

## Werner Büttner

*Malerei 1981–2022*

Bleibtreustraße 45 and 15/16, 10623 Berlin

23 June – 19 August 2023

Opening: Friday, 23 June, 6 – 8pm

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to present *Malerei 1981–2022*, a solo exhibition of **Werner Büttner's** work at Bleibtreustraße 45 and 15/16 in Berlin. This is the artist's tenth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Absurdity, irony and ambivalence play a central role in Werner Büttner's paintings, which gained recognition in the late 1970s under the term 'Bad Painting'. Motifs of classical modernism are reworked, sometimes with the help of linguistic elements, and thus become unflinching commentaries on society and the broader *condition humaine*. 'The generation before us – the conceptual artists – had declared painting as an outdated, bourgeois medium to be abolished. This prohibition had to be broken by us descendants, out of defiance, for distinction, and because the laws of generation demand it. And so, in juvenile presumption, I took hold of almost all known categories of painting – still lifes, self-portraits, animal pictures, seascapes, history painting, religious subjects, etc.', the artist explains.<sup>1</sup>

This exhibition comprises works from a creative period of over 40 years, offering an impressive insight into Büttner's practice. The impasto painting, applied in rapid brushstrokes and *alla prima* (wet-on-wet), lends the works a coarseness that is further emphasised by the typical artist's frames made of wooden slats. Isolated splashes and streaks of paint, created by the explosive movements of the brush, reinforce the dynamism and power of the paintings. In the later works, this fast technique is replaced by a more precise painterly style, yielding images with a greater intellectual and visual subtlety. A block of drawings and a group of sculptures by the artist will also be shown at Bleibtreustraße 15/16.

The works in the exhibition are diverse in their subjects, ranging from depictions of animals to images of objects, food and body parts. In *Düsenjäger, Kind und Seevogel* (Jet Fighter, Child and Seabird), 1981, the artist presents a seascape, while his painting *Moderne Kunst I* (Modern Art I), 1981, serves as a memento mori. The trenchant and often ironic titles play an essential role. *Das war's dann also* (So That's It Then), 1998, depicts a reclining female nude as if secondary to the comic-like deer skin sprawled out at the forefront of the painting. The composition's background is filled with red and white stripes reminiscent of the American flag. In *Stalin*, 1985, a rather atypical history painting, only the dictator's supposed boots are depicted. The communist symbols of the hammer and sickle reappear



Werner Büttner, *Das war's dann also*, 1998  
Photo: def image

<sup>1</sup> W. Büttner, quoted in *Zuweilen ist Ehrlichkeit die eleganteste Maske. Thomas Eller im Gespräch mit Werner Büttner*, Fürth: Starfruit Publications, 2022, p. 36

in the painting *Düsterer Nachruf* (Gloomy Obituary) from 2022. Open to interpretation, yet always one step removed from the rational, these works allow us to immerse ourselves in Büttner's complex world of creation. Ultimately, despite their manifold allegorical interpretative possibilities, these images are primarily to be understood as an expression of an outlook on life: 'if it is a good picture, it always contains a non-rationalisable remnant. We should joyfully accept that', the artist states.<sup>2</sup>

**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 Hamburger Kunsthalle (2021); 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; Kunstmuseum Walter im Glaspalast, Augsburg; Ludwig Forum, Aachen; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Museum für Kommunikation, Frankfurt am Main; Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe; Ulster Museum, Belfast; and Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, among others.

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<sup>2</sup> W. Büttner, quoted in *Zuweilen ist Ehrlichkeit die eleganteste Maske. Thomas Eller im Gespräch mit Werner Büttner*, Fürth: Starfruit Publications, 2022, p. 28

Further exhibitions and events

Berlin:

9 June – 19 August 2023

**Bridget Riley**

*Wall Works 1983–2023*

Potsdamer Straße 77–87, 10785

23 June – 19 August 2023

**das gelbe Licht 6 Uhr nachmittags**

**Remembering, envisioning, sensing landscape**

Darren Almond, Georg Baselitz, Glenn Brown, André Butzer, Sarah Crouner, Carroll Dunham, Hedwig Eberle, Ida Ekblad, Günther Förg, Katharina Grosse, Alex Israel, Melike Kara, Alex Katz, Friedrich Kunath, Beth Letain, Jake Longstreth, Tal R, David Salle, Ben Sledsens, Sean Scully, Julian Schnabel, David Schutter, Mònica Subidé, Vivian Suter, Liliane Tomasko, Tursic & Mille, Rinus Van de Velde, Grace Weaver, Emma Webster, Toby Ziegler

Curated by Christian Malycha

Goethestraße 2-3, 10623

Paris:

7 June – 29 July 2023

**Toby Ziegler**

*Blind men exploring the skin of an elephant*

46 & 57 rue du Temple, 75004

London:

2 June – 29 July 2023

**Thomas Struth**

41 Dover Street, W1S 4NS

Marfa:

4 May – 10 December 2023

**Grace Weaver**

*Indoor Paintings*

1976 Antelope Hills Road, TX 79843

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