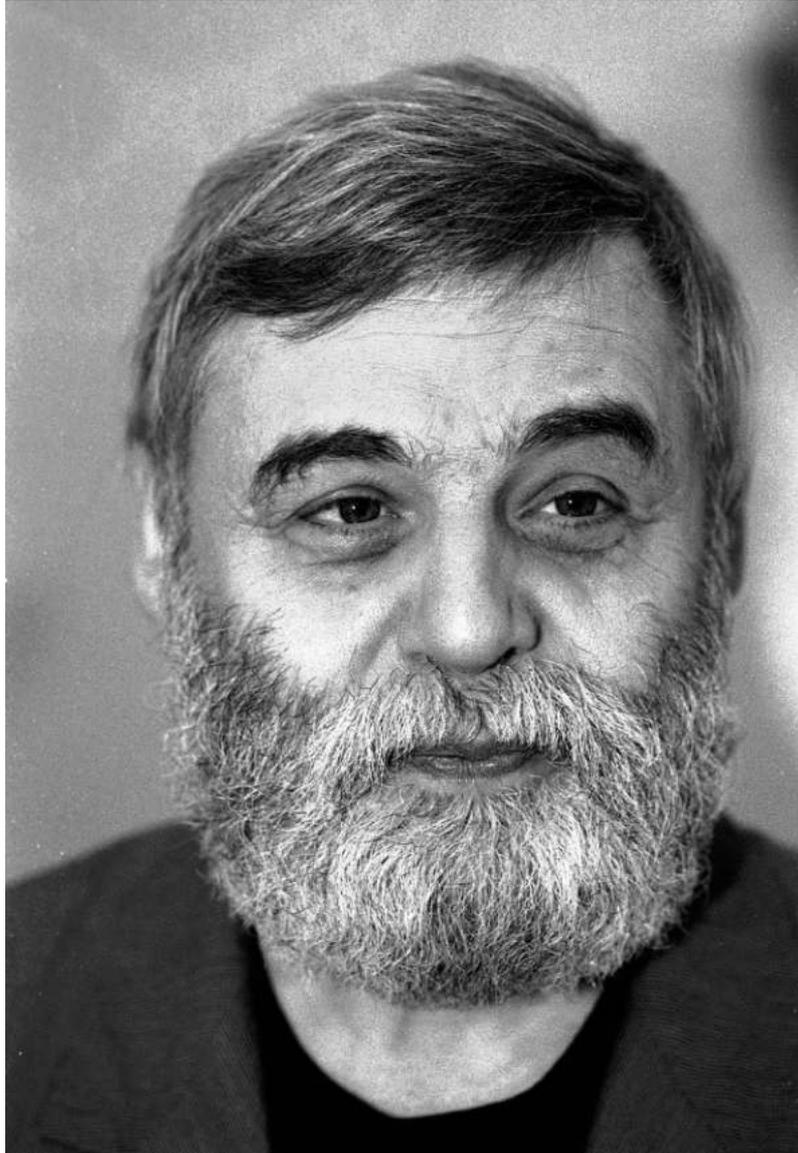


A.R. Penck:  
Stick Figures



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**Ralf Winkler**, alias **A. R. Penck**, who also used the pseudonyms *Mike Hammer*, *T. M.*, *Mickey Spilane*, *Theodor Marx*, "a. Y." or just "Y" (5 October 1939 – 2 May 2017) was a German painter, printmaker, sculptor, and jazz drummer. A neo-expressionist, he became known for his visual style, reminiscent of the influence of primitive art.

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## East Germany (until 1980)

Penck was born in Dresden, Germany. In his early teens, he took painting and drawing lessons with Jürgen Böttcher, known by the pseudonym Strawalde, and joined with him to form the renegade artists' group Erste Phalanx Nedserd [de] ("Dresden" spelled backward). The group sought artistic work without compromise. For this reason, their members refused to study at an academy. The group members were also denied membership in the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR. They, therefore, had to earn a living as workers or craftsmen. He later worked for a year as a trainee draftsman<sup>[3]</sup> at the state advertising agency in Dresden. From 1955 to 1956, Winkler was a draftsman for the publicity agency DEWAG. Since 1956, he attempted but failed to gain admission to the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts and the Berlin University of the Arts in East Berlin. Penck worked for several years as a stoker, a newspaper deliverer, a margarine packer and a night watchman. He also had a small acting role in the film *Vintage 45* (1966), directed by Jürgen Böttcher.

In 1966, Winkler became a candidate to join the Association of Plastic Artists, now under the artistic pseudonym A. R. Penck, which was chosen after the geologist Albrecht Penck. Since 1969, he had increasingly problems with the Ministry of State Security of the GDR. His paintings were confiscated and his membership in the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR (VBK) was rejected.

Winkler was one of the founding members, in May 1971, together with Steffen Terk, Wolfgang Opitz and Harald Gallasch, of the artist group GAP, which existed until 1976. Since 1973, he worked under the pseudonyms Mike Hammer and TM. After serving the military service in 1974, he was awarded the Will Grohmann Prize, in 1975, by the Academy of Arts in West Berlin. By this time, the state security control over him also increased. In 1976, Penck met the West German painter Jörg Immendorff, with whom he would work together in the following years. In their work, they campaigned for the abolition of the inner German border, and for the dissidents, among them Rudolf Bahro and Robert Havemann. Since 1976, he also signed simply Y.

In 1977, he had some of his paintings confiscated. In May 1979, several of his works and records were destroyed during a break-in into his studio.

Penck participated at Documenta 5 in Kassel in 1972, and also at Documenta 7 (1982) and Documenta IX in 1992. He was meant to exhibit at the Documenta 6 (1977), but was prevented to do so by the influence of an unofficial employee of the State Security of the GDR on a Hessian parliamentarian.

### **After 1980**

On 3 August 1980, he moved to West Germany. He first lived in Kerpen, southwest of Cologne. After emigrating, Penck became one of the foremost exponents of new figuration, alongside Jörg Immendorff, Georg Baselitz and Markus Lüpertz. Their work was shown by major museums and galleries in the West throughout the 1980s. They were included in a number of important shows including the famous *Zeitgeist* exhibition in the Martin Gropius Bau museum and the *New Art* show at the Tate in 1983. In 1981, the Goethe Foundation awarded him the Rembrandt Prize in Basel, Switzerland. In 1983, Winkler moved to London, England, and was awarded the Aachen Art Prize for 1985. In 1988 he participated in the exhibition *Made in Cologne*. In the same year, he was appointed professor of painting at the Academy of Arts in Düsseldorf.

After retiring, in 2003, he moved to Dublin, Ireland, where he would live and work the following years. At the time of his death, Penck lived and worked in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Dublin and New York City. He died on 2 May 2017 in Zürich at the age of 77.

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## Works

An autodidact, he created in his paintings "worlds" and "experience spaces", filled with symbolic abbreviations. He used stick figures and graphic icons that seem reminiscent of cave paintings, Asian calligraphy and graffiti art. In the 1960s and 1970s, he created a series of paintings and sculptures that he called Standarts, a conflation of "standard" and "art", with an echo of the German word for banner or flag, *Standarte*. By this term, Penck understood an art form that used simple and archaic pictorial symbols, such as traffic signs or trademarks. In the 1980s, he became known worldwide for his paintings with pictographic, neo-primitivist imagery of human figures and other totemic forms. He was included in many important shows both in London and New York City.

Penck's sculptures, although less known, evoke the same primitive themes as his paintings and drawings and use common materials, such as wood, bottles, cardboard boxes, cans, packing tape, tin and aluminum foil, wire and paste, all done with simplicity and spontaneity.

A keen drummer, he was a member and co-founder, with Frank Wollny, of the free jazz group Triple Trip Touch (aka *T.T.T.* or *TTT*) and had the opportunity to play with some of the best Jazz musicians of the late 1980s, including Butch Morris, Frank Wright, Billy Bang, Louis Moholo and Frank Lowe. He organized events at his country mansion in Heimbach involving installations by Lennie Lee, performances by Anna Homler and paintings by Christine Kuhn, in 1990.

He also wrote poems, essays and theoretical texts.

## **Public collections**

A. R. Penck is represented in many public collections, like the Kunstsammlung Deutsche Bundesbank, in Frankfurt am Main, the Städel Museum, in Frankfurt am Main, the Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, in Duisburg, the Kunsthalle, in Hamburg, the Galerie Neue Meister, in Dresden, the Kunstmuseum Walter, in Augsburg, the Kunstmuseum Bonn, in Bonn, the Ludwig Museum, in Cologne, the Kunstpalais Erlangen, in Erlangen, the Pinakothek der Moderne, in Munich, the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art, in Zürich, the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam, the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, in Strasbourg, the Hugh Lane Gallery, in Dublin, the Berardo Collection Museum, in Lisbon, the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., the Art Institute of Chicago and the Goulandris Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, Greece.

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## A.R. Penck

Standart

1990

Various colored pencils on handmade cardboard

40 x 30 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Standart Deutschland

1996

Pastel and colored pencil on paper

40 x 30 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Herabsteigender - Kontrolle

1995

Pastel and colored pencil on paper

21 x 30 cm



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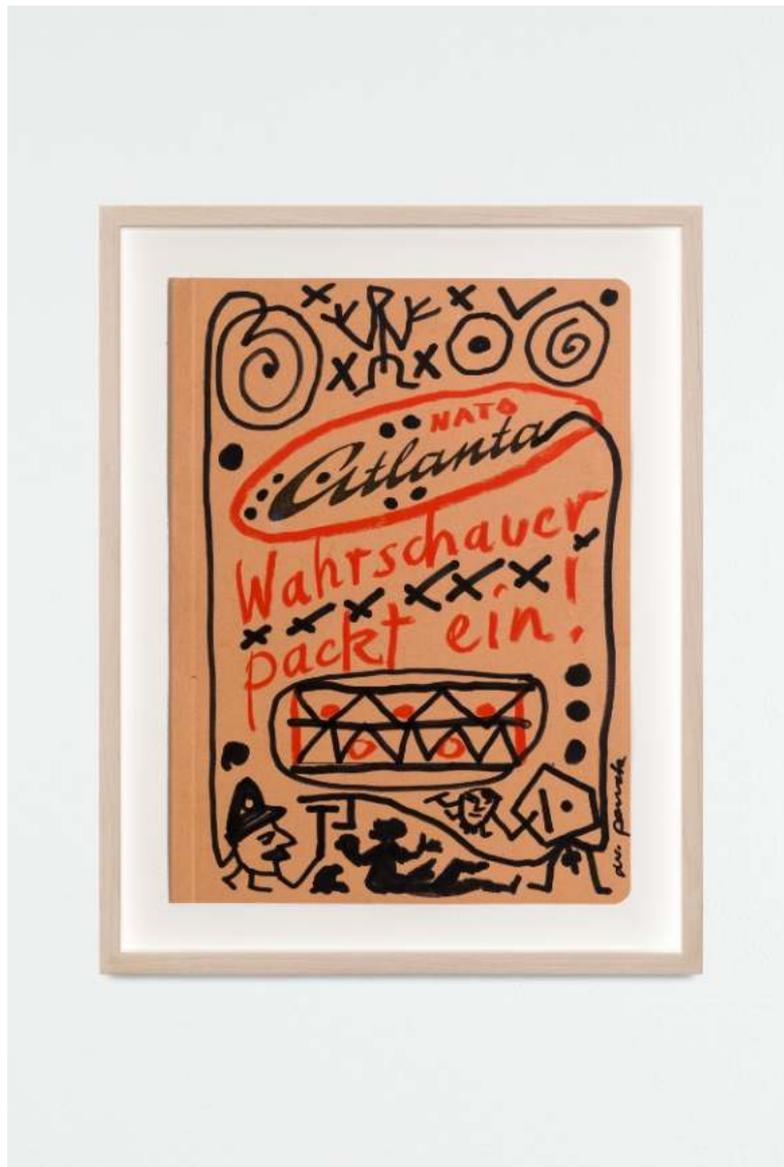
**A.R. Penck**

*Wahrschauer packt ein!*

1990

Felt-tip pen and marker on cardstock

33 x 24.5 cm



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# A.R. Penck

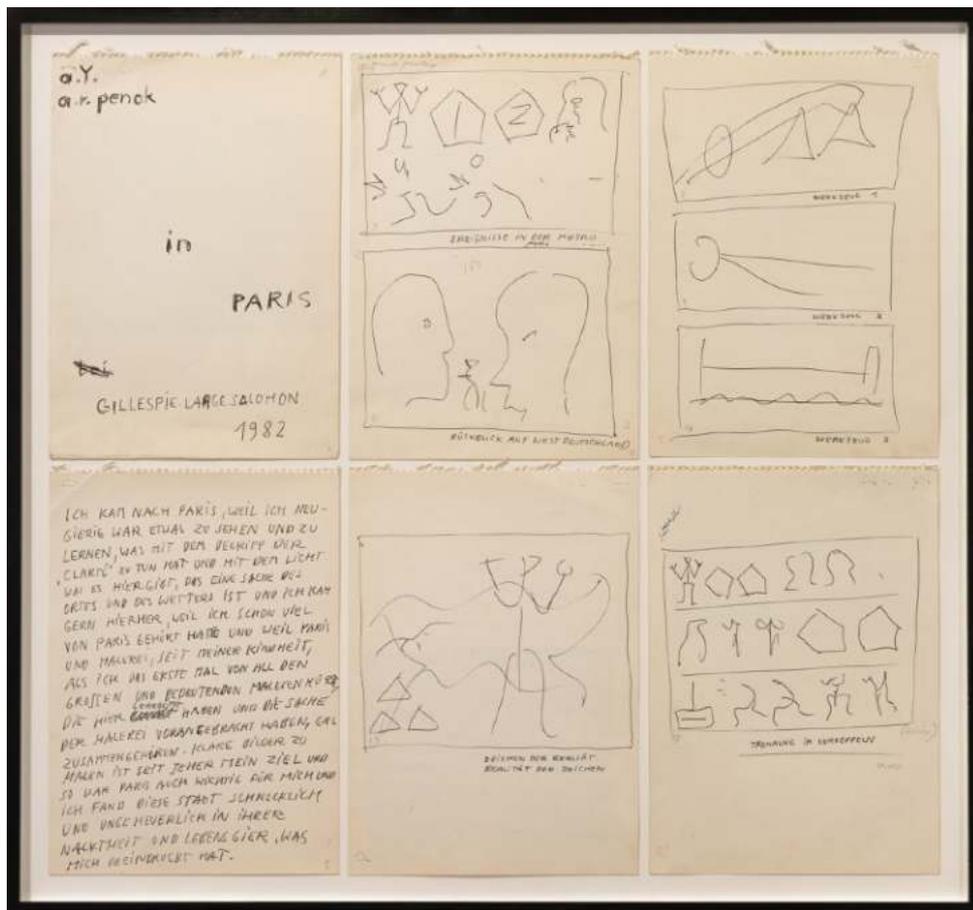
Model of the catalogue of the exhibition at Galerie Gillespie-Laage-Salomon

1981

Ballpoint pen on paper, 6 sheets

Each : 30 x 21 cm

Total : 66 x 72 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Untitled

1993-1996

Acrylic on heavy rag paper

57 × 77 cm



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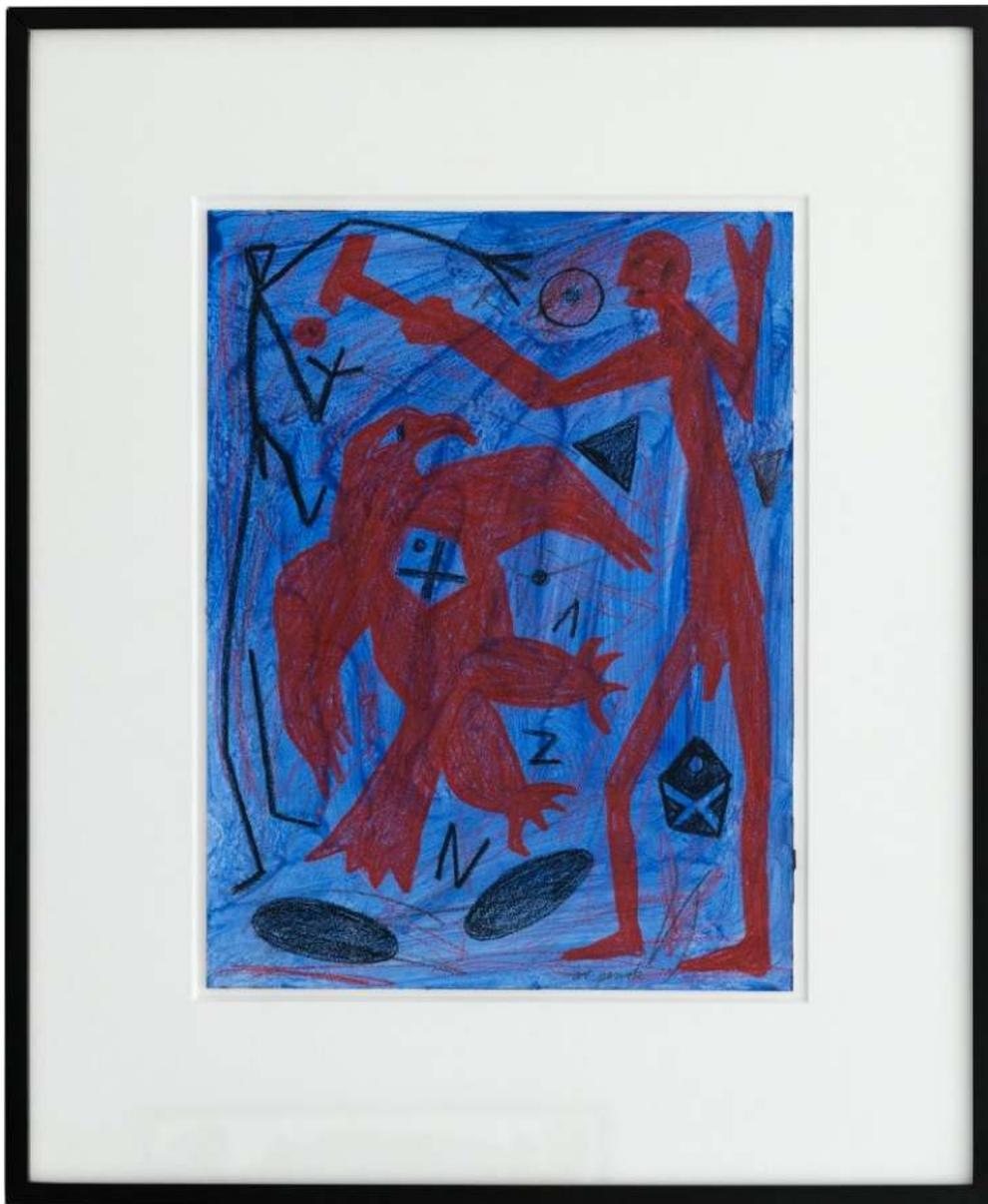
**A.R. Penck**

Über dem Adler Raum

1990

Mixed media on paper

40 x 30 cm



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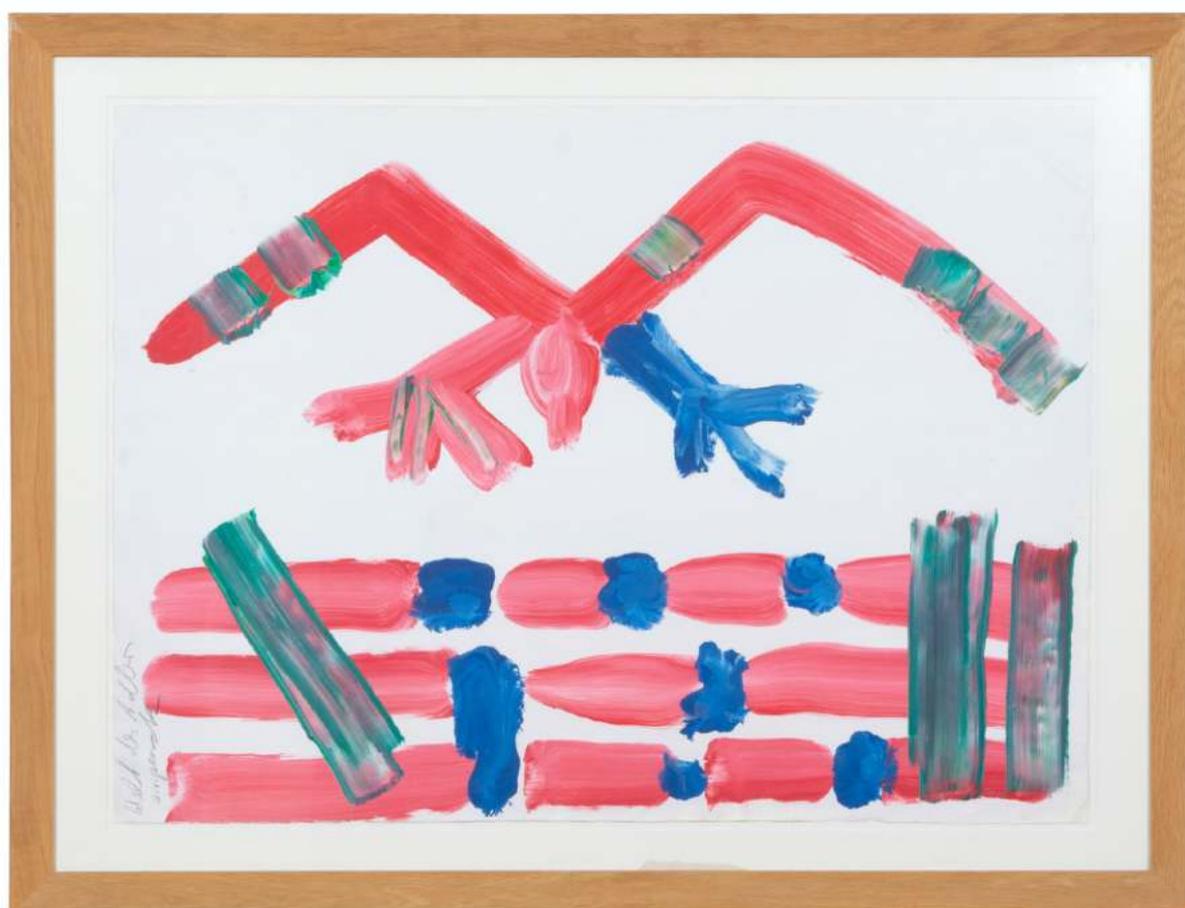
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**A.R. Penck**

Welt des Adlers  
Undated  
Gouache on paper  
78.2 x 106 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Untitled  
1987  
Oil on cardboard  
88 × 42 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

“Man , Scorpio at night “

1993

Oil on canvas

30 x 40 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

*Zufall-Freund oder Feind (Accident-friend or enemy)*

2001

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 100 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Samourai

1991

Acrylic on canvas

53 x 46 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Schritt geometrisch

1999

Oil on canvas

50 x 70 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

Front

2007

Acrylic on canvas

70 x 90 cm



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**A.R. Penck**

TX  
1995  
Steel  
165 x 118 x 5 cm  
2/7 (+ 2 e/a)



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