JOSEF MIKL "TROPFEN... WIEN..." 1978

Josef Mikl, "Tropfen... Wien..." ("drops... Vienna..."), 1978, mixed media on paper, signed

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Alongside Wolfgang Hollegha, Markus Prachensky, and Arnulf Rainer, Josef Mikl ranks among the most important pioneers of Austrian post-war modernism. As a leading member of the Gruppe St. Stephan, founded in 1956, he played a decisive role in shaping the development of the Viennese avant-garde. His participation as Austria’s official representative at the 34th Venice Biennale in 1968 marked his international breakthrough. The drawing Tropfen … Wien … (1978), executed in mixed media on paper, exemplifies Mikl’s characteristic fusion of text and image. As the art historian Wieland Schmied observed, Mikl’s works are “written pictures.” The artist’s distinctive handwriting resembles not so much calligraphy as hastily jotted fragments of thought, whose energy is transferred directly onto the sheet. Writing is not primarily intended to be legible; rather, it functions as a gesture and thus becomes an integral pictorial element.

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