

Kiki Kogelnik

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**Fragments and Masks: Works from the 70s and 80s,**

March 4 - April 8, 2018

Opening Sunday, March 4, from 5-7pm



It is with great pleasure that Simone Subal Gallery announces the opening of *Fragments and Masks: Works from the 70s and 80s* on Sunday, March 4, 2018. The show runs until April 8, 2018. This is the gallery's third presentation of Kogelnik's work. Please join us for the opening on Sunday, March 4 from 5p -7pm.

The Austrian born Kiki Kogelnik (1935 - 1997) spent much of her career in New York. Her earliest works show an affinity for School of Paris style painting, but upon moving to New York in the early 1960s she developed a unique form of Pop Art that rethought the gendered subject through the intersection of science and technology. As her work progressed, a kind of detached-figuration—often created through vinyl cutouts of actual people—grew in complexity, both formally and content wise. Increasingly affected by the power of the Women's Liberation Movement as well as a growing skepticism about the depiction of women in mass media, Kogelnik's paintings, drawings, and graphic works of the 1970s have an uncannily familiar yet absent look to them. The women depicted at first seem all surface, but upon closer inspection they emote a whole range of feelings and sentiments. It is this tension between a precise, isolated form and a fomenting subjectivity that informs the selected works on view. Almost all depict a woman whose visage appears more often than not as a mask or a type of screen. An air of defiance is often present in these pieces, especially in *Untitled (Girl with Cigarette)* from 1974, whose world-weariness portrays the utter rejection of normative social values.

Since the mid 1960s cut outs have been a central aspect of Kogelnik's practice. She has used flattened human forms as either stencils for her paintings, or as sculptural elements that evoke thoughts of flayed skin and the anonymity of fashion. In the late 1970s and 1980s Kogelnik distilled this working method in a group of paintings, drawings, and ceramic wall pieces. Her attention trained mostly to the faces of women—but also to geometric forms— and her use of cutting and fragmentation generated compositions that are both disorienting and oddly liberating. Kogelnik was engaged with the Downtown New York art scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. Her gaze was capacious, and she incorporated in her works a variety of styles and elements she encountered. Yet things like appropriation, as it came to be understood in the 1980s, or a direct involvement with mass media are not immediately present. Instead, she maintains a critical distance, one that allows poignant themes from her past to permeate these vibrant compositions. The use of stencils and repeated patterns, as with *Untitled (Still Life)* [1981] and *Untitled* [1981], hint at ideas of automation and the dehumanization of the subject. The objects and figures seem to float aimlessly in what appears to be a virtual world, like a scene from the 1982 movie *Tron*. The ceramic sculptures like *Untitled (Head)* [1986] only intensifies this feeling; it is like a wisp, fixed to the wall yet disembodied.