

André Butzer

First Floor, 41 Dover Street, London W1S 4NS

3 October – 14 December 2024

Opening: Thursday, 3 October, 6 – 8pm

Galerie Max Hetzler, London, is delighted to present **André Butzer's** third solo exhibition in its London space. Comprised of seventeen paintings, specifically created for the occasion, it is a poignant display of the artist's mature mastery.

André Butzer's *Synthetic Paintings* are a challenge to our image of man. The towering, composite bodies are permeated by technology, maltreated by devices and pieces of apparatus, destroyed from within. Though at the very point where the human figure would be negated and disintegrated into abstract pieces, he undertakes a turn. In the face of absolute annihilation, nothing remains but mere existence. A constant foundation for living. From there, Butzer rebuilds his whole image: *Gesundung der Seele durch Bilder (2)* [Healing of the Soul by means of Paintings (2)], 2024. He resolutely realises the substantial oneness of their opposites and unites figures, colours and forms into a planar ornament that pervades the entire painting, thereby reinstating its posture and character. *Gesundheit und Geistesleben* [Well-being and Spiritual Life], 2024, and *Rudolf Steiner in Erinnerung an den Erzengel Michael* [Rudolf Steiner in Memory of the Archangel Michael], 2024, reveal all the more urgently that a dignified life, the integrity of body and soul, is not just under threat in painting but permanently.

In four *N-Paintings*, all 2023 and for the first time painted in colourful hues, Butzer also fathoms the impaired existence of man. As an echo of his original *N-Paintings* (2010–2017), from the elementary relation between the horizontal and the vertical, he creates a pictorial figure that inevitably reveals the finiteness as well as the possibilities of being. In this tremendous condition the *N-Paintings* have their immaterial measure. Butzer accentuates that paintings never are found upon their motival or material surface: 'Visibility is no goal, it's almost the other way around. The so-called world has to be concealed in order to be looked at.' Images of the soul. In imageless immediacy, each *N-Painting* is unique, unrepeatable, individual. An invitation to question our wavering stand in the world.

While Butzer's *N-Paintings* preserved all chromaticity in a potentiality of light and darkness, he now allows the colours to spring forth from them again and spread out as a dazzlingly iridescent stream of individual brushstrokes on four untitled paintings, all 2023. Prudently, these brushstrokes ponder, modulate and shift the primary colours red, yellow and blue, complemented by some flesh tones. This gradual coming-into-their-own of the images lays bare the building blocks as well as the colouristic and historical heritage of Butzer's paintings, which are neither merely figurative nor merely abstract but complete beings of the unison and presence of colour. Every layer, block or patch of colour coheres



André Butzer
Gesundheit und Geistesleben, 2024
Photo: def image

with the basic directions of the canvas. Contrary to their opulent dispersion, all expressive marks mutually resonate with one another, thereby creating the delicate balance of the painterly whole.

In *Untitled, 2023*, a *Woman* in red robes appears. She is wreathed by a radiating aureole of yellow blocks, like her, embedded within a deep blue. Delicate yet vigorous, the interplay of primary colours locates the painting in another sphere, in a heavenly place amidst the stars. Then, the *Woman* is a 'Madonna among the Stars'. With graceful majesty, she is enthroned in the eighth celestial circle, the heaven of the fixed stars: 'Celestial Lady! I will hover; long as thou / thy Son shalt follow, and diviner joy / shall from thy presence gild the highest sphere. // Thus taken shape the circling melody had: / and, as it ended, all the other lights / took up its tune and chanted Mary's name. // The robe, that with its regal folds enwraps / the world, and with the nearer breath of God / doth burn and quiver' (Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso: Canto 23*). Painterly, Butzer shapes the image as a threshold between earthly futility and heavenly capability, between us, who are bound in this world, and that which is concealed in the beyond: 'Here is the might and here the wisdom, which did open lay / the path that had been yearned for so long, / between high heaven and the earth.'

Here, however, in *Untitled, 2023*, the *Woman* in a brown dress, with bright blue eyes and golden hair, streaked in waves and ribbons, is simply there. Empathetically integrated into the brown colour field surrounding her with a golden shimmer. As if she dwelt in her own potential. As a young girl, as a woman. Figure, colours and plane open up to each other and merge. Intimate and sensitive, moving, full of sorrow and longing, all parts of the image are attuned to one another, none of them unseen. Harmony, humility, fundamental being-there. In her ostensible seriality, each *Woman* is a soulful individual with a unique temperament. And if the canvas is the place of colour and colour is the place of appearance, calmly and exaltedly they emerge in and out of themselves.

Untitled, 2023, unexpectedly opens up an interior space. Although a single *Woman's* head floats upon a flat red plane, this does not at all exhaust the painting. It expands into an enormous colour space. Butzer takes all spatial relations—left / right, top / bottom, front / back, near / far—as one. The red is not only a surrounding colour, it rather becomes the place of the image itself. The *Woman's* gaze surpasses what is merely visible. Or does she decorate a table with fruit? Almost a still life then. Colours and forms become vessels and Matisse lemons, and lemons and vessels become forms and colours once more. Everything comes into and out of appearance and for Butzer, painting realises itself in this cyclical process of passing and returning. A painting, which is filled with the world, because it extends from the innermost soul to heaven.

Two further paintings express this experience in all simplicity: table, window, room, house, garden, fruit tree, meadow, forest, pine, birch, river. Both *Frau im Garten* [Woman in the Garden], 2023, as well as *Frau im Garten (27. August)* [Woman in the Garden (27 August)], 2023, are fully immersed in the colour landscapes that encompass them. They merge into the all-encompassing presence of colour. The totality of the

colouristic relational being far exceeds the figures. In lush abundance, Butzer scatters blocks and patches of colour across luminous reddish brown or intertwines them with violet and orange, green and red planes, which challenge, repel, affectionately lean towards and equally support each other. However, these colour clods are just as much fertile soil, earthy pathways, patches and plots, trellises, walls of houses and sheds, foliage and blossoms of shrubs and flowers, oranges and peaches. And 'the woman,' says Butzer, 'is not a figure, the entire painting is a woman. It's in a garden. I service the landscape and the garden.'

Christian Malycha

André Butzer (b. 1973, Stuttgart) lives in Berlin. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held in international institutions including Gesellschaft für Gegenwartskunst, Augsburg; Museo Novecento, Florence; Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence; St. Nikolaus, Innsbruck; nw9 -Kunstraum der Stiftung Kunstwissenschaft, Cologne (all 2024); Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Keibel Villa | Oberpfälzer Künstlerhaus, Schwandorf; Mieltinen Collection, Berlin; Kunstverein Friedrichshafen (all 2023); Friedrichs Foundation, Weidingen (2022); Yuz Museum, Shanghai; Museum of the Light, Hokuto (both 2020); IKOB Musée d'Art Contemporain, Eupen (2018); Växjö Konsthall, Växjö (2017); Bayerisches Armeemuseum, Ingolstadt; Neue Galerie Gladbeck (both 2016); Kunstverein Reutlingen (2015); Halle für Kunst, Graz (2014); Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover; Kunsthistorisches Museum / Theseustempel, Vienna (both 2011); Kunsthalle Nuremberg (2009); Kunstverein Ulm (2005); and Kunstverein Heilbronn (2004), among others.

Butzer's works are in the collections of Aishti Foundation, Beirut; Art Institute of Chicago; Aurora Museum, Shanghai; Carré d'Art, Nîmes; Children's Museum of the Arts, New York; CICA Center of International Contemporary Art, Vancouver; Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Friedrichs Foundation, Weidingen / Bonn; Galerie moderního umění, Hradci Králové; Galerie Stadt Sindelfingen; Hall Art Foundation, Reading / VT | Derneburg; Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin; Hölderlinturm, Tübingen; IKOB Musée d'Art Contemporain, Eupen; Kupferstichkabinett / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin; LACMA Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Marciano Art Collection, Los Angeles; MARE Museum, Bucharest; MOCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Musée d'art Moderne de Paris; Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Museo Novecento, Florence; Museum Reinhard Ernst, Wiesbaden; Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Rubell Museum, Miami; Sammlung Goetz, Munich; Space K, Seoul; Ståhl Collection, Norrköping; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus / Gabriele Münter- und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich; Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck; University of Washington, Seattle; Wooyang Museum of Contemporary Art, Gyeongju-si; and Yuz Museum, Shanghai, among others.

Further exhibitions and events

Berlin:

7 September – 26 October 2024

Friedrich Kunath

One Day I'll Follow the Byrds (Tutto Pasta)

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623

7 September – 26 October 2024

Danielle Mckinney

Haven

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623

14 September – 2 November 2024

Albert Oehlen

Schweinekubismus

Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785

9 November – 21 December 2024

Jeremy Demester

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623

9 November – 21 December 2024

Rineke Dijkstra

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623

15 November 2024 – 18 January 2025

Louise Bonnet

Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785

Paris:

14 October – 18 December 2024

Glenn Brown

In the Altogether

46 & 57, rue du Temple, 75004

Marfa:

9 May – 8 December 2024

Katharina Grosse

The Super Eight

1976 Antelope Hills Road

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