

A surrealist painting by Beatrix Ost. The composition is dominated by a blue-skinned face with a single, large, dark eye, looking towards the left. Below this face, a vibrant red face is partially visible. In the center, a bouquet of white flowers with green stems and leaves is held. The background is filled with vertical, textured elements in shades of green and blue, suggesting a dense, abstract environment. The overall style is characterized by bold colors and a complex, layered composition.

# BEATRIX OST

## ILLUMINATIONS & ILLUSIONS



Second Street Gallery is a 501(c)3 nonprofit art organization that presents exhibitions of contemporary art and related education programs to Central Virginia. SSG receives funding from individuals, businesses, and foundations through its fundraising and membership and through local and national grants, including the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

# BEATRIX OST

## ILLUMINATIONS & ILLUSIONS

*Curated by*  
Kristen Chiacchia



# INTRODUCTION

*You need to meet Beatrix Ost!*

This was a recurring suggestion that I received from multiple people after I moved to Charlottesville, Virginia in early Autumn 2016. I had recently relocated from New York City and was adjusting to my new life in the South as the newly appointed Director of Second Street Gallery.

Time has a way of getting away from us and it would be a little over two years until I was able to schedule a mutually convenient time to visit Beatrix in her studio. At last I would finally have the opportunity to see these elusive paintings that I had only caught a tiny glimpse of on Instagram – hardly a way to look at art!

I remember the morning of my visit vividly; the elevator opened up to a rather bright and nondescript hallway that felt very sterile, not unlike a doctor's office. For a moment, I thought I might be in the wrong place. But then suddenly, one of the doors in the hallway revealed Beatrix, who invited me inside. I entered the studio and suddenly felt as if I had been transported to another, magical world.

A large canvas sat on an easel in the center of a mostly dark room, save for several small skylights at the top of a very high ceiling. The space was filled with art of all kinds: stylish furniture, decorative antiques, vintage books, and photographs. But most striking were the paintings. As we walked around the space, Beatrix would stop to show me every canvas that occupied her walls. I was shocked to learn that she had painted each one of these hauntingly surreal landscapes and portraits herself.

At some point in the conversation, Beatrix mentioned in passing that she had studied with Oskar Kokoschka. “Oskar Kokoschka?!” My heart swelled in my chest. Suddenly the work adorning the walls made perfect sense. My scholarly focus in Art History is German and Austrian Art between the two World Wars. I had spent years studying Expressionism and had sought out work by Kokoschka and his peers at every opportunity I had, most frequently at the Neue Galerie in New York City. Now I found myself surrounded by an extraordinary neo-Expressionist body of work that was tucked away in a private studio in Charlottesville: each work more interesting than the last, each one painted by Beatrix.

I knew before I left her studio that day that I absolutely had to curate an exhibition at Second Street Gallery with Beatrix Ost.

— Kristen Chiacchia, 2019



*The Hunter Haunted*, 1984

*Kristen Chiacchia received her BA in the History of Art & Architecture from the University of Pittsburgh and her MA in Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies at Columbia University. She also completed a Certificate in Appraisal Studies in Fine and Decorative Arts at New York University. Chiacchia is the Executive Director & Chief Curator of Second Street Gallery in Charlottesville, Virginia. Prior to joining Second Street Gallery, she was Director at Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art in New York, where she organized numerous exhibitions of works by contemporary artists and masters of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art.*



# ILLUMINATIONS & ILLUSIONS

## *A lament.*

If your mind is awakened you know the struggle we wage against an insidious form of helplessness. You pass a majestic tree and you want to bow before the transcendent will which embodies itself in his sophisticated DNA, already tested for its compatibility with the crickets' song in his leaves, the squirrel hiding in the armpits of his branches, the fruit he feeds the friendly bear passing by. As a human, you want to bow and assure every species, including our own, that it will be able to continue in its accustomed round. Our children, too. Yes, they should be in school and not fretting about the future. Let me bow also to that river beneath the bridge, to its fish, its plant life. Let me tread carefully into the grasshopper's realm, the snake's kingdom, the bees' airspace. Let me sing the song of seasons, the glory of the rain, the backbone of the frost. Whatever threatens these things threatens the rose of love. But our science threatens them, our science which has made us so rich. We are guilty of desecrating them all at the height of our intellectual triumph. Where are the roses? Our triumphant mind is threatened at its core. We never envisioned the vulnerability we are living today. The idea that it could be too late does not compute, because it forces us out past the ragged edge of silence. My love is threatened. How could this happen? Indifference slunk in undetected beneath the umbrella of the information age. I wear the frock of helplessness. Don't judge my elegance alone. Don't judge the vulnerability of a flower by its beauty. It is there, and deeply so. It is a reminder, a cloak to cover the struggle, the sadness. My love is threatened.

— Beatrix Ost, 2019

I have known Beatrix Ost and her work for nearly forty years. Over that stretch of time I have observed her profound creativity delve, manifest, and pluck the most exotic visionary fruits. Some of these have luscious, ambrosia tastes and are life, love, and pleasure enhancing, while others caution of sin, abuse, and foolish obsession as they darkly lure the oblivious into a theatre of the unfortunate future.

Beatrix Ost is, herself, Eve, still here walking among us and nudging us to consider this. There is a moving frame around her, the only way we know Eve. A frame from which we peer into Eve's surreal, voluptuous realm—she standing on Eden's promising soil; she holding the famous fruit; she beneath the treacherous spreading tree with the omnipresent coiled snake. Beyond, in the soft distance, the perfect verdant world postulated by God. Oh, except...

I know, from previous conversations on her work, that the painting Ost made long ago of Sigmund Freud as a dramatic and self-sacrificing landscape was a pivotal expressive moment in what would become her mission and soul as an artist: the intercourse between the world of reality and the contraposing realm of imagination, the idea of the mind as an actual destination, and the proposition that one object was ostensibly a surrogate for another. A cloud was more than a cloud—it might as well be a skull, or a pair of lips with something to whisper. That tears were rivers of shared human experience; that birds were nature's sacred messengers. And that people, even the ones we recognize, are strangers playing both a part and a place for our benefit and awakening. And, of course, they are ourselves. These fertile tools of expression buoyed the artist's imagination and early work, as minimalists were clearing their slates of anything representing anything. Those tools continue to function as Ost's implements to share her abiding love of the emotional and physical world, and of this holy ground from which we were shaped. It is about listening to it, observing it, and singing to it.



In perhaps most of Ost's paintings, one finds those goddess-like protagonists in the foreground capturing the viewer's attention. Seductive, fascinating, confident, and sexually powerful in earlier paintings, they evolved to something larger and more archetypal, serving as an intentional motif or symbol for what is going on behind. The revelatory landscape Ost's figures inhabit, gentle, plump and glowing in the earlier work, has begun to heave and ache in these later paintings. Often still greeting each viewer, new female characters hold both fecund possibility and abiding grief for the asymmetrical strength they must call upon against dire conditions. Exhausted they maintain a defense against each assault—they must, as keepers of what remains. Figure groupings in some newer scenes suggest the necessity of gathering forces, huddling together—as protectors, witnesses, and as heirs of an earth scape being so futilely desecrated.

Beatrix Ost's earliest explorations of imbuing her work with resonant mythologies of the environment began, to my knowledge, with a series of majestic goddesses she formed from the mud and branches and burlap collected from around her farm. Towering above the standard-size mortal, they provided a sense of protection. They had an imposing, slightly frightening demeanor like all power figures, and anyone beholding them felt the earth's wellbeing to be in the care of capable guardians. They were seeing without the presence of eyes, they were knowing within their woven earth and burlap minds.

Eventually, that prescient river of tears flowing long ago from Sigmund Freud's eyes, would resurface, revealing itself to be a world over spilling in torrential distress. The Surrealist's tangent of reality and the psychiatrist's nightmare curving briefly towards one another proved instead to be a Venn diagram. We, all of us, bent that curve and bent it again until it encircles and engulfs us. It holds us in with what water we might have left, while outside a drought shaves away the green while tectonic plates unsettle. The prospect is not just a prophesy in the medium and on the plain in Beatrix Ost's landscapes and sculpture. This too, you see, is about listening, observing, and speaking up.

Deborah McLeod, *Director, Chroma Projects*



*The Interpretation of Dreams, 1972*



*Backstage of the Mind*, 1976



*Paradise Paradox*, 1986



*Dusk*, 1986



*Dawn*, 1986



*Illuminations and Illusions*, 1988-2019



*Utopia Lost*, 1992





*Nature Politely Declines - Metamorphosis of Order, 2002*



*The King's Indictment*, 2002-19



*Aphrodite's Well, 2019*



*I Should Be In School, 2019*



*The Edge of Our Silence, 2019*



*Anything is Possible, 2019*



*Responsibility Is a Triumphant Tool, 2019*



*Omnivores' Natural History, 2019*



*Irresponsibility*, 2019



*HearSeeScream*, 1994



*Detail*



*Detail*





*Justice's Shame, 1992*



*You Stole my Future, 1992*



*Tyrants (series of seven pieces), 1994*



*The Last Tree*, 2019



*Detail*



*Let's Create a Garden VII, 2000*

From the exhibition *Archaeology of the Omnivore - Paintings from the Garden Soil* at Chroma Projects



*Let's Create a Garden IX, 2000*

From the exhibition *Archaeology of the Omnivore - Paintings from the Garden Soil* at Chroma Projects

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

*Beatrix Ost: Illuminations & Illusions*  
November 1, 2019 - January 10, 2020  
Second Street Gallery



*The Interpretation of Dreams*  
1972  
Oil on canvas  
24 x 35 inches



*Paradise Paradox*  
1986  
Oil on canvas  
54 x 48 inches



*Backstage of the Mind*  
1976  
Oil on canvas  
14 x 23 inches



*Dusk*  
1986  
Oil on canvas  
52 x 52 inches



*The Hunter Haunted*  
1984  
Oil on canvas  
21 x 16.2 inches



*Dawn*  
1986  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 60 inches



*Illuminations and Illusions*  
1988-2019  
Oil on canvas  
70 x 72 inches



*The King's  
Indictment*  
2002-19  
Oil on canvas  
36 x 66 inches



*Utopia Lost*  
1992  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 60 inches



*Aphrodite's Well*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



*Nature Politely Declines -  
Metamorphosis of Order*  
2002  
Oil on canvas  
66 x 60 inches



*I Should Be In School*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 30 inches



*The Edge of Our Silence*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 60 inches



*Omnivores' Natural History*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 60 inches



*Anything is Possible*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 30 inches



*Irresponsibility*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 30 inches



*Responsibility Is a Triumphant Tool*  
2019  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 30 inches



*HearSeeScream*  
1994  
Gold, wood, bronze and  
binocular  
72 x 24 inches each





*Justice's Shame*  
1992  
Bronze  
22 x 13 x 9 inches



*The Last Tree*  
2019  
Gold, wood, iron, glass, nests  
96 x 60 inches



*You Stole my Future*  
1992  
Bronze  
12 x 12 x 20 inches



*Meditation is Gold*  
2017  
Pine wood, gold leaf  
48 x 40 x 36 inches



*Tyrants (series of seven pieces)*  
1994  
Bronze  
18 x 10 x 7 inches each

*Beatrix Ost: Archaeology of the Omnivore - Paintings from the Garden Soil*

November 1 - November 30, 2019

Chroma Projects



*Let's Create A Garden II*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden VI*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden III*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create a Garden VII*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden IV*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden VIII*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create a Garden IX*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden XII*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create A Garden X*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches



*Let's Create a Garden XI*  
2000  
Red earth on paper  
18 x 24 inches





When Beatrix Ost arrived in New York in 1976, she was already an accomplished artist and actress. Since studying art with Oskar Kokoschka in Salzburg, and psychology and homeopathy in Munich, she has exhibited internationally: *In Search of the Goddess*, *Ten Years of Solitude*, *Beauty is Harsh*, *Love and Other Obstacles*, and *Animal Attraction*, to name a few.

Beatrix has appeared in leading roles on both stage and screen, beginning with *Protokol einer Heirat*; among her credits as producer and screenwriter are *Hearts' Lonely Hunters*, *Killer Venus* and *White Chocolate*. She is the author of short stories and books including *My Father's House*, *More Than Everything*, and her most recent, *The Philosopher's Style*. She also designs jewelry for Article 22, which works to fulfill Princess Diana's wish to eliminate the remains of landmines in war-torn Laos.

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

## **Beatrix Ost: Illuminations & Illusions**

Second Street Gallery, Charlottesville, Virginia

November 1, 2019 - January 10, 2020

The exhibition at Second Street Gallery includes an original score composed by Abel Okugawa, music by Red Flower Lake and a rose oil olfactory experience by Young Living Essential Oils.

Sponsored by



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*Backstage of the Mind, 1976*

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