

WALTER PICHLER *Zwei Tröge, Wasserrinnen* April 27th 2013 until October 5th 2013 **VIENNA**

Opening Sat April 27th noon, introduction by Christian Reder.

Walter Pichler Zwei Tröge, Wasserrinnen Snoeck Verlag Köln coming in autumn 2013.

With the sculpture/architectural study *Zwei Tröge, Wasserrinnen* Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman Vienna presents a concept that appeared very early on in Walter Pichler's work, that took on its eventual form only at a later stage, though. It is a tricky balancing act that the artist sets out on with this project. Occupying an undefined state between architecture and visual arts, the flumes are perfect examples of his creative impetus. The buildings housing the troughs and flumes came about in St. Martin not only through a temporal context. The architectural purpose too stands in direct relation to the spatial conditions of Pichler's haven in southern Burgenland. In the hilly expanses of the region water is never far. Rain, brooks and rivers are omnipresent and have carved the gentle cultural landscape. Walter Pichler did not create spatial interventions here, he let the water do what it does naturally, namely flow. An architectural approach to this project would have required but few drawings. Yet this is where one of the main characteristics of Walter Pichler's work as an artist comes to the fore. Time has always been his prime material, time that he devoted to every single detail of his projects, in order to give them the attention they deserved. Working on an impulse, often regarded as a positive quality of the artistic process, never was Walter Pichler's mode of procedure. Every one of his objects was accorded the highest mental concentration and the best craftsmanship. This concentration, combined with his retreat from the hectic art world, makes Walter Pichler an exceptional artist and his work a successful and unique balancing act between art and architecture.

Walter Pichler was born in Deutschnofen, South Tyrol, in 1936. After his family, during World War II, had opted to move to Austria, he studied at the arts school in Innsbruck and, in 1955, passed his exams at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. His very first exhibition, *Architektur*, together with Hans Hollein, at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, was among the most talked about Austrian exhibitions of the post-war years. In 1960, Pichler spent an extended period of time in Paris. Later he spent time in New York and also travelled to Mexico. In 1967, the artist's works, together with those of his friends and colleagues Raimund Abraham and Hans Hollein, were shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York under the title *Visionary Architects*. The following year, he took part in the Documenta IV in Kassel. At the beginning of the seventies, Pichler acquired a small farmstead in St. Martin an der Raab, in southern Burgenland, that consequently served him as both workshop and residence, but also as installation site for his sculptures. In 1975, Pichler once more exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition was simply titled *Projects*. In the course of that decade, Pichler's works were presented, among other places, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. In 1982, under Commissioner Hans Hollein, Pichler took part in the Venice Biennale. In 1985, he was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize for Visual Arts and the Käthe Kollwitz Museum in Berlin presented his works, together with works by Joseph Beuys, under the title *Joseph Beuys, Walter Pichler: Zeichnungen*. Other exhibitions to follow were *Drawings: Sculptures: Buildings* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1998, and *Prototypen 1966-1969* at the Generali Foundation Vienna in 1999, as well as *Das Haus neben der Schmiede* at the Architekturzentrum Wien in 2002. The exhibition *Es ist doch der Kopf* for CFA Berlin and the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck in 2008, and the last exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna in 2011 looked back at the artist's career from its beginning. A very special presentation is the permanent exhibition *Zeichnungen: Für meine Mutter* at Schloss Tirol near Merano, South Tyrol. While presenting his work in many international exhibitions, he kept reconstructing and redesigning his property. Thus, over several decades, not only a large number of figures and art objects emerged at this farmstead in southern Burgenland. The very unique relationship between Walter Pichler and his works also becomes palpable in the structures specially erected for them in St. Martin an der Raab. Over time, an almost mythical *Gesamtkunstwerk* has thus come about that provides the fitting space for Pichler's preoccupation with architecture, sculpture and drawing. Walter Pichler died in Vienna on July 16, 2012. The 55th Biennale di Venezia 2013 shows a group of sculptures by Walter Pichler in the rotunda of the international pavilion.

We are looking forward to seeing you!
Klaus and Elisabeth Thoman

Vienna, April 2013