

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Frieze Masters

Ilona Keserü

Booth E07

12-16 October 2022

The Regent's Park
London



Stephen Friedman Gallery presents **Ilona Keserü** for Frieze Masters 2022.

With a career extending over seventy years, Keserü is one of Hungary's leading post-war abstract artists. This exhibition focuses on works from the 1970s and early 1980s and demonstrates the breadth of her practice, spanning multiple disciplines including painting, sculpture and work on paper.

Keserü's distinctive approach combines references to Hungarian folk culture with Western European modern art and historic architecture. The artist's organic abstract style developed in defiance of Soviet rule following the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Her liberal use of forms and bold palette expressed a refusal to conform and an affinity with ideals beyond the Iron Curtain.

One year spent in Italy in 1963 led to Keserü becoming influenced by the local architecture, with baroque forms subsequently incorporated into her practice. In the late sixties, the artist undertook an intense period of experimentation, conducting what she refers to as 'colour research'. In many works, swathes of luminous paint form meandering shapes alongside erratic gestural brushstrokes. The corporeal qualities of her curvilinear forms are animated by vibrant, expressive use of colour. Heart-shaped headstones discovered at a cemetery in Balatonudvari in Hungary came to inspire the lobed motifs in paintings for years to come.

Following a pivotal visit to Western Europe in the early 1970s, Keserü proclaimed, "I've decided that I must do what I want, and I must do it in Hungary." From free-flowing curves in her works on paper to rainbow-coloured sculptures, the exhibition demonstrates the playful aspects of Keserü's practice. Highlights include 'Cylinder Robe', 1978 a theatrical installation made from linen. Gallery visitors were originally invited to 'wear' the structure, which would ascend and drop via a pulley operated by an assistant. The installation recalls her work on scene and costume design (1967-76), blending these disciplines with sculpture. Activated by physical presence, the work speaks to Keserü's focus on her audience in a context of censorship and restrictions.

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Ilona Keserü

Ilona Keserü was born in 1933 in Pécs, Hungary and she lives and works in Budapest. From the age of 13 Keserü was taken under the wings of Ferenc Martyn, a painter of Irish origins, who had been a member of the Abstraction Creation group in Paris before moving to Pécs in the late 1940s.

In May 2021 the artist's work was exhibited in the group show 'Women in Abstraction' at Centre Pompidou, Paris, France which travelled to Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, Bilbao, Spain in October 2021. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York included a monumental wall hanging by Keserü from their collection in the group show 'Epic Abstraction: Pollock to Herrera' in 2019. Stephen Friedman Gallery presented the artist's first solo exhibition in London in 2018.

The second volume of Keserü's catalogue raisonné was published in 2021, focusing on works made between 1981–2000. The third volume will be published later this year.

Keserü's work features in the collections of numerous prominent institutions including Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, USA; National Museum of Modern Art, Seoul, South Korea; Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen and Nationalgalerie, Berlin in Germany; Fondation Károlyi, Vence, France; Zentralsparkasse und Kommerzbank, Vienna, Austria; Ludwig Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest; Municipal Gallery, Kiscelli Museum, Budapest; Francia Intézet, Budapest; Kassák Museum, Budapest; Városi Művészeti Múzeum, Győr; Modern Magyar Képtár II., Janus Pannonius Múzeum, Pécs; Szent István Király Múzeum, Székesfehérvár; and Ferenczy Múzeum, Szentendre in Hungary.

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery represents exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration in 1995, the gallery has been based in London on Old Burlington Street, Mayfair. The gallery has three spaces in which it hosts solo and group exhibitions throughout the year. Additional works can be viewed by appointment in private rooms and office spaces. There is also a facility to exhibit outdoor sculpture in a landscaped private garden.