

Helvetika 1575 Announces Exclusive Sale Offering of Hermann Nitsch's 20th Painting Action

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Zug, Switzerland – January 20, 2026 – Helvetika 1575 announces the exclusive offering for sale of Hermann Nitsch's 20th Painting Action, a seminal work within the artist's Orgies Mysteries Theatre and a landmark of Viennese Actionism. The work originates from the Helmut Essl Private Collection, and was most recently presented in Venice in 2022 in conjunction with the 59th Venice Biennale.

Executed in 1987 at the Wiener Secession, Vienna, the 20th Painting Action marks a decisive moment in Nitsch's expansion of painting into ritualized, performative action. Distinguished by its monumental scale, material intensity, and performative origin, it remains the only complete painting action by Nitsch preserved as a unified ensemble. Its presentation at Officine 800 on Giudecca Island constituted the first major recontextualization of the work within an international biennial framework.

"The 20th Painting Action is not only a defining work within Hermann Nitsch's oeuvre, but a cornerstone of postwar European art," said Katerina Maliakina, Director and Co-Founder of Helvetika 1575. "Presenting this work as an exclusive sale offering alongside an exhibition reflects our commitment to historically significant practices that continue to challenge how art is experienced, embodied, and understood."

Through its exclusive representation, Helvetika 1575 offers collectors and institutions a rare opportunity to acquire a historically pivotal work that bridges painting, action, and durational performance. The 20th Painting Action exemplifies Nitsch's ambition to dissolve boundaries between aesthetic experience, corporeality, and metaphysical inquiry.

In parallel with the sale offering, Helvetika 1575 will open the exhibition Hermann Nitsch: The Art of Extremes on January 20, 2026. Developed in collaboration with Helmut Essl, the exhibition provides a focused introduction to Nitsch's practice, situating the 20th Painting Action within the broader conceptual, ritualistic, and material framework of his work. The presentation marks the beginning of a sustained engagement with Nitsch's legacy at the gallery.

"Hermann Nitsch's work demands commitment—intellectual, emotional, and ethical," said Helmut Essl. "The 20th Painting Action embodies the totality of his artistic vision, where painting, action, and existential inquiry become inseparable. Collaborating with Helvetika 1575 ensures the work is presented with the seriousness and context it requires."

Hermann Nitsch (1938–2022) was a central figure of Viennese Actionism, whose work radically challenged conventions of painting and performance through ritual, excess, and sensory immersion. His influence continues to shape contemporary discourse around the body, temporality, and the limits of representation.

About Helvetika 1575

Located at Unter Altstadt 20 in Zug, Switzerland, Helvetika 1575 presents historically significant and contemporary works by international artists, serving as a platform for ambitious exhibitions and exclusive offerings that engage critically with art history and its ongoing evolution.

About Helmut Essl

Helmut Essl is a leading supporter of Hermann Nitsch and an influential advocate of Viennese Actionism. He has built a focused collection of Austrian Actionism and international contemporary art defined by historical relevance and institutional quality.

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