refers to the theme of time. The result is blank sheets of white powder-coated aluminum signs. This time they can be fully loaded with the viewers' inner images.

This exhibition is complemented by another small show that enriches the theme of time and transience with artistic life, as it were.

A small overview exhibition of seven decades of Ursula Sax's artistic work, drawn from a small Berlin private collection offered for sale. Sax's oeuvre was part of the owner's life for decades, was supplemented for the last time in the late 1990s and was recently removed from the empty house. Now the works are looking for a new companion.

Traces of life have been inscribed in a large gold-leafed round stele from 1963, created in Florence and also gilded there, which is in need of partial restoration. The earliest work, a small bronze called *Figur*, dates from 1957, when Ursula Sax was 22 years old and studying art for the second time under Hans Uhlmann in Berlin. Her first commissioned work for the Studierendenwerk Berlin dates from the same year: the excitingly bold yet stoic relief made of round steel rods, *Almeno Due*, has been accepted as a permanent loan by the Nationalgalerie. It is a pity that it is not on display in the current collection show, despite the original plans. Yet another opportunity has been missed that did not work out in the artist's favor, delaying her canonical inscription in the modern history of sculpture once again – while she was still an elderly "Grande Dame de la Sculpture". Last fall, after a 50-year delay, she finally became a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. The first attempt was made in 1974, when none other than the Berlin architect and President of the Academy, Werner Düttmann, proposed her - unfortunately in vain.

Tempus fugit. The clock is ticking.

Semjon H. N. Semjon, Berlin, January 2025