

## Käthe Kollwitz reloaded: Vom Leben geduckt

Enrique Martínez Celaya is a fan of Käthe Kollwitz. In Galerie Judin, the interpretations of the Los Angeles-based painter can be seen - alongside the originals.

BY CHRISTIANE MEIXNER

It must feel strange when Käthe Kollwitz looks over your shoulder in the studio. But for the Cuban-born artist Enrique Martínez Celaya, this situation is part of everyday life. First, he has a self-portrait by Kollwitz. And secondly, he feels so close to the work of the German expressionist that he constantly compares his own with the quality and messages of Kollwitz's work.

What could be more obvious than letting both works meet? This dialogue takes place at Galerie Judin in Berlin - albeit in an elaborate form, because Martínez Celaya, who has lived in Los Angeles for a long time, dealt directly with the painter and sculptor: his current exhibits reflect famous drawings and reinterpret them while facing the present.

The basis of his occupation was the outstanding collection of Gudrun and Martin Fritsch. In Berlin, the couple are known as experts on Käthe Kollwitz and Martin Fritsch is the founding director of the Kollwitz Museum on Fasanenstrasse, where the artist's life and work are presented. At Galerie Judin you come across an enlarged reproduction of a black and white photograph that shows Kollwitz in the last days of her life. In the spring of 1945 she was sitting on the balcony of her house in Moritzburg, gazing into the seemingly infinite, ready for the last journey.

### Kollwitz's motifs seep into his work

This atmosphere characterizes the entire, museum-like show. The self-portraits from the 1890s also show a young, serious woman whose sensitivity for the suffering of those around her paves its way through her hand into the drawings. The woodcut "Hunger" from 1925 hangs in the exhibition as an example, as does the



gloomy chalk drawing "Death, Woman and Child", on which the living squeeze together in a block so as not to give the angry skeleton on the horizon a chance to get into a gap to ride between them. The other (not for sale) pictures also demonstrate once again the intensity with which Kollwitz realizes her humanistic demands in conversations between mother and child that are as intimate as they are harrowing.

Enrique Martínez Celaya, born in 1964, is visibly touched by this consistency. His own group of works consists of nine paintings, two works on paper and one sculpture, in which he accomplishes far more than mere appropriation. The artist examines how far Kollwitz's universal language fits the present of a pandemic and global refugee crisis. He doesn't have to change much, their motifs seep into his work, are recognizable and yet transformed, because Martínez Celaya also has his own painterly language.

### With great feelings there is danger

He does this brilliantly in "The Long Night" (2020). With oil paint and wax he creates a sparsely lit place where a monumental hand peels out of the dark. The hand carefully touches the chin of a person who is lying down, and you don't know whether it is a lover or a dead person. Kollwitz's counterpart takes place on the battlefield, but the uniqueness of her scene gives way to a floating, ambiguous, fascinating moment in Martínez Celaya's.

There is also another side. The largest picture "The Child's Song" depicts the death of a child - for the original, the artist copied her son as a monumental model. But feelings don't get stronger just because they are transformed into monumental form. On the contrary, they provoke rejection, as the pain and grief threaten to become disproportionate.

*Galerie Judin, Potsdamer Str. 83; through April 10, Tuesday - Saturday 11 am-6pm*