

GALERIA HEINRICH EHRHARDT

André Butzer

From February 27th to April 24th 2021

While the painting of André Butzer (Stuttgart, 1973) has followed different paths over the decades and can be classified today, in retrospect, into various periods, types or series, his oeuvre always opens up again to future prospects.

His early paintings under the title *Science-Fiction Expressionism*, which outline his interest in mass culture and advertisements; his images, in which the canvas is seen as a space between the universe and the earth; his later works, which are closer to an abstraction at times more opaque or more transparent; and finally his so called *N-Paintings*, which are progressively covered in black as a manifestation of absolute negativity or the end-point and conclusion of all the images painted up to that moment as well as the place of origin of everything after – all his works are the fruit of the same true intention. Every painting Butzer has made over the last 25 years, considered in its truth, leads us towards an idea of painting as an indivisible whole; painting conceived as both that which has happened and that which is yet to come; painting as both conclusion and source, whose orientations converge on that which is transcendental for the painter: the proportions and relations between colours and planes and human existence.

Butzer's conception of the elements of nature and their representation in painting, at times responding to his own imagination, are evidence of the poetry and art of man.

Removed from a structuralist logic or modern rationalism, vision and poetics – understood as the principles or purest motifs of art – the search for a specific form, composition or theme becomes irrelevant in the face of a greater, spiritual force. In Butzer's own words, images evolve, become legitimised, and together follow a path.

A path along which Giotto, Rembrandt, Cézanne, Munch, Mondrian, Matisse and Walt Disney may be found, but in which the presence of the more recent history of painting and politics is questioned, a period Butzer says he does not feel he belongs to. His different approaches in terms of colour, composition and theme nonetheless pursue the same pictorial truth, an incessant search for the place of painting and its essence, embodied upon the threshold of life and death.

The inhabitants of his paintings, whether the portraits of women or the abstractions of lines and masses of colour (the paintings which form part of Butzer's fourth exhibition at Heinrich Ehrhardt Gallery), all establish the pictorial limits and threshold from which Butzer had to return via his *N-Paintings*. In this return, thanks to the pictorial experience of this threshold, in which blinding apparitions of light reflect an all-embracing idea of painting, the return to other themes, to an abstraction of colours and to the female characters that occupy his paintings acquires real meaning.

Consisting of three new paintings and a selection of seven drawings on paper, this exhibition reveals a new body of work in Butzer's painting. The portrait of the woman who shelters and gathers in this recent work stands in contrast to the immensity of the universe as presented in the new abstract compositions, on which lines and wires intrude and are covered in strange and sudden masses of flesh-like colour. The portraits do not lend themselves to concrete representation; rather, in the universality of their image, they engage with the history of painting itself and, according to Butzer, its corporeal embodiment: this lost encounter between heaven and earth, which could also be the painter's own feminine identity; once again a theory of colour and a creations.

The brushstroke and materiality of a painting in relation to its general idea are also essential elements, with the figure of Cézanne emerging as a necessary reference in this sense. As many of the critics of his own time argued, there was something disconcerting in Cézanne's painting and a certain resistance had to be overcome "in order to approach the radical strangeness of Cézanne's style". From the conjunction of the fragmented, sometimes interrupted brushstroke (which we also find in Butzer) and the panoramic view of the whole emerges a harmony and beauty, the product of Cézanne's intensity and a certain unfinished quality in his works.

For Butzer, painting is refuge and birth; existence and death; the history of man and the narrative of the spirit in the face of the culture of the spectacle. A reflection of the anxieties of the world and of the crisis of modernity; figures of shame but also of joy. And just as was said of Cézanne, Butzer's art is the art of life: re-creating, re-envisioning that which is irremediably under perpetual transformation.

BIO

André Butzer, born in Stuttgart in 1973, lives in Altadena, California.

Since 1996, his paintings have been the subject of numerous institutional exhibitions; solo exhibitions among others at IKOB Museum of Contemporary Art in Eupen, Belgium; Kestnergesellschaft in Hanover, Germany; Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Germany; Kunstverein Reutlingen, Germany; Museum of the Light, Hokuto, Japan; Växjö Konsthall in Växjö, Sweden; and YUZ Museum, Shanghai, China.

Among others, works of his are part of the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Carré d'Art, Nîmes; Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn; Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Hall Art Foundation, Reading; Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin State Museums, Berlin, Germany; Nationalgalerie / Hamburger Bahnhof –Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; LACMA, Los Angeles; MOCA, Los Angeles; Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen; Rubell Museum, Miami; YUZ Museum, Shanghai.