

DIRECTIONS

WALTER PICHLER
WORKS ON PAPER

OCTOBER 26, 1988 - JANUARY 22, 1989



One and the Same, 1986. Ink and tempers on paper; 11 x 15 inches. Collection of the artist.

Wenn ich dich nicht beschützen könnte



Fig. 100-101, 1980, W. Pichler

If Only I Could Protect You, 1980. Ink on paper; 17 1/4 x 23 1/4 inches. Collection of the artist.

WALTER PICHLER HAS BEEN WORKING as a sculptor since the early 1960s. His first exhibitions had strong architectural aspects; in fact, in 1963 he issued a manifesto that urged an architecture based on technological forms. In 1967 his work was included in *Visionary Architecture*, the Museum of Modern Art's survey of machine-influenced architectural drawings.

Pichler's primary concern today is the house and studio complex he is designing and building on his land outside Saint Martin, a village in an isolated corner of Austria near the Hungarian and Yugoslav borders. Because his sculptures embody personal beliefs and ideas, he feels they need special care, and he has assumed the responsibility of housing them from the elements and screening them from harm. "I protect my

sculptures. . . . They are things alive. . . . They need houses just like people, they need to be protected like people need to be protected."

The artist's continued interest in architecture is reflected in his drawings as well as his sculptures. Pichler thinks of his drawings as visual representations of past feelings. He produces three types: architectural plans, personal stories, and dream-like images that relate to spontaneous reveries. Many of his drawings combine all three elements. Carefully drawn in line and color, the plans outline prospective projects that may be rendered again in subsequent drawings, analyzed in small-scale models, or actually constructed. Often his subjects are the houses that will hold certain sculptures, as in *View into the Small Tower*, 1983. His more freely drawn images can illustrate stories or depict

memories of his past, as in *Death of Kurt Schapira*, 1976. Some of his images are rich in metaphysical and psychological content, expressing emotions and attitudes even though the specific meaning may be obscure, as in *Dog and Cat*, 1983. He admits that the scenes in some of these drawings come to him like dreams, saying "It all comes from very deep."

Much of Pichler's imagery comes from an area between the conscious and the unconscious. The artist acknowledges that when he drew *Left and Right Side*, 1974, he did not understand the scene or know exactly what he was trying to describe. He considers the work's development "rather miraculous, even to me." The title refers to how the composition is split in half by a vertical line that might be the support for the cross-like structure that seems to float at the top. On the left side, three forms that could be statues stand in a solemn row; on the right, two mysterious figures seem to gesture. Yellow rays that fall diagonally from both arms of the cruciform structure encompass the entire composition like a celestial shower.

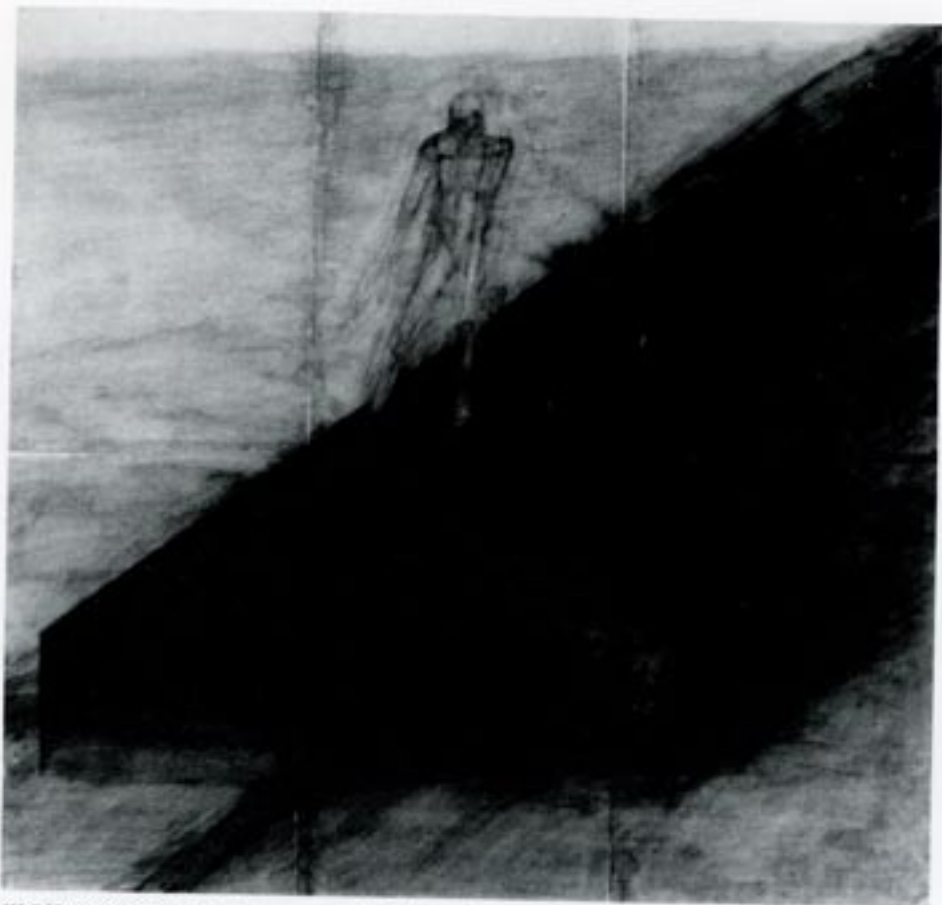
Believing that color creates form on paper, Pichler thinks of it as a material like the wood, metal, and clay of his sculpture. The few colors he uses in his drawings are hues of brown and yellow. Thin and thick washes of these neutral earth colors are often brushed over lines drawn in pencil or ink. Unlike many painters, he avoids seductive color combinations and never uses bright passages in his work.

Whereas *Left and Right Side* seems to have originated in Pichler's subconscious, in *One and the Same*, 1986 (cover), he explores a realm beyond the world of experience, a world where metaphysical concerns are important. The artist has described this work as a person encountering himself. His description of the scene comes close to the dictionary definition of a doppelgänger, a "ghostly double of a live person that haunts him through life and is usually visible only to himself." A dialogue appears to be taking place between the two, as if one person is re-creating his own experiences through a double or questioning the existence of the second (one long arm of the figure on the right appears to be poking the body of the other). While the features of the figure on the right are visible, the other figure is painted with rich earth colors, obscuring its features. The two houses in the top center of the drawing are similar to the houses that protect Pichler's sculptures. This drawing may well represent the artist coming face to face with his creative persona.

When Pichler was young his family was poor. Life was hard on his mother, who died when she was comparatively young. His notion of protecting his sculptures may be a result of his childhood concern for her. He has stated that all his art somehow relates to her. *If Only I Could Protect You*, 1980 (fig. 1)—a man supporting a sad, bowed figure with her hair in a bun—expresses this claim directly. *My Mother's Silver Apron*, 1979, portrays a tall, thin woman seen from the side with face turned away from the viewer. Pencil and brush lines present a strong yet mysterious figure, emphasized by the contrasting areas of white apron and black skirt. The figure stands in an ambiguous space; the faint lines indicate a wall and floor. This almost ghostly figure is suffused with loneliness and memories.

Recollections of his childhood sometimes surface in the artist's drawings, as in *Well House*, 1988 (fig. 2). Rather than a plan for a project, this drawing illustrates a specific story. The house, seen from above, forms a dramatic diagonal element in the composition. A man stands astride the roof as if he were a spirit directing the function of the structure. In the Tyrol such small buildings are still used today to protect the water supply. The artist believes this safekeeping of precious water is similar to his efforts to care for his sculpture. "Concrete houses are built over the wells and covered with grass to help control the temperature, then painted with black asphalt so that water does not come in through the concrete."

Like many sculptors, Pichler produces drawings that document his accomplishments. *The Glass House for the Mobile Figure: View of the Interior of the Glass House*, 1981 (fig. 3), is a section drawing of a house he designed for one of his sculptures that is now installed at Saint Martin. With carefully ruled pen lines brushed with wash he presents a clear analysis of the house, with the sculpture—a metal-jointed mannequin called Mobile Figure—placed on rafters. Within this carefully constructed study the artist has drawn a couple making love in the eaves. Almost ethereal, they appear at odds with the rest of the scene yet introduce an emotional aspect into a composition that is primarily rational and geometric. The artist occasionally inserts such human elements into his drawings. Although seemingly out of place at first, in fact, they do not interfere with the aesthetic or compositional unity. Pichler admits that the couple was meant to illustrate a "a very personal story," as do so many of his works.



Well House, 1988. Pencil and tempera on paper; 23 x 24 inches Collection of the artist.

Occasionally a drawing may refer to the artist's physical being. Pichler considers *Torso*, 1982, something of a self-portrait. This faceless, schematic description of a body has the translucence of an x-ray, with the skeleton drawn in broad, earth-brown brush strokes. The head is a rounded triangular form devoid of expressive facial details. The artist considers the framework upon which he builds his sculptures as important as the surface, or skin, of his finished work. In this drawing he calls attention to the structure that can be considered the core of the human body.

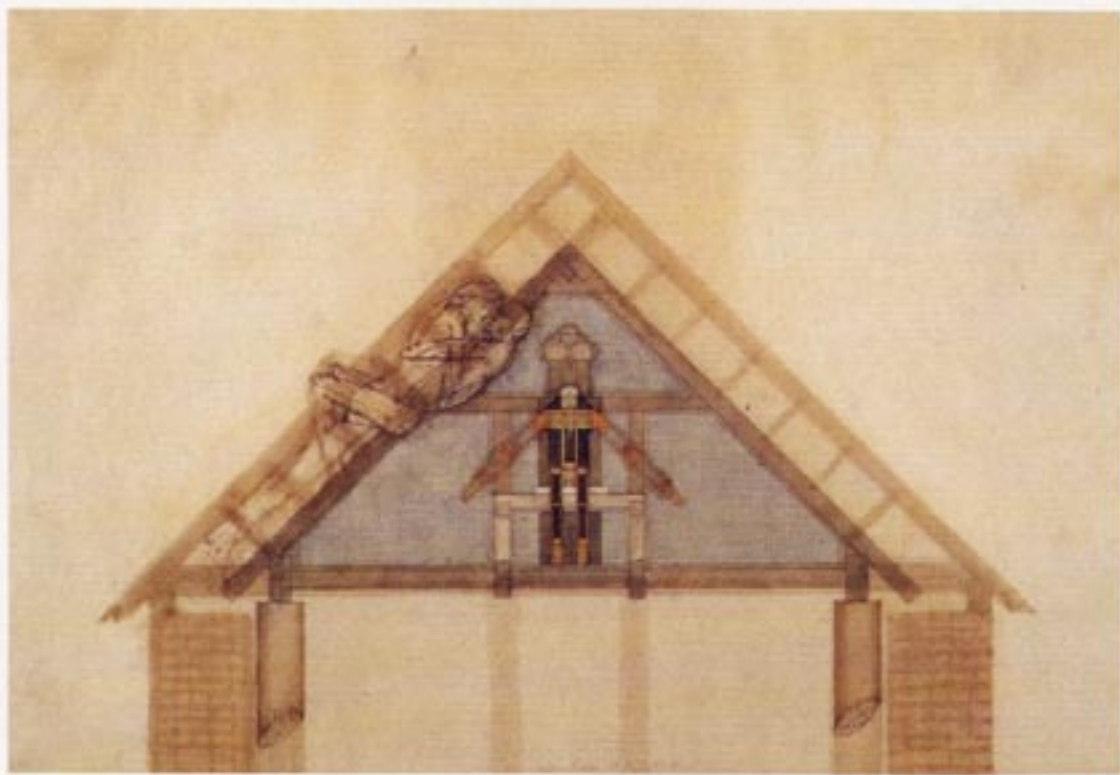
For Walter Pichler, art and life are totally interconnected. The process of working generates ideas and memories that he then incorporates into his drawings

and sculptures. Creating and protecting his art are ritualistic activities. He is convinced that he can express his emotions only through the images he develops. "I do not have any feelings if I do not work." Pichler believes viewers will respond to the images that appear in his work, recognizing in them universal feelings presented in a highly individual way.

Frank Gettings
Curator of Prints and Drawings

All quotes are from a June 1988 interview with the artist.

This exhibition is supported in part by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution Special Exhibition Fund.



The Glass House for the Mobile Figure: View of the Interior of the Glass House, 1981. Pencil, ink, and tempera on paper; 21 1/8 x 31 1/8 inches. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., museum purchase.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Deutschneudorf, South Tyrol, Austria, October 1, 1936.

Educated at the Academy for Applied Art in Vienna, 1955-59.

Awards include Austria's grand prize for the visual arts, which entitles him to lifelong membership in the Kunst-Senat, 1985.

Lives and works in Saint Martin, Austria.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1963 Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, *Architektur* (with Hans Hollein)
- 1966 Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, *Prototypen*
- 1967 Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Visionary Architecture* (with Raimund Abraham and Hans Hollein)
- 1968 Museum Fridericianum, Orangerie im Auepark, Kassel, West Germany, 4. Documenta
- 1969 Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, *Österreichs Stolz* (with Christian Ludwig Attersee); Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf
- 1971 Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna; Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna
- 1972 Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Kunstverein, Kassel
- 1973 Galerie Buchholz, Munich; Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
- 1975 Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Walter Pichler: Projects* (catalog)
- 1977 Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, West Germany (catalog); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; Kunsthalle, Tübingen, West Germany
- 1978 Haus der Kunst, Munich; Leo Castelli Gallery, New York; Israel Museum, Jerusalem
- 1980 Galerie Kiewit, Munich
- 1982 Austrian Pavilion, Venice, 40 Biennale di Venezia
- 1986 Kunsthalle, Bremen, West Germany, *Aspekte der Zeichnung in Österreich, 1960 bis 1980* (catalog); Galerie Ulysses, Vienna, *Walter Pichler Bilder*
- 1987 Städtische Galerie im Städtischen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, *Walter Pichler: Skulpturen, Zeichnungen, Modelle* (catalog)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Michael Andre, "Walter Pichler," *Art News* 74 (November 1975):118.
- Peter Cook, "Walter Pichler: The Fountain-head," *Architectural Review* 169 (April 1981):226-29.
- Hans Hollein, "Walter Pichler/Venice Preview Two," *Studio International* 195 (June 1982):86-87.
- Anne Krauter, "Walter Pichler," *Artforum* 26 (September 1987):142.
- Kate Linker, "Walter Pichler at the Museum of Modern Art," *Art in America* 63 (November/December 1975):101.
- Henry Martin, "Venice, 1982: Or, Is the Biennale Sinking?" *Art International* 25 (September/October 1982):90-93.
- Ida Panice, "Austria," *Artforum* 21 (November 1975):118.
- Max Peintner, *Walter Pichler: Zeichnungen*, Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1973.
- Richard Pommer, "Architecture: Structures for the Imagination," *Art in America* 66 (March/April 1978):75-77.
- Walter Pichler Bilder*, Vienna: Galerie Ulysses, 1986. Text by Christian Reder.
- Walter Pichler: Skulpturen, Gebäude, Projekte*, Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1983.

CHECKLIST

All works are courtesy the artist and Galerie Ulysses, Vienna and New York, unless noted otherwise.

- Family*, 1974. Ink and tempera on paper, 16½ x 23½ inches.
- Left and Right Side*, 1974. Pencil and tempera on paper, 16½ x 23½ inches.
- Red Dress*, 1974. Ink and tempera on paper, 16½ x 11½ inches.
- Death of Kurt Schapira*, 1976. Pencil on paper, 11½ x 8½ inches.
- Death of Mr. Karner*, 1976. Ink on paper, 8½ x 11½ inches.
- Structure to Support the Skulls*, 1976. Ink and tempera on paper, 26½ x 33½ inches. Städtische Galerie im Städtischen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.
- Organpipe Embedded in a Figure of Metal and Clay*, 1977. Ink on paper, 23½ x 31½ inches. John Sailer, Vienna.
- Double Head*, 1978. Tempera on paper, 24½ x 33 inches.
- My Mother's Silver Apron*, 1979. Pencil and tempera on paper, 9½ x 8½ inches.

If Only I Could Protect You, 1980. Ink on paper, 17½ x 23½ inches.

Small Glass House for Both Wagons, 1980. Pencil, ink, and tempera on paper, 24½ x 18½ inches.

The Glass House for the Mobile Figure: View of the Interior of the Glass House, 1981. Pencil, ink, and tempera on paper, 21½ x 31½ inches. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., museum purchase.

The Ever Hurt, 1982. Tempera on paper, 67 x 25½ inches.

Torso, 1982. Tempera on paper, 33½ x 17½ inches.

Dog and Cat, 1983. Pencil and tempera on paper, 16½ x 18½ inches.

The Room Under and Between, 1983. Ink and tempera on paper, 11½ x 8½ inches.

Small Tower, Front View, Ground Plan, 1984. Ink and tempera on paper, 23½ x 11½ inches.

Small Tower, Side View, 1984. Ink and tempera on paper, 16½ x 17½ inches.

Clay House for the Couples, Axonometric, 1985. Ink and tempera on paper, 24 x 33½ inches. Private collection, New York.

The Drinker, 1986. Tempera on paper, 24½ x 33½ inches.

One and the Same, 1986. Ink and tempera on paper, 11 x 15 inches.

Reservoir, Copper House, and Boat, Ground Plan, 1986. Pencil and tempera on paper, 30½ x 24½ inches. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

Reservoir, Copper House, Front View, 1986. Pencil and tempera on paper, 33½ x 24½ inches. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

Reservoir, Copper House, Side View, 1986. Pencil and tempera on paper, 33½ x 24½ inches. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

Cross, 1988. Tempera on paper, 24½ x 30 inches.

Small Tower, Construction Plan, Side View, 1988. Pencil and tempera on paper, 26½ x 35½ inches.

View into the Small Tower, 1988. Pencil and tempera on paper, 33½ x 16½ inches.

Well House, 1988. Pencil and tempera on paper, 23 x 24 inches.



HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND
SCULPTURE GARDEN
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION