

OSMOS

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Julije Knifer: Rules and Emotions

March 11, 2023

On view until April 15, 2023

Thursday, Friday, & Saturday 12 - 6 pm (and by appointment)

Working in Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslav Croatia until his relocation to Paris in the mid-1990s, Julije Knifer's acts of visual and creative condensation against more easily identifiable imagery and meaning acquired added political weight, interpreted as resistance against communist politics and as a retreat or sheltering from the long reach of ideology and party apparatuses.

Alongside graphite and collage works from 1960 to 1990, this exhibition features a series of 20 drawings, entitled, *Rules and Emotions* (1979), which spans the length of the gallery. This significant work has never before been exhibited in New York, and it forms the spine of the corpus on view at OSMOS. This exhibition has been co-curated with the artist's daughter, Ana Knifer, to commemorate the newest monograph, "*Julije Knifer: Collages for Meanders*" (published by OSMOS Books, New York, 2022), which focuses on a group of collages, produced in the late 1950s and early 1960s, that illustrates the development of the meander motif at a pivotal moment in the artist's career.

What emerges gradually over the entire sequence of Knifer's early collages and drawings, is his intuitive search for and arrival at selective compositional principles that would form the basis of his entire subsequent oeuvre. These works illustrate an emotional, affective charge that could be described in lieu of, or rather, as the source of, the deeper meaning of Knifer's works overall: a rhythmic oscillation between black and white, background and foreground, between strips of varying thickness and density, between abstraction and figuration, between the recognition of the meander form and the freedom to ignore its presence, between the desire for chronological development and the utter indifference to progress expressed in the stubborn insistence on a single motif. For if Knifer's works in general have a meaning, then it is the pictorial embodiment of a search for what it means to be free within the tight bounds of a given situation, chosen or imposed.

In his notes, published in 1977, Knifer asserts as much when he describes his goal of painting during these years:

My primary goal was rhythm through a minimum, rhythm in most minimal of visual art ways, which is entirely visual art in its result. I tried to reduce everything to utter minimum. Chronology and continuity had no meaning to me. ... With me, there is no development or progress. I have reserved the realm of doing this work for my freedom and I have always actually considered this a form of my only freedom. Or the only form of my freedom. The only real form of my freedom. (Knifer Notes, published 1977, p. 146)

In mid April, OSMOS together with Peter Freeman Gallery, will host a conversation with recognized scholars and curators to launch the book, Julije Knifer: Collages for Meanders, in New York City.