

# METRO PICTURES

## *Painting and Threshold*

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How can, how should André Butzer's recent paintings be understood? What has happened to the artist, respectively to his oeuvre, that was long known for squandering paint in an expressive alienation that is bordering to the irrational and beyond (of course in a controlled manner).

Butzer always took figurations as a starting point, he has developed their form, in or as a picture, providing them with names and terms of an unspeakable German and also American past, as image and language, that are created in a seemingly clueless, self-evident, but also brute manner. If we compare these earlier, more calculated eruptions with the present (a present that however lasts already for three years), then our access to his painted world seems to be strangely locked for the meantime. The dramatic but at the same time grotesque and colorful statements are possibly given way to a kind of inclusion: Color has superficially disappeared, as well as all figurations have. Did only a formal framework remain, or take the place of the previous, a prop, an ornament or a skeleton, that seems to oscillate between a stretched linear manner and a filled area. So, where have the colored cable-strands or the *Friedens-Siemense* and the other staff gone with their concurrently enchanting as well as malicious grin? But – we remember – they already had disappeared in-between. Their balloon-heads had grown, puffed up and finally exploded or imploded. Their physical being came down onto the image surface as dark, brown-greyish clumps and sauces, as a kind of atomic, carnally-incarnated fall-out (The so-called *Haselnuß*-paintings from 2004). Hence the existence of these creatures was endangered and at risk, as it is with all of us who live and have to live in an everlasting post-war period, at the beginning of the 21st century.

Despite of all the seemingly non-being, or the no-longer-being, despite of all the extermination that lashes around, respectively where André Butzer tenderly lashes around with, or has lashed around with, despite of all the being, that in favor of another being is dismantled and has dissolved into contrasting colored air: what he puts into the picture, or more specifically what comes out of the picture is what the picture itself forces, what it needs to get out, not only out of the tubes of paint, and not only out of the painter's brain, but out of his whole being. Everything is a pictorial appearance, a puzzling appearance without enigma. The picture has the nature of a creature, who obeys or has to obey the laws of life respectively the laws of death: the peculiar diversity in the unity of the species.

With his actual paintings Butzer has not created a series or a printed edition, that could be repeated and pursued mechanically, or could be forced to a mechanical repetition. The painter instead reveals the individual in the context of the only seemingly equal; a mystery of creation that he has not invented as such. The diversity and the complexity of his paintings consist of a different handling of the surface and brushwork, of varying colors and materiality of color, rich and/or glistening color-tones and so on, and likewise in different color-spaces, that seem to come forward and retreat. The coloristically pointed, respectively coloristically "escalating" and expanding black and white areas are active: they are moving gently. And there are significant differences in the specific execution of the elements that determine the image: forms and relations are always balanced differently and are never applicable – sometimes more heavy and solid, then again more easily and nearly vibrating ethereally, devoted towards heaven.

So it only seems at first glance that André Butzer is painting the same picture already since years. But perhaps, in a special way, he can not do any other, probably also he needs to "obey". He, the supposed inventor and ruler of pictures; perhaps also he has to follow some kind of law, if he does not want to be pretentious or naive. At least, one has to submit to the laws that want to pass through the artist (and not only through him but through everyone). It is important to follow these laws that appear in the form of art, that manifest themselves as images.

Is André Butzer a romantic spirit? Is it compelling to observe and to recognize the traces of being in everything? Perhaps, but Butzer also knows what romanticism feared, but could not stop either: the unleashing of a fatal industrial culture and a the pervasive instability of a brought down Modernism, the violence of destruction that

among others is typical for the 20th century, with its two World Wars and its industrially practised form of mass murder.

Butzer reacts to the infiltration of industrial culture into art that occurred in the form of the Ready-Made. For him the actual Ready-Made is already the right angle, an applicable measurement developed by man and established in form of a law. Butzer's paintings invoke this Ready-Made, but destroy it simultaneously on the spot.

The right or the alleged right measure was always decisive and dominant, for instance concerning the proportions for the representation of figures at the Gothic Cathedrals, whose over length bodies derived from a description of the measurements from Noah's Ark. To deal nowadays as an artist with questions of measurement of course means much more than picking up or even reviving a curious and anti-naturalistic compulsory system of the past. André Butzer is concerned with consciously putting his concentration at the precise examination of the picture and its background against the supremacy of so-called contemporary art. Butzer namely does not construct or paint rectangles, his pictures create conditions. In his art there is no constructivism. To understand or to experience that, the viewer needs to empathize intensively with the paintings. The new creations can only unfold and give weight to their meaning as threshold-pictures in form of meditation or contemplation. The pictorial itself thereby is the threshold, there is no "simple" hereafter, no respective before or after, nor is there an ordinary surface of the picture, respectively of the threshold. What is oscillating in the painting is the actual dimension of the picture without size or space. Every picture can be understood as a proportion of light that in his uniqueness refers to the never ending beginning of life and death.

The "long end" of Pop Art and the supremacy of the Ready-Made that Butzer's pictures want to transcend, is of course the status quo of the current situation in art. The question connected therewith is: Is it possible to come out of the present situation, a zeitgeist, that on the one hand somehow has forfeited its vitality, and on the other hand, although being dominant, only appears in a Postmodern "coloring": in form of citations, as picked-up-again-elements of a second and third order. Butzer's paintings are a response to this challenging, self-contained Modernism-Postmodernism-problem, that appears as a closed circuit, a vicious circle, that one should try to burst open. Certainly also this endeavor could be classified as modern – as an Avantgardistic forward-thrust that was distinctive for Modernism. But still a vital momentum seems to be essential, otherwise we still move around in a vicious slurry of Neo-Modernistic thrusts. These drift, meanwhile weakened in many cases and broken down, into formal and too tasty phenomena.

However, in Butzer's paintings we feel: His former expressive exuberance was aiming at the same, a dimension, where also his recent, decidedly creations are targeting. They demonstrate the attempt and the endeavor to dwell at the threshold with an emphatic and firm, somehow eternally recurring, but never repeated "last picture" or "first picture". The paintings not only aim at something that lies ahead, but project from a future, respectively indicate back from a prospective and place a moving marker, a careful measurement.