

Werner Büttner

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

16 September – 22 October 2022

Opening: Friday, 16 September, 6 – 8pm

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by **Werner Büttner** from the 1980s, at Goethestraße 2/3 in Berlin.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Werner Büttner became known for his distinctive painterly approach, cultivated at the time under the heading of 'Bad Painting'. In Büttner's work, irony and satire abound. Originally conceived as the antithesis of conventional notions of 'high' art, Büttner's paintings reject attributes of transcendence, elegance, refinement and taste to make subversive and humorous commentaries on society and the *condition humaine*.

Funny, self-reflexive, and absurd, Büttner's work is characterised by an equally poignant integration of language. 'Büttner's art oscillates between image and word,' writes Dr. Alexander Klar, producing 'painting which is just as committed to language as it is to the iconic image. Both language and picture are dominated by the ambivalent but also by the unspeakable, essentially even by the unpaintable.'¹ To Klar, one of the key elements of Büttner's paintings lies in his depictions of the tragedy and futility found in everyday life.

The works in this exhibition, painted between 1981 and 1987, reflect traditional genres and themes of art such as landscapes or still lifes. They are often populated with strange objects and operate with anecdotal pictorial metaphors. Several depict animals, which are given as much importance in Büttner's works as the fate of the human subject, as in *Totes Kaninchen*, 1981, or *Traurige Tropen - Vermessung eines erlegten Krokodils*, 1984. In two of the artist's self-portraits – *Selbst mit gefangenen Gänsen*, 1983, and *Selbst mit Vögelchen*, 1986 – Büttner portrays himself wringing the necks of two flapping geese in one, and cradling a small bird in his hands in the other, his head strikingly cropped from the latter image. Representing the alleged self-portraits in which the role of the artist and his social influence are examined, Büttner presents himself not in a heroic, unassailable pose, but rather as a subject of the everyday, whose actions range from grotesque gestures of empowerment to soft and gentle affection.

In keeping with the artist's deliberate negation, Büttner's works are captivating in their calculated shabbiness: the picture surfaces remain matte, the palette is predominantly limited to greys and earthy browns, and the recognisable pictorial motifs are executed in spontaneous and intrepid brushstrokes. With this strategic anti-attitude, Büttner pursues the defiant return of an artistic medium that was, by the 1970s and 80s, considered obsolete and outdated. Reviving and revitalising the painterly form anew, Büttner elevates in his works a thematic examination of the repressed and neglected spaces in everyday life.



Werner Büttner, *Selbst mit Vögelchen*, 1986
Photo: def image

¹ Prof. Dr. Alexander Klar, 'Werner Büttner: Last Lecture Show', *Hamburger Kunsthalle*, 14 October 2021

Werner Büttner (*1954, Jena, Germany) lives and works in Geesthacht, Germany. The artist has held a post as professor at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts since 1989. Büttner's work has been presented in solo exhibitions at institutions including the Zentrum für Kunst and Medien, Karlsruhe (2013); Kunsthalle Dominikanerkirche, Osnabrück (2006); Kunstverein Bremerhaven (2005); FRAC Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême (2004); L'Espace Sainte Croix, Loudun (2004); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2003); Städtische Museen Romantikerhaus, Jena (1997); Kunstverein Hamburg (1995); Kunstmuseum, Reutlingen (1989); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1988); and Kunstverein München im Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, travelled to: Museum Folkwang, Essen (1987).

Büttner's works are in the collections of the Cincinnati Art Museum; Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; FRAC Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Kunstmuseum Walter im Glaspalast, Augsburg; Ludwig Collection, Aachen; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Museum für Kommunikation, Frankfurt; Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg; Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg; Sammlung Städel Museum, Frankfurt; Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe; Ulster Museum, Belfast; and Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, among others.

Further exhibitions and events:

3 September – 29 October 2022

Victor Man

From Wounds and Starry Dreams
57, rue du Temple, 75004 Paris

15 September – 29 October 2022

Anthony Caro

Six Decades
Potsdamer Straße 77–87, 10785 Berlin

15 September – 29 October 2022

Anthony Caro

Oratorio, 1991–1992
Window Gallery, Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

16 September – 29 October 2022

William N. Copley

Works on Paper
Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623 Berlin

16 September – 29 October 2022

Toby Ziegler

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

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