

ANDRÉ BUTZER

1 Eis, bitte! (1999)

London: 41 Dover Street, 13 November 2018 – 8 February 2019



André Butzer, 1 Eis, bitte!, 1999

Galerie Max Hetzler is delighted to announce a solo exhibition of early paintings by **André Butzer** to inaugurate its London space.

The first dedicated exhibition of the artist's seminal "Science-Fiction-Expressionism" series in the UK, *1 Eis, bitte!* (1999) features works from 1999 – 2000 and one large-scale painting from the "N-Bilder" ("N-Paintings") dated 2011.

The exhibition title *1 Eis, bitte!* (1 Ice-cream Please), is taken from one of the paintings included and can be seen as referencing Butzer's first solo show at Galerie

Max Hetzler Berlin in 2003 - *Chips und Pepsi und Medizin* (Chips and Pepsi and Medicine). Whilst both titles are playful in their casual spoken nature, Butzer wryly critiques commodity aesthetics through the allusion to products of mass consumption and branded identities. At the same time, aware of the contradictions at play, Butzer lures in the viewer through his deliberate use of bright colours and enlivened compositions.

At times using enamel from spray cans and oil paint directly from the tube without first mixing it, Butzer further engages with themes of mass consumption and the ready-made by employing products which are industrially manufactured. Squeezing the paint directly from the tube onto the canvas, without the medium of a brush, creates a physical distance between the hand of the artist and the textured surface of the painting.

An assault on the twentieth-century canon, in particular Pop art, "Science-Fiction-Expressionism" represents for Butzer a means to transform the past into the future in optical terms: *"For me, it should be something eternal, like an expressive machine that works and calculates in an irrational manner. An eventful, but calm element between life and death that measures the future. The term science fiction caught my eye, since we do not know what it truly is but the term extends to our present nonetheless."*

Arriving at painting through the cartoons and comics of his youth, Butzer's artistic influences range far and wide from Asger Jorn, Edvard Munch, Piero della Francesca, Philip Guston and German Expressionism to Walt Disney and Henry Ford – influencers of culture and industry on a mass scale.

Contrasted with the jocular title of the exhibition, works such as *Seuche in USA (Epidemic in the USA)*, 2000 and *Schande (Teil 2)* (Shame Part 2), 2000 highlight the different realms at work in the paintings. Bridging the trauma of Germany's history of terror and violence with American dreams of utopia, the paintings refuse to conform to a simple reading of good versus evil. Instead Butzer strives to find balance amidst the chaos and contractions. He unites the opposing elements of life and death, horror and beauty, hope and despair to make visible that which cannot be represented in the world.

Populated by anarchic and grotesque figures, the artist explores the existential condition through these imaginary creatures. In works such as *Ex-Menschen* (Ex-Humans), 1999 the alien-like figures appear as detached puppets controlled by invisible hands, in other paintings such as *Schande (Teil 2)* (Shame Part 2) the figure is identified by its bulging eyes, jellyfish head and Mickey Mouse boots. The oversized features lend the figure a comic air that

masks its more sinister intent. Representing types of the industrial age, destroyed by war and terror or mass consumption, these characters highlight the serious political and social undertone of Butzer's early paintings.

"in the beginning there is as much as possible. You include everything you've got in the paintings, colour, form, expression, themes, contradictions. And then you have a certain amount of time to throw it out again..."

Moving away from the saturation of many colours and motifs in the early paintings, *Untitled*, 2011, from Butzer's "N-Bilder" series, addresses the potential for painting as a means for expression from another extreme. Apparently reduced, but in fact increased to its essentials, the flat expanse of the grey surface provides a unified pictorial plane on which the vertical and horizontal forms compliment each other. Inspired by a figurative drawing by Luca Signorelli found in Cézanne's studio of a living vertical body carrying a dead horizontal body, the abstracted forms in *Untitled* serve as a metaphor for the human condition. Offering a new beginning and fertile new ground, the "N-Bilder" continue Butzer's exploration of painting and life across time and genres:

"I believe in painting as one of the sources of life. It's not that life is represented in painting, it's that painting has been bringing up life, always like light."

André Butzer was born in 1973, Stuttgart. The artist lives and works in Los Angeles. Solo shows of his work have been organised by institutions including the IKOB – Museum of Contemporary Art, Eupen (2018); Växjö Konsthall (2017); Bayerisches Armeemuseum, Ingoldstadt and Neue Galerie, Gladbeck (both 2016); Kunstverein Reutlingen (2015); Künstlerhaus – Halle für Kunst und Medien, Graz (2014); Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover and Kunsthistorisches Museum – CAC Contemporary Art Club im Theseustempel, Vienna (both 2011). His work is in the collections of the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Carre d'art, Nîmes; MOCA, Los Angeles; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix; MONA, Tasmania; Marciano Collection, Los Angeles and Rubell Family, Miami, among others.

Further exhibitions, events and fair participations:

Albert Oehlen

13 October – 21 December 2018
57, rue du Temple 75004 Paris

Charles Gaines

9 November - 22 December 2018
Opening: 9 November, 6-8 pm
Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

True Stories. A Show Related to an Era – The Eighties: Part II

curated by Peter Pakesch
9 November 2018 - 9 February 2019
Opening: 9 November, 6-8 pm, with a DJ set by Gudrun Gut
Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

Talk Peter Pakesch

in conversation with Wilhelm Schürmann, Heimo Zobernig and Bettina Steinbrügge
15 November 2018, 6.30 pm
Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin
space is limited, please register at info@maxhetzler.com

Art Basel Miami Beach

6 – 9 December 2018

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