



Aanant & Zoo

# GERHARD RÜHM

## Arbeiten auf Papier, 1955-1975

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The most evident and accurate description of Gerhard Rühm's typographical images, his typocollages, typewriter ideograms, automatic drawings and ink smudgings appears to be 'visual poetry'. His oeuvre, informed as much by poetry as by processes in visual art, succeeds in creating a thought-provoking and associative emotive space with the simplest of means. Through simultaneous reading and seeing, pictorial and textual information are brought into correspondence with one another and, with humorous and critical intent, touch on the boundaries and idiosyncrasies of giving meaning to typographical and pictorial signs, thus: visual poetry.

Rühm, member of the Vienna Group during the 1950s, is situated at a particular juncture in 20th century art with his visual and auditory poetry, where poetic material developed from artistic developments in the pre-war years, like expressionism, dada, surrealism, and constructivism, are structurally brought into a new relation with modern painting.

Within his artistic oeuvre, Rühm systematically employs uncontrollable effects, spontaneous reactions and particularly the own unconscious. In his automatic type-drawing, he explores the blurred boundaries, or rather the now obsolete opposition between, figurative and non-figurative painting, between drawing and writing (e.g., *ich-binbereit*, 1972). In his earlier typewriter ideogrammes, formal, functional and visual conditions and possibilities of typewriter font lead back to the conception of the text (*starr welle*) and make plain unconscious mechanisms of reading for the viewer (*zart* and *fast*, 1954 – 57). They are composed of word images and gaps, meant to be put into relation to one another, evoking vague emotional reactions in the viewer despite their origin in as simple a medium as standardized type. Also the combination or constellation of newspaper images, torn bits of newspaper, and photographs (e.g., *Ohne Titel*, 1961), as well as 'text scraps', cut out and removed from their context and termed typocollages by Rühm, through their graphical elements and positionings (e.g., *Frau wir uns*, 1959) produce additional, not immediately visible information by releasing their latent connotations only through the process of reception by the viewer.

Gerhard Rühm came to literature via music, studying composition before he became a writer and an artist. This may be the cause for the particular effect the tone of his words develop as they are organized on the pictorial field, thus becoming notation to be interpreted: their melody creates music in the mind of the beholder.

The solo exhibition at Aanant & Zoo unites works from 1955 - 1975 with sound- and speech-material by Gerhard Rühm.

*Julia Müller, October 2013*