

HUTCHINSON MODERN & CONTEMPORARY

IDES KIHLEN

Ides Kihlen (born 1917, Santa Fe, Argentina – lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Ides Kihlen's childhood was spent on the banks of the Paraná River in the Argentine provinces of Corrientes and el Chaco. Painting has always been a constant in Kihlen's life, as has her passion for music. It was after moving to Buenos Aires that she enrolled at the Escuela de Artes Decorativas (The National School of Decorative Arts), giving rein to a vocation that she still actively and enthusiastically continues to practice to this day at the age of one hundred and two.

For over a decade, Kihlen was Professor Vicente Puig's favorite student at the School of Decorative Arts. She later continued her studies by visiting other artists' studios (including Emilio Pettoruti's, Batlle Planes', and André Lhote's in Paris); pursuing a degree in Art History; and actively frequenting museums around the world. Nothing, however, could interrupt her own deliberate rhythm, and her work developed independently of the artistic trends that were taking place back in Buenos Aires at the time.

Kihlen's artistic process has been an eloquent expression of her personality. She decided, before anything else, to be true to her own internal pace. For long stretches of time, she was more interested in the production of art than in obtaining results. She did not consider herself to be a professional artist, and therefore never attempted to forge a career as an artist. She simply was an artist, and that was enough for her. Furthermore, Kihlen is known to have destroyed much of her work and, for the most part, has neither titled nor dated her paintings.

As a result, Kihlen did not emerge onto the Buenos Aires art scene until shortly after turning sixty years old. While her acrylics and collages are mostly abstract and non-figurative, many of the artist's works contain references to music and lyrical compositions, such as the inclusion of hovering keyboard-like forms, clefs, and staves. Her choice of color palette is at the same time both reserved but also vibrant, and her formal compositions oscillate between exuding a lively, playful energy through incorporating geometric fragments, patterning, and numerical traces, while also presenting windows of negative space that open up into new dimensions where forms float freely across the works' surface.

Mercedes Casanegra has commented on the fact that art and everyday activities are intertwined in inseparable ways throughout Kihlen's life; that painting and drawing are languages that connect the artist to life in a poetic manner. In a way, Kihlen's practice is what comprises her spiritual backbone to the point that, to this very day, the artist's ascetic lifestyle flows in tandem with her work.