

# LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

WERNER TÜBKE

1929 Schönebeck – Leipzig 2004

## *Self-Portrait*

Graphite on paper.

Signed: *Tübke* lower centre. Dated: 1970 upper right.

880 x 660 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Germany

The drawing has been assigned the registration number Z 28/70 in the archive of the Tübke-Stiftung in Leipzig.

This large-format self-portrait shows Tübke seated with his legs crossed, his right hand resting on the arm of his chair, his left arm outstretched. He is wearing a long work overall. The ambiguity of the upward gaze and the outstretched arm would certainly seem to indicate that he is not working. The bright tone of the paper around the figure is left untouched, apart from a few broad strokes of hatching at the right of the image, perhaps indicating an indeterminate piece of furniture. The low viewpoint emphasizes the height and angularity of Tübke's figure. It occupies most of the sheet. The date 1970 in large digits in the upper margin – far larger than the letters of the signature at the lower edge of the image – punctuates the picture space like a statement, as if rooting the artist's laborious self-analysis in time.

Tübke was forty-one in the year 1970. He however depicts himself as far older – almost bald, his forehead deeply furrowed – with a harrowed air of authority. It was the year in which he won the competition to execute a monumental mural titled *Working Class and Intelligentsia* for the Rector's Building at Leipzig University.<sup>1</sup> Measuring almost 3 metres by 14 metres, the painting was completed in 1973. The year 1970 saw Tübke at the height of his artistic career. There had been many peaks and troughs. He charted these in numerous self-portraits, sometimes openly, sometimes indirectly. They show him in changing moods and at different phases of his life and career – now defiant, confident, cheerful and boastful; now sceptical, self-critical, volatile and tormented. The high points of his career saw self-portraits in the pose of a *Malerfürst* – the invincible prince of painters – while in other phases he depicted himself as a lone sufferer, a sick man wounded by the world, an anguished *ecce homo* figure.<sup>2</sup>

The present self-portrait may possibly be related to the Leipzig mural, both formally and on grounds of size. Although a self-portrait does not appear in the mural, the pose Tübke adopts in the present

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<sup>1</sup> *Arbeiterklasse und Intelligenz*, mixed media on twelve interlinked panels, 270 x 1380 cm, 1972-3. Signed and dated. Ceremoniously unveiled and presented to the University of Leipzig on 7 July 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Eduard Beaucamp, *Werner Tübke. Meisterblätter*, edited by Herwig Guratzsch, exhib. cat., Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloß Gottorf, Schleswig; Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig; and Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal, Munich 2004-5, p. 30.

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drawing has certain similarities with the stance of a number of figures depicted in the mural. The format of the mural was considerably cut down in the course of execution and this was almost certainly at the expense of a number of figures.



*Tübke at work on Working Class and Intelligentsia, a mural for the Rector's Building at Leipzig University completed in 1973.*