

Hidden Thoughts
of a Visual Nature



Hans Hollein, Sigmund Freud's Couch and Chair, 1985
(miniature replica)

An Exhibition of Conceptual Art

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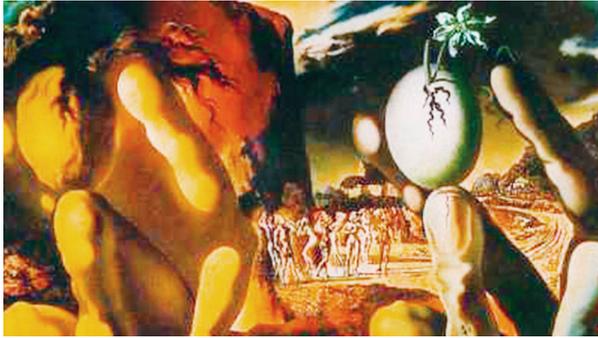
A medium for reflection and an instrument for creating meaning; Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis has long offered artists—be they visual or performing artists, musicians or writers—food for thought. What is more, artistic intentions would seem akin to those of psychoanalytic science: the arts too make reference to hitherto concealed aspects of our existence, bringing them to the forefront of our awareness, rendering them visible. In this respect, Freud's description of the psychotherapeutic process may be seen as allegorical: «The analyst finishes a piece of construction and communicates it to the subject of the analysis so that it may work upon him; he then constructs a further piece out of the fresh material pouring in upon him, deals with it in the same way and proceeds in this alternating fashion until the end.»¹

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Beginning in spring 2020, works from the museum's collection of conceptual art will be on permanent display in an exhibition entitled *Hidden Thoughts of a Visual Nature* housed on the Upper Ground Floor of Berggasse 19. It was in these rooms that the doctor and psychoanalyst worked in his first practice from 1886 until 1908, developing the foundations of his new scientific discipline. Closely echoing psychoanalysis and its wide range of methods, this selection of works from international artists takes a critical look at and investigates current sociocultural issues.

From the mid 1880s onwards, Freud's research was focused on the functions of the psychic apparatus and the interpretation of dreams. Marked by new insights, this research was also accompanied by setbacks, rejections and new beginnings. Like the medical discourse, the arts too had an interest in these developments, reacting like a seismographic instrument to the upheavals and innovations of the time.

Although there is no hard evidence of the ca. 1900 dialogue between psychoanalysis and the visual arts, the psychological quality of paintings by, for instance, Egon Schiele, Richard Gerstl and Oskar Kokoschka, testify to a shared interest in intrapsychic matters. As evidenced by the works of Hugo



Salvador Dalí,
The Methamorphosis of Narcissus, 1937

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von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler and Stefan Zweig, there is also a great deal of overlap between themes explored in psychoanalysis and contemporary literature. A bit later, visual artists associated with groups and movements such as the Bauhaus, the De Stijl, expressionism and surrealism began drawing more explicit attention to the overlaps between themes addressed in their work and that of psychoanalysis. The classical avant-garde, intent on introducing new social attitudes, incorporated Freud's theories into their moral-philosophical and social-reformatory discussions. They attempted to harness the dynamics of the human psyche in order to create new models for society on the one hand, and to widen and deepen their own imaginary worlds on the other. In his manifesto *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art), Wassily Kandinsky, for example, endorsed only artistic expression that arose from an «inner tendency» or need, for it was only those which «[contained] the seed of the future within [themselves].»²

André Breton, vanguard theorist of the surrealists, defined the interpretation of dreams as an accomplishment that facilitated the «exploration of the human» and as a result of which «a part of our mental world is brought back to light.»³ Breton, who visited Sigmund Freud in Vienna in 1921, also referred to the «considerable portion of psychic activity» of dreams, and advocated the recognition of psychoanalysis as a basis for developing new modes of seeing and acting within artistic practices.

In 1938 Stefan Zweig arranged for Salvador Dalí to meet with Freud, at that point living in exile in London. Dalí took the opportunity to create some portrait sketches, and was particularly fascinated by Freud's writings on cultural theory. In 1907, Freud wrote about the protagonist in Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva* (1903),⁴ which features surrealist imagery and the concept of narcissism, the latter of which Freud began to make use of in 1909 and introduced into his instinct theory a few years thereafter.⁵ Again with regard to surrealism, Dalí is believed to have shown Freud his painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937)⁶

with the aim of convincing the «father of psychoanalysis» of art's capacity to depict inner states of mind. After their meeting, Freud wrote to Zweig: «I really have reason to thank you for the introduction which brought me yesterday's visitors. For until then I was inclined to look upon surrealists, who have apparently chosen me for their patron saint, as absolute ... cranks. The young Spaniard, however, with his candid fanatical eyes and his undeniable technical mastery, has made me reconsider my opinion.»⁷

In the mid 1920s, Marcel Duchamp's photographs of his female alter ego «Rose Sélavy»—an important contribution to modernism—became increasingly dedicated to gender relations, in particular the instability of male and female stereotypes, and in so doing were informed by the teachings of Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung.⁸

Characterizations of psychoanalysis and its interpretative processes likewise remained a subject of intellectual and artistic consideration in postmodernism. Pierre Klossowski, brother of painter Balthus, a writer and painter in his own right and translator of the writings of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Walter Benjamin and Lou Andreas-Salomé, exerted some influence on the intellectuals of his day through his early psychoanalysis-inspired work on the Marquis de Sade.⁹ During the 1960s and 1970s Klossowski's work would go on to be particularly influential on French thinkers such as psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and philosophers Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Helmut Newton's photographic work also includes a series in which Pierre and Denise Klossowski enact a seduction in a psychoanalytic setting, an allusion to Pierre's trilogy *Les Lois de l'Hospitalité* (The Laws of Hospitality).¹⁰

In the years following 1945, Austrian architect and «universal artist» Hans Hollein succeeded in focusing contemporary discourse on some central turning points in European cultural history. As early as the 1970s, Hollein began creating drawings that paid tribute to specific artistic and sociocultural achievements of the modern age, describing them as «Elementary Environmental Situations,» in other words crucial to the further development of human existence. The architect sketched spaces with sparsely furnished interiors, for example a



Helmut Newton,
Pierre and Denise Klossowski,
Paris 1986

Marcel Duchamp Room that contained nothing but a staircase against the rear wall, a chessboard-style floor, and a window—a «reception of Duchamp» reduced to a few signifiers—and a *Sigmund Freud Room* that is completely empty save for a couch and chair. What is interesting about the latter, is that Hollein not only depicts the «psychoanalytic setting» naturalistically, but also strictly adheres to the classical constellation comprising the therapy room, a tradition that continues to this day: the analyst's chair stands behind the head of the couch, obstructing the view of both therapist and patient and therewith facilitating an interaction unperturbed by disconcerting body language. For Hollein, the analyst's couch and chair manifests one of the key cultural accomplishments of psychoanalysis—free association, the revolutionary, creative and deconstructive potential of which would find increasing expression in the art of subsequent decades.

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A growing focus of interest in this sense was on the linguistic structural posits of psychoanalytic models of explanation. American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth has been marrying Freud's theories with contemporary conceptual art inquiries since the 1980s. On the fiftieth anniversary of Freud's death in 1989, Kosuth created the *Zero & Not* installation on the mezzanine of Berggasse 19, and later added contributions from international artists, including John Baldessari, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Georg Herold, Jenny Holzer, Ilya Kabakov and Franz West. In 1997, donations from Clegg & Guttman, Jessica Diamond, Marc Goethals, Sherrie Levine, Haim Steinbach and Heimo Zobernig were added to the collection initiated by Kosuth. Since 2014, works by Susan Hiller and Wolfgang Berkowski have underscored the imprint of psychoanalytic modes of thinking on what Kosuth has referred to as, «that cultural horizon which forms our consciousness.»¹¹

Starting in 2020, a show on the upper ground floor of the museum entitled *Hidden Thoughts of a Visual Nature* will feature artworks that provide unique links to the early history of psychoanalysis. Instead of adhering to the «white cube» exhibition design that has been propagated since the 1920s, we will return to the former significance and function of the surrounding architecture to form a constitutive component in the conception of our presentation. Today, twelve works selected from the collection inscribe themselves into the rooms of Freud's first office in the Alsergrund district: the doctor's waiting room with its little veranda, which from 1902 onward likewise served as the meeting place for the Psychologische Mittwoch-Gesellschaft, or the Wednesday Psychological Society; the treatment room in which analysands, lying on the couch, worked with Freud to develop the talking cure method; Freud's study and the kitchen of the doctor's apartment through which one could discretely exit the office once the psychoanalytic session was complete.

The preserved architectural elements of Freud's former workplace not only define the birthplace of psychoanalysis, they also represent the prototype of the psychoanalytic setting. Major ideas that Freud once tested and formulated here

coincide with those of the works on display. The presentation space thus represents a correlate of the artistic concepts, and vice versa. This mutually corresponding relationship between the exhibits and their setting becomes apparent when walking around the rooms of Freud's first practice, which, with all of their meaning, become an exhibition display in which art fuses with its setting and becomes a single concerted force.

Works by Joseph Kosuth and Heimo Zobernig, placed in Freud's former waiting room, mark the start of the exhibition. Kosuth's wall installation, a combination of text and images, encourages the integration of new thoughts into the existing material, and places visual elements alongside an excerpt from Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*¹² as concrete points of reference.¹³ In Zobernig's piece, the structural similarity between vision and reality becomes the subject of artistic scrutiny: traces of memory are subjected to «a *rearrangement* in accordance with fresh circumstances—to a *retranscription*,» thus emphasizing the synergy between the work and its historical setting.¹⁴

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In an area in which a little veranda still affords a view of the building's shady courtyard, found objects and pieces of language become the protagonists of Sherrie Levine's and Wolfgang Berkowski's artistic narratives, which visualize the coping strategies described by Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia*.¹⁵

In Freud's former treatment room, the hub of early developments in psychoanalysis, works of visual art incorporate core themes from the field of psychological investigation: Georg Herold, for example, addresses a question that likewise concerned Freud with critical wit and an ironic choice of materials, namely «whether our «civilized» sexual morality is worth the sacrifice which it imposes on us.»¹⁶

With an «AHA!» emblazoned on the wall, Haim Steinbach draws attention to communication in the course of the psychoanalytic therapy in his reference to the talking cure—the foundation of all talking therapy even today.

For John Baldessari, photographic references form a starting point for his visualization of the affinity and the discrepancy of the un-canny. The piece also demonstrates and provokes the paradoxical defense reaction (identifying oneself with the attacker) as described for the first time by psychoanalyst Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's youngest daughter.¹⁷ In her extensive examination of archival material from Sigmund Freud's estate, Susan Hiller tests the idea of «seeing oneself in others.»¹⁸ The materials, although only partially inventoried and defying clear-cut historical contextualization, seem to contain important information: gaps in transferred knowledge which Hiller not only fills with her visual research, but also widens through her addition of various psychoanalytic frames of reference that address the same topics. Harking back to historical references and in the course of her appropriation of the same, she also questions mechanisms and methods of contemporary art production.

In the adjoining study, the room in which Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the founding document of psychoanalysis, we find psychoanalytic

descriptions of constructions of reality: Jessica Diamond's piece, both self- and other-referential, is a tribute to Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama which focuses on the *Me-constellation* (1995), and in which Diamond investigates issues of personal and societal self-positioning.

Ilya Kabakov's installation, based on items of furniture found at Berggasse 19 or provided by the artist, unfolds its symbolism in the place where Sigmund Freud's desk once stood, underscoring the room's erstwhile purpose, and adding the fantastic autobiographical story *The Man Who Flew Into His Picture* (1987–1989).

Positioned on the wall of the former kitchen of Freud's practice, Pier Paolo Calzolari presents *Avido* (greed), a piece that highlights the sexual desire and abuse that, as a result of the «[construction] of phallic relations of power,» imposes massive constraints on the development of female sexuality.¹⁹

328 Whereas Freud has on one hand claimed that «it is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling,»²⁰ he also drew attention to the correspondence between psychoanalysis and art—in particular the congruence of their methods—by pointing out that the both disciplines often heeded initially «despised or unnoticed features.»²¹

Translated by Ricard Watts (Graz)

—— 1 —— Sigmund Freud, «Constructions in Analysis,» [1937*d*], in *SE* 23, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 255–269, 260. —— 2 —— Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (Dover Publications: New York, 1977). —— 3 —— André Breton, *Premier manifeste du surréalisme* (J. J. Pauvert: Paris, 1962), 22 f. —— 4 —— Freud, *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's 'Gradiva'*, 1907*a*. —— 5 —— Freud, «On Narcissism,» 1914*c*, 73 ff. —— 6 —— Salvador Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937, oil on canvas, 51 × 78 cm, London, Tate Gallery, was a centerpiece of the exhibition *Freud, Dalí and the Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, curated by Dawn Ades for the Freud Museum London (2018). —— 7 —— Ernst L. Freud, ed., *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873–1939*, trans. Tania and James Stern (London: Hogarth Press, 1970), 448–49. In his memoirs, Stefan Zweig wrote of Salvador Dalí's visit to Sigmund Freud on July 22, 1938 that: «Once, on one of my last visits, I took Salvador Dalí with me, in my opinion the most gifted painter of the younger generation, who revered Freud immensely and while I talked with Freud, he worked at a sketch. I dared not show it to Freud, because clairvoyantly Dalí had already incorporated death in the picture.» In: Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964) 423. —— 8 —— Dawn Ades, Neil Cor and David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 136 f. —— 9 —— Pierre Klossowski, *Sade My Neighbor*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991). —— 10 —— Pierre Klossowski, *Roberte Ce Soir & The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002). —— 11 —— Joseph Kosuth, text for the

Sigmund Freud Museum included in the booklet *The Sigmund Freud Museum Contemporary Art Collection* (Vienna: Sigmund Freud Private Foundation, 2005), 13. Original in English: «acknowledging the imprint of Sigmund Freud's life on that cultural horizon which forms our consciousness. It is a monument to Sigmund Freud, and it is a living one» (author's translation). — 12 — Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 1905c. — 13 — Cf.: Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900a, 339. — 14 — Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, December 6, 1896, in: Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson ed., *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 207–215, 207. — 15 — Freud, «Mourning and Melancholia,» (1917e [1915]). — 16 — Freud, ««Civilized» Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,» 1908d, 181–204. — 17 — Anna Freud, *The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defence* (Karnac Books: London, 1993). — 18 — Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). — 19 — Cf.: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 42. — 20 — Freud, «The «Uncanny,» 1919h, 219. — 21 — Cf.: Freud, *The Moses of Michelangelo*, 1914b, 222.

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