DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

Andrea Büttner

Grids, Vases, and Plant Beds

July 17 – August 28, 2021

press@davidkordanskygallery.com
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David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Grids, Vases, and Plant Beds, an exhibition of new work by Andrea Büttner, on view July 17 through August 28. The exhibition features several new bodies of work, including a group of hand-blown glass vases based on floral bulb forms; a series of photographs of former plant beds at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site; a monumental painting installation housed in an aluminum structure; reverse glass paintings; and Karmel Dachau, a video about a convent of Carmelite nuns established on land that abuts the Dachau memorial.

Andrea Büttner uses different mediums, materials, and conceptual approaches to explore a range of inter-related themes. Her exhibitions are places where emotions and intellect are synthesized in highly visual, often tactile, works that are notable for their rich colors and formal directness. Projects born of historical research exist alongside those in which the presence of the artist's hand is the most prominent element.

In the exhibition, nine new glass vases combine several of these tendencies and are a notable addition to Büttner's overall project. Their forms recall Delftware and other vases designed to hold flowers grown from bulbs, such as tulips. They also respond to the organic shapes of flowers. Many feature globular protrusions; on three of the works, the protrusions function as feet. These elements are in turn reflective of Büttner's own watercolor sketches, as well as her long-standing interest in humble, natural things like potatoes, stones, and moss. The vessels rest in groups on wooden tables that further emphasize their connection to craft and interior design.

The glass works are also driven by Büttner's research into what has been called the "brown roots of the green movement": in Germany and elsewhere, the modern development of organic planting methods and back-to-the-land tendencies is inextricably linked with fascist political movements like Nazism, whose anti-Modernism was part of an overall vision of "traditional" life, nationalism, and racial purity. At the Dachau Concentration Camp, experiments were conducted in organic agriculture with the aim of establishing reliable

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German sources of various crops and their derivatives. Prisoners were tasked with cultivating these plants; among them were Gladiolus bulbs, regarded as potential sources of vitamin C.

The large-scale photographs entitled Former plant beds from the plantation and "herb gardens," used by the Nazis for biodynamic agricultural research, at the Dachau Concentration Camp provide visual documentation of the remnants of these practices. Aside from their historical import, Büttner's images are abstract compositions in which grid-like forms (the decaying plant bed structures) rest on quasi-monochromatic backgrounds of grass and earth. Reflection upon the role played by grids as organizing structures, especially in modernist aesthetics, is another prevailing theme in this exhibition.

"Grids," a 1979 essay by Rosalind Krauss, explores the compensatory use of the grid in modernist art. Krauss observes that "now we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention *art* and *spirit* in the same sentence. The peculiar power of the grid… arises from its power to preside over this shame: to mask and to reveal it at the same time." In a related fashion, Büttner takes up the grid as a form in which the problems and potential of modernism are constellated, and through which abstract art enables the willful forgetting of criminal acts. She juxtaposes the ad hoc grids of the Dachau plantation with an installation-based work in which nine oil paintings on canvas—each of which features an open rectangle painted in a single color, flush to its edges—have been set into an aluminum frame constructed in front of one of the gallery's walls. Behind it, covering the wall itself, is a large painted grid. The architectural scale of this work is derived in part from Büttner's ongoing engagement with the history of painting ceilings, frescoes, and other room-wrapping interventions, and represents the latest example of her interest in altering white-box spaces through the introduction of color and pattern. In this case, the installation recalls a contemporary cassette ceiling turned on its side. The canvases it holds, meanwhile, evoke twentieth-century experiments in color and geometry produced by modernist artists like Joseph Albers. Seen alongside the reverse glass paintings that also appear in the show, as well as

the plant bed photographs, the installation works to reverse the tendency of abstract art to obscure historical narrative. Büttner allows the grid to mirror the layout of the Dachau plantation; in so doing, she also calls attention to the questionable politics and supposed moral superiority of an organic "lifestyle" that often goes unquestioned in contemporary life.

Karmel Dachau, a video first produced for the Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism in Munich—and the most recent in a series of videos about nuns Büttner has made since 2007—documents a Carmelite convent established on land that abuts the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial. While carefully, and even lovingly, showing the midcentury modernist buildings and pastoral grounds that the nuns inhabit, Büttner records their stories of joining the order, relating to the horrors of the Holocaust, and living their religious calling. Granted a high degree of access to the intimate spaces and thoughts of the nuns, and allowing the nuns themselves to film those spaces where access is restricted, Büttner creates a group portrait in which devotion, suffering, cultural appropriation, and the tragic sublime reveal individual as well as collective effects.

Andrea Büttner (b. 1972, Stuttgart, Germany) was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2017. She has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at institutions worldwide, including Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2018); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Switzerland (2017); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2016); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2015); Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2014); Tate Britain, London (2014); Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre, Canada (2014); National Museum Cardiff, Wales (2014); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2014); and MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany (2013). Group exhibitions include Affective Affinities, 33rd Bienal de São Paulo (2019); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany and Kabul, Afghanistan (2012); and 29th Bienal de São Paulo (2010). Her work is in the permanent collections of museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Reina Sofia, Madrid; and Tate, London. Büttner is also the author of several books, including the recently released Shame (König Books, 2020). Büttner lives and works in Berlin.

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Andrea Büttner
Grids, Vases, and Plant Beds
July 17 – August 28, 2021

South Gallery

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Bubble), 2021
hand-blown glass
16 1/4 x 9 x 10 inches
(41.3 x 22.9 x 25.4 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.017)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Bubble), 2021
hand-blown glass
14 1/2 x 15 3/4 x 9 1/2 inches
(36.8 x 40 x 24.1 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.018)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Green), 2021
hand-blown glass
10 3/4 x 6 x 6 inches
(27.3 x 15.2 x 15.2 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.020)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Painted), 2021
hand-blown glass
12 5/8 x 10 5/8 x 9 inches
(32.1 x 27 x 22.9 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.022)

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Andrea Büttner
Vase (Taped), 2021
hand-blown glass
13 1/4 x 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches
(33.7 x 31.8 x 31.8 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.025)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Blue and White), 2021
hand-blown glass
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches
(21.6 x 14 x 14 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.021)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Bubble), 2021
hand-blown glass
12 3/4 x 10 x 9 1/2 inches
(32.4 x 25.4 x 24.1 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.019)

Andrea Büttner
Vase (Green and Red), 2021
hand-blown glass
25 1/8 x 10 1/2 x 13 1/4 inches
(63.8 x 26.7 x 33.7 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.024)

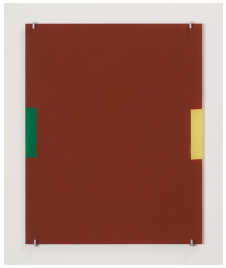
Andrea Büttner
Vase (Painted), 2021
hand-blown glass
12 1/8 x 9 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches
(30.8 x 23.5 x 23.5 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.023)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
wood
29 3/4 x 86 5/8 x 27 5/8 inches
(75.6 x 220 x 70.2 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.012)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
wood
29 3/4 x 86 5/8 x 27 5/8 inches
(75.6 x 220 x 70.2 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.011)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.010)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.009)



Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.015)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.008)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.014)

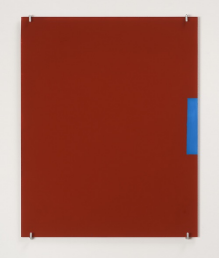
Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.006)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.017)

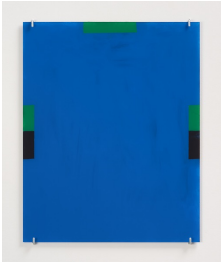
Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.018)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2020
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.019)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.007)



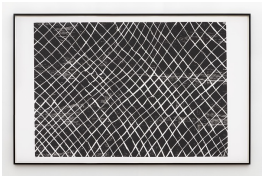
Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.012)



Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.011)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.016)

Andrea Büttner
Untitled, 2021
reverse glass painting
19 5/8 x 15 3/4 x 1/4 inches
(50 x 40 x .6 cm)
(Inv# ABU 20.013)

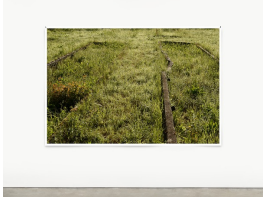


Andrea Büttner
Grid, 2007
woodcut
45 x 70 1/2 inches
(114.3 x 179.1 cm)
framed:
46 1/2 x 72 1/2 x 1 3/4 inches
(118.1 x 184.2 x 4.4 cm)
Edition 3 of 10, with 4 AP
(Inv# ABU 13.041.3)

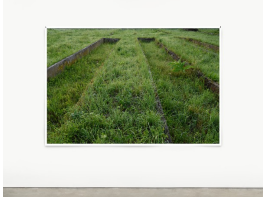
Andrea Büttner
Untitled (Painted Ceiling), 2020
oil on canvas, aluminum
overall dimensions:
118 7/8 x 154 1/4 x 1 1/8 inches
(301.9 x 391.8 x 2.9 cm)
framed:
119 x 154 3/8 x 18 1/4 inches
(302.3 x 392.1 x 46.4 cm)
(Inv# ABU 21.009)

Andrea Büttner
Dancing Nuns, 2007
woodcut
two parts, each:
70 1/2 x 45 inches
(179.1 x 114.3 cm)
framed:
72 1/4 x 89 3/4 x 1 3/4 inches
(183.5 x 228 x 4.4 cm)
Edition 8 of 10, with 2 AP
(Inv# ABU 13.075.8)

Andrea Büttner
Four corners, 2017
woodcut
46 1/4 x 72 inches
(117.5 x 182.9 cm)
framed:
47 3/4 x 73 1/2 x 1 3/4 inches
(121.3 x 186.7 x 4.4 cm)
Edition 1 of 10, with 1AP
(Inv# ABU 17.027.1)



Andrea Büttner
Former plant beds from the plantation and "herb gardens," used by the Nazis for biodynamic agricultural research, at the Dachau Concentration Camp, 2019 - 2020
chromogenic print
67 x 100 1/2 inches
(170 x 255 cm)
Edition 1 of 3, with 1AP
(Inv# ABU 21.006.1)

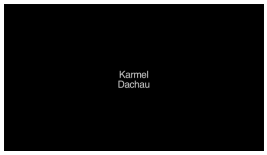


Andrea Büttner
Former plant beds from the plantation and "herb gardens," used by the Nazis for biodynamic agricultural research, at the Dachau Concentration Camp, 2019 - 2020
chromogenic print
67 x 100 1/2 inches
(170 x 255 cm)
Edition 1 of 3, with 1AP
(Inv# ABU 21.007.1)

Andrea Büttner
Former plant beds from the plantation and "herb gardens," used by the Nazis for biodynamic agricultural research, at the Dachau Concentration Camp, 2019 - 2020
chromogenic print
67 x 100 1/2 inches
(170 x 255 cm)
Edition 1 of 3, with 1AP
(Inv# ABU 21.008.1)

Andrea Büttner
Grid, 2021
interior emulsion paint
dimensions variable
unique
(Inv# ABU 21.010)

Viewing Room



Andrea Büttner
Karmel Dachau, 2019
video, 32:25
Edition 1 of 6, with 1AP
(Inv# ABU 20.001.1)

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ANDREA BÜTTNER

born 1972, Stuttgart, Germany
lives and works in London, England and Frankfurt, Germany

EDUCATION

2005-2009
PhD, Royal College of Art, London, England

2003
MA, Art History and Philosophy, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

2000
MA, Fine Art, University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany

SELECTED SOLO / TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS
(* indicates a publication)

2021	*Grids, Vases, and Plant Beds*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA *TRIEBE,* Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland K21, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany
2019	*Steine, Moose und Zelte*, Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland *The Heart of Relations*, Hollybush Gardens, London, England *Andrea Büttner*, in conjunction with the KW Production Series 2019 at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, Kunstverein München e.V., Munich, Germany
2018	Jan Mot, Brussels, Belgium Hollybush Gardens, London, England *Shepherds and Kings*, Bergen Kunstall, Bergen, Norway
2017	*Gesamtzusammenhang*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Gallen, Switzerland *Hammer Projects: Andrea Büttner,* organized by Aram Moshayedi with Ikechukwu Onyewuenyi, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland

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2016 *Andrea Büttner*, curated by Céline Kopp, Musée régional d'art contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon Midi Pyrénées, Sérignan, France
David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Looking at..., Staatsgalerie, Stuutgart, Germany
Beggars and iPhones, organized by Lucas Gehrmann, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria

2015 *Andrea Büttner*, organized by Fionn Meade, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
Moos / Moss: Andrea Büttner, Kestle Barton, Cornwall, England
Andrea Büttner and Brit Meyer, Piper Keys, London, England

2014 *Andrea Büttner*, Hollybush Gardens, London, England
2, curated by Julia Friedrich, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
BP Spotlight: Andrea Büttner, Tate Britain, London, England
Piano Destructions, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada, Goethe-Institut, Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
**Andrea Büttner: Hidden Marriage,* National Museum Cardiff, Wales
**Andrea Büttner*, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

2013 *Andrea Büttner*, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich, Germany
Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia, Tramway, Glasgow, Scotland
**Andrea Büttner*, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany
**Andrea* Büttner, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, England

2012 *Moos/Moss*, Hollybush Gardens, London, England
Andrea Büttner, International Project Space, Birmingham, England

2011 **The Poverty of Riches*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, England; The Maramotti Collection, Reggio Emilia, Italy
Three New Works, Artpace, San Antonio, TX

2009 *Andrea Büttner*, Croy Nielsen, Berlin, Germany
Vertiefen und nicht Erweitern, SE8, London, England

2008 **Nought to Sixty*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England
It's so wonderful to be a woman and an artists in the 21st century, Crystal Palace, Stockholm, Sweden
Andrea Büttner, Hollybush Gardens, London, England

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2007 *On the spot #*1, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
(* indicates a publication)

2021 *The Roaring Twenties,* Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain
The Displacement Effect, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany
Studio Berlin, Berlin, Germany

2020 *Smoke and mirrors. The Roaring Twenties,* Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
What Is so Terrible about Craft?, Jan Mot, Brussels, Belgium
The Botanical Mind: Art, Mysticism and the Cosmic Tree, Camden Arts Centre, London, England
Parliament of Plants, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Liechtenstein
The Botanical Mind: Art, Mysticism and The Cosmic Tree, curated by Gina Buenfeld and Martin Clark, Camden Arts Centre, London, England
Collection of Contemporary Art: John Dewey and the New Presentation of the Collection of Contemporary Art at the Museum Ludwig, curated by Dr. Barbara Engelbach and Janice Mitchell, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
Allan Kaprow at Jupiter Artland, Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh, Scotland
Am Ende diede Arbeit, curated by Julia Schäfer, Nam Nguyen and Franciska Zólyom, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, Germany

2019 *On Vulnerability and Doubt,* curated by Max Delany, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne, Australia
Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow, NS Dokumentationszentrum Munich, Munich, Germany
ART. 132-75, conceived by Gallien Déjean, Emmanuel Guy, Juliette Pollet and Fanny Schulmann, with Reynaldo Gomez and Sif Lindblad, Kunstverein Langenhagen, Langenhagen, Germany
Curves to the Apple: Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Andrea Büttner
Dorothy Iannone, Reto Pulfer, Dieter Roth, Hollybush Gardens, London, England
sentido/comum (common/sense), curated by Antonio Ballester Moreno, as part of Affective Affinities, the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, Palácio das Artes, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Museu de Arte Murilo Mendes, Juiz de Fora, Brazil; Fundação Iberê Camargo, Porto Alegre, Brazil

Aos Nossos Pais (To Our Parents), curated by Alejandro Cesarco, as part of Affective Affinities, the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, Palácio das Artes, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Museu de Arte Murilo Mendes, Juiz de Fora, Brazil; Fundação Iberê Camargo, Porto Alegre, Brazil
Faena Festival: The Last Supper, curated by Zoe Lukov, Faena Forum, Miami, FL
Absolutely Tschudi, Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland

2018 *CHANCE ENCOUNTERS IV*, LOEWE Foundation, Miami, FL
REFLECTION about - about REFLECTION, Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland
TOUCH (AT), nGbK, Berlin, Germany
New Materialism, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden
Cloudbusters: Intensity vs. Intention, 17th Tallinn Print Triennial, EKKM / Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn, Estonia
sentido/comum (common/sense), curated by Antonio Ballester Moreno, as part of Affective Affinities, the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, the Pavilhão Ciccillo Matarazzo, at Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil
Aos Nossos Pais (To Our Parents), curated by Alejandro Cesarco, as part of Affective Affinities, the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, the Pavilhão Ciccillo Matarazzo, at Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil
Don Quixote, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin, Germany
Fillette, curated by Mai-Thu Perret and Fabrice Stroun, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, Switzerland
**Stories of Almost Everyone,* organized by Aram Moshayedi with Ikechukwu Onyewuenyi, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA

2017 *Resonanzen. 40 Jahre Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg,* ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany
KölnSkulptur #9, curated by Chus Martínez, Stiftung Skulpturenpark Köln, Cologne, Germany
**La Vie simple - Simplement la vie / Songs of Alienation,* curated by Bice Curiger in collaboration with Julia Marchand, Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, Arles, France
Indexmaker, Le 19 Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain, Montéliard, France
Turner Prize 2017, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, England
Please fasten your seat belt as we are experiencing some turbulence, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China
**An Inventory of Shimmers: Objects of Intimacy in Contemporary Art,* curated by Henriette Huldisch, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge,

Massachusetts
Four Saints in Three Acts, DePaul Art Museum, DePaul University, Chicago, IL
WAGSTAFF'S, curated by Richard Cynan Jones, Jane Matthews, and Adam Carr, MOSTYN, Wales, England

2016 *Andrea Büttner, Alejandro Cessarco, Jason Dodge, Van Hanos,* Tanya Leighton Gallery, New York, NY
Le Mérite. 2014-2016, Treize, Paris, France
Going Public: The Napoleone Collection, Graves Gallery, Sheffield, England
Broken White, curated by Mathieu Meijers, Jurgen Bey, Bas van Tol, and Thomas Widdershoven, Design Academy Eindhoven and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands
Répétition, curated by Nicola Lees and Asad Raza, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium
Life of Forms, organized by Piper Marshall, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY
Piano Destructions, Walker Art Center, Medtronic Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
The Practice of Theories, Wysing Arts Centre, Bourn, England
FOOD - Ecologies of the Everyday, curated by Susanne Gaensheimer, 13th Fellbach Triennial of Small Scale Sculpture, Fellbach, Germany
**British Art Show 8*, curated by Anna Colin and Lydia Yee, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, England

2015 *Prosu(u)mmer*, Contemporary Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia
THE PROBLEM OF GOD, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Wesfalen, K21, Dusseldorf, Germany
Such a Thing I Also Must Have: Contemporary Art from the Lenbachhus and Kico Foundation, curated by Eva Huttenlauch, Lenbachhaus, Munich
Over You / You: 31st Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, curated by Nicola Lees, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Contour 7: A Moving Image Biennale, Mechelen, Belgium
**British Art Show 8*, curated by Anna Colin and Lydia Yee, Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, England; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland; Norwich University of the Arts and Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Norwich, England; John Hansard Gallery \
Individual Stories: Collecting as Portrait and Methodology, curated by Luca Lo Pinto, Nicolaus Schafhausen, and Annie-Claire Schmitz,

Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria
Second Chances, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO

2014 *Boom She Boom. Works from the MMK Collection*, MMK 2, Frankfurt, Germany
**The Story Behind*, NoguerasBlanchard, Barcelona, Spain
New Habits, curated by Binna Choi, Casco, Utrecht, The Netherlands
Glass Puzzle, curated by Mary Simpson, Simone Subal Gallery, New York, NY
Before Normal: Concept after Concept, curated by Lars Bang Larsen, Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark
New Habits, Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, The Netherlands
You Don't Need a Weather Man to Know Which Way the Wind Blows, Hollybush Gardens, London, England

2013 *No fear, No shame, No confusion,* Triangle France, Marseille, France
Die Form ist uns Geheimnnis, Städtische Galerie Nordhorn, Germany
Several Species of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together in a Cave and Grooving with a Pict, VW (VeneKlasen/Werner), Berlin, Germany
Etwas Eigenes, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich, Germany
Vergüenza (Shame), La Casa Encendida, Madrid, Spain
Andrea Büttner / Joëlle de la Casinière / Gareth Moore, Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver, Canada
**The Assistants*, curated by Fionn Meade, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2012 *Brot und Salz,* Sommer & Kohl, Berlin, Germany
Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany; Kabul, Afghanistan
Soundworks, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England
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Reversibility, curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc, Peep-Hole, Milan, Italy

2011 *When is a Human Being a Woman?,* Hollybush Gardens, London, England
Independent Curators International presents FAX and Project 35, South London Gallery, London, England
**Heimatkunde: 30 Künstler blicken auf Deutschland*, Jewish Museum Berlin, Berlin, Germany
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Qui admirez-vous?, La Box, Bourges, France

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Unto This Last, Raven Row, London, England
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Love Boat, Kunsthaus Essen, Essen, Germany
Andrea Büttner/Martin Pfeifle, Haus der Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart, Germany

2009 *The young people visiting our ruins see nothing but a style*, curated by FormContent, London, GAM Galleria Civica D'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino, Italy
East International, selected by Art & Language; Raster, Norwich, England

2008 *No one needs the needy*, Galerie Sandra Buergel, Berlin, Germany
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Poetry, Copenhagen, 2008
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2005 "Scham – Jedes Wort ist eine Blamage," *Sinn-haft*, Vienna 2005

GRANTS / AWARDS / RESIDENCIES

2017 Turner Prize, Hull, England, Shortlisted
Fellowship with foundation of Murano glassblowers, Venice, Italy

2012 1822-Kunstpreis, Frankfurt AM Main, Germany

2011 Artpace, San Antonio, TX

2010 Max Mara Prize in association with the Whitechapel Gallery

American Academy, Rome

2009 Maria Sibylla Merian-Prize, Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, Hessen, Germany

2007 Doctoral Research Grant of the Cusanuswerks, Bonn Research Grant, Royal College of Art

2006 Residency Bad Tölz

2005 British Institution Award, London

2004 Shortlisted for the GASAG Art Price, Berlin

2003 Scholarship of the Cusanuswerk, Bonn

Barratt, Martha, "The Botanical Mind," *LRB.co.uk*, April 2021

London Review
OF BOOKS

'The Botanical Mind'

By Martha Barratt | April 2021

A detail from Andrea Büttner's stereoscopic slideshow (2014).

At the start of the First World War, 12-year-old Tom Harris moved with his family to a semi-derelict mansion on the outskirts of Leicester. Struggling at school and with few friends, he built a world for himself from its garden, a museum of pressed plants and tree samples. He established a fernery – complete with grotto – and spent evenings 'skeletonising' dead animals, which he kept in buckets on the roof. This industrious boy became a distinguished paleobotanist, whose investigations into the structure of living matter enabled him to describe lost landscapes and species. After he died, his name was given to the botanical garden at the University of Reading, the site of my earliest childhood memories. A huge Turkey Oak stretches out over the lawn like a great candelabra. Beneath it are spiralling ferns and mossy ledges, furrowed barks and conkers. This world of pattern and texture, which Harris spent his career tracing, is as natural to humans as it is to plants. We can find it by rubbing our eyes, in the phosphenes flashing against our eyelids, and in the fractal patterns of our fingerprints. We can see it more easily by using microscopes, or ingesting plants with entheogenic or mind-manifesting properties – as in the crystalline visions induced by ayahuasca. The shapes of nature, what used to be called 'sacred geometries', are the closest thing we have to a global aesthetics.

The Botanical Mind at Camden Arts Centre (currently closed, viewable online) brings together artworks from different centuries, continents and belief systems that consider our relationship with the plant world. Jung's illustrations for his *Red Book* introduce the cosmic tree – a link between earthly and celestial realms – and the mandala. His *Tree of Life* combines the two in a heavily worked watercolour. At the bottom of the page, the red earth and its creatures form an intricate grid, tangled with roots. Above, the tree's crown swirls out like flame, from a white flash in the centre to a deep blue edge. The careful shading suggests activity and immersion – the mandala as meditation device – but it also functions as a symbolic representation to be decoded or analysed.

Jung's illustrations appear stiff in comparison to two small pictures by the American artist and fisherman Forrest Bess. Bess used a limited palette, just three or four colours per image, without any of the surface pattern associated with cosmic diagrams and none of the overt symbolism. Instead of a tree, he paints a pale stick figure reaching up from a dark world towards the rising sun. The paintings have an intense energy. Bess's simple mandala suggests better than Jung's 'a psychic centre of the personality not to be associated with the ego', its viscous paint and wobbly symmetry giving form to the effort of prolonged introspection.

Variations on the tree and mandala, the snake and the axis mundi, multiply in the tantric, Surrealist and Christian examples on show. There is the Rosicrucian symbolism of Charles Filiger, the sweetly humanoid mandrakes of the 15th-century manuscript *Ortus Sanitatis*, mediumistic drawings by Hilma af Klint and Emma Kunz, and woven textiles by the Shipibo-Conibo people of Amazonian Peru, the patterns (*kené*) of which echo the songs sung in ayahuasca-guided healing ceremonies. In the exhibition, connections are made lightly, simply by the presentation of repeated shapes and overlapping iconographies, with greater context given in the catalogue (presumably to allow the mind to create its own patterns).

For many of the works, this feeling-thinking approach reflects the way they were made. Wolfgang Paalen's fumage pictures from the 1930s, for instance, are repeated shapes left on paper by candle smoke, an exercise, we are told, in unconscious communion. He saw painting as an opportunity for 'affective identification' between viewers and 'painting-beings', a stance that left its impact on a generation of American painters. Abstract Expressionists, especially Rothko, made mainstream the idea of the aura as both spiritual emanation and emotional interaction.

There have been limited opportunities for this kind of communion at Camden Arts Centre, which was closed for most of 2020, and the exhibition looks unlikely to reopen in 2021. Throughout its interrupted run, however, the show has existed as a website, bolstered by new commissions and supplementary reading. The sprawling nature of the project is reflected in its online presentation: you can enter in roundabout ways, veer off to read a dense essay on the theology behind Hildegard of Bingen's botanical writing or watch the ethnobotanist Terence McKenna delivering a practical course on using psychoactive plants to achieve 'the dissolving boundaries of the vegetable mind'.

An accompanying podcast series covers plant intelligence, the Amazon pharmacopeia and ecologist Stephen Harding's concept of 'Gaia alchemy', which seeks to access the intelligence of the earth through meditation and shamanic ritual. To address the climate disaster, Harding urges, we first have to heal the split between science and rationality. One of the new commissions is a guided meditation by the artist Joachim Koester: you begin as a mantis, grow into a plant and by the end you are floating without a body at all. It is best experienced, the voiceover suggests, close to the brink of consciousness – a state that would be tricky to reach in the Camden Arts Centre.

One of the central images on the website is an illustration known as *Cultivating the Cosmic Tree* from Hildegard's 12th-century book of visions, *Scivias*. It shows a world with the tree at its centre, an embodiment of the divine 'greening' energy she calls 'viriditas', from which both soul and mind emerge. 'Know that you are a plant,' she counsels, 'and know, furthermore, that your knowledge, hued with a fading green, is the afterglow of vegetal growth.' In recent years the belief in a conscious, interconnected plant world has been taken up by writers, for whom, as the poet Rebecca Tamás argues, 'the basis of new thoughts must be equality, not only between humans but of every being on earth.' Hildegard's concept of a world in which self emerges through plants provides a prototype for this. In a reversal of gender stereotypes, she figures the Virgin Mary as 'the greenest branch', a symbol of virility and wisdom, while Jesus is the flower. This vision shares much with Yggdrasil, the unisex cosmic tree that connects the nine worlds of Norse mythology, and to which af Klint returned repeatedly.

A series of works by Andrea Büttner looks to plants for accounts of human sexuality. Her photographic slides flick between images of moss enthusiasts pressed to the hillside, their faces close to the ground and their bums in the air. The accompanying text, influenced by Linnaeus's description of cryptogam reproduction as 'clandestine marriage', relates lichens and moss to queerness, hidden sexuality, smallness and shame. It also recalls the anthropomorphising language of Maeterlinck, who couldn't help but marvel in *The Intelligence of Flowers* at the ejaculation of a balsam apple: 'As if we succeeded, relatively speaking, in emptying ourselves in one spasmodic movement and had shot all our organs, innards and blood half a kilometre from our skin and skeleton.' Sometimes the project goes too far, as with the assertion in the podcast that 'it is actually a fact that nature is queer.' But it does present a wide-eyed challenge to our preconceptions. It also provides the bearings for a new story, what Donna Haraway calls the 'big-enough story'. The oldest known plants, a clonal colony of aspens in Utah, date from more than seven thousand years ago, almost a millennium before the earliest fossils indicate the impact of humanoids on the planet. In plant time, at least, we are relatively young.

LaBarge, Emily, "Andrea Büttner," *Artforum,* January 2020, p. 225

ARTFORUM

Andrea Büttner

HOLLYBUSH GARDENS

High overhead in the blue, barrel-vaulted firmament: potatoes. Painted, not real. Of the versatile tuber, Andrea Büttner has said they are "what maybe Duchamp would have called a 'prime word.' Within art there are forms that can be poo, or bread, or a potato, so they are kind of ambiguous primal shapes."And here they were, on the gallery ceiling, twinkling, transubstantiated spuds in a field of precious ultramarine. "We have," they seemed to say with a knowing wink, "*transcended* our earthly stature." Büttner's work has long been invested in probing theologically inflected binaries (high and low, sacred and profane, private and public, spiritual and material), frequently linking them to social and institutional critiques of art and its more worldly contexts. At the heart (the soul?) of the artist's recent exhibition "The Heart of Relations" was a kind of aesthetic and Conceptual syncretism: Eccentric combinations, spare delineations, and elegant sidesteps offered a series of proposals about how we live together, or might, in and alongside art.

The lapis lazuli over the gallery's largest space was an invocation of Giotto's early-fourteenth-century Scrovegni Chapel, with its extensive fresco cycles of the life of Christ and the life of the Virgin. In Padua, Italy, the ceiling is painted with golden stars and roundels of Mary, Jesus, and the prophets. Büttner's substitution of root vegetables for saints is less sacrilege than social-minded art-historical collage: She links her motif to van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*, 1885. This early work, which was poorly received at its debut, depicts a dark domestic interior in which a family of peasants share their starchy evening meal. Like their meager nourishment, the peasants are beige, lumpen, dusty. In *Painted Ceiling (potatoes)*, 2019, Büttner abstracted them metonymically into celestial beings: an elevated labor, twofold.

Andrea Büttner, *Deutsche Bundesbank Dining Room*, 2019, cardboard, book-binding linen, 8¼ × 29¾ × 20⅛".

If van Gogh's painting is cramped with figures, Büttner's show harbored none. In this exhibition, her subjects were places, not people. *Dachau, Coventry, Groß St. Martin, Plötzensee*, 2017–19, consists of four postcards and the middle spread from a small booklet mounted to sheets of glass: They depict an aerial view of the Karmel Heilig Blut, a Carmelite Catholic convent just outside the Dachau concentration camp in Germany; in the same location, a spring tree branch with blue sky and barbed wire behind; John Piper's baptistry window at Coventry Cathedral; a religious statue from Great St. Martin Church, Cologne; and Georg Meistermann's altar fresco mural in the Maria Regina Martyrum, Berlin. This is a community of devotional architectures frozen in flashes of memento mori—blank dispatches from abroad—and void of inhabitants. Some are sites of trauma and ongoing attempts at recuperation or solace where perhaps none exists, and others evidence the long history of secular artists and architects turning their hands to sacred contexts.

Upstairs, three architectural maquettes continued the theme of evocative composite structures with a host of interlocking references: Made of thin cardboard, with all colors flattened and patterns reduced and simplified, were *Deutsche Bundesbank Dining Room*, *Rockefeller Dining Room*, and *Corner Münter Haus Murnau*, all 2019. The first two interiors refer to notable artist commissions (by Victor Vasarely and Fritz Glarner, respectively), while the third is more tender and idiosyncratic, representing the wood-paneled corner of the Blaue Reiter painter Gabriele Münter's dining room with a series of tiny icons balanced along its thin upper ledge. Back downstairs, I paused to rest on *Bench*, 2018, a length of pale wood balanced across two gray plastic crates, to take in the potato heavens, the postcards, and four framed ink drawings of frames—stark lines of brown and midnight blue on white—that frame nothing but abundant white space. There is a poetic refusal in Büttner's work, with its carefully structured stanzas in which repeated phrases and variations—not *of*, but *around* an idea—show that stripping away can be a powerful additive force.

—*Emily LaBarge*

Delany, Max, “Poverty and Shame, Dignity and Gravitas,” *On Vulnerability and Doubt*, Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2019, p. 20-23, cover

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Andrea Büttner

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POVERTY AND SHAME, DIGNITY AND GRAVITAS

MAX DELANY

Andrea Büttner's series *Beggars*, 2016, presents a line-up of prone, cloaked figures, with expressive hands and outstretched arms, appealing to the viewer. Each of the veiled, pleading figures is shrouded, as if to hide their shame. The nine insistent figures are articulated in the simple, rudimentary yet determined lines of the relief printing process. In a colour edition of the series each of the images is printed in monochrome variations, resulting in fields of exuberant colour reminiscent of medieval stained glass or expressionist graphics, but also of modernist instructional books and pedagogical children's illustrations.

The outstretched hand of the beggar in art history is a subject the artist has explored in depth, including a subsequent book published in 2018, also titled *Beggars*, 'about art and poverty, art history and beggars, shepherds and kings'.[1] Exploring discourses of poverty and shame, which recur throughout the artist's practice, Büttner's *Beggars* exemplify the ways in which the artist seeks to privilege that which might otherwise remain undervalued or neglected – endowing the figure of the beggar with dignity, and humble gestures with gravitas. The series inevitably points to questions of social, economic and art-historical value. Mindful of the contradiction that 'art collectors would likely never give a beggar the amount they might spend on the depiction of a beggar', Büttner's project is equally focussed on contradictions which appear in Christian theology and philosophy, and which return, again and again, in contemporary politics and morality, in the increasingly divisive positioning of *us* and *them*, and in the denigration of the vulnerable, the outsider and the poor. As a reflection on the relationship between art and economics, poverty and patronage, Büttner also sees the beggar figures 'as images of artists before their viewers'. Like their subjects, the prints themselves are related to the body, and the reach of the artist.

Büttner's *Phone etchings* of 2015 continue this sensibility; in apparently abstract compositions that bear the anonymous traces, marks and smudges that we habitually leave on the flat-screen surfaces of our smart phones. If the cut of the *Beggars* woodblocks is purposeful and deliberate – notwithstanding the resistance of the woodgrain to the artist's gesture – the traces that we leave on our phones are anonymous, intuitive gestures, smooth and spon-

Delany, Max, "Poverty and Shame, Dignity and Gravitas," *On Vulnerability and Doubt*, Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2019, p. 20-23, cover

taneous, and made without thinking. The *Phone etchings* enlarge and transfer these basic, quotidian gestures onto the flatbed of the etching plate, elevating them to the heroic scale and symbolic status of abstract expressionist painting, albeit with a sense of abjection and otherness that traces of bodily fluids and materiality provoke.

Whilst Büttner's practice is characterised by a complex heterogeneity, embracing research and publishing, sculpture and installation, video and performance, she maintains a dedication to printmaking and its traditions, which have historically ranked lowly on the hierarchy of art-historical significance and value. Büttner's deployment of printmaking has a conceptual resonance, and a critical register in the minor key. She has spoken of her interest in Franciscan vows of poverty, and her woodcuts display a commitment to a *povera* aesthetic, both figuratively, in their iconography and an almost monastic restraint – the work *Corner* 2011–12 or *Potatoes* 2017 might be exemplary in this regard – and materially, in the ways in which her woodcuts are carved, or ground out, from large sheets of plywood, itself a mundane, prosaic material.

Büttner has referred to a sense of 'pathetic visuality' inherent in her practice; an ethical position aligned with certain branches of conceptual art.[2] In the place of authority, uniqueness, individualism or grandiosity, Büttner retains a preference for more collective and democratic processes. At the same time, as the artist has noted, the woodcut is also aligned with ideas of authenticity and humanism, and diverse, wide-ranging contexts from folk art to metaphysics. The evidence of the artist's hand and the elevation of collective, artisanal values is inevitably present, aligned with the mobilisation of subjectivity and the very idea of being human. Büttner's works are, indeed, all too human in their disclosure of vulnerability, their search for beauty and embrace of failure, and their understanding that: 'When, as an artist, you exhibit your work, offering it up for public judgement, shame is invariably one of the emotions at stake.'[3]

1 Andrea Büttner, *Beggars*, Koenig Books, London, 2018, p. 11. Along with texts by Büttner, and contributions by Anne Carson, Linda Nochlin and Christopher P. Heuer, *Beggars* includes an extended picture essay, titled 'Shepherds and Kings', which Büttner has presented as a slide-installation cum art-historical slide presentation, along with 'Warburg Institute Research', a meticulous, indexical research project exploring the iconography of beggars and almsgiving throughout art history.

2 Andrea Büttner and Lars Bang Larsen, 'Inverted Interview # 3', *The Responsive Subject: From OOOOOO to FFFFFF*, FormContent, London, 2011, p. 4; accessed at http://www.andreabuettner.com/files/inverted-interview-lars-bang-larsen.pdf

3 Andrea Büttner, 'Ideal Syllabus: Andrea Buttner', *Frieze*, no. 152, Jan - Feb 2013; accessed at https://frieze.com/article/ideal-syllabus-andrea-b%C3%BCttner

Knezic, Sophie, "On Vulnerability and Doubt," *Frieze*, September 2019, p. 189

ON VULNERABILITY AND DOUBT

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia

Although we all know what it means – and moreover, how it feels – it's worth noting that the word 'vulnerable' originates from the Latin *vulnerare*, 'to wound'. This sense of puncture and injury inevitably links to the notion of suffering, and both philosophy and art have had much to say about this. Contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that vulnerability is an essential experience, and that to be open to the world – precisely in its capacity to harm or injure – is a fundamental part of not just being human but being good. Suffering differs from mere pain inasmuch as it is not localized but affects the entirety of one's being, pervading one's sense of self in the world.

Many of the works by the eight artists in 'On Vulnerability and Doubt' – which was curated by ACCA artistic director Max Delany – pull back the skin on suffering and selfhood, touching the wound of personal anguish in ways that extend beyond individual circumstance and swell into universal experience. Cherine Fahd's photographic series 'Fear of' (2011/19) documents street posters inscribed with phrases conveying the artist's worries: 'fear of getting old' or 'fear of never being happy'. Pasted onto building exteriors that back onto laneways, the overlooked nature of the facades adds pathos to the work's confessional tone and its conjuring of broader human anxieties. Pathos intensifies in Andrea Büttner's row of large-scale woodcuts on paper, 'Beggar' (2016), each adumbrating a hooded figure with arms outstretched. Drawn with lines abbreviated to near abstraction, the sketchy figures' supplicant gestures impart an anguish at odds with the candy-coloured monochrome grounds.

The Four Cruelties (1982) by Linda Marrinon valorizes the importance of vulnerability in images that depict its opposite. Featuring cartoonish figures, this early series of paintings on cardboard explores a lack of empathy or 'excessive confidence' – what current parlance would call 'mansplaining'. Taking its cue from William Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751), Marrinon's work, while equally satirical, coruscates with a feminist bite.

It's not that masculinity *per se* is the problem so much as what psychoanalysis has come to call phallocentrism – of which Tala Madani is shrewdly aware. Her 47-second animation *The Crowd* (2017) shows a sketchily drawn group of men and a giant, glistening pink phallus. Worshiping its towering might, the crowd capitulates to the tumescent phallus before it bludgeons them to smithereens. It's hilarious and unsettling in equal measure. More disturbing is her adjacent work, *Mr Time* (2018), a seven-minute animation of a man shunted up and down a mall escalator, repeatedly bashed by a group of thugs to the point of dismemberment, his body parts reduced to dislocated fragments of human sentience.

More salutary notes on vulnerability appear in Charlie Sofo's cluster of works. His found objects and videos draw straight connections to predecessors like Francis Alÿs and Gabriel Orozco, notably *Lost Soccer Balls (Removed from Circulation for the Duration of the Exhibition)* (2019). Sofo's sensitivity to the minor register of the everyday implicitly asks the viewer to re-attune themselves to banal objects such as broken bricks or gnarled branches; an attention to the prosaic that is poeticized in *Low Notes* (2019), a text-based video showing stills of the artist's musings. ('Lettuce gets lighter in colour as you eat it'.)

Puncture might be the leitmotif of the exhibition but, if so, it takes on a different meaning in Brent Harris's suite of introspective paintings, 'Borrowed Plumage' (2007). Harris's reductive pop aesthetic, drenched in Edvard Munch-like ennui, often probes existential questions, but here the brooding paintings turn on the Biblical narrative of doubting Thomas: the Apostle who only believed in the resurrection when permitted to plunge his finger into Christ's wound. With arms reaching into black voids and finger-like forms penetrating flesh-coloured folds, these paintings thematize the experience of doubt. As the philosopher Sören Kierkegaard declared, '*de omnibus dubitandum est*' – everything must be doubted. Doubt presupposes vulnerability, and vulnerability doubt: the experience of the world lies in the circuit between them.

Sophie Knezic

This page
Andrea Büttner, *Beggar*, 2016, woodcut on paper, 126 × 90 cm

Opposite page
Above
Yu Linhan, *Gentian Violet 3*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 2.1 × 2 m

Below
Fyerool Darma, 2019, exhibition view

Halpert, Juliana, “Andrea Büttner On Her Iconographies of Poverty,” *Artforum.com*, October 23, 2018

ARTFORUM

INTERVIEWS

ANDREA BÜTTNER

October 23, 2018 • ANDREA BÜTTNER ON HER ICONOGRAPHIES OF POVERTY

Andrea Büttner, *The Archive of the Lives of the Little Sisters of Jesus with Circuses and Fun Fairs*, Tre Fontane, Rome (detail), 2012, 35-mm slide show.

German artist Andrea Büttner has a long-standing practice of using appropriated imagery as a historical and philosophical tool. For the first time, three of Büttner's slide projections are being shown together as large-scale, standalone installations. "Shepherds and Kings," a solo exhibition of Büttner's work, is on view at Bergen Kunsthall in Norway until October 28, 2018. She is also participating in the São Paulo Bienal, on view through December 9, 2018.

I'VE LONG BEEN INTERESTED IN depictions of poverty. Considering how much we know about representations of wealth and power across centuries, there is astonishingly little research on poverty within art. We have no art history of poorness. For one of the slide projections in Bergen—titled *Shepherds and Kings*, from 2017—I compiled 35-mm slides of nativity scenes and juxtaposed portrayals of shepherds next to portrayals of kings. By studying the figure of the shepherd, I wanted to present an implicit iconography of poverty, and examine its connotations throughout history, both positive and negative. I placed these images side-by-side, working by comparison, whichis a traditional art-historical approach that art historians would always use. So I emulated their methodology as a way to emphasize that I am, ultimately, assembling these images and making this work in order to fill an art-historical gap. I've just edited a book titled "Beggars."

My research into poverty comes from my extended study of shame within art and aesthetics. Shame is a free radical—it can be attached to anything. Poverty is certainly a source of shame, although this is historically contingent. In the nineteenth century, the poverty of workers wasn't so much a source of shame, but of rage—revolutionary movements couldn't have been drawn up otherwise. Any experience of shame with regard to class implies a belief in self-reliance and being the sole agent of one's own luck.

Monastic communities are a useful example of voluntary poverty carrying positive social connotations. This is, in part, what drew me to the Little Sisters of Jesus, a Roman Catholic community of nuns founded in 1939. The second slide projection, The *Archive of the Lives of the Little Sisters of Jesus with Circuses and Fun Fairs, Tre Fontane, Rome*, from 2012, displays photographs that the nuns took while working at these fun fairs and circusses around the world. I first showed this slideshow as a very small projection as part of my installation at Documenta 13, but here it really fills the space. The way these nuns devote their lives to contemplation and poverty within a context of spectacle, rather than missionary work, somehow resonates with twentieth-century artistic movements that embraced voluntary poverty—like Arte Povera in Italy, and poor theater in Poland. In these instances, it becomes laudable, even political, rather than shameful.

The third slide projection in this exhibition, Stereoscopic slide show from the *Whitehouse collection (mosses and field trips)*, from 2014, features images of moss and people examining moss. There are also stones growing live moss in the middle of the room. Historically, moss has been classified as a "lower," primitive plant, and contemporary biology classifies it as "cryptogamous," because it is so little, and because its sexuality is "hidden"; it procreates with spores instead of flowers. In a way, this hidden sexuality relates moss to my work with nuns. And while flowers are so relevant, art-historically, moss has not been given any aesthetic or cultural significance. As with poverty, I'm interested in this very contingent social judgment that takes place, even in biology. During the exhibition, the curators have to keep this live moss, this little lowly plant, alive and moist. It's a task that is officially beneath them, but that requires them to become what curators truly are, which is caretakers.

— As told to Juliana Halpert

frieze

STORIES OF ALMOST EVERYONE
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA

In 1997, artist and scholar Rhonda Roland Shearer published a paper alleging that each and every one of Marcel Duchamp's readymades was, in fact, meticulously handmade: in other words, a fake. Though the idea of Duchamp perpetrating such an elaborate (and quintessentially Duchampian) hoax is an appealing one, Shearer's theory gained little traction within the academic community. ('If she's right,' said Arthur Danto haughtily, 'I have no interest in Duchamp.') It came to my mind, again, in 'Stories of Almost Everyone', organized by Hammer Museum curator Aram Moshayedi, which elaborates not so much on the subject of craft but of craftiness, and on the integral untrustworthiness of the readymade as an artistic form.

Moshayedi began by considering contemporary conceptual art's reliance on narrative. Once he started tugging that thread, it kept on coming. It led him to the grand theme of faith versus scepticism in art; then, naturally, to illusion and deception; then to the vexed role of institutions in interpreting and contextualizing such works (the curator as storyteller), as well as storing and conserving collections of them, when they resemble bric-a-brac without their supporting texts. There is enough here to keep someone busy for an entire career; if there is a weaknessin Moshayedi's thoughtful and often entertaining exhibition it is that, in attempting to bind so much into a single package, it risks losing focus. Is the show primarily about belief, narrative or museology? For me, its egalitarian title – borrowed from Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano – is one extrapolation too many.

Above
Kapwani Kiwanga, *Flowers for Africa: Nigeria*, 2014, mixed media, dimensions variable

Below
Andrea Büttner, *HAP Grieshaber / Franz Fühmann: Angel of History 25: Angel of the Disabled, Claassen Verlag Düsseldorf 1982*, 2010, Xerox and clip frame, 42 × 59 cm

The presentation itself is refreshingly unshowy, alluding sardonically to the pragmatic efficiencies of art storage rather than gallery display. Dividing walls removed, the open galleries contain objects, evenly spaced and mostly placed directly on the floor, all accompanied by chunky rectangles of wall text. Given that these texts are as much the subject of the show as the objects themselves, it is interesting that Moshayedi has not been tempted to mess with the neutral, impersonal tone that is ubiquitous in museum didactics. Instead, an audio guide written by Kanishk Tharoor is available, taking the form of a short story about a mother and her son. Stitching into its fabric oblique references to objects in the show, the story is charming but no serious challenge to the powerful official narratives presented by the museum.

Without burning through my word allocation retelling these narratives here, some examples: two piles of notebooks and art magazines (Ryan Gander's *Alchemy Box*, 2009), accompanied by lists of the hidden contents of the 'boxes'; a yellow pillow (*The Mayor Is Sleeping*, an undated work by Jason Dodge) that has reportedly been slept on by the mayor of Nuremburg; a large globe (Danh Vo's *Lot 34. Replogle Thirty-two-inch Library Globe*, 2013) that Lyndon B. Johnson gifted to Robert McNamara. Any of these origin stories, of course, could be lies.

Some of the more pleasing works in the show actively interfere with the systems of conservation and museology on which their existence depends. A padlocked and keyless suitcase (Lara Favaretto's *Lost and Found*, 1997) is a time-capsule, buried in an art collection. For *Mail* (2013/18), Mungo Thomson asks that the museum allow all its post to pile up, unopened, in the gallery. Others may not be artworks at all; Carol Bove has contributed a hunk of petrified rock, an artefact from her studio and an unfinished sculpture, all (as yet) unfixed by either title or date.

Do you want to go to an art gallery and spend half your time reading? I don't, particularly – although it's often an inevitable activity these days. 'Stories of Almost Everyone' may not change that, but it demonstrates how museological mediation can be witty and self-critical, bemused by its own contradictions, and happy to let us in on the joke.

Jonathan Griffin

Garner, Alex, “Cloudbusters: Intensity vs. Intention,” *Artforum.com*, Critics’ Picks, July 2018

ARTFORUM

TALLINN

“Cloudbusters: Intensity vs. Intention”

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA (EKKM)
Põhja puiestee 35
June 2 - July 15

The main exhibition of the Seventeenth Tallinn Print Triennial takes Wilhelm Reich’s pseudoscientific invention from the first half of the twentieth century as its starting point. Upon entering the building (which was an abandoned heating plant until 2006 and is now redesigned for each triennial), the viewer first sees photo documentation of Christoph Keller’s ongoing project of creating his own “cloudbuster,” in which he reenacts Reich’s experiments with the goal of influencing the atmosphere and inducing rain. Featuring more than twenty artists, the show, curated by Margit Säde, conjures various notions of the word *cloud*, from the ephemeral matter in the sky to the digital operating cloud to the nuclear mushroom.

Babi Badalov, WWW.WORLDWORDWAR III, 2018, fabrics and acrylic, dimensions variable.

The first floor includes “visual poems” by Babi Badalov and prints and books by Corita Kent, which are housed in lime-green vitrines. Badalov’s linguistic pieces tackle ideas of mixed cultures, money, and media, his words painted directly onto the museum walls and bright, slouching banners. Mirroring Badalov’s pieces, Kent’s silk screens with ominous slogans—“Hope is the remembrance of the future”—point to a metaphorical looming black cloud that is more constant than transient. On the second level, Andrea Büttner’s *Phone Etchings,* 2015, presents four large prints that bind the idea of the technological cloud, the personalized username, and the iPhone with the most intimate, individual form of identification: the oils and prints on the pads of our fingers. The exhibition ties together different interpretations of an extremely elusive concept, beginning and ending with the fact that “cloudbuster” was originally a metaphor for people’s indestructible optimism and willpower.

—Alex Garner

Griffin, Jonathan, "'Stories of Almost Everyone': Aram Moshayedi's Museological Mediations," *frieze.com*, February 21, 2018

frieze

'Stories of Almost Everyone': Aram Moshayedi's Museological Mediations

At the Hammer Museum, LA, the curator casts a witty, critical eye on the vexed role of institutions contextualizing the art they display

By Jonathan Griffin

Andrea Büttner, *HAP Grieshaber / Franz Fühmann: Engel der Geschichte 25: Engel der Behinderten, Claassen Verlag Düsseldorf 1982 (HAP Grieshaber / Franz Fühmann: Angel of History 25: Angel of the Disabled,* Claassen Verlag Düsseldorf 1982), 2010, Xerox and clip frames, set of 9, each: 42 x 59 cm. Courtesy: the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. © Andrea Büttner / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016

In 1997, artist and scholar Rhonda Roland Shearer published a paper alleging that each and every one of Marcel Duchamp's readymades was in fact meticulously handmade: in other words, a fake. Though the idea of Duchamp perpetrating such an elaborate (and quintessentially Duchampian) hoax is an appealing one, Shearer's theory gained little traction within the academic community. ('If she's right,' said Arthur Danto haughtily, 'I have no interest in Duchamp.') It came to my mind, again, in 'Stories of Almost Everyone', organized by Hammer Museum curator Aram Moshayedi, which elaborates not so much on the subject of craft but of craftiness, and on the integral untrustworthiness of the readymade as an artistic form.

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'Stories of Almost Everyone' runs at the Hammer Museum, LA, until 6 May, 2018.

Hontoria, Javier, “KölnSkulptur #9,” *Artforum*, February 2018, p. 202

ARTFORUM

COLOGNE

KölnSkulptur #9

SKULPTURENPARK KÖLN

Held every two years in a twenty-five-thousand-square-foot park by the Rhine, KölnSkulptur is now twenty years old. The project was set up by fervent German collectors Michael and Eleonore Stoffel, who began inviting curators to commission works for the park in 1997. The idea was that the sculptures from each iteration of the show would remain in the park for two years, after which the next curator would add new ones and decide which of the previous ones should be removed, left in place, or relocated. So in this edition, subtitled

Eduardo Navarro, *Letters to Earth* (detail), 2017, bronze, walnut kernels, dimensions variable. From Köln Skulptur #9. Photo: Veit Landwehr.

“*La Fin de Babylone. Mich wundert, dass ich so fröhlich bin!*” (The End of Babylon. I’m Amazed That I’m So Happy!) and featuring the work of eight artists under the artistic direction of Chus Martínez, we can still see many older pieces, including Jimmie Durham’s striking *Pagliaccio non son* (I Am Not a Clown), 2011, and Joel Shapiro’s bronze *Untitled*, 1996/99.

Durham’s work is a tree trunk lying on its side, originally brought from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be processed into wood veneer, while Shapiro’s structure is ultimately indebted to Minimalism, an aesthetic that has proved predominant throughout KölnSkulptur’s history. But if rationalist, quasi-architectural works have traditionally topped curators’ preferences, this is something Martínez has effectively done away with, in part by reducing the size of the new productions compared with many of the earlier pieces. None of the new ones has an anthropomorphic form, but they nonetheless have a lot to say. Rather than continuing to investigate the histories her predecessors explored, Martínez picks up on the narrative potential of Durham’s enormous tree trunk; it is no surprise that she has placed Brazilian artist Solange Pessoa’s multipart soapstone *Untitled*, 2017, close by. The formal procedures behind this work seem to defy logic; in it, matter seems not to be acted upon but instead “occurs” following its own rhythms, which are those of the materials employed and the stories they bring with them. Some of the other new works also reflect recent developments in the field of sculpture, where technical advances have enabled a staggering range of uses for many materials and have led to the emergence of a sculptural form of trompe l’oeil, here exemplified by Pedro Wirz’s fried eggs slipping down robust stones (*Trilobites*, 2013/2017) or Teresa Solar’s tongue bursting out from deep beneath the ground (*Pumping Station*, 2017). Both artists treat bronze as if it were some sort of sticky gum or still in a viscous melting state, while ignoring the material’s historical weight—and that of KölnSkulptur.

Martínez projects her signature vision into the background woven by the natural context, the old works, and the newly produced ones. What emerges from the exhibition as a whole is a reflection on temporality. The new commissions seem caught in their own conversations, indifferent to or simply unaware of the conventional narratives of recent art history. They are bewitched by myths and fables, and their unmonumentality is blatant. One might suddenly feel, for instance, a small bump beneath one’s foot: Eduardo Navarro’s gorgeous life-size bronze walnuts (*Letters to Earth*, 2017) are scattered here, many covered by leaves. One would have to kneel down to examine these diminutive works, which is hardly the usual way of encountering art in a sculpture park. Not too far away, concrete birds congregate at the rim of Andrea Büttner’s empty *Schale* (Bowl), 2017. Here, we feel time might have just stopped. The bowl’s shape is as schematic as those of Claudia Comte’s simplified marble succulents, *The Nordic Cactuses*, 2017. Both works share a puzzling confusion of scale and invite us to rethink our relation to nature in a world where we no longer play a leading role.

—*Javier Hontoria*

Charlesworth, J.J., “Turner Prize 2017,”
ArtReview.com, 2017

ArtReview

Turner Prize 2017

J.J. Charlesworth argues that the annual prize is showing its age

Lubaina Himid, The Fashionable Marriage, 1987, installation view. Image: David Levene

A female British prime minister being courted by an American president? It may be the most abrasive, political work in this year’s Turner Prize exhibition – which for the fifth time in its 33-year history is being presented outside London, at Hull’s elegant Ferens Art Gallery – but Lubaina Himid’s A Fashionable Marriage, from 1987, is also the oldest work here, alongside work by fellow nominees Hurvin Anderson, Rosalind Nashashibi and Andrea Büttner. A stage-set of crudely comedic cutout figures painted and collaged on chipboard, it’s inspired by Hogarth’s Marriage A la Mode (1743–45). No Theresa May or Donald Trump to be seen – the protagonists in this work are a haughty courtesan, her face made up of newspaper clippings of Margaret Thatcher, being wooed by a swooning Ronald Reagan dressed as a nuke-laden Superman.

Himid’s A Fashionable Marriage is about a lot else – mixing race politics and feminism in which the artworld is itself indicted as incorrigibly white and male. It’s a raucous, angry and complex piece, immersed in the politics and polemics of its moment. That it should be here at all was only possible because of the prize’s decision, this year, to abolish the age rule that had previously limited nominees to those artists under fifty. Himid is sixty-three, fellow nominee Hurvin Anderson is fifty-three. The prize’s Tate organisers have made much of this, suggesting that the under-fifty rule was no longer so relevant – apparently the idea of youthful energy and young emerging art is less important these days.

Charlesworth, J.J., “Turner Prize 2017,”
ArtReview.com, 2017

That’s all good, but it means that work that was made three decades ago is presented in the same context as work made in the last couple of years, and that has a big impact on the experience of the show. Shouldn’t the Turner Prize be attending to artists who are contributing to the development of art now? To, as its blurb explains, ‘promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art’? Since the other element of its remit – that it’s awarded ‘to a British artist for an outstanding exhibition of their work’ – is now missing the ‘under fifty’ bit, it begs the question of how we might understand what counts as ‘new developments’.

There are plenty of new developments here, nevertheless. Hurvin Anderson presents some of the newest work here, with paintings straight from the studio (some of which, according to the exhibition’s curators, are barely dry). These paintings are mostly of the outdoors, of woodland scenes or particular clusters of trees. Anderson’s technique balances the looseness of his fluid medium with the highly ordered process of marking up the canvas in grid squares. They’re dense and opulent surfaces, yet artificial and constructed, focusing in and out, as it were, between something recognisable and nothing. Anderson’s paintings are all about place and memory, of sites the painter recollects or invents as a substitute to recollection; they’re about multiple places coming together (the son of Jamaican parents, Anderson was born in Birmingham and lives in London). Another group of paintings are set in what might be a barbershop: a man sits in the barber’s chair, a long, brightly striped gown over him. His features are indistinct and he’s surrounded by a room of even more indistinct objects. There’s a sense of nostalgia, and Anderson harnesses the visual typology of abstraction – simple shapes and surfaces – to another agenda: that of remembering and forgetting –things become indistinct, things fall away, and the image of what we have lived, of what we were, is hard to hold on to.

There’s a hint of a political world outside the barbershop in Anderson’s Is it OK to be Black? (2016), a seemingly anodyne composition presenting the wall above a shelf of hairdresser’s products – bottles of shampoos, conditioners and suchlike. The scattered collection of squares seen there might be an arrangement of photographic prints a barber would pin around his shop to remind him of what is dear to him – sporting heroes, film stars, his family. Here these are indistinct, ghostly white smudges on black. The ones that stand out are particular – one of Martin Luther King Jr, the other of Malcolm X. Another, less recognisable, is of the interwar Pan-Africanist campaigner and industrialist Marcus Garvey.

IF THERE’S AN OVERARCHING SENSE TO THIS YEAR’S SHOW, IT’S THE MUTED PRESENCE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

This one interjection of a bigger political world into Anderson’s otherwise intimate worldview carries a pathos of past heroes and conflicts. Against Himid’s historical work, it produces an odd sensation of a long history and politically tinged melancholia. Himid’s other works are similarly about the history of black experience in Britain. Alongside A Fashionable Marriage, there’s her suite of doctored porcelain tableware Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service (2007); typically English chintz onto which Himid has painted satirical cartoonsharking back to campaigns for the abolition of slavery in Britain. Opposite these is a series of amended news paper pages from The Guardian (Negative Positives: The Guardian Archive, 2017–2015), all of which carry a photograph whose subject is black – university students, a fashion model, footballers, a woman shot dead for looting in earthquake-hit Haiti, a team of African midwives. Around these photos Himid paints over stories that aren’t important, while creating patterns or boldly stylised images that comment on those she thinks are. This highlighting makes stories out of the news, prodding at the types of representation of black people that appear in the press; the implication is that, even in the supposedly liberal Guardian, there’s a ‘white gaze’ at work in how black people get to be seen.

Charlesworth, J.J., “Turner Prize 2017,”
ArtReview.com, 2017

ArtReview

There’s politics of a slightly different sort in Rosalind Nashashibi’s films. Electric Gaza (2015), though set in the Gaza Strip, barely touches on the oppressive security situation. Rather, the subject is everyday life seen from the window of a taxi or in an apartment where three friends gather. They chat, share a song, make a falafel wrap. Out on the seafront, boys lead their horses into the water for a bath. Every so often, the camera shot is transformed into an idyllic cartoon version of the scene. Nashashibi’s film is about conviviality, sociability and care, even in straitened circumstances. As such, it partners her other work here, Vivian’s Garden (2017), a quite opposite space of domesticity. Vivian Suter and her mother, Elisabeth Wild, are both artists, European émigrés living in a small town in Guatemala. Why they live in their rustic compound, with their cook and caretaker, we never find out. Wild makes abstract collage, Suter more expressionistic canvases, mixing strange paints from natural ingredients. They discuss Vivian’s upcoming trip to a big exhibition of her work (it could be this year’s Documenta 14), and what clothes she should pack. They talk of their past, of Vivian’s ex-husband, hinting at his violent departure from their otherwise idyllic, if claustrophobic, little world. Rain falls on the garden outside and contented dogs snooze on sofas.

Nashashibi’s sophisticated take on personal life and its connections to the world beyond takes in the art-world in Vivian’s Garden; however modest her career in the Western artworld, it somehow affords Vivian and her mother a life here in rural Guatemala, and the domestic help that makes their lives possible. It’s a subtle and layered reflection on interdependence and necessity.

A kind of ethical concern seems to animate Andrea Büttner’s presentation also, though her work is a good deal more cryptic in its intent. Büttner’s works are primarily woodcut prints, lowly images made in a humble technique. Three large prints scale up the fingerprint smudges and greasy swipe marks from an iPhone screen (Phone Etching 2015–17); another series of prints vary a motif of a hooded figure begging, two hands outstretched. One of Büttner’s Benches (2012), made of plastic crates, a wooden plank and a hand-woven fabric backrest, proposes contradictions between investment, value and use, and a complicated relationship of humility and indifference between maker and user. But half of Büttner’s space is given over to a standing display of photography and quotes by the Nazi-era leftwing activist Simone Weil, a display loaned from the Anti-War Museum of the Evangelical Church of Berlin. These rickety wooden frames juxtapose extracts from Weil’s writings with images by midcentury modernist photographers such as André Kertesz and August Sander. Weil’s writings are an odd mix of socialism and a quasi-religious moral fervour about how to shape society to give people ‘rootedness’ and inculcate in them a sense of good and evil. Some of the extracts have odd resonance with today. One reads: ‘The need for truth calls for protection against error and lies… every avoidable material falsehood publicly asserted becomes a punishable offence.’ In the controversy over ‘post-truth’, it sounds strangely contemporary.

If there’s an overarching sense to this year’s show, however, it’s this peculiarly muted and restrained sense of the presence of social and political life. These are mostly contemplative works, despite themselves, and Himid’s appears noisy and rebarbative in their midst. The looking-inward in Nashashibi’s films revel in human fellowship, while there’s a solemn, somewhat proscriptive feeling to Büttner’s ascetic ethical ruminations.

There is, in other words, a distinct lack of the caustic and the provocative, the outrageous or the fiercely critical. Where is the younger equivalent of Himid, declaiming the crises of the present? With the Turner Prize staged this year in Hull, you have to wonder. Once an industrial centre for steel and shipbuilding, but, like much of the north of England, now marked by the long effects of deindustrialisation. The Brexit campaign got 69 percent of the vote in this city, and walking around its centre, you get a strong sense of the economic problems that beset it, it, evident in the vacant shops and deserted shopping malls. The prize itself seems timid in comparison to its moment; extending its remit further into older artistic careers and further into the past may allow it to laud previously unsung artists such as Himid, but the cost of this is its increasing distance from the cultural controversies and artistic innovations of the present.

THERE IS A DISTINCT LACK OF THE CAUSTIC AND THE PROVOCATIVE, THE OUTRAGEOUS OR THE FIERCELY CRITICAL

Searle, Adrian, "Turner prize 2017 exhibition review: a snake-infested garden and fat cats on horseback," *TheGuardian.com*, September 25, 2017

theguardian

Turner prize 2017 exhibition review: a snake-infested garden and fat cats on horseback

September 25 2017| by Adrian Searle

Yes, I believe, every word you say, 2007, by Andrea Büttner. Photograph: David Levene for the Guardian

Opening at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull, the 2017 Turner prize is an uneven and at times frustrating exhibition. Relaxing the upper age limit for nominated artists is a good thing. Some artists don't hit their stride until relatively late or are, for various reasons, overlooked. For a long time Lubaina Himid, born in Zanzibar in 1954, was just such a case. In the last couple of years, major solo shows in Oxford and Bristol, and her inclusion in a survey of 1980s black art, have brought her a new audience and increased visibility. Her 1987 tableau, A Fashionable Marriage, is a take on William Hogarth's Marriage a la Mode, restaged as a series of cut-out figures. It remains the best thing in Himid's Turner prize exhibition, which is a pity. Her 2007 paintings on butter dishes, jugs, plates and tureens overlay the glazed crockery with fat-cat country squires lumbering about on horses, black servants and slaves, querulous ladies pondering the abolition of slavery, in a motley procession of 18th and 19th-century types. Riffing on the satirical prints of Gilray and Rowlandson, Himid shows what an accomplished graphic artist she is. In another series, she works over pages and spreads from the Guardian, between 2007-2015. There are knives, guns, teeth and abstract, optical patterning, all relating more or less directly to stories about black sportsmen and women, police killings in the US, street gangs in London, and a host of other stories. Himid's adumbrations are well done but minor. Her one, recent painting is a still and stilted thing. Were it not for her earlier work, would she be in the Turner prize now?

Too many paintings by Hurvin Anderson fill another gallery, in a survey of works from the last decade. I have always liked his barbershop paintings, and the way he uses the paraphernalia of bottles and products, the mirrors and posters and illustrations of haircuts on the walls as a kind of abstraction – they make you think of abstract expressionist Hans Hofman's push-and-pull rectangles of dancing colour, and also at times of Dutch painter René Daniëls' plays between figuration and abstraction. In some of Anderson's work, this game becomes a more awkward play between quotation and derivation. It is almost impossible to paint without quotation. I'm less interested in Anderson's paintings of trees and foliage. Sam Francis is in there, along with Peter Doig and George Shaw. One recent painting, commissioned for the Arts Council Collection, presents a series of barbershop portraits hovering over a small shelf-bound Manhattan of hair products. Many of the portraits are like photographic negatives, white on black. Only Malcolm X and Martin Luther King appear in full focus and full colour. *Is it OK to be Black*?, the title asks. But again, I kept thinking of other painters, and in particular of Luc Tuymans.

Andrea Büttner and Rosalind Nashashibi's shows are the best in this year's prize. Büttner's show is complicated, not least by a large display, called *Simone Weil: The Most Dangerous Disease*, borrowed from the Peace Library and Anti War Museum of the Evangelical Church of Berlin, which frequently lends it out. Mixing texts by the French thinker and activist Simone Weil, and large numbers of photographs, including harrowing Vietnam war images, American landscapes by Ansel Adams, August Sander's portraits of national socialists, and much besides, the display is intended as an introduction to Weil's times and thoughts. There's a lot to read and look at before we even get to Büttner's large woodcuts – a bare black silhouette of a hill, jaunty potatoes floating in a field of colour, a number of simplified images of a beggar, a body humped over, arms extended in supplication. An entire wall is covered in hi-vis yellow fabric, on which hangs a number of large-scale etchings derived from the fingerprints and smears on her smartphone screen. As well as erudition and gravity, there is a kind of musicality to Büttner's exhibition. I don't know what all this adds up to, or where Büttner's identification with the ascetic, socialist, religious Weil is meant to take us.

In her new film, Vivian's Garden, Rosalind Nashashibi gives us a portrait of the relationship between a mother and daughter, Vivian Suter and Elisabeth Wild, in their rambling, ramshackle home and overgrown, snake-infested garden in Guatemala. We glimpse the daily comings and goings, their staff and numerous dogs, life behind a hefty gated entrance. Suter drags large canvases through the foliage. Her mother, in her wheelchair, glues together a collage by lamplight. The film is full of fractured glimpses, incomplete conversations, talk of departure and some violence in the past. Things hover that we can't grasp. Nashashibi's films are often extremely beautiful to look at, their slowness never a burden. For Vivian's Garden alone, Nashashibi deserves to win. A second film, shot in Gaza in 2014, slides down alleys, cruises the streets in a car, watches a Hamas march and witnesses the queues and anxieties at the border crossing into Egypt. Sometimes the scene – young men talking and singing in a room, a view over the city, the awful architecture at the border – flips into animation. Towards the end of these weary scenes from ordinary, but extraordinarily difficult everyday life, a black dot grows to almost fill the screen, a strange and startling irruption.

Cumming, Laura, "Bang a Drum for the Turner's Coming of Age," *TheGuardian.com*, October 1, 2017

theguardian

Bang a drum for the Turner's coming of age

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Works inspired by slavery and the strange beauty of life in Gaza feature in this outward-looking 2017 Turner prize show – the first to include artists over 50

Laura Cumming
October 1, 2017

'Yes I Believe Every Word You Say (2007) by Andrea Büttner Photograph: David Levene

Good news from the north. Lifting the age bar has had dramatic effects on the Turner prize. Now that it's no longer restricted to the under-50s, with all the usual star-making and specious controversy of the last two decades, the shortlist is far more varied and mature. Painting, sculpture, installation, collage, film and print are all on display in an absorbing and graciously presented show at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull. This is immediately more representative of the art scene in Britain today. And more than that, the work feels out-turned, rather than wilfully inaccessible or self-involved; all four artists are alive to the ebb of flow of other people's lives and to the tide of international history. Hurvin Anderson (born Birmingham, 1965) looks both backwards and forwards with a sequence of metaphysical post-pop paintings of his father's barber's shop in the Midlands and lush landscapes of their ancestral Jamaica as it exists in his imagination.

Here's a customer in a not-quite shop, where the floor falls away and the ceiling opens skywards, in a cape that might be made of African fabric. Is he dreaming of Jamaica? Is he actually black? The image deflects all answers in its strange conflation of contradictory visual layers. Another painting in the series shows black and white photographs pinned to the mirror above a miniature skyline of hairdresser's bottles. Probably Muhammad Ali, possibly Martin Luther King: you deduce the identity from the form or pose, until both fade into uncertainty and you can't even recognise these black heroes. Is it OK to Be Black? asks the title. Anderson alludes to art as well as politics – Morandi bottles and Mondrian abstractions in the rectilinear photos and mirrors; colour field painting and Peter Doig in his dripping Caribbean landscapes. His art swithers between figuration and abstraction. And always there is the sense of something hidden, something behind what you see: another life, another place. This is less compelling in the landscapes, overlaid with gigantic palm fronds and the mesh fences through which an outsider might view them. But it's languidly pervasive in the shop scenes, where figures (and the artist himself, one senses) truly seem to exist in a floating world. What is it to be a black painter?

Lubaina Himid (born Zanzibar, 1954) is showing works from her Oxford and Nottingham shows earlier this year. They are, I fear, the wrong ones. Her partial redactions of old Guardian covers, so that they show up what she regards as black stereo-

typing, are like an agitprop slide show. Her 18th-century bone china service, overpainted with scenes of slavery and the supposed perils of abolition, is an apt period piece, but it is overdone and its piquancy thus short-lived. Indeed the strongest work here, other than the recent and marvellously dreamlike painting of an encounter between four black men and a mythological bird-woman in a curious seaborne chamber, which touches on the tragic journey of a slave ship, is the huge installation A Fashionable Marriage. Life-sized figures cut out of plywood preen, gawp and guffaw across a raised stage: a Georgian toff with a ruff of filthy rubber gloves, in memory of Hogarth (whose Marriage à la Mode is reprised and updated here); Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as the fated lovers; and looking on, as one of the two black servants in Hogarth’s original, Himid’s alter ego in modern dress. It is an uproarious send-up of 80s politics and art through the theatrical medium she has made her own. Indeed it was created in 1986.

At least this exhilarating parade is the artist’s own work, however dated. Andrea Büttner (born Stuttgart, 1972) has simply borrowed an enormous photo display from the Peace Library in Berlin and let it run through more than one gallery. Presented rather crudely, like a series of parish noticeboards, this is nonetheless a riveting examination of the French philosopher Simone Weil’s ideas on rootedness, belonging and the human heart, accompanied – one might say illustrated, except the relationship is far deeper – by the photographs of August Sander, André Kertész and others. What we might not be able to imagine – the soul, the Holocaust, the universe – is carried here in these magnificent images. Weil’s concern for the poor is, I suppose, Büttner’s own theme. It is in the photographs of old master paintings of beggars displayed on tables so low you are required – ostentatious tactic – to bend down to see this priceless high art. It is in the large and heavy-handed woodcuts she has derived from Ernst Barlach’s 1919 statue Cloaked Beggarwoman, embodying German shame and defeatism after the first world war. Coarsest of all, it is in the greasy finger swipes made on a mobile phone that the artist has had painstakingly transformed into enormous etchings that resemble ab-ex brushstrokes; a counterproductive waste of human labour, never mind money. Büttner’s 2007 film about Carmelite nuns was a much stronger candidate for the prize, which will be awarded in a live TV ceremony on 5 December. Indeed one concern about the new age rules is that the prize may start to look backwards, as in Himid’s case, to work from the long ago past. But the judges base their shortlist strictly on the exhibitions they have seen in the previous year; in this respect, nothing has changed. And rather like the Man Booker, often thought to reward the wrong novel in a writer’s output, so the Turner prize sometimes alights on the wrong phase or works in an artist’s career. And so it seems for Rosalind Nashashibi, whose spellbinding films I always seek out, and who has long been one of Britain’s best artists.

Nashashibi (born Croydon, 1973) is showing two films. Electrical Gaza employs many characteristic methods, fusing narrative techniques with documentary footage, staging occasional scenes, interrupting vérité with fragments of animation. Here, she captures the self-contained life of Gaza, removed from the world yet somehow enchanted: shops selling sweets and wedding dresses; cars stopping so that friends can leap out and hug one another; streets that end in sparkling blue sea, where – unforgettable image – horses are bathed in the waves. It could be a seaside idyll were it not for the fearful crowds queuing at the Rafah border as the gates clang shut, or the Hamas youth march cutting straight across the scene. Alleys end in roadblocks, cars are forced to reverse down streets and as the camera rises high to look down on the blasted landscape, revealing traces of unexplained violence, Benjamin Britten’s Fanfare from Les Illuminations surges on the soundtrack, Rimbaud’s ironic phrase “Only I have the key to this savage parade” ringing out as if describing the ultimate mystery of Gaza. The film is incomplete. Nashashibi was forced to leave by Israeli incursions and my sense is that the piece might have been as good as her best work given more time. But as it is, she is showing another film about a secluded enclave, this time a compound in Guatemala where two artists live together, an elderly mother and her daughter. Whose work is whose? Are we inside or out? The women speak of being imprisoned here, once, and it feels as if they still are, only now by choice. Glowing red interiors give way to dense green gardens, threatened by snakes and the jungle beyond. Villagers arrive with food, make lunch, keep the artists afloat. How would the women survive without them – or without each other? What will the mother do when the daughter leaves on holiday? What will the daughter do when the mother dies? Nahashibi takes us into this slow, mesmerising existence in a film without narration, or even much dialogue, yet profound as any tragedy. It’s only half of her show, but this work alone deserves the Turner prize.

Allsop, Laura, “A Quiet But Powerful Turner Prize,” *ApolloMagazine.com*, September 28, 2017

APOLLO

A quiet but powerful Turner Prize

Laura Alsopp 28 September 2017

Beggar series (2016), Andrea Büttner. Loaned from Hollybush Gardens

This year’s Turner Prize exhibition, which is taking place in Hull’s Ferens Art Gallery, is a quieter affair than the showcase at Tate Britain in 2016. There are no headline-grabbing images to match Anthea Hamilton’s giant buttocks or Michael Dean’s sea of coins from last year. Instead, ideas about rootlessness and belonging, states of limbo and states of grace, pervade the array of paintings, prints, sculptures, films and installations by the four shortlisted artists: Hurvin Anderson, Andrea Büttner, Lubaina Himid and Rosalind Nashashibi.

Lubaina Himid’s exhibition functions as a kind of mini-retrospective for the 63-year-old artist, who along with Hurvin Anderson qualifies for the 2017 prize following a decision to scrap the upper age limit of 50 years. A succession of mostly unnamed black figures – individuals lost to history – populates her work. In one piece they are painted onto a traditional dinner service, to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade; in another, a black woman features in a theatrical arrangement of rough cut-outs that restage a scene from Hogarth’s Marriage à-la-mode (1743) for the Thatcher age. Mirroring this large-scale installation (which dates from 1987) is a more recent painting, Le Rodeur: Exchange (2016), depicting five people in an elegant tableau. The work’s source – a horrific episode in the history of the slave trade, in which an infection caused the passengers of a slave ship to suddenly go blind – is obliquely referenced with a view of the ocean and a tiny eye standing in for a button on a coat. Strangely dreamlike, not least because one of the characters has a bird’s head, the painting is charged with a sense of magical suspension. Himid’s noble figures appear on the one hand trapped by history, and yet poised on the brink of flight.

Like Himid, German artist Andrea Büttner reconsiders and elevates forgotten people in her work. In her display, images of beggars from art history are exhibited on a low table, quite literally begging a closer look, while a series of nine woodblock prints, based on Ernst Barlach’s 1919 sculpture of a cloaked mendicant, initially seem childlike in terms of their composition, but prove deeply affecting. Elsewhere, overlooked forms of labour are alluded to via simple statements of colour: a wall covered in yellow Hi-Vis fabric underscores the efforts of emergency service workers; a piece of blue fabric laid across a table turns out to be a fine silk made by nuns. Musings from Simone Weil’s L’Enracinement (The Need for Roots), which was published posthumously in 1949, also feature. They have been loaned from the Peace Library and Antiwar Museum of the Evangelical Church in Berlin as a complete display, pinned to easily transportable frames – the kind you see in schools or libraries. There’s a charming didacticism to Büttner’s showcase overall.

Allsop, Laura, “A Quiet But Powerful Turner Prize,” *ApolloMagazine.com*, September 28, 2017

Le Rodeur: The Exchange (2016), Lubaina Himid. Loaned from Hollybush Gardens

Electrical Gaza (2015), Rosalind Nashashibi. Photography by Emma Dalesman, animation by Visitor Studio, produced by Kate Parker. Loaned from Rosalind Nashashibi

Across the Tracks (2013) and *Northern Range* (2010), Hurvin Anderson. Loaned from the Halamish Collection / Loaned from a private collection, courtesy Michael Werner Gallery

Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service (2007), Lubaina Himid.

Weil’s thoughts on displacement link, indirectly, to Hurvin Anderson’s beguiling paintings. These are the highlight of the prize, some of which deal literally and metaphorically with roots. His lush landscapes, often painted on large-scale grids, fuse different memories and sources, notably the trees of the UK and Jamaica, where the artist’s parents were born. Two large-scale paintings depict a figure almost completely obscured by foliage, which gives the impression of something glimpsed in a dream or recreated from a lost source. In a video on display in another room, Anderson talks about people ‘forgetting’ where they are from, and there’s something liberating about the possibility of misremembering or remixing one’s past and place in the world. Paintings alluding to race – Is it OK to be Black? (2016), for example, from a series of works set in barbershops – are undoubtedly political yet at the same time evoke spaces of introspection.

There’s a hermetic feel to the two films by Rosalind Nashashibi, one shot in the Gaza Strip in 2014 and another more recently in the Guatemalan home of mother and daughter artists, Elisabeth Wild and Vivian Suter. Electrical Gaza (2015) combines claustrophobic footage of narrow alleyways and the Rafah Crossing with moments of animation which seem to breathe air into the scenes. The threat of violence, however, is ever-present and finally communicated via an ominous black circle overlaid onto a street scene. Vivian’s Garden (2017 follows mother and daughter as they go about vvtheir apparently cloistered lives. Comparisons to the 1975 documentary Grey Gardens are inevitable, especially in the couple’s oddly infantile relations. But here, too, there are moments of unexpected transcendence and pathos, whether in the protagonists’ tender exchanges, or in the footage of a painting bobbing through the trees as it’s carried through a forest.

Judah, Hettie, “This Year’s Turner Prize Show Is a Remarkably Satisfying Exhibition, Thanks to More Mature Artists,” *News.ArtNet.com*, September 26, 2017

artnet news

This Year’s Turner Prize Show Is a Remarkably Satisfying Exhibition, Thanks to More Mature Artists

In an edition which boasts a strong, politically engaged line-up, Lubaina Himid stands out as a favourite.

Hettie Judah | September 26, 2017

Lubaina Himid, A Fashionable Marriage (1987) at the Turner Prize 2017 exhibition, Ferens Art Gallery Hull. Loaned from Hollybush Gardens. Photo David Levene.

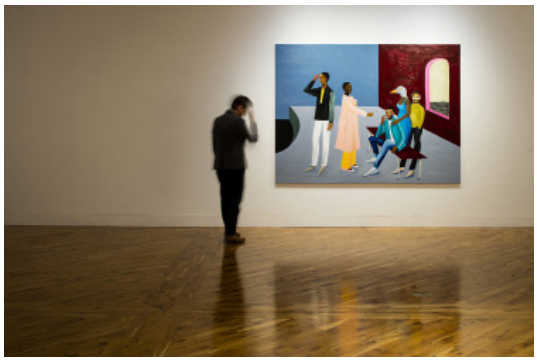
The politics of representation emerges as the dominant theme of a Turner Prize show in which four artists’ works coalesce into a remarkably satisfying exhibition.

This year’s shortlist—Andrea Büttner, Rosalind Nashashibi, Hurvin Anderson, and Lubaina Himid—provoked comment at its announcement: for the lifting of the prize’s age limit, for the diversity of the nominees, and for the artists’ engagement with traditional media, including painting and printmaking.

An unexpected side effect of embracing works by more mature artists is Lubaina Himid’s decision to show A Fashionable Marriage, made in 1986. Displayed alongside two more recent series—the recontextualised crockery of Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service (2007) and graphic newspaper interventions of Negative Positives: The Guardian Archive (2007–15)—it emphasized the artist’s consistency of voice and vision, as well as the enduring timeliness of her themes.

Shown earlier this year as part of the historical survey “The Place Is Here” at Nottingham Contemporary, A Fashionable Marriage recasts Hogarth’s Marriage à la Mode (1743). The figures of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan here occupy the roles of the Countess and amorozus lawyer Silvertongue. The marginal figures of the African servants are recast as Black women embodying virtues of wisdom and grace. Presented as a series of life-sized cutouts, decorated with collage relating to current events, the work also suggests Himid’s identification with female artists of the time: two plates tumbling from the dresser are decorated with stylised labia that recall Judy Chicago’s The Dinner Party (1974–79).

Himid’s display is remarkably strong, and one might put the smart money on her as the eventual laureate. Were it to go her way, the prize would also be an acknowledgement of her important role as a curator and archivist.



Lubaina Himid, Le Rodeur: The Exchange (2016) at the Turner Prize 2017 exhibition, Ferens Art Gallery Hull. Loaned from Hollybush Gardens. Photo David Levene.

Andrea Büttner, an artist who has historically explored issues of authorship, has also chosen to extend herself into a quasi-curatorial role by hosting a display on the ideas of Simone Weil, on loan from the Peace Library and Antiwar Museum of the Evangelical Church of Berlin. While there were strong works and series within her exhibition, Büttner’s work overall sat a little uncomfortably.

A series of large etchings made of fingerprint smears left on smartphone screens—a physically demanding and highly skilled response to involuntary mark making—were a highlight. Büttner’s ongoing interest in condescension and oversight was represented here in woodcuts showing hooded beggars seen from above, their forms reduced to anonymity that bordered on abstraction. A series of prints of historic etchings of begging figures are shown at a low table, forcing one to look down.

Installation view of Andrea Büttner’s work at the Turner Prize 2017 exhibition, Ferens Art Gallery Hull. Photo David Levene.

While one can appreciate the humility of the gesture, the inclusion of the Simone Weil display upsets the balance of Büttner’s own work, its text demanding our time and attention. The suggestion of timeliness implicit in Weil’s writing—on the rise of fascist powers and the danger of uprootedness caused by conflict and economic forces—feels reductive.

Works by Rosalind Nashashibi and Hurvin Anderson introduce a quality not often associated with the Turner Prize: beauty. It is a quality Nashashibi seeks out—and finds—in Electrical Gaza (2015) an alternative representation of a location commonly pictured in the context of crisis and conflict. Nashashibi brings it an almost magical realist quality: we see boys cooling off with festively adorned hors-

Judah, Hettie, “This Year’s Turner Prize Show Is a Remarkably Satisfying Exhibition, Thanks to More Mature Artists,” *News.ArtNet.com*, September 26, 2017

artnet news

Installation view of Rosalind Nashashibi’s work at the Turner

es in the sea; soft, almost sensual conversation and song shared by a group of young men; and a pavement fish market that recalls a Joachim Beuckelaer painting on display in a neighbouring gallery. Portions of the film that the artist was unable to finish shooting because of mounting threat are rendered in animation, and a sense of non-specific tension flashes unexpectedly into the work as it ends.

A second film by Nashashibi, Vivian’s Garden (2017) is set in the Guatemalan home of artists Vivian Suter and her mother Elisabeth Wild. Themes of caregiving and making emerge as the camera roves between mother and daughter, the servants that tend them and a group of dogs with which they share the complex. At the heart is the titular garden, a wild and tropical presence that provides Suter with the site, subject and often material for her work. The dark green of monstera leaves, terracotta walls and eau de Nil drapes set off Suter’s flame-red hair as she makes her way through this painterly and gorgeously coloured piece of filmmaking.

That sensitivity to colour is extended in Hurvin Anderson’s lusciously verdant arboreal paintings, one of two bodies of works by the artist that are likely candidates for the popular vote. Anderson’s paint handling is delectable, with images that build in structural drama through impasto, strong colour, and crisp line before dissolving into washy stain at the edges. In Greensleeves (2017) patches of a figure appear through the tree branches toward the upper left of the canvas, but as we move away from this focal point Anderson fragments the image so far that we can see the grid points with which he plotted the composition.

Installation view of Hurvin Anderson’s work at the Turner Prize 2017 exhibition, Ferens Art Gallery Hull. Photo David Levene.

Four earlier works set in barbershops explore problematics of portraiture. Two, from the series Peter’s Sitters (2009) offer faceless men, sitting not for the artist but for the barber, who will in his own way create a fresh portrait of them: a new self with a new haircut. Anderson takes this question of projected self-image a step further in Is It OK to Be Black? (2016), in which the haircut display board has been repopulated by images of Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King.

This is likely to be a popular year for the Turner Prize. In shifting the focus to artists at a more mature stage in their careers, some of whom have pointedly engaged with audiences beyond the artworld elite, this year’s shortlist has a clarity of vision and voice that makes their works particularly engaging.

The Turner Prize 2017 exhibition is on show at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, September 26, 2017–January 7, 2018. The winner will be announced on December 5 at an award ceremony in Hull, broadcast live on the BBC.

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

Metropolis M

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

WAT ZACHTJES FLUISTERT

Door Laurie Cluitmans

Mos is oud, stokoud. Het is tegelijk uiterst kwetsbaar en een overlever, behorend tot de hardnekkigste gewassen ter wereld die niet weg te krijgen zijn. In deze tekst dient het als model voor de waardering van kunst. De kunstenaar Andrea Büttner gaat ons voor.

Zaalimpressie van de tentoonstelling *Andrea Büttner* in Walker Art Center, 2015. Foto Dave Rattunde, courtesy Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Over mos en kunst

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

Ze zijn ongeveer vierhonderdmiljoen jaar oud, maar worden toch vaak over het hoofd gezien: mossen. In evolutionair opzicht bevinden ze zich ergens tussen de algen en vaatplanten. Ze waren een van de eerste plantensoorten die op aarde gedijden. Mossen worden doorgaans gekarakteriseerd aan de hand van dat wat eraan ontbreekt: wortels, bloemen, vruchten, zaden en een intern vatenstelsel om water op te nemen (vasculair systeem). Volgens de klassieke botanische taxonomie voldoende redenen om mos te typeren als een primitieve plant, een 'lagere' soort, letterlijk en figuurlijk. Toch bestaan er maar liefst 22 duizend verschillende soorten die men doorgaans aantreft op schaduwrijke, vochtige plekken in bossen, langs rivieren en moerassen, maar ook op braakliggend terrein en grootstedelijke verborgen plekken. Ze kleven zich vast aan bomen of stenen, waar ze gehele 'kolonies' vormen. Hoewel ze afhankelijk zijn van een constante vochttoevoer (door het gebrek aan een vasculair systeem kunnen ze geen water opslaan), laten sommige soorten zichzelf in tijden van droogte tot op sterven na uitdrogen en kunnen ze in deze slapende toestand maandenlang (soms jarenlang) overleven. Zelfs in woestijngebieden houden ze stand.

Het narratief van de botanische geschiedenis is wonderlijk en standaard tegelijkertijd. Standaard in de zin dat het rationele systemen betreft die ordenen, maar ook blind zijn voor alles wat afwijkt. Het is een narratief dat de constante correlatie tussen natuur, cultuur, macht en taal toont. In zijn *Systema Naturae* (1735) ordende de Zweedse wetenschapper Carl Linnaeus het plantenrijk in vierentwintig categorieën. De indeling was gebaseerd op een eenvoudig systeem, waarbij de voortplantingsorganen (de meeldraden en vruchtbeginsels) leidend waren. Volgens Linnaeus belichaamden de voortplantingsorganen de essentie van de plant. Zijn systeem werd al snel populair, waarmee ook de gedachte dat planten een seksueel leven hebben gangbaar werd. Middels de botanische taxonomie werd het vervolgens mogelijk om openlijk, doch indirect over de menselijke seksualiteit te spreken.

Om mos op te kunnen nemen in zijn systeem, bedacht Linnaeus de vierentwintigste categorie: de

Detail uit de tentoonstelling *Andrea Büttner* in Walker Art Center, 2015, foto Gene Pittman, courtesy Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Van de curatoren werd verwacht dat ze de mossen dagelijks zouden verzorgen en voor zichtig met water zouden besprenkelen

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

cryptogamen, waaronder algen, korstmossen, mossen en varens vallen. *Kryptos* staat in het Grieks voor verscholen, *gamos* voor huwelijk; een verscholen huwelijk dat verwijst naar de verborgen seksualiteit van de mossen. In de evolutionaire tijdslijn werden de mossen beschouwd als een primitieve oervariant, een lagere plantsoort. Pas met de ontwikkeling van goedkopere microscopen groeit de interesse en de kennis over de soort en de voortplantingsmechanismen.[1]

Voor wie zich verdiept in mos, gaat er een nieuwe wereld open. De Amerikaanse plantkundige Robin Wall Kimmerer beschrijft in *Gathering Moss* hun leven in de marge van onze alledaagse blik. Haar kennis van planten komt voort uit verschillende tradities; door haar opleiding als botanist, maar ook via haar Potawatomi-achtergrond. De sensatie van een plotselinge visuele bewustwording, zo stelt ze, wordt gedeeltelijk geproduceerd door de vorming van een zoekbeeld in de hersenen. In een complex visueel landschap registreren de hersenen aanvankelijk alle inkomende data zonder kritische evaluatie. Pas door oefening en ervaring worden die neurale trajecten opgeleid om de binnenkomende informatie te verwerken. Het onzichtbare wordt plotseling duidelijk. Maar mossen vereisen niet alleen het juiste zoekbeeld, ook een zekere vorm van aandacht en aandachtigheid. Zoals Kimmerer schrijft: 'To pass hurriedly by without looking is like walking by the *Mona Lisa* chatting on a cell phone, oblivious'.[2]

Mos vormt een inherent onderdeel van het ecologische systeem, speelt een belangrijke rol in de instandhouding van de vochthuishouding van bossen en bij het tegengaan van erosie. Volgens Kimmerer voegt het kijken naar mossen een zekere intimiteit toe aan het grondig kennen van het bos. En juist die intimiteit laat ons de wereld anders zien en anders ervaren.

Mos in het museum

In een reeks van uiteenlopende werken richt de Duitse kunstenaar Andrea Büttner haar aandacht op mos, aanvankelijk voornamelijk geïnteresseerd in wat zij beschrijft als de 'sculpturale kwaliteit' van mos: 'For example, the moss covered Tufa fountains in Rome, those overgrown heaps, which seem like incarnations of "informe": they exist between beauty and formlessness. Moss is like a moist Land Art version of the dust on the surface of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, shown in Man Ray's photograph *Dust Breeding*. It gathers where surfaces are left alone. Moss is something small that can be found nearly everywhere. Moss is also a slang word for money in German.'[3]

Büttner verkent de potentie en waarde van deze vaak vergeten plantsoort in lijn met haar praktijk waarin het kleine, schaamte en waardigheid centraal staan. Voor haar solotentoonstelling bij Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales in 2014 werkte zij nauw samen met Ray Tangney, bioloog, specialist in biodiversiteit en de mos-curator van het museum. De botanische collectie in Cardiff stamt uit 1867 en herbergt een herbarium van ongeveer 337 duizend lagere planten (zoals ze in de botanische terminologie nog altijd worden genoemd), waarvan 280 duizend soorten behorende tot de stam Bryophyta (mossen, korstmossen en varens). Büttners blik viel op de bijzondere reeks 3D-foto's in deze verzameling. Harold Whitehouse legde meer dan dertig jaar lang bijzondere mossoorten vast, met een speciaal door zijn vrouw ontworpen camera waarmee hij stereotypes kon maken. Deze stereotypes verwerkte Büttner vervolgens in een 3D-slideshow. Mossen bevinden zich niet alleen laag bij de grond en vereisen daarmee een knieval van de toeschouwer, ook zijn de precieze details met het blote oog nauwelijks waarneembaar. In de slideshow valt de diversiteit in soorten op door de close-ups van draden, bladeren, vormen en composities. Zacht, organisch en van dichtbij ook wa buitenaards.

In het werk *Limestone with moss* brengt Büttner echt mos de tentoonstellingsruimte binnen. Tentoongesteld in het Walker Art Center bestaat het werk uit een kalksteen begroeid met uiteenlopende, lokale mossoorten. Mossen gedijen echter het best wanneer ze met rust worden gelaten, op schaduwrijke plekken met een constante, maar gematigde vochttoevoer. Ontheemd en uit hun natuurlijke habitat gehaald werden de mossen in het felle licht van de tentoonstellingsruimte geplaatst. Van de curatoren werd verwacht dat ze de mossen dagelijks zouden verzorgen en voorzichtig met water zouden besprenkelen (te veel vocht is slecht voor mossen). Voor de curatoren betekende dit dat hun praktijk werd teruggebracht naar de oorspronkelijke etymologische betekenis ervan: iemand die de zorg heeft over iets.

Voor Büttner was het hierboven genoemde 'verscholen huwelijk' overigens een gelegenheid om een nieuw huwelijk te sluiten. Voor haar tentoonstelling in het National Museum Wales plaatste ze de serie werken over mos naast het werk van de Welsh kunstenaar Gwen John, eveneens vertegenwoordigd in de collectie van het museum. John verhuisde in 1911 naar de Parijse voorstad Meudon waar ze kerkdiensten bijwoonde en een hechte relatie opbouwde met de nonnen daar. Tijdens de diensten tekenden John de biddende dames van achteren na, waarmee ze onderdeel uitmaakte van de groep alsook erbuiten stond. Voor Büttner bestond er een connectie tussen het werk van John en haar mossen door de aandacht voor het kleine en kwetsbare, maar ook door schaamt in relatie tot een verborgen seksualiteit.

Büttner creëert met haar werken over mos een nieuw zoekbeeld, zoals Kimmerer beschrijft. Voorbij de conventies en beperkingen van de blik in een bepaalde periode, laat ze ons de marge waarnemen. Met deze serie werken vraagt ze om een andere aandacht van de beschouwer, maar ook van de curatoren. Voor bij de hedendaagse schreeuw en de grote narratieven kent ze waarde toe aan dat wat zachtjes fluistert. Weekt ze de curatoren los uit hun dagelijkse praktijk en laat ze hun deze bescheiden plantjes verzorgen.

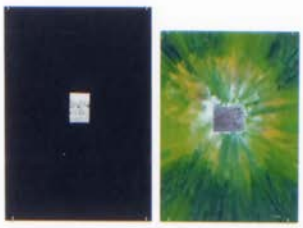
LAURIE CLUITMANS
is kunstcriticus en curator

Andrea Büttner, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlijn
27.10.2017 t/m 07.01.2018

1 Andrea Büttner, Lily Foster & Ray Tangney, *Hidden Marriages: Gwen John & Moss*. Cardiff: National Museum Cardiff, 2014, p. 5-6
2 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Moss*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003, p. 10
3 Andrea Büttner, Lily Foster & Ray Tangney, *Hidden Marriages: Gwen John & Moss*. Cardiff: National Museum Cardiff, 2014, p. 1

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75

Cluitmans, Door Laurie, “Wat Zachtjes Fluistert,” *Metropolis M*, August/September 2017, pp. cover, 70-75



Andrea Büttner, *UNTITLED (GWEN, JOHN, ST THERÈSE OF LISIEUX AND HER SISTERS)*, 2014, en *UNTITLED (DUST BREEDING)*, 2014, courtesy de kunstenaar en Hollybush Gardens, London. ©Andy Keate. ©Andrea Büttner/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2017

Rosenmeyer, Aoife, "Andrea Buttner: Gesamtzusammenhang With David Raymond Conroy and the Friedensbibliothek/ Antikriegsmuseum Berlin," *ArtReview*, May 2017, p. 113

Andrea Büttner *Gesamtzusammenhang*
With David Raymond Conroy and the Friedensbibliothek/Antikriegsmuseum Berlin
Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen 4 March – 7 May

If intermingling art and activism is the topic of the moment, Andrea Büttner can claim precedence, having long examined how people act on their convictions: for example, she filmed nuns who live with a travelling fair and work in its community for the work *Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia* (2012). The German artist's latest iteration on the theme is this exhibition, which gives other voices a platform – or, to use her lexicon, a shelter. Her own works are here too, with their air of modesty: more than a dozen woodcut prints, made between 2005 and 2017 and exploring signature themes – elementary architecture in *Tent (marquee)* (2012) and *Tent (two colours)* (2012–13), holy orders in *Dancing Nuns* (2007) and hooded, begging figures in three works titled *Beggar* (2017). In these mostly one- or two-colour works, sometimes more than two metres wide and generally at least one-metre tall, subjects are limned with sharp lines carved into the wooden block and minimal detail: the supplicants, for example, are sacklike cloaked shapes, just two outstretched hands visible.

Placed centrally, however, in the Kunst Halle's first gallery and prominently in the third is an exhibition from the Friedensbibliothek/ Antikriegsmuseum (Peace Library/Anti-War Museum) in Berlin, an institution of the Protestant Church that produces travelling educational displays. This one, mounted on rudimentary wooden stands, highlights the writing of Simone Weil, writ large on A4 sheets interspersed with A4 prints featuring familiar black-and-white images of key events from the last century. Three chapters are created in the display from quotations of Weil's writings from the 1930s and 40s (the French philosopher and teacher died, aged just thirty-four, in 1943). The opening section, 'The Needs of the Soul', outlines her thoughts on the responsibilities of freedom, while 'Uprootedness' bemoans the influence of money, capitalism and nationalism, with August Sander images of workers, industrialists and soldiers segueing into Don McCullin, Leticia Valverdes and others who reported on war, famine and misery in Vietnam, Brazil and elsewhere. Finally, in 'The Growing of Roots' Weil's words argue that good and evil must be taught and the young motivated to act, alongside pastoral and still-life images by Josef Sudek and photographic portraits of noteworthy figures. In the middle gallery, Büttner includes British artist David Raymond Conroy's film *(You (People) Are All The Same)* (2016), a 40-minute handheld record of the artist's attempts to make an artwork, his (ultimately aborted) plan being to ask a homeless person to gamble the production budget accompanying his Las Vegas residency. Conroy is stymied by events and lack of time as well as his own reservations about the dubious endeavour, his being just one of several voices recounting the events that happen off-camera over footage shot like a video diary, while the whole is tied together by another, authoritative American woman's critique, spoken as if picking over evidence.

All three elements of the exhibition share a DIY aesthetic (and, no matter how well meant, demonstrate how easily the art market will be able to absorb this ethical candour). Each part is a scaffold sustaining something more substantial – be that literally, in the case of the Weil exhibition; Conroy's would-be diary that weaves a complicated fabric of naivety, guile, calculation and moral judgement; and Büttner's prints, in which the bare lines relate to systems and questions of faith or life. As conductor and author of the composition, Büttner's bigger picture (as the exhibition title translates) consists of immense concerns about human nature, though the topic of presentation embedded within it is important too. Why, for example, does a didactic tool appear anomalous in an art institution? Is the appropriation and instrumentalisation of documentary photography in the exhibition warranted? We are more at ease watching Conroy's video, second-guessing the sincerity of what is on display even while understanding that his questions relate to ethics. '*Das Höchste ist nicht, das Höchste verstehen, sondern es tun*' ('The greatest achievement is not to understand greatness but to do it') is one of Weil's quotations; in this context, should we interpret it as an indicator that we are too fixated on understanding when we look at art? I don't believe Büttner wants to discredit the art space, but maybe to show that an aesthetic forum is inescapably a moral one too. *Aoife Rosenmeyer*

Gesamtzusammenhang, 2017 (installation view, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen). Photo: Gunnar Meier. Courtesy the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, and Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz

Muñoz-Alonso, Lorena, "The Turner Prize 2017 Shortlist Is Here, and It's More Diverse (and Older) Than Ever," *Artnet.com,* May 3, 2017

artnet news

The Turner Prize 2017 Shortlist Is Here, and It's More Diverse (and Older) Than Ever

Two of the nominees are over 50, a novelty for the prestigious prize.

From left to right, Hurvin Anderson, Andrea Büttner, Lubaina Himid, and Rosalind Nashashibi. Photos by Vanley Buke, Andrea Büttner, Edmund Blok, and GAJ, respectively.

This morning, Tate Britain revealed that the four nominated artists for the 2017 Turner Prize are Hurvin Anderson, Andrea Büttner, Lubaina Himid, and Rosalind Nashashibi.

The jury is formed by Dan Fox, co-editor of Frieze Magazine; the art critic Martin Herbert; LUX director Mason Leaver-Yap; and Emily Pethick, director of the Showroom, London.

Like in recent years, the resulting shortlist features three women and just one man. What's remarkable this year is that all nominees are over 40—the organizers of the prize recently scrapped the under-50 age rule—and how racially diverse the list is in terms of the artists' heritage.

Installation view of Andrea Büttner's "Gesamtzusammenhang" exhibition at Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen. Photo Gunna Meier, courtesy Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen.

Andrea Büttner

Born in 1972 in Stuttgart, Büttner has been nominated for her exhibitions "Gesamtzusammenhang" at Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen and her solo show at David Kordansky in Los Angeles.

Büttner's work explores religion, morality and ethics through a variety of media, including woodcuts, reverse glass paintings, sculpture, video, and performance. The German artist, who is based in London and Frankfurt, is interested in the role of the amateur in the production of culture.

Muñoz-Alonso, Lorena, “The Turner Prize 2017 Shortlist Is Here, and It’s More Diverse (and Older) Than Ever,” *Artnet.com,* May 3, 2017

Hurvin Anderson, *Is it OK to be black?* (2016). Courtesy the artist.

Hurvin Anderson

Born in Birmingham in 1965 and based in London, Anderson has been nominated for his shows “Dub Versions” at New Art Exchange in Nottingham and “Backdrop” at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Canada.

Anderson’s work addresses urgent political questions to do with identity and belonging. Influenced by art history and his Caribbean heritage, the artist combines figuration and abstraction to craft eerie, dense paintings that span portraiture, landscape, and still-life.

Rosalind Nashashibi, film still from *Vivian’s Garden* (2017). Courtesy the artist.

Rosalind Nashashibi

Born in Croydon, London, in 1973, Nashashibi has been nominated for her solo exhibition “On This Island” at The University Art Galleries at UC Irvine’s Claire Trevor School of the Arts in California, and for her participation in Documenta 14.

The Palestinian-English artist, who is currently based in Liverpool, works mainly in the field of moving image. In her films, she explores sites of human occupation—be it a family home or the Gaza Strip—and the coded relationships that unfold within them, showing how intimate gestures take place in controlled environments.

Lubaina Himid

Himid has been nominated for her widely-acclaimed trio of shows, the solo exhibitions “Invisible Strategies” at Modern Art Oxford and “Navigation Charts” at Spike Island in Bristol, and her participation in the group exhibition “The Place is Here” at Nottingham Contemporary.

Currently based in Preston, Himid was born in 1954 in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and was raised in the UK. She is a key figure of the Black Arts Movement and, throughout the last four decades, her work has teased out questions of personal and political identity through vivid installations, paintings, and prints.

Lubaina Himid, *Naming the Money* (2004) at “Navigation Charts”, Spike Island. Photo Stuart Whipps, courtesy the artists, Hollybush Gardens, and National Museums, Liverpool.

This year, the exhibition of work by the four shortlisted artists will be staged at Ferens Art Gallery in Hull, as part of the UK City of Culture celebrations. It is slated to open on September 26.

The winner of the Turner Prize 2017 will be announced on December 5 at an award ceremony that will be broadcast on the BBC.

“Andrea Büttner at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland,” *ArtNews.com*, March 23, 2017

ARTNEWS

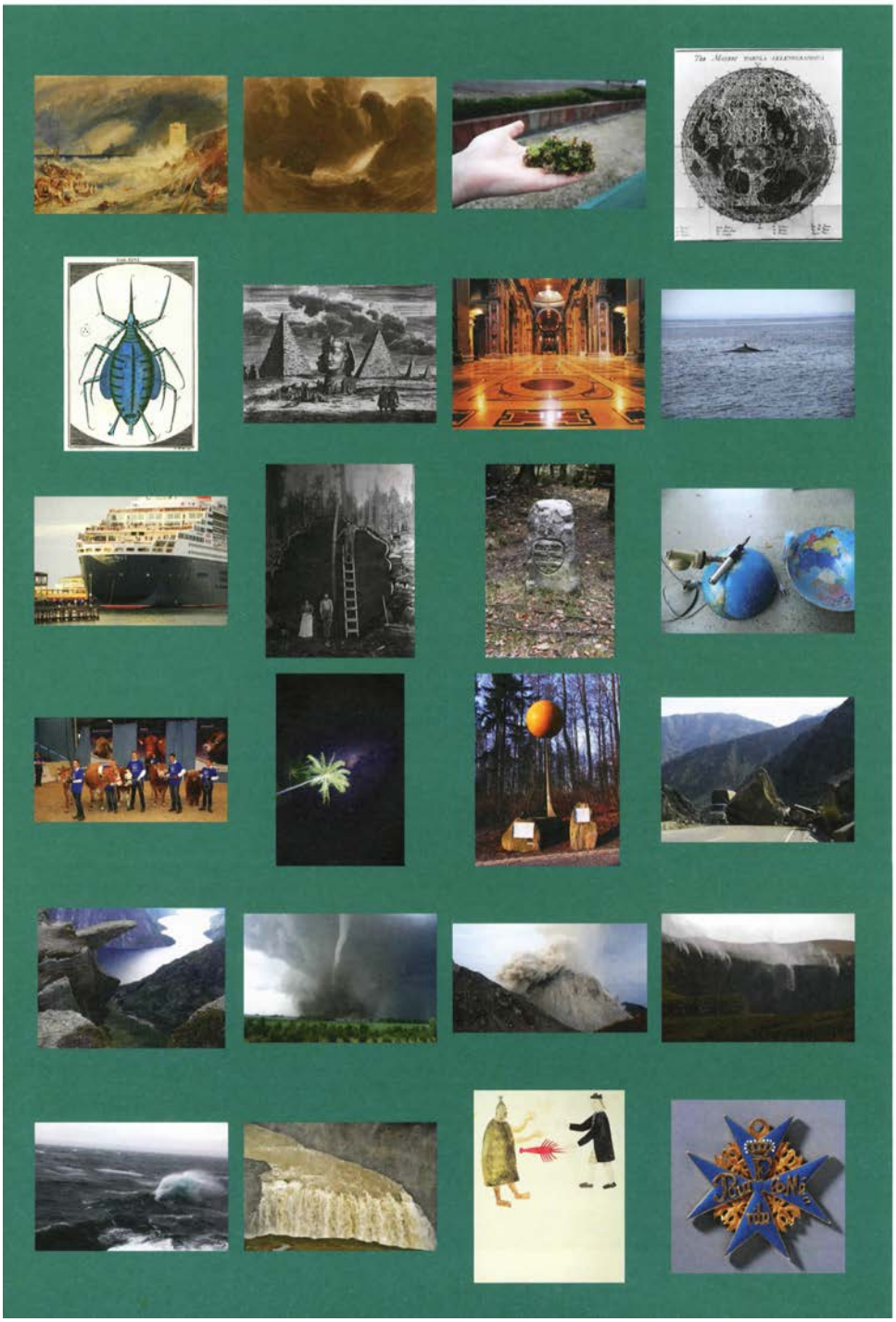
Andrea Büttner at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland

Installation view of “Andrea Büttner: Gesamtzusammenhang,” 2017, at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Today’s show: “Andrea Büttner: Gesamtzusammenhang” is on view at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen in St. Gallen, Switzerland through Sunday, May 7. Then solo exhibition, the title of which translates to “Bigger Picture,” also includes “an exhibition about Simone Weil borrowed from the Friedensbibliothek/Antikriegsmuseum Berlin (Peace Library/Anti-War Museum) and a film from fellow artist David Raymond Conroy, (You (People) Are All The Same),” according to the show’s press release.

Dillon, Brian, “Embarrassment of Riches,” *frieze*, No. 180, June/July/August 2016, pp. 154-159

frieze



Dillon, Brian, “Embarrassment of Riches,” *frieze*, No. 180, June/July/August 2016, pp. 154-159

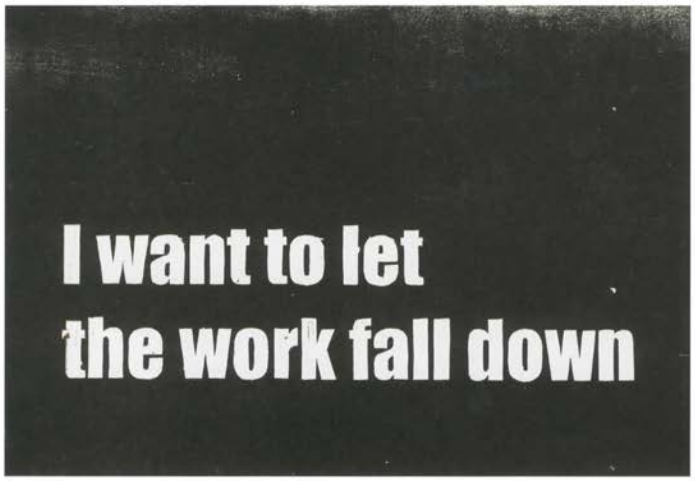
Embarrassment of Riches

Left
Images in Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment (detail), 2014, offset lithographic print, 1.7 × 1.2 m

Right
'Andrea Büttner', installation view at Walker Art Center

In her prints, paintings, photographs and videos, **Andrea Büttner** explores poverty, community and her philosophy of 'little works' *by Brian Dillon*

Dillon, Brian, “Embarrassment of Riches,” *frieze*, No. 180, June/July/August 2016, pp. 154-159



1

1
I want to let the work fall down, 2005,
woodcut on paper, 99 × 140 cm

2
Vogelpredigt (Sermon to the Birds), 2010,
woodcut on paper, diptych, 1.2 × 1.8 m

3
Piano, 2015,
woodcut on paper, 1.4 × 2.1 m

All images courtesy
the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London, and
David Kordansky, Los Angeles

‘Beauty is an object’s form of purposiveness as it is perceived in the object without the presentation of a purpose.’[1] Thus Immanuel Kant, in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), attempts to delimit the scope of the beautiful and runs straight away into vexing counter-examples – works of art not least among them. What are we to do, he wonders in a footnote, with the stone artefacts often discovered in ancient burial mounds? They look like tools, so have a purpose, but that purpose remains unknown. Are they not, then, beautiful? Not in the philosopher’s nascent theory of beauty: ‘We have no direct liking whatever for their intuition.’[2] A tulip, on the other hand, we consider beautiful, ‘because in our perception of it we encounter a certain purposiveness that, given how we are judging the flower, we do not refer to any purpose whatever’[3].

Tulips and stone axes are just the start; empirical examples proliferate in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and they have a habit of working against the purpose of Kant’s own text, which is to prove the pure and disinterested nature of beauty. Consider, for instance, his reflections on mere charm (as opposed to real beauty), which is frequently to be found superadded to the object: charm arrives in the degraded form of decoration. In painting, sculpture and architecture, ornament is secondary to design – we should not mistake the charms of a gilt frame, nor even the pigments in the painting itself, for the beauty of form or composition. That would be, Kant writes, as if we paid more attention to the spirals and curlicues of Maori tattoos than to the proportions of the faces on which they appear.

Enlightenment exoticizing aside – New Zealand and Australia had lately furnished European writers with new images for ‘primitive’ otherness – such examples are always curious, even embarrassing, in a work of philosophy: a discipline that tends to forget or deny its literary dependence on imagery and anecdote. In Kant, these moments actually resemble those secondary charms that he would like to banish from the realm of the beautiful. But a critique of aesthetic judgment can hardly do without actual objects; they decorate Kant’s writing like so many jewels, they grow on it like mosses.

What would happen if you took literally Kant’s rhetorical illustrations and turned them into pictures? That is precisely what Andrea Büttner has done in *Images in Kant’s Critique of the Power Judgment* (2014): a set of eleven large prints on which images culled from diverse sources, including Kant’s own library, purport to illustrate his text. (The piece, accompanied by an illustrated edition of Kant’s treatise, was first shown in Büttner’s solo show at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, in 2014. It is currently featured in the British Art Show 8.) So, the tattooed Maori is therein an 18th-century engraving, the tulip in a botanical illustration, the stone tool in a photograph of a museum artefact. There are the statues and paintings one might expect to accompany Kant’s discussion of the beautiful, the classical ruins and erupting volcano that go with his reflections on the sublime. But the illustrative project has overshot, absurdly, its avowed end because here, too, are anonymous gardens, 18th-century women in their finery, geometric forms that just happen to have been mentioned in the *Critique*, even examples of Büttner’s own work. Anything at all that suggests an image has been translated into graphic, painted, drawn or photographed form. And, while there is an echo of the encyclopedia, the effect is also to cut the philosopher’s abstractions down to size, to collapse aesthetics into the everyday, the mundane, the image-dump of Google searches and Wikipedia.

The literal-minded but learned comedy of *Images in Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment* is of a piece with the simultaneously high and low concerns of Büttner’s earlier work. The Stuttgart-born artist, who currently divides her time between Frankfurt and London, has made work in a flummoxing array of registers and media. She is perhaps best-known for her woodcuts, but also produces prints and etchings, paintings on glass, photographs and videos, raw canvas paintings whose fabric brings to mind uniforms and monastic habits. Her recent ‘Phone Etchings’ (2015) are coloured renderings of the smears and greasy blurs that sully pristine mobile-phone screens. Büttner’s sculptures include gobbets of unfired clay, apples piled in gallery corners, museum-style benches made of plastic crates and planks of wood. What all of this work has in common, and in common with the Kant piece, is a consistent urge to impoverish or, rather, to reveal the wealth in poverty, the dignity in shame and embarrassment, the conceptual richness hidden in the empirical.

There’s a clue to the lowering if not lowly ambitions of Büttner’s art in a text-only woodcut from 2005, which baldly states: ‘I want to let the work fall down.’ Büttner turned to the woodcut in the 1990s, when, as she once noted, it seemed a decidedly ‘uncool’ medium, too bound-up with the inheritance of artists such as Georg Baselitz. Now, she says: ‘I like having one area where I can be physically engaged, working with an angle

Dillon, Brian, “Embarrassment of Riches,” *frieze*, No. 180, June/July/August 2016, pp. 154-159

2

Büttner's sculptures have a consistent urge to impoverish or, rather, to reveal the conceptual richness hidden in the empirical.

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Dillon, Brian, “Embarrassment of Riches,” *frieze*, No. 180, June/July/August 2016, pp. 154-159

grinder.' But woodcuts are also apt expressions of an abiding aesthetic and conceptual strand in Büttner's work: a medievalism that has seen her engage not only her own experience of growing up Catholic, but a complex of historical and contemporary ideas about wealth and poverty, shame and dignity, the relationship of art to one's form of life. The most obvious example in this regard is her 2010 woodcut *Vogelpredigt* (Sermon to the Birds), in which the 12th-century Italian friar St Francis of Assisi speaks to a parliament of birds.

St Francis has been a key figure for Büttner: a theological and art-historical nexus for her interests in poverty, community and the concept of work or, more precisely, what she terms her 'little works'. Francis, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, famously abjured familial riches and initiated a rule among his followers: 'to live in obedience, in chastity and without property'. As Giorgio Agamben puts it, in an account of their monastic precepts, the Franciscans' aim was 'not some new exegesis of the holy text, but its pure and simple identification with life, as if they did not want to read and interpret the Gospel, but only live it'.[4] According to Agamben, Francis and his friars imagined an entirely new attitude and relation to things: a *simplex usus*, by which use and property rights were separated and all was held in common. (Francis had underestimated the Church's attachment to the idea of property; a century after his death, Pope John XXII issued an edict disallowing the Franciscans' pious communism.)

From this historically distant and ideologically fraught context, Büttner has extracted the idea of 'little works'. As she put it in an interview with Nikolaus Hirsch and Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2013: 'For me, it's about exploring the poetics of "letting fall", of addressing issues such as: how much do you want to show off?'[5] Frequently, the answer to this question has been *not at all*, especially in those projects where Büttner has worked with religious communities of women. In 2006, she began drawing the nuns of a Carmelite convent in Notting Hill, London, and the following year she equipped them with a video camera so they could record their own modest labours. *Little Works* (2007) shows the women making baskets, bowls, crucifixes, satchels, drawings and icons of the Virgin Mary. According to one of the nuns, Sister Luke, this annual burst of industry involves 'everyone taking an interest in what everyone else has done'; the labour involved, and the finished objects, are both solitary and collective, instances of a rigorous but joyous form of being-together.

There are nuns elsewhere in Büttner's work. For another video, *Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia* (2012), she filmed women from the Little Sisters of Jesus who are based at an amusement arcade outside Rome. 'We are people of the spectacle,' declares one of them to camera. In an earlier sound piece, *Corita Reading* (2006), Büttner invoked the pop-art activist Sister Corita Kent, whose sloganeering serigraphs borrowed their language from theology, pop music and the avant-garde. Kent – who eventually left her order, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in 1968 – is another instance of an artist whose work is hardly separated from the mundane, from life itself. Büttner seems to be drawn to these figures, and whole communities, who conspicuously carry on a labour, worship or practice that is determinedly minor.

Among the unexpected links made in Büttner's work is that between the idea or practice of 'little works' and, at some apparent remove, a quite recondite field in botany. Between 2011 and 2014, she pursued research at National Museum Wales, Cardiff, among its renowned and extensive collection of mosses. These lowly plants, which do not flower, were classified by Carl Linnaeus as reproducing asexually, by 'hidden marriages': they seemed to have been 'excluded by the creator from the theory of stamens'.[6] A secretive and modest sort of plant, then, but also a ubiquitous one. Büttner's research led to 'Hidden Marriage', an exhibition at the museum in 2014. The mosses remind her of the dust flourishing on Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915–23), photographed by Man Ray as *Dust Breeding* in 1920. A degraded but transformative stuff, in other words. In German, moss is a slang term for money: 'Ohne Moos, nix los!' (Nothing happens without moss.)

Büttner's Cardiff show also included works by Gwen John – an artist once quite overshadowed by her brother Augustus – whose drawings and paintings accord with Büttner's attachment to 'little works' and a certain Catholic context. (In 1911, John moved to the Paris suburb of Meudon, where she repeatedly drew nuns and other worshippers at her local church.) Büttner's reference to a historically rescued or retrieved artist like John is part of a pattern of engagement in her work with 'minor' artists and neglected forms. The first work of art she recalls seeing was a large woodcut by HAP Grieshaber, installed in the secretary's office at her convent school. (Grieshaber had taught the nuns to make woodcuts.) In 1982, Grieshaber showed his work at a school for teenagers with learning difficulties. Büttner appropriated photographs of the students viewing the exhibition for her own *HAP Grieshaber/Franz Fühmann: Engel der Geschichte 25: Engel der Behinderten* (HAP Grieshaber/Franz Fühmann: Angel of History 25: Angel of the Disabled, 2010). The faces, she says, remind her of people painted by Hans Holbein the Younger and his contemporaries in the 16th century.

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1
Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia, 2012, HD video still

2
Limestone with moss, 2015, limestone with moss, exhibition view at Walker Art Center

3
Phone Etching, 2015, etching, 1.9 × 1.2 m

Courtesy
2 the artist and Walker Art Center; photograph: Gene Pittman

The historical citations have continued in Büttner's more recent work. *Piano Destructions* (2014) is a video installation that repurposes the documentary history of mostly male artists (Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik, Ben Vautier) attacking pianos: an avant-garde gesture that is also an (inadvertent) assault on the gendered history of the instrument. Büttner's 'Piano' woodcuts (2013–15) involve dismantling a piano and using its parts as printing blocks: an altogether more modest and meticulous sort of violence.

Neither Büttner's art-historical references nor her theological interests ought to suggest that hers is a polite or constrained practice. There is a scatological and scurrilous impulse in some of the work that is entirely appropriate to her concerns with poverty, shame and encouraging the work to 'fall over'. In partial homage to the plain, dun-hued garb of the Franciscans, Büttner has painted gallery walls brown as high as she could reach, creating, as she puts it, a 'shit space' for her art to inhabit. At times, she makes the link between shit and riches comically clear: *ATM* (2011) is a photograph of a cash-machine keypad smeared with an unknown brown substance: it might be food or it might be faeces. *Diamantenstuhl* (Diamond Chair, 2011) is a plain white Monobloc chair – Büttner has photographed many of these – on which rests a small brown nugget; it is actually a rough diamond, but it sits on the pristine white plastic of the chair as if to say: one of us is pure and, therefore, beautiful, but neither is going to tell.

1 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1987, p. 84
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko, Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 94
5 Nikolaus Hirsch and Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'Interview with Andrea Büttner', in *Andrea Büttner*, Koenig Books, London, 2013, p. 274
6 Carl Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, trans. M.S.J. Engel-Ledeboer and H. Engel, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop, 1964, p. 24

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Andrea Büttner is an artist based in London, UK, and Frankfurt, Germany. This year, her solo exhibitions have included Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA, and Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany. Her show 'Beggars and iPhones' opens at Kunsthalle Vienna, Austria, on 8 June. Her work is also included in the British Art Show 8, in Norwich, UK, (24 June–4 September) and Southampton, UK, (8 October–14 January 2017).

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There is a scatological and scurrilous impulse in some of the work that is entirely appropriate to Büttner's concerns with poverty, shame and encouraging the work to 'fall over'.

Meade, Fionn, “There Are Many Ways to Destroy a Piano,” *WalkerArt.org*, March 2, 2016

WALKER ART CENTER

There Are Many Ways to Destroy a Piano

Gender, Class, and Andrea Büttner’s *Piano Destruction* (2014)

BY FIONN MEADE
March 2, 2016

“There are many different ways to destroy a piano,” says Andrea Büttner. Burning, toppling, jackhammering, sawing, painting, drenching in milk, and pounding (with axes, sledgehammers, and pickaxes), to name but a few—all of which Büttner documents in *Piano Destructions* (2014), an immersive video installation that presents, silently on four screens, interventions by (predominantly male) artists, including Raphael Ortiz, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, and Ben Vautier. A fifth screen offers a powerful counterpoint—and a soundtrack: nine women pianists, orchestrated by Büttner, perform works by Chopin, Schumann, and Monteverdi in tandem. A meditation on art history and gender, the work counterbalances versions of a seemingly heroic gesture of male aggression with seemingly fastidious acts of female beauty, complicating the notion of the male individual as the presumed artistic iconoclast, while demonstrating the destruction of an instrument traditionally associated in part with the strictures of bourgeois education for women.

Presented as part of *Andrea Büttner*, the artist’s first US solo exhibition, *Piano Destructions* is on view in the Walker’s Medtronic Gallery. In a recent conversation, exhibition curator Fionn Meade discussed the work with Büttner.

Fionn Meade
Can you give us a brief introduction to this layered work?

Andrea Büttner
I sourced all the filmic documentation of historic piano destructions within the arts that I could find, beginning with the famous Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden in the early 1960s. I combined these historic piano destructions, which you see on four screens, with a concert that I organized at the Banff Centre in Canada. During this concert, nine female pianists play a concert in one voice in so far as they are playing in tandem. They play a romantic piano concert, and they play Monteverdi—a composition that was composed for two choirs by Monteverdi, so it has nine voices. It has four voices for each choir, plus basso continuo. In this section of the concert, each pianist plays their own voice. So in this installation, mostly male artists destroying pianos is juxtaposed with nine female pianists performing a piano concert. One interesting aspect is the aspect of repetition. Because obviously with each piano destruction, the piano is destroyed, bourgeois culture is supposedly put to its end. And this gesture that puts an end to something—to a specific cultural history—has been repeated by several artists over decades. This repetition changes the perception of the piano destruction. And the repetition also speaks to another kind of repetition that’s necessary when you want to learn an instrument—the repetition of practicing an instrument.

Meade
In the film footage we see gestural acts from Nam June Paik, Joseph Beuys, George Maciunas, Benjamin Patterson, Emmett Williams, Philip Corner—artists associated with Fluxus and a branching off from Fluxus into other kinds of artistic practices in the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s. Can you talk about the critique embedded within your framing of the piano destructions, in terms of it as an anti-artwork performance or anti-object—going against the idea of the artwork, or in this case, the piano—as a representative object of the bourgeoisie? Why do you seem to critique here the artistic gesture of upending bourgeoisie culture? Why reverse the critique?

Büttner
I’m gathering this kind of art history of the piano destruction as a trope. And it becomes very visible that it is a kind of a trope, which strangely contrasts the act of violence—the whole choreography of it. But I’m not critiquing it. I’m gathering it, and I really enjoy watching it. There are many different ways to destroy a piano. And you see a whole variety of possibilities of piano destruction. I think one aspect that becomes apparent when you see this gathering of piano destructions is the sheer masculinity of the history of piano destruction within art—a masculinity that’s very, well, straightforward. I answer with a very straightforward femininity that has to do with also a repressive history of the education of females. It’s not that I celebrate feminine pianists. I just show how female education was also conceptualized.

Meade, Fionn, “There Are Many Ways to Destroy a Piano,” *WalkerArt.org*, March 2, 2016

Meade
The Nam June Paik performance is particularly unforgettable. He asks his attendants to pick the piano up and drop it, and pick it up and drop it, and pick it up and drop it, until it breaks apart. In doing so, he holds the gestural position of the conductor; he doesn’t touch it himself. And there’s something powerful about his version of a piano destruction that speaks to what you were saying about learning an instrument, and the discipline of practicing scales, how the instrument becomes an extension of the expressive or coerced body.

Büttner
I also think at this moment in time, with iconoclasm being an important political tool again, we see the destruction of culture totally differently than we did back then in the 1960s. This is also something that’s very interesting.
Nam June Paik was elderly and ill, and he needed in his late age he needed assistance to destroy the piano. He smashes the piano onto eggs he lays on the floor. And this was particularly distressing to the pianists who performed the concert in Banff. The eggs being destroyed, and the milk being used to destroy a piano by Wolf Vostell in one of his performances, they really both speak about the female body. And this is something about this instrument that is also speaking about the female body, perhaps.

Meade
How did you choose the music that you excerpted?

Büttner
One reason I became interested in this project was a certain envy of pianists. Think of Glenn Gould: he was free to choose to only play Bach, and didn’t have to compose his own music. He could just lean into this kind of beauty that was created for him centuries before he even came to this earth. And this is something we visual artists are not allowed to do. We can’t choose Bach to be our language, and try to play it better and better and better. There’s such a demand for invention within visual art, as opposed to what musicians do. So it was quite natural to choose pieces that I like, because it was really about this kind of choice that musicians can make: loving other artists, basically. But we also chose pieces that are easy to play as a choir, that aren’t so demanding. In a way the romantic piano concert speaks about a very skilled artist and demands the genius of a pianist, but, on the other hand, these pieces we chose are also for youth—pieces that are easier to play—so the choir could stay together.

Meade
Stay in concert?

Büttner
Yeah, stay in tune. I chose Monteverdi because in Jonas Mekas’s film on the life of George Maciunas, *Zefiro Torna, or Scenes From the Life of George Maciunas* (1992), the end shows the funeral of George Maciunas, and we learn that Monteverdi was his favorite composer. I think there’s also some Monteverdi being played at his funeral in the film, and George Maciunas being the founding father of Fluxus, loving a composer—and I share this love—who composed before the invention of the piano. It’s just an interesting angle.

Herbert, Martin, “Angle of Repose: Martin Herbert on the Art of Andrea Büttner,” *Artforum*, March 2015, pp. 264 - 269

Angle of Repose

MARTIN HERBERT ON THE ART OF ANDREA BÜTTNER

Above: **View of “Boom She Boom,” 2014–15**, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt. From left: Andrea Büttner, *Fabric Painting (neon orange)*; Andrea Büttner, *Fabric Painting (blue)*; Andrea Büttner, *Fabric Painting (orange)*; Andrea Büttner, *Fabric Painting (grey)*; Andrea Büttner, *Fabric Painting (green)*, all 2011. Photo: Axel Schneider. Below: **Andrea Büttner, *Piano Destructions*, 2014**. Rehearsal view, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre, Canada, April 11, 2014. Photo: Rita Taylor.

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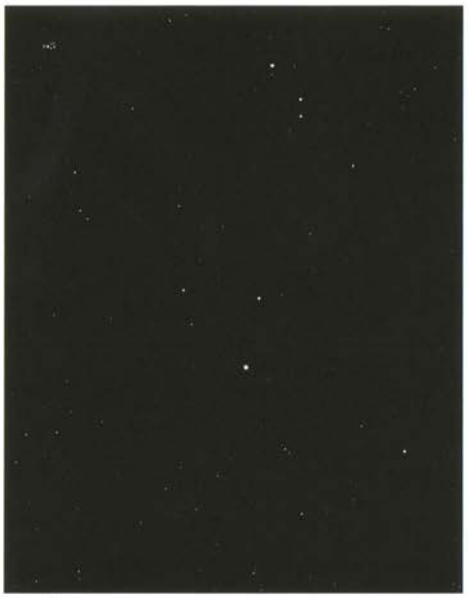

Left: **Page from Andrea Büttner's *Immanuel Kant. Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Immanuel Kant: Critique of Judgment) (Felix Meiner Verlag, 2014).**

Right: **Andrea Büttner, *Images in Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment* (detail), 2014,** eleven offset prints on paper, each 69¼ × 47¼".

"I WANT TO LET THE WORK FALL DOWN." These words sing out from (and provide the title for) a black-and-white woodcut that Andrea Büttner printed in 2005—and as it was written, so it would be done. Biblical overtones, we'll see, are pertinent to the Frankfurt- and London-based artist's oeuvre, which over the past decade has splintered into various media, including screen prints, wallpaper, photography, books, furniture, textiles, paintings on glass, instruction-based works, ephemeral installations involving live moss and wet clay, and videos she variously shot herself, collated from archives, or had nuns film for her. Her scope of inquiry ranges through Catholicism, philosophy, music, art history, shame, and botany, among other topics. Yet what remains constant is the fall: Büttner lets things go, allows them to drop, pushing the limits of form and refusing fixity, singularity, and authority. And this transgression is also a kind of conversion, a near-theological exploration of substance and accident in the world.

The gravitational pull in Büttner's art is everywhere to be found in the artist's current exhibition at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, curated by Julia Friedrich. Take, for example, the video installation *Piano Destructions*, 2014, commissioned by the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre in Canada, which features video projections of archival footage of artists—almost all male, from Nam June Paik to Ben Vautier—destroying pianos. These are countered by another projection: footage from the 2014 performance in Canada of a group of demure, mostly young women performing, in impeccable synchrony, piano pieces by Schumann and Chopin. The neo-avant-garde gesture aimed at destroying bourgeois culture, reprised over and over again, comes to look ridiculous and routine; but it is also positioned against the seemingly lesser (in high-cultural terms) act of obediently learning to play Romantic piano music, of being a "good" student. The piece is ambivalent, literally ambidextrous, its dual sets of hands and its comparison of rectitude and collapse echoed in its nebulous refusal to take a discernible position concerning what's shown. In *Piano Destructions* we find the transposition or bringing low of heroic, radical demolition into the sphere of gendered, domestic, technical craft. But this alteration is not simply a critique of what came before. Rather, it continually undoes the relation between high and low, performance and skill, inviting viewers to pick through questions about the value of different kinds of production and repetition, as well as the relationship between artistry and the anonymity of rote exercise.

The work, then, embroils us in the process of judgment—a process we're constantly engaged in without necessarily being aware of it—while thwarting the apodictic: Rather than make definitive, individualistic artistic statements on the order of, say, dismembering a piano, Büttner constructs situations of inferential seepage that spread outward and often blend into another artist or thinker's practice. Declarations—and their ownership—liquefy.

Eleven large offset prints—not unlike subway posters—in the Ludwig exhibition each contain a multitude of small inset images, keyed to instances in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* where the philosopher alludes to something visual. (Felix

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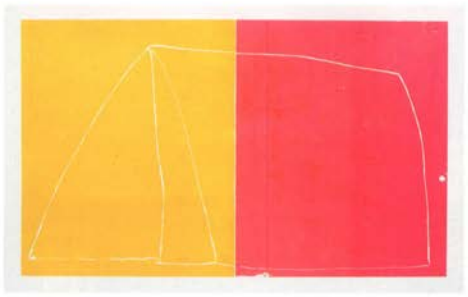

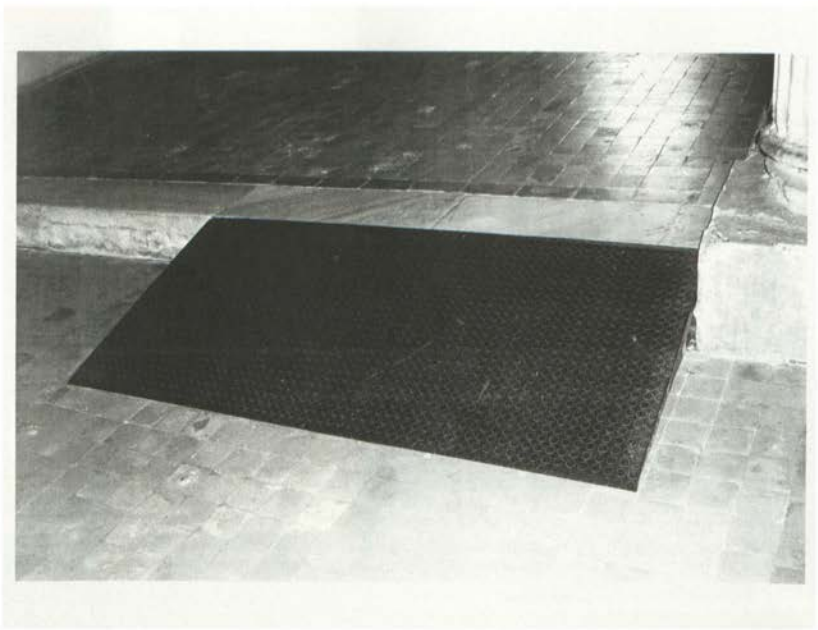

Above: **Andrea Büttner, *Tent (two colours)*, 2012**, woodcut print on paper, 55⅞ × 91⅜". Right: **Andrea Büttner, *Ramp*, 2010**, silk screen on paper, 47¼ × 63". From the series "Ramp," 2010–14.

Meiner Verlag recently published an edition of the eighteenth-century text featuring Büttner's images.) Some of the chosen pictures mirror Kant's thought—a starry night sky, for example, annotates the writer's famous soliloquy on the ineffable heavens—while others tug against it via anachronism: images of fans waiting for pop group One Direction, of street-food vendors in China, or of a Sigmar Polke stained-glass window in a Zurich cathedral. Büttner even interpolates earlier works of her own into the assembly. As the selected images here assume something like critical agency, acting as oblique commentary on the text, the pure form of judgment that Kant sought—detailed in the book that contains his foundational thoughts on aesthetics—is deftly muddied. (At the same time, this work—for which Büttner seems to have borrowed liberally from Wikimedia Commons, among other sources—echoes recent projects such as Camille Henrot's *Grosse Fatigue*, 2013, in its consideration of the fungible excess of available images, situating informational superfluity as at once a daunting glut and a route to limitless new compound meanings.)

Countenancing night skies nevertheless represents an atypical move for Büttner. Her eyes are usually directed downward: a "falling down" of the gaze, if you like. The Ludwig show also includes a series of screen prints featuring photographs of wheelchair ramps: If these constitute a metaphor for elevation, it's a pointedly *modest* elevation, at a gradient that helps one safely lower oneself, too. Büttner, in conversation, says that she was attracted to the first of these—a corrugated-dark-metal example that also graces the cover of her self-titled 2013 monograph—because, framed by her lens, it reminded her of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* of 1915. Malevich's landmark canvas was first shown in the artist's "Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10" exhibition in St. Petersburg (then Petrograd) in 1915–16, wedged high up in a corner, as icons famously are. Büttner's ramp photograph obliquely echoes the painting in order to establish difference and distance. The ramp presses into a corner between street and sidewalk, a dark rectangle that embeds mobility and a direct reference to the real world into the monochrome. Büttner, read this way, wants to reposition progress as a subtle, everyday action, bringing it down to earth. The movement she implies is humble but effective: more *lateral* and connective than ascendant and grand.

Several screen prints of ramps also materialized in Büttner's recent solo show at Hollybush Gardens in London, accompanied by several works revolving around that highly horizontal living form, moss. Three-dimensional slides drawn from a collection assembled by Harold and Patrice Whitehouse, an English couple who collected moss and created stereoscopic photographs of their specimens, were shown on a flat-screen monitor, making the plants look gorgeously rich and almost painterly. Nearby lay a display of live mosses in the form of a moist rectangle of green in a steel tray, resting on tuffs, with ceramic limb-like objects and a sex toy hidden on the ground beneath. Büttner first noticed moss when, once again, she lowered her gaze: Some years ago, in Rome, she became interested in the green growths clustered over the amorphous piles of stones that form many of the city's famous fountains. She appreciates the plant, she says, because there is no *singular* moss, and because of its relation to passivity. Moss doesn't require dedicated cultivation; at most it asks for a little water. Like the dust gathering on Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* in Man Ray's 1920 *Dust Breeding* photograph—a precedent for Büttner's thinking—bryophytes are modest, communal, self-propagating, and stay at ground level, clinging to the surface. If we frame this within the social sphere (as Büttner's art asks us to do), her decision to focus on menial moss rather than showy fountains might suggest itself as symbolic of an expansion, or a recalibration, of what one gives care and attention to; the plant might also be considered the antithesis of thrusting, onward-and-upward mobility. What, to quote the old saw, does a rolling stone not gather?

Büttner lets things go, pushing the limits of form, and this transgression is also a kind of conversion, a near-theological exploration of substance and accident in the world.

Herbert, Martin, “Angle of Repose: Martin Herbert on the Art of Andrea Büttner,” *Artforum*, March 2015, pp. 264 - 269

Above, from left: **Andrea Büttner, *Fallen lassen* (Letting Fall) (detail), 2010**, leaf, string, jacket, potted cactus, helium balloon, charcoal, carrot, paper, glass, clear tape, book, boxing bag, sand, apple and orange peels, plastic cup, water, aluminum cans, dimensions variable. **Andrea Büttner, *Moss Garden*, 2014**, eighteen species of moss, powder-coated steel, tuffs, ceramics, sex toys, 6 × 70⅛ × 47¼".

INDIVIDUALISM AND GRANDNESS have been nemeses of Büttner's art for some time. This is evident as much in the materials she chooses to work with as in the subject matter they depict. She began making woodcuts in the 1990s, when the medium was discredited within recent German art history for its association with the marketable heroism of neo-expressionism, and verboten in the then-presiding context of institutional critique. Examples of her prints from 2004 onward skew, pointedly, to iconography from the supplicatory side of faith—Saint Francis, animals, nuns, cribs—and sheltering constructs such as tents and igloos. In 2007, Büttner handed a camcorder to an order of Carmelite nuns so that they might film inside their convent in West London. The resulting video, *Little Works*, found the sisters engaged in craft activities that—as one saw when the crocheted bowls, woodworked crucifixes, lavender satchels, and visionary drawings of the Virgin Mary were brought together in a modest display—were emphatically embedded in community. Büttner's own equivalent of such "little works" might be her glowing paintings on the recto or verso of glass, which she typically makes on an unassuming, domestic scale (whereas her screen prints and photographs tend to be quite large). These paintings, which intentionally recall church windows, feel as though they could constitute a daily practice.

They're also intended to echo Jutta Koether's work in the same medium, and indeed Büttner's art is often overtly referential, reminding us that artists almost never work solo—even art made alone arises from influences. She has divested authority and assumptions of artistic grandeur repeatedly: See, for instance, her instructional work *Fallen lassen* (Letting Fall), 2010, for which she asked friends and other artists to give her instructions on how one might allow things to fall down "to express an affirmative attitude." She then performed these instructions, involving small tasks and quotidian objects such as carrots and leaves, and left the traces on view during

Two stills from Andrea Büttner's *Little Works*, 2007, HD video, color, sound, 10 minutes 42 seconds.

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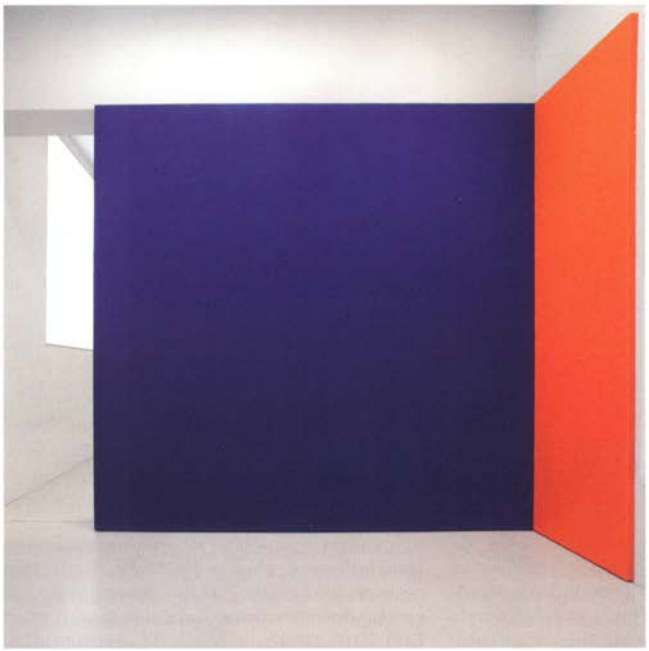

Left: **Andrea Büttner, *Untitled (corner)*, 2012**, stretched fabric. Installation view, Neue Galerie, Kassel. Documenta 13. Photo: Anders Sune Berg.

Right: **Andrea Büttner, *All my favourite artists had problems with alcohol*, 2005**, woodcut print on paper, 16½ × 25⅝".

Below: **View of “Andrea Büttner: Nought to Sixty,” 2008**, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. From left: *Dancing Nuns*, 2007; *Grid*, 2007; *A stone Schwitters painted in the lake district*, 2005; *Little Works*, 2007; *Untitled*, 2010; *Little Works*, 2008. Photo: Marcus J. Leith.

Büttner’s art can be read as a form of empathy—an exemplary outstretched hand, not from above but from across.

the exhibition. Extending her consideration of authority to matters of artistic signature—an issue that Büttner appears to care about only insofar as she can resist it—she embraces a number of incredibly diverse historic practices (from command-driven Fluxus and Conceptualism to abstraction), making unambiguous nods to artists who have shaped her. We see Blinky Palermo, in wall-scaled textile monochromes such as *Untitled (corner)*, 2012, that refer to the painter’s “Fabric Pictures” series from 1966–72; Sister Corita Kent, in her graphic word pieces; and Dieter Roth and Martin Kippenberger— two figures who allowed human weakness into their art—in the woodcut *D. Roth and M. Kippenberger are meeting at the bridge of sighs*, 2006. Büttner has spoken of her fascination with Roth’s diaries (for her forty-one-minute sound piece *Roth Reading*, 2006, she recited all the passages within them that relate to shame and embarrassment) and particularly with his assertion that what we look for in the journals of others are disclosures of vulnerability—revelations that they, too, failed.

This questioning of the artist’s eminent cultural position is decisive. It’s increasingly clear that the successful contemporary artist is the model for the individual under the cognitive regime of neoliberalism: mobile, self-directed, self-evolving, practicing

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immaterial labor, practicing "freedom," successful, a celebrity. Of course, this is a fantasy for most. Büttner offers a very different portrait of the artist, one who is openly influenced, who needs others, who has limits. (ALL MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS HAD PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL, reads a woodcut from 2005, doubling down on inspiration and imperfection, not to mention nodding toward another well-worn cliché of the bohemian creative figure.) For her 2008 show at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London—on view while she was also writing a Ph.D. thesis at the Royal College of Art, examining the relationship between art and shame—Büttner painted the gallery walls an ugly brown as high as she could reach, which was certainly not the ceiling, and called this intervention "shit space" (shit and shame having obvious links). She also often reprises works, bucking the idealist notion that the artist-as-individualist has a new idea, a salable innovation, for each new exhibition. She presents this model not only to critique the role of the artist as neoliberal avatar but also to critique the entire coercive context it precedes—the area where biopolitics and the marketization of everything merges with the new, you-can-do-anything religion of self-optimization, as monetized by the Tim Ferrisses of this world. Here, in the aftermath of what filmmaker Adam Curtis has famously termed "the century of the self," bodies and minds are set in competition with each other and, in a culture of achievement, are mostly doomed to fail. But what does failure even mean if you will your work to fall?

It's fitting, then, that Büttner looks at the culture of self-help and self-promotion with a cocked eye, privileging the self-effacing gesture, the "minor work." Countering the sacred with the profane, Büttner is drawn to the tension between the two—to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism and the precariousness of the secular state, to questions of devotion and questions of betrayal, to the exegetical tradition within Catholicism and the technological vision of the present. The modernist dialectic of high and low itself, the artist has noted, is a Christological concept, stemming from Pauline theology; Christ lowered himself, and that's why he was elevated again. Büttner has suggested that aspects of faith, such as Franciscan selflessness, might be worth reconsidering, as both a way of seeing more, through a kind of embodied vision of the world, and a way of distinguishing generosity and tolerance from dogma. Again, this complicates judgment, *reminds* us of judgment and the ways in which we are always, even if unconsciously, adjudicating good and bad, self and other. It reminds us what it might mean to judge someone else's life choices according to attitudes we've adopted unconsciously, been taught to hold: how, in short, to be in the world.

All this might be read as a form of empathy—an exemplary outstretched hand, not from above but from across. For a 2012 show at International Project Space, in Birmingham, UK, Büttner produced *Benches*, a set of emphatically beautiful padded, fabric-covered backrests in rainbow hues and austere grays, accompanied by simple lengths of wood resting on plastic crates, like secular pews. If her practice can be telescoped into a single move, this might be it. In an unlikely echo of Matisse's famous idea of art as something "like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue," the visitor was offered, alongside sheer visual pleasure, a work plainly opposed to self-elevation. It was allowed that he or she might be tired. Here was both a slow attenuation of experience—one that countered the hyperactivity of the endlessly producing creative laborer while avoiding any lofty meditative concepts—and a nurturing gesture on the metaphoric order of watering moss. The plant won't grow bigger or more beautiful as a result, but ideally you do it anyway. Stitched into one of the pews' backrests, meanwhile, was a simple two-letter German word, perhaps the most disproportionately accepting sentiment that could be communicated in such a small space, which you could read before letting yourself sink down: JA. □

"Andrea Büttner: 2" is on view through March 15 at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

MARTIN HERBERT IS A WRITER AND CRITIC BASED IN BERLIN.

Andrea Büttner, ***Benches*** **(detail), 2012**, handwoven fabric, wood, plastic crates. Installation view, International Project Space, Birmingham, UK, 2012. Photo: John Fallon.

Bryan-Wilson, Julia, “Andrea Büttner’s Little Queer Things,” *Parkett 97*, Collaboration, 2015, pp. 18-31

ANDREA BÜTTNER, CURTAIN, 2013, woodcut, 55 1/8 x 78 3/4" / VORHANG, Holzschnitt, 140 x 200 cm.
(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, HOLLYBUSH GARDENS, LONDON, AND DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES © ANDREA BÜTTNER / VG BILD-KUNST, BONN 2015 / PHOTO: FREDRIK NISEN)

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JULIA BRYAN-WILSON

Andrea Büttner’s *Little, Queer Things*

“What does it mean to be little?,” asks Andrea Büttner, directing her question to a pair of nuns in her video LITTLE SISTERS: LUNAPARK OSTIA (2012). Commissioned by Documenta 13, the forty-two-minute piece captures Büttner’s conversations with two members of the Little Sisterhood of Jesus who run a game booth at an amusement park near Rome. They discuss their views on beauty, spirituality, and spectacle, articulating a far-ranging and expansive theorization of littleness, which they describe as a relational condition that emphasizes humility in the face of the other, in particular, a humbleness before God. Littleness is, in other words, a kind of modesty, not only in its embrace of simplicity but also as an affective orientation of harmony and equanimity.

Yet while modesty has gendered connotations, suggesting a womanly sense of decency and proper female comportment, littleness proposes a radical leveling of the self, a recognition of equivalent valuation. In Büttner’s work, this littleness, I think, also manifests itself as a queer quality, not necessarily in the literal sense of expressing same-sex desire but as a model of interacting in which one exists, as one sister puts it in the video interview, “alongside the other … alongside another person on equal terms.” With this evocative formulation of proximity and balance, the nun articulates a theorization similar to Eve Sedgwick’s understanding of the “beside,” which moves away from binary argumentation (in the vein of *this* versus *that*) in favor of embracing how “a number of elements may lie alongside each other.”[1] For Sedgwick, “*beside* comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attacking, aggressing, warping, and other relations.”

In Sedgwick’s account, “beside” is a distinctly queer, rather than religious, methodology, but Büttner’s work brings the two together by probing the queer implications of Catholicism. Nuns and their single-gender havens figure prominently in queer histories and fantasies, and religious communities, especially in their secluded formations that reject the heterosexual family as a core organizing unit, might arguably be viewed as culturally, if not sexually, queer.[2] The convents and sisterhoods that intrigue Büttner are sanctuaries for, and embodiments

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ANDREA BÜTTNER, LITTLE SISTERS: LUNAPARK OSTIA, 2012, HD video, 42 min. / KLEINE SCHWESTERN: LUNAPARK OSTIA, HD-Video.

Below / unten: ANDREA BÜTTNER, LITTLE SISTERS: LUNAPARK OSTIA, 2012, production photograph / KLEINE SCHWESTERN: LUNAPARK OSTIA, Produktions-Photographie.

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Andrea Büttner

ANDREA BÜTTNER, ATM, 2011, digital pigment print, 15 3/4 x 23 3/8”/ Digitaler Pigmentdruck, 40 x 60 cm.

of, the desiring, identifying, paralleling, and warping that is common to both Sedgwick’s “beside” and the nun’s “littleness.” In one of her best-known pieces, LITTLE WORKS (2009), Büttner practiced an alongsideness, beside, or dehierarchization of artist and subject when she handed her video camera to an order of Carmelite nuns living in London and asked them to document their craft projects, such as lavender sachets and sugar-stiffened baskets. The resulting eleven-minute video shows intimate encounters between the nuns, unmediated by the artist’s presence, as they display their drawings, crochet, and candles made from recycled bits of wax.

Büttner’s video briefly chronicles the sisters as they prepare for a feast day display of their “little works”—littleness refers not to smallness of size but to the fact that such objects are created in the nun’s spare time, as an auxiliary activity—and implicitly asks questions about how such unlike things as the nuns’ sachets and her own artwork exist within just barely intersecting spaces, tracing connections between the cloistered world of the hobbyist maker and the commercial art market of high-value exchange. Although there is some overlap in their shared discourses of a creative “gift,” the sisters’ pointed acceptance of their unassuming littleness counters the rhetoric of self-aggrandizing artistic “greatness”—a term that still has traction in the contemporary art world, perpetually awash in pronouncements about great works and great artists (not to mention greatness of scale and auction-house results).

The commodity itself, Karl Marx wrote, “is a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”[3] This much-quoted English translation dates from 1957 and was rephrased, in later editions, as “a very strange thing”; the original German reads *“ein sehr vertracktes Ding”*—the commodity as baffling, messy, complicated, confounding, tricky.[4] The original German adjective has no straightforward associations with sexuality, but the early English wording (or mistranslation) might hit on something by conjoining queerness and religion in the charged nature of the capitalist commodity object as it becomes fetishized and freighted with

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a quasi-spiritual significance. For Marx, of course, the “leveling” wreaked by capitalism is anything but positive, and the only “equivalent valuation” is in the exchange of commodities for money—the “universal equivalent.”

Büttner’s art, on the other hand, often seeks to disrupt the coherence of the commodity. Indeed, as she moves across and between many media—including paintings on glass, ceramics, fabric “paintings” (stretched pieces of colored material from work uniforms), installations composed of found objects, videos, appropriated images, photographs, moss, instruction-based events, sound pieces in which she reads the writings of other artists (including Dieter Roth and Sister Corita Kent), and woodcuts—not all of her work is easily understood within the logic of the concrete thing or discrete art object. Her exhibitions sometimes take the shape not of the presentation of individual works but as whole-gallery gestures, often incorporating pieces made by family and friends.

Throughout her practice, the artist probes “tricky” thresholds not often explicitly explored in contemporary art—the blurry line between amateur making and fine art production, for instance, or the unexpected relationship between marginal religious experiences and philosophies of modernist contemplation. Her interest in inverting or dissolving boundaries—that is, queering them—is felt most palpably when she drags the abject into the art space, as when she displayed her work against a messy backdrop of brown paint (whose brushstrokes did not quite reach the top of the walls because she painted only as far as she could reach) to create a “shit space” that besmirches the pristine expectations of the white cube. In her photograph ATM (2011), the keypad of a cash machine is smeared with what looks like fecal matter—a reference perhaps, as Lars Bang Larsen has noted, to Freud’s analysis of dreams, where excrement symbolizes money.[5)] The analogy also appeared in Büttner’s 2011 exhibition “Our Colours Are the

ANDREA BÜTTNER, ANCESTOR DUMPLINGS, 2009, unfired clay, water, plastic, dimensions variable, detail / AHNENKNÖDEL, ungebrannter Ton, Wasser, Kunststoff, Masse variabel, Detail. (PHOTO: DAWN BLACKMAN)

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Andrea Büttner

ANDREA BÜTTNER, MINERVA, 2011, video loop, 5 min, 39 sec. / Videoloop.

Colours of the Market Place,” in which a floor-bound clay sculpture of lumpy balls (AHNENKNÖDEL [Ancestor Dumpling], 2009–11), looking like some exotic animal’s droppings, was placed alongside a video of hands ringing up purchases at a checkout counter (MINERVA, 2011).[6)]

As many writers have noted, Büttner is a connoisseur of the scatological, and of the bodily shame that such matter out of place can elicit; she even wrote a PhD dissertation on shame in art, including its queer aspects.[7)] But a queer sense of shame lets Büttner embrace the melancholic, the abject, and the outmoded together with—or *beside*—the ecstatic. In Büttner’s large woodcut print DANCING NUNS (2007), seven figures frolic in a field of tall grass. As the nuns fling their arms in the air and bend their bodies, the medium of the woodcut itself, with its crude and emphatic lines, contributes to the print’s sense of corporeal vitality and liveliness. As Daniel Pies comments in an interview with the artist, in such work, “the convent turns into something like a utopian community.”[8)] While the description is romantic, it recalls a counter-history of the church, of nuns who took on progressive causes as they attempted to extend the concept of littleness beyond the walls of the convent and into the world. Take Sister Corita Kent, for example, whose riotously colorful prints of the 1960s and ’70s employed advertising lingo to express both rapturous faith and fervent protest—for which she got in trouble with the church patriarchy.[9)]

More recently, shame has served as a catalyst for activism, as it has in queer politics; as Sedgwick wrote, “If queer is a politically potent term, which it is, that’s because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy.”[10)] Over the last decade, shame has become central to queer politics as a way to contest the corporatization of mainstream gay pride and to put pressure on the white male face of academic gay studies; “queer shame” is now a touchstone for critical queer theory and a rallying cry for progressive sexual cultures.[11)]

Littleness, queerness, religion, shame: These are some of the sites in which Büttner locates herself, positions alternative to the mainstream art world. Another term for her work, and for her formal strategies, might be “backward,” to draw on Heather Love’s notion of queer temporal outsiders who “embrace backwardness in many forms; in celebrations of perversion, in defiant refusals to grow up, in explorations of haunting and memory, and in stubborn attachments to lost objects.”[12)] But if Büttner’s work looks backward, in Love’s queer sense, it is far from a regression or a retreat: It is a powerful step forward.

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1) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.
2) On the queerness of Christianity in general and of Catholicism more specifically, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
3) Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954), 78.
4) Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie* (Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meissner, 1872), 47.
5) Lars Bang Larsen, “Theodicies: Andre Büttner’s Sense of Letting Go,” in Susanne Gaensheimer and Anthony Spira, eds., *Andrea Büttner* (London: Kõnig Books, 2013), 130.
6) The exhibition title is borrowed from a line in a 1964 print by Sister Corita Kent.
7) Andrea Büttner, *Perspectives on Shame and Art: Warhol, Sedgwick, Freud and Roth*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Royal College of Art, London, 2008.
8) Conversation between Andrea Büttner and Daniel Pies, in Anja Casser, ed., *I Believe Every Word You Say* (Berlin: Argobooks, 2009), 41.
9) One of Kent’s most infamous prints hails Mother Mary as “the juiciest tomato of them all,” quoting the writer Samuel Eisenstein; it is a frankly sensual, and even somewhat queer, assertion. The Archbishop of Los Angeles decried Kent’s work as “weird and sinister,” and Kent left the order in 1968. See Susan Dackerman, *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).
10) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel,*” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, no. 1, vol. 1 (November 1993): 4.
11) See Judith Halberstam, “Shame and White Gay Masculinity,” Social Text 84–85, vol. 23, nos. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2005): 219–33; and Sally R. Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (London: Ashgate, 2007).
12) Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7.

ANDREA BÜTTNER, STEREOSCOPIC SLIDE SHOW FROM THE WHITEHOUSE COLLECTION (MOSSES AND FIELD TRIPS), 2014, detail, stereoscopic slides by Harold and Patricia Whitehouse transferred to digital / STEREOSKOPISCHE DIASHOW AUS DER WHITEHOUSE-SAMMLUNG (MOOSE UND EXKURSIONEN), Detail, digitalisierte stereoskopische Dias.
(PHOTO: © NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES)

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CHRISTOPH MENKE

Andrea Büttner’s Aesthetics

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Page 24 and 25 / Seite 24 und 25:
ANDREA BÜTTNER, Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft,
artist's book, edited by Museum Ludwig, Cologne,
published by Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2014 / Künstlerbuch.
(PHOTO: TINO GRASS)

What is aesthetics? Aesthetics is the philosophical consideration of the aesthetic: the attempt to analyze and grasp what it is that constitutes the aesthetic, and what it says about us that the aesthetic exists or that we possess it (or indeed that it possesses us); what we owe to the aesthetic and how we can pay tribute to it, and what we lose (or have already lost) when we no longer have it.

What is the aesthetic? The aesthetic is a dimension, a dynamic, a force of the soul, and with that, a source of everything that makes us who we are—in contrast to theory, because it has neither subject nor content; in contrast to praxis, because it has no goal; in contrast to concept, because it has no rules; in contrast to society, because it has no norms; in contrast to individuality, because it has no owner. Alternatively, the aesthetic is the power of fascination in a glance, the drive of exaltation in a deed, the sudden insight into a thought.

In other words, aesthetics is the philosophical attempt to ponder what cannot be grasped, but without which nothing can be grasped at all. In aesthetics, philosophy is not only directed toward something that can never actually be quantified, but it takes on something that is an impossibility within philosophy itself. Aesthetics is not simply another of the many diverse fields that philosophy analyzes; it is more like a counterpart of philosophy, with which it is in constant conflict: Philosophy gnaws away at aesthetics, but never quite gets to grips with it. Aesthetics as a philosophical understanding of the aesthetic seeks the impossible—it is itself an impossibility.

No one was more aware of this problem, of this fundamental impossibility, than Kant. It is to him, in fact, that we owe our insight into this conundrum. When we speak of the aesthetic—that is, of something beautiful—it might seem as though we were attributing a specific quality to an object, a quality similar to all the other qualities that object might have; but in truth, beauty has no specifiable quality. This is the basic premise with which Kant begins: The beautiful, the aesthetic is something fundamentally indeterminate and undeterminable; it cannot be pinned down. The aesthetic is not about some quality or other, not about a thing (as a thing in itself) but about nothing, about the nothingness of that quality, about what comes before all determination and goes beyond all determination.

Yet at the same time, nobody demonstrates more clearly than Kant what immense difficulties are involved in even saying this, or in thinking it. This proposition—that the aesthetic is indeterminate, nothingness, the abyss of all determination—might be taken as a license, or even as an invitation, to describe the aesthetic in sentimental, emotional terms instead of defining it; but for Kant, that is a kitschy, schmaltzy response. Philosophy does not grasp the aesthetic simply by becoming a little more narrative, a little more metaphorical, a little more descriptive, a little more essayistic—in other words, by acting a little more *aesthetically* itself. The great thinkers in the field of aesthetics—Baumgarten, Kant, Hegel, Adorno—never did this. Philosophy has to be a matter of thinking, conceptually clear and explicit, distinguishing

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and abstract. According to Kant, it is necessary to go through the icy wastes of abstraction in order to contemplate the aesthetic. It is therefore the task of the philosopher to grasp the aesthetic, even in the knowledge that this is bound to fail. And that is precisely the point of aesthetics: It wants to fail to grasp the aesthetic. It is only when one actually goes through the experience of discovering that all attempts to define and grasp the aesthetic are doomed to failure—to *utter* failure, as opposed to simply foundering—that one has truly experienced what the aesthetic and aesthetics *mean*. Those who do not even attempt to determine whatthe aesthetic is, who do not follow the path of its conceptual determination, and who do notfail to define it, will never be able to experience the aesthetic or contemplate it as itself.

— —

At this point in my text, you might be wondering when I will mention Andrea Büttner. You're thinking, "He's just rambling on about philosophy and not about art." But I've actually been talking about Büttner's work at the same time—about Kant and his philosophy in her art, and what this reveals to us about Kant, or rather, what it has to do with Kant and philosophy. In 2014, the artist published her own edition of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of the Power of Judgment), first published in 1790. She did not intervene in the text, commenting, reviewing, criticizing, or deconstructing it, except to here and there discreetly add a number in the margin; this number serves to connect a few lines of Kant's text with an image. Büttner drew her images from a range of sources, both historical (including from Kant's own library) and contemporary. She also created a series of eleven offset prints, featuring a total of more than two hundred images. But what happens to Kant's philosophy when it is linked to images? It becomes something else entirely. Not in its inner structure and manifest content, but in its status and, with that, its substance. The text itself, the philosophical treatise, the philosophy—all become different.

Frequently, Büttner adds an image where the text provides a description of one; the added image might be of something that Kant knew or might have known, or simply something that fits his description. In this way, Büttner seems to provide the image in retrospect as the object Kant is talking about. But the image invariably gains something: a surplus, a counterforce an opponent. What emerges is an endless to and fro between text and image, with each referencing the other—countering and contradicting it. The text loses its power over the image. But what is a text without power over the image? And how can there be philosophy without power over the image?

At first, the text appears to tell us *what* we should see in the image: For instance, as Kant writes, "a bubble of water in a rock crystal." The text also appears to tell us *how* we should see the image, so that we can expect everyone else to see it the same way—not just that everyone will see the same thing, but every person will experience the same pleasure. But the more we alternate between text and image, the more the boundaries between them become blurred. Can the text guide the image and express our perception of it? Or was it not, conversely, the image that gave rise to the text in the first place? Does the image, then, constitute not the content of the text but rather the basis of the text? Does Büttner undermine the text by showing that the image, the opponent of the text, is the foundation, or ground, of the text—and, with that, the abyss? But if this can be said, and if it can be written, has not the text once again prevailed over the image?

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ANDREA BÜTTNER, IMAGES IN KANT'S CRITIQUE OF THE POWER OF JUDGMENT, 2014, offset print on paper, 69 1/8 x 47 1/4" / BILDER IN KANTS KRITIK DER URTEILSKRAFT, Offsetdruck auf Papier, 177 x 120 cm.

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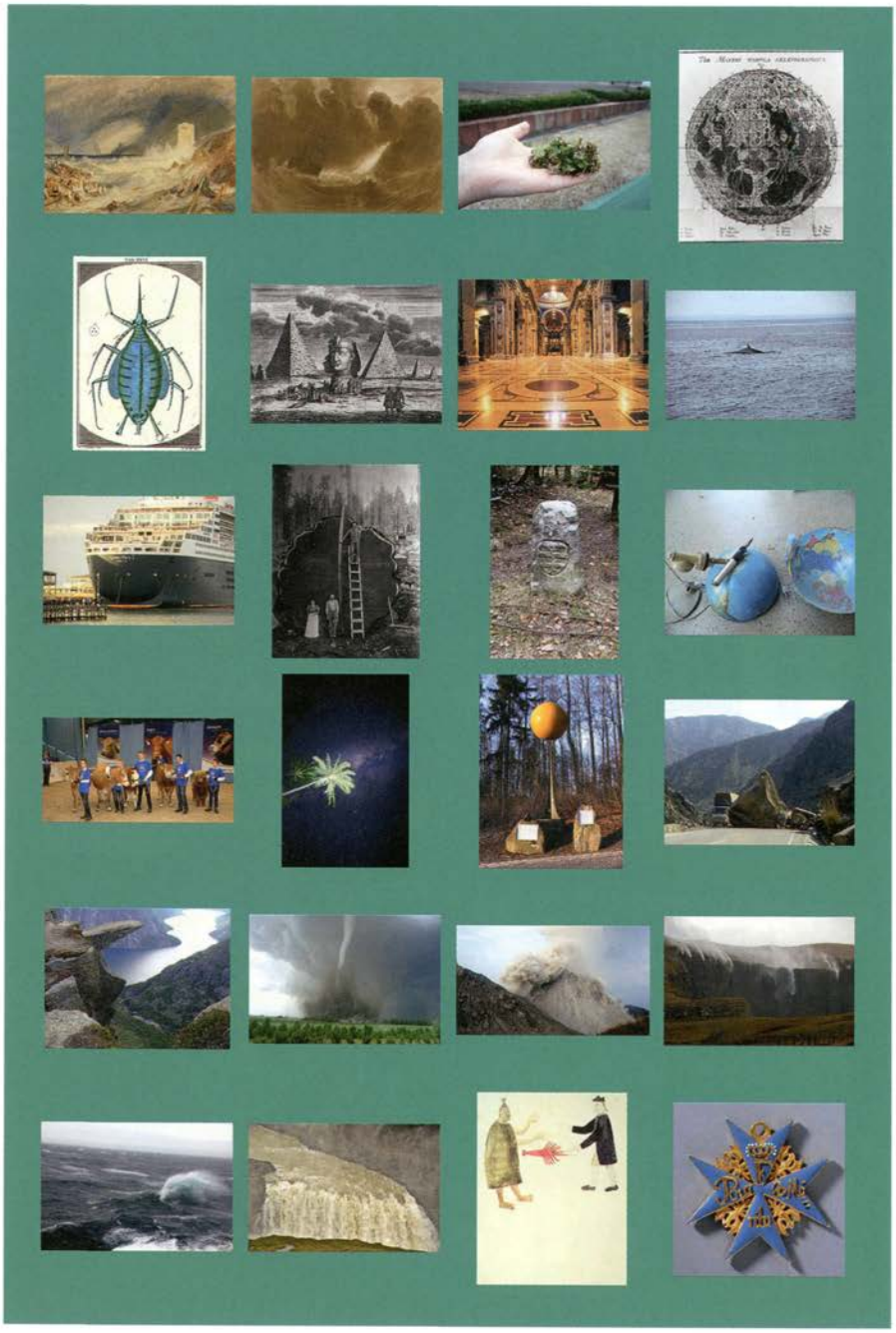

ANDREA BÜTTNER, IMAGES IN KANT'S CRITIQUE OF THE POWER OF JUDGMENT, 2014, offset print on paper, 69 $^{1}/_{8}$ x 47 $^{1}/_{4}$" / BILDER IN KANTS KRITIK DER URTEILSKRAFT, Offsetdruck auf Papier, 177 x 120 cm.

Menke, Christopher, “Andrea Büttner’s Aesthetics,” *Parkett 97*, Collaboration, 2015, pp. 33-45

— —

By exploring the abyss of this text-and-image game, Büttner leads us into the very core of Kantian aesthetics. For it is precisely this interaction between Kant's text and its visual counterpart or visual ground that becomes the subject matter of the text of Kantian aesthetics. There are, therefore, two games being played out here between text and image: the game that Kantian aesthetics addresses (or the game of *how* Kantian aesthetics addresses it) and the game of which Büttner's artwork is composed, which it practices and which we implement in experiencing or perceiving the artwork; the game between text and image in (philosophical) theory and in (artistic) practice. (Philosophy and art are both, at the same time, but in opposition for precisely that reason.)

The play between reason and imagination, concept and intuition, lies at the very heart of Kantian aesthetics. We take pleasure in this game, according to Kant, which is why we describe the object that we perceive with pleasure as "beautiful." Kant's basic premise is that we take pleasure in the perception of beauty, and that reason and imagination are capacities that correspond to one another: aesthetic pleasure is pleasure in harmony—the harmony of text and image, concept and viewpoint. It is a harmony that lies *within* ourselves. Our pleasure in beauty assures us that—in contrast to what our daily experience might suggest—we are not divided, alienated, or torn, but that there really is a possibility for us to come to terms with ourselves and with others. Even in Kant—which is to say, very early in the history of the discipline—aesthetics goes hand in hand with ideology.

Büttner's art between text and image, her art of the in-between, saves aesthetics from itself—from its own danger and even from its own will to ideologize. Büttner's art develops what aesthetics does—no matter what it might say—and what it therefore is. In Büttner's work, aesthetics becomes the scene of a dispute that has no end, albeit one that is not destructive but productive (and perhaps for that very reason also pleasurable); aesthetics as the scene of unending dispute, rather than of harmony, between text and image, in which both become what they are. This is not a critique of Kant; it is, in fact, the strongest imaginable defense of his aesthetics. Through Büttner's edition, we discover what a bold, dangerous, and courageous step Kant takes in thinking about the aesthetic. For in doing so, philosophy is exposed to a dispute between the aesthetic that is the subject of its inquiry and the philosophy that is its own way of thinking. But because aesthetics opens up this dispute within itself, it begins a dispute with itself. Aesthetics is philosophy in conflict with itself, in the middle of a dispute that it can never win and which can never end (for while one might be able to win a dispute with others, one can never win a dispute with oneself). Aesthetics, as the philosophical consideration of the aesthetic, is philosophy's dispute with what invariably eludes it, precisely because what eludes it proves to be its own basis, or ground. Büttner shows that, in aesthetics, philosophy takes what is most alien to itself and places this at its very core. To put it another way: In aesthetics, philosophy sacrifices itself—and thereby, at the same time, liberates itself. Büttner's edition serves up Kant's aesthetics for us to read as the tragedy of philosophy that is, at the same time, its comedy. Ultimately, philosophy is as powerless and as vibrant as never before.

(Translation: Ishbel Flett)

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ARAM MOSHAYEDI

ANDREA BÜTTNER: THE WOODCUT REVISITED

My first encounter with the work of Andrea Büttner was at the Mandrake, an artist-run bar in Los Angeles, where one of her woodblock prints hangs on the wall. Its rough-hewn white letters, tightly squeezed into a black rectangular background, announce ALL MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS HAD PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL (2005). Installed above a table at the bar's only booth, the line reads as a sales pitch to the Mandrake's typical clientele—young artists and art students who identify success in the art world with the legends of superstar addicts like Kippenberger, Büttner's compatriot, and LA's own Jason Rhoades. Leaving aside the cliché of the modernist tortured soul, the statement—in the context of Büttner's practice—reflects an interest in human weakness as well as Büttner's own identification with the figure of the artist as inherently flawed.[1] Beyond this, the work hints at a deep discomfort with the discourse of autobiography and authorship.

Büttner began making woodcuts in the 1990s, when the previous decade's wave of neo-expression-

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Left page / linke Seite: ANDREA BÜTTNER, D. ROTH AND M. KIPPENBERGER ARE MEETING AT THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS, 2006, woodcut, 23 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 11 $^{2}/_{8}$" / D. ROTH UND M. KIPPENBERGER TREFFEN SICH BEI DER SEUFZERBRÜCKE, Holzschnitt, 60 x 30 cm. (PHOTO: ANDY KEATE)

ANDREA BÜTTNER, ALL MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS HAD PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL, 2005, woodcut, 16 $^{1}/_{2}$ x 25 $^{1}/_{2}$" / ALLE MEINE LIEBLINGSKÜNSTLER HATTEN ALKOHOLPROBLEME, Holzschnitt, 42 x 65 cm. (PHOTO: ANDY KEATE)

ism in Germany gave way to a revival of conceptualism, and deconstruction took over academe. “I started making woodcuts because they were the most uncool thing I could do,” Büttner has said.[2] The medium was a favorite of the ultimate macho German painter, Georg Baselitz; furthermore, as woodcuts require intensive labor and tend to result in “something beautiful, something like an auratic object,” they were out of critical favor.[3] A seemingly reactionary move, Büttner’s woodcuts would appear to stand apart from the rest of her work, which ranges widely across media and is indebted to the lineages of Conceptual art, performance, and video. Yet, as evidenced by the print discussed above, Büttner’s woodcuts comment on the medium’s history while simultaneously expressing an ambivalence toward aesthetic judgment, in particular, that moment when critique calcifies into dogma and the particularities of personal modes of inquiry become canonized. Her prints should thus be regarded as another articulation of the school of art that privileges idea over representation, even as they reintroduce a rich

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ANDREA BÜTTNER, SERMON TO THE BIRDS, 2010, woodcut, diptych, each 70 7/8 x 47 1/4" / VOGELPREDIGT, Holzschnitt, Diptychon, je 180 x 120 cm. (PHOTO: DARIO LASAGNI)

and vibrant visual logic to the analytical process of making.

Büttner's woodcuts often explore themes found in her work in other media. Communities of faith, a longstanding interest, form the focus of the videos LITTLE WORKS (2007) and LITTLE SISTERS: LUNA-PARK OSTIA (2012); similarly, she has created numerous woodcuts that incorporate Christian iconography or refer to biblical scenes. These prints hark back to the medium's medieval beginnings in northern Europe, when it was employed for the mass reproduction of religious illustrations. One intricate, five-color diptych, VOGELPREDIGT (Sermon to the Birds, 2010), depicts St. Francis of Assisi preaching to birds sitting in a tree; UNTITLED (THREE KINGS) (2012) is based on a twelfth-century stone carving of the wise

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ANDREA BÜTTNER, HAP GRIESHABER / FRANZ FÜHMANN, ANGEL OF HISTORY 25: ANGEL OF DISABLED, CLAASSEN VERLAG DÜSSELDORF, 1982, 2010, xerox and clip frames, each 16 1/2 x 23 1/4" / HAP GRIESHABER / FRANZ FÜHMANN, ENGEL DER GESCHICHTE 25: ENGEL DER BEHINDERTEN, CLAASSEN VERLAG DÜSSELDORF, 1982, 2010, Photokopien und Wechselrahmen, je 42 x 59,2 cm.

men visited by an angel as they sleep. Despite their devotional subjects, however, Büttner's bold images stylistically evoke the early twentieth century, when the woodcut was revived by German Expressionists.

As Büttner reflects on the position of woodcuts within the history of art, she also considers the conditions of their production and reception, a central concern throughout her work. The eight photocopies that make up ENGEL DER GESCHICHTE 25: ENGEL DER BEHINDERTEN, HAP GRIESHABER/FRANZ FÜHMANN, CLAASSEN VERLAG DÜSSELDORF 1982 (Angel of History 25: Angel of the Disabled, 2010), for instance, present archival images of groups of teenage boys from psychiatric homes looking at woodcuts by HAP Grieshaber, the renowned German printmaker who had died the previous year. The analytical lens of re-picturing the photographs allows us to see the process of interpretation between subject and object; furthermore, critic Louise O'Hare writes, the work reflects on "embarrassment as a condition of viewing."[4] Grieshaber himself stands for another historical moment in the lineage of woodcuts that Büttner constructs: He studied art in the 1920s, was banned from exhibiting by the Nazis, and became an outspoken pacifist and political activist; more personally, he led printing workshops at the monastery where Büttner would later attend school.

Although many of Büttner's woodcuts display the skilled technique handed down to her by way of Grieshaber, at other times, she has opted for a reduced approach: Simple lines illustrate the title subject in TENT (2010) and TENT (TWO COLOURS) (2012) while the triangular space of CORNER (2011) is printed from three separate boards that fit together. In these crude approximations, a formalist preoccupation is foregrounded as the communication of extraneous ideas recedes. Despite their seemingly handmade quality, however, the craggy outlines of the tents were in fact made with an angle grinder, a power tool more often employed to cut through the material entirely. The print's nearly solid fields

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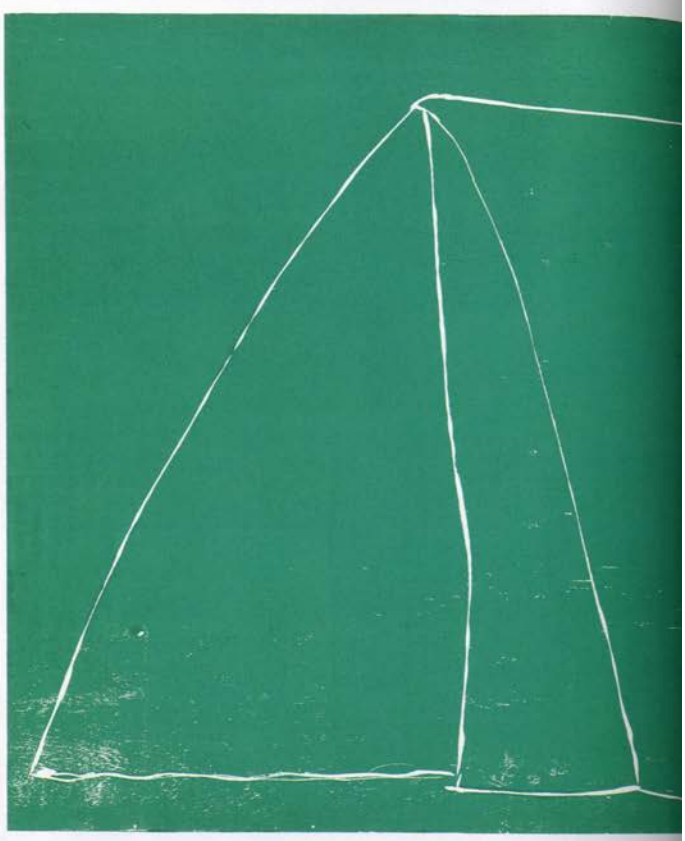

ANDREA BÜTTNER,
TENT (TWO COLORS), 2012,
woodcut, 56 x 91 1/4" /
ZELT (ZWEI FARBEN),
Holzschnitt, 142 x 232 cm.
(PHOTO: BRIAN FORREST)

of color reveal the plywood's natural grain in a smattering of speckled dots and dark striations, recalling the "truth to materials" approach of the Arts and Crafts movement, which sought to attend to the intrinsic quality of each medium. Indeed, these woodcuts are as much representations of the plywood from which they are constructed as they are of any outside referent. In KEYHOLE (2013), a small white shape opens at the center of the print, presenting a stark contrast with the expanse of black ink that envelops it, which is only interrupted by a static-like noise—the irregular grain of the block's surface.

A number of prints titled PIANO, also from 2013, are made from the direct application of a piano's wooden parts onto paper. The prints were first exhibited alongside PIANO DESTRUCTIONS (2014), a performance and video installation that contrasts gendered representations of the musical instrument. Traditionally considered an appropriate leisure pursuit for the bourgeois female, the piano became an object of aggression in works by male artists and musicians in the 1960s, variously burned, smashed, and dropped. Büttner's prints could be seen to bridge this divide: She disassembles a piano, but then uses its components to produce an attractive wall-based artwork.

Büttner's approach differs from that of Sherrie Levine, whose Knot Paintings, first made in the mid-'80s, demarcate the plugs embedded in plywood with the direct application of paint or lead, forcing an encounter with their physical properties. Or think of Wade Guyton's works in wood, such as his 2008 edition for *Parkett*: a standard sheet of two-by-eight-foot plywood swathed in solid, shimmering black ink that varies in intensity according to the wood's grain. Unlike these sculptural examples, in which wood forms a base structure that is obscured by pigment, Büttner's prints provide access to the wood's image but not its material presence. The keyhole offers a view of the white surface of the paper while the flat field it pierces indexes the material upon which the entirety of the encounter relies. In truth, however,

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Büttner often attempts to even out the block's surface, filling in its holes and depressions, before she makes her prints. To her, the roughness no longer looks authentically handmade but instead appears "too finished-looking"—like a Photoshop filter intended to make a digital image look like it is from a bygone era.

If ambivalence and antagonism initially led Büttner to woodcuts, her reasoning has since evolved. "I am no longer interested in reacting to commercialized visual culture," she explains. "I do the woodcuts now because I like them."[5] Büttner's words, which propose subjective taste in place of theoretical argument, echo the relentlessly affirmative language of digital culture—Facebook and Instagram, after all, provide the ultimate forum for "liking," for pledging an allegiance to a consensus of tastes. But while woodcuts are historically associated with accessibility and populism, the medium is decidedly out of touch with the speed and spread of today's image production. Büttner's prints instead speak of slowness, materiality, and preciousness, insisting on a modesty of means seemingly at odds with the demands of the global art world.

And yet, these very qualities situate the woodcuts squarely within our contemporary moment, as the rise of the digital has been met by the forceful reassertion of the "beautiful, auratic object," which now proliferates in numerous analogue forms.[6] Even critical discourse has shifted in parallel, as exemplified by Jan Verwoert's hypophoric proposition, "Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it's a good idea."[7] In the end, it might be impossible to maintain a contrary position in today's all-embracing, all-consuming art world. Büttner thus grapples with the very notion of what it means to be contemporary, and the contradictory demands placed on artists in the hypersphere that defines contemporary art today. If the question of relevance were to be asked of Büttner's woodcuts, the answer would probably have something to do with an uncool faith in the power of art and, paradoxically, the conceptual gestures that propel this faith forward into the future.

1) These themes have been written about at length by Martin Herbert, among others. See Herbert, "Angle of Repose: Martin Herbert on the Art of Andrea Büttner," *Artforum* (March 2015), 269.
2) Andrea Büttner, quoted in Gil Leung, "Artists at Work: Andrea Büttner," Afterall.org (May 25, 2010), www.afterall.org/online/artists.at.workandreabttner (accessed August 4, 2015).
3) Büttner, quoted in ibid.
4) Louise O'Hare, "Not Quite Shame: Embarrassment and Andrea Büttner's Engel der Geschichte," *Afterall* (Summer 2014): 110.
5) Büttner, quoted in Leung.
6) See Claire Bishop, "Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media," *Artforum* (September 2012), www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201207&id=31944 (accessed August 4, 2015).
7) Jan Verwoert, "Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It's a Good Idea," *Afterall* (Autumn/Winter 2005), www.afterall.org/journal/issue.12/why.are.conceptual.artists.painting.again.because (accessed August 4, 2015).

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ARAM MOSHAYEDI

ANDREA BÜTTNER: WIEDERSEHEN MIT DEM HOLZSCHNITT

Zum ersten Mal begegnet bin ich dem Werk von Andrea Büttner im Mandrake, einer von Künstlern betriebenen Bar in Los Angeles, wo einer ihrer Holzschnitte an der Wand hängt. Dessen grob geschnitzte, in einen rechteckigen schwarzen Hintergrund gepferchte weisse Buchstaben verkünden: ALL MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS HAD PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL (Alle meine Lieblingskünstler hatten Alkoholprobleme, 2005). Die Zeile auf dem über einem Tisch in der einzigen Nische der Bar angebrachten Holzschnitt liest sich wie ein Verkaufsslogan für die typische Klientel des Mandrake: junge KünstlerInnen und KunststudentInnen, die Erfolg in der Kunstwelt mit den Legenden von Superstar-Süchtigen wie Büttners Landsmann Kippenberger und LAs eigenem Jason Rhoades gleichsetzen. Wenn wir einmal vom Klischee der gequälten Seele des modernen Künstlers absehen, spiegelt die Äusserung – im Kontext der Büttner'schen Praxis – ein Interesse an menschlicher Schwäche wie auch Büttners eigene Identifikation mit der Figur des Künstlers als einem grundsätzlich fehlerhaften Menschen wider.[1] Darüber hinaus spielt das Werk auf ein tiefes Unbehagen am Diskurs der Autobiographie und Autorschaft an.

Büttners erste Holzschnitte entstanden in den 1990er-Jahren, als der in den 80ern in Deutschland erfolgreiche Neoexpressionismus einer Wiederbelebung des Konzeptualismus wich und die Dekonstruktion die akademische Welt eroberte. Büttner hat hierzu erklärt: «Ich begann Holzschnitte zu machen, weil es das Uncoolste war, was ich tun konnte.»[2] Der Holzschnitt war ein bevorzugtes Medium des supermachohaften deutschen Malers Georg Baselitz. Zudem war der Holzschnitt, der intensive Arbeit erfordert und tendenziell zu «etwas Schönem, ähnlich einem auratischen Objekt» führt, bei der Kritik in Ungnade gefallen.[3] Als scheinbar reaktionärer Schritt stehen die Holzschnitte Büttners allem Anschein nach abseits von ihrem übrigen, breit gefächerten und medienübergreifenden Schaffen, das Traditionslinien der Konzept-, Performance- und Videokunst verpflichtet ist. Dennoch kommentieren Büttners Holzschnitte, wie die oben beschriebene Arbeit zeigt, die Geschichte des Mediums, während sie zugleich eine Ambivalenz gegenüber dem ästhe-

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ANDREA BÜTTNER, UNTITLED (THREE KINGS), 2012, woodcut, 51 1/8 x 84 1/4" / OHNE TITEL (DREI KÖNIGE), Holzschnitt, 130 x 214 cm. (PHOTO: FREDRIK NILSEN)

tischen Urteil zum Ausdruck bringen, besonders gegenüber dem Moment, wenn Kritik zum Dogma erstarrt und die Besonderheiten persönlicher Fragemodi kanonisiert werden. Ihre Druckgraphiken sollten deshalb als eine weitere Äusserung jener Kunstrichtung gesehen werden, die die Idee gegenüber der Darstellung privilegiert, selbst wenn sie wieder eine reiche, lebhafte visuelle Logik in den analytischen Prozess des Machens einführen.

Büttners Holzschnitte setzen sich oft mit Themen auseinander, die innerhalb ihres Schaffens in anderen Medien wichtig sind. Glaubensgemeinschaften, für die sie sich schon seit Langem interessiert, stehen im Mittelpunkt der Videoarbeiten LITTLE WORKS (Kleine Werke, 2007) und LITTLE SISTERS: LUNAPARK OSTIA (Kleine Schwestern: Lunapark Ostia, 2012). Sie hat ebenso zahlreiche Holzschnitte geschaffen, die auf eine christliche Ikonographie verweisen oder sich auf biblische Szenen beziehen. Diese Druckgraphiken blicken zurück auf die mittelalterlichen Anfänge des Mediums, als dieses für die massenhafte Vervielfältigung von religiösen Illustrationen verwendet wurde. Ein komplexes fünffarbiges Diptychon mit dem Titel VOGELPREDIGT (2010) stellt den zu Vögeln in einem Baum predigenden heiligen Franziskus von Assisi dar. UNTITLED (THREE KINGS) (Ohne Titel [Drei Könige], 2012) beruht auf einer Steinskulptur aus dem 12. Jahrhundert, die die Weisen zeigt, die im Schlaf von einem Engel heimgesucht werden. Trotz ihrer religiösen Motive beschwören Büttners kühne Bilder stilistisch das frühe 20. Jahrhundert, als der Holzschnitt von den deutschen Expressionisten wiederbelebt wurde.

Im Zuge ihrer Reflexion über die Stellung des Holzschnitts innerhalb der Kunstgeschichte berücksichtigt Büttner auch die Bedingungen seiner

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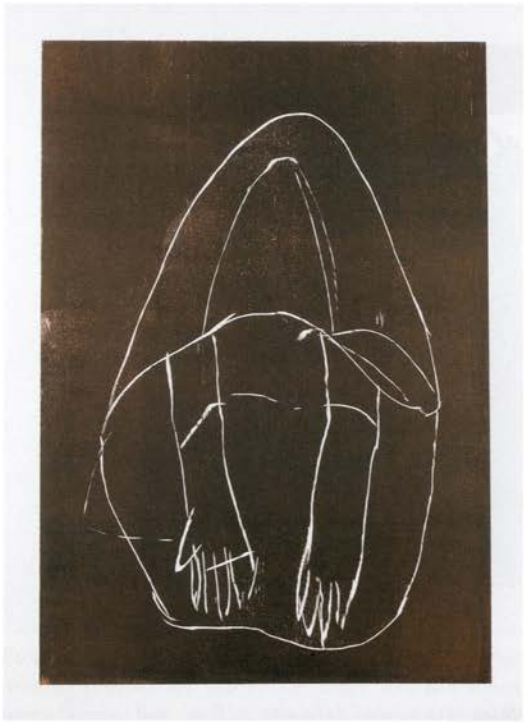

ANDREA BÜTTNER, BEGGAR, 2015, woodcut, 59 x 50" / BETTLER, Holzschnitt, 150 x 127 cm. (PHOTO: JAKA BABNIK)

Produktion und Rezeption, ein zentrales Anliegen in ihrem gesamten Werk. So zeigen die acht Photokopien, aus denen ENGEL DER GESCHICHTE 25: ENGEL DER BEHINDERTEN, HAP GRIESHABER/FRANZ FÜHMANN, CLAASSEN VERLAG DÜSSELDORF 1982 (2010) besteht, Archivbilder von Gruppen männlicher Jugendlicher aus psychiatrischen Pflegeanstalten beim Betrachten von Holzschnitten von HAP Grieshaber, dem namhaften deutschen Graphiker, der im Jahr zuvor gestorben war. Die analytische Linse der Abbildung der Photos erlaubt es uns, den Prozess der Deutung zwischen Subjekt und Objekt zu sehen. Zudem, so die Kritikerin Louise O'Hare, reflektiert das Werk über «Betretenheit als eine Bedingung der Betrachtung».[4] Grieshaber selbst steht für einen weiteren historischen Moment in der Traditionslinie des Holzschnitts, die Büttner konstruiert. Er studierte in den 1920er-Jahren Kunst, wurde von den Nazis mit Ausstellungsverbot belegt und entwickelte sich zu einem entschiedenen Pazifisten und politischen Aktivisten. Auf einer persönlicheren Ebene leitete er Graphikworkshops in dem Kloster, wo Büttner später die Schule besuchen sollte.

Obwohl zahlreiche Holzschnitte Büttners die gekonnte Technik erkennen lassen, die über Grieshaber auf sie gekommen ist, hat sie sich in anderen Fällen für einen reduzierten Ansatz entschieden: In TENT (Zelt, 2010) und TENT (TWO COLOURS) (Zelt [zwei Farben], 2012) verbildlichen schlichte Linien den im Titel genannten Gegenstand, während der dreieckige Raum von CORNER (Ecke, 2011) mit Hilfe von drei gesonderten, zusammenpassenden Platten gedruckt wurde. In diesen kruden Annäherungen rückt eine formalistische Beschäftigung in den Vordergrund, da die Vermittlung äusserer Ideen in den Hintergrund tritt. Die schroffen Umrisse der Zelte wurden aber ungeachtet ihrer scheinbaren handgemachten Beschaffenheit tatsächlich mit einem Trennschleifer gemacht, einem Werkzeug, das meistens dazu verwendet wird, das Material ganz zu durchschneiden. Die natürliche Maserung des Sperrholzes scheint in einzelnen Flecken und dunklen Streifen durch die nahezu homogenen Farbfelder hindurch, was an den Ansatz der «Materialgerechtigkeit» der Arts-and-Crafts-Bewegung erinnert, die sich der spezifischen Beschaffenheit eines jeden Mediums anzunehmen suchte. Tatsächlich sind diese Holzschnitte ebenso sehr Darstellungen des Sperrholzes, aus dem sie aufgebaut sind, wie solche eines jedweden Referenten in der Welt. In KEYHOLE (Schlüsselloch, 2013) tut sich in der Mitte der Graphik eine kleine weisse Form auf, die einen starken Kontrast zu der weiten schwarzen Farbfläche bildet, die sie umfängt und die lediglich durch eine Art Rauschen – die unregelmässige Maserung der Holzoberfläche – unterbrochen wird.

Einige Holzschnitte tragen den Titel PIANO (2013), sie entstanden durch den direkten Kontakt der hölzernen Teile eines Klaviers mit Papier. Diese Drucke wurden erstmals zusammen mit der Arbeit

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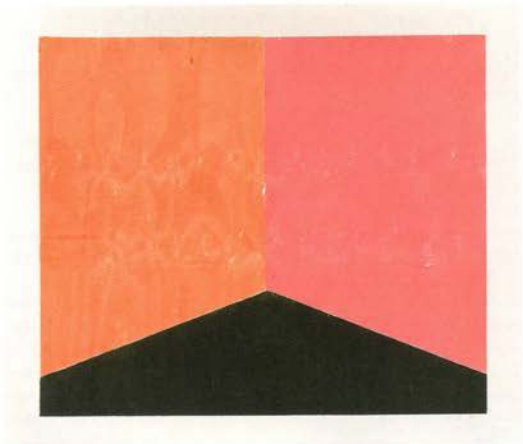
PIANO DESTRUCTIONS (Klavier-Zerstörungen, 2014) ausgestellt, diese Performance und Video-Installation kontrastiert geschlechtspezifische Darstellungen von Musikinstrumenten. Stand das Pianospiel traditionellerweise für den angemessenen Zeitvertreib bürgerlicher Damen, wurde das Instrument in den 1960er-Jahren zum Gegenstand der Aggression in Arbeiten von Künstlern und Musikern, mehrmals wurde es von ihnen verbrannt, zerstört, fallen gelassen. Büttners Drucke können als Überbrückung dieser Kluft gesehen werden: Sie zerlegt das Piano, aber sie verwendet die Bestandteile für die Produktion einer attraktiven Wandarbeit.

Büttners Methode unterscheidet sich von jener Sherrie Levines, deren Mitte der 1980er-Jahre erstmals entstandene Knot Paintings im Sperrholz eingelassene Holzstopfen durch unmittelbar aufgetragene Farbe oder Blei demarkieren. Oder man denke an Wade Guytons Arbeiten in Holz, wie seine 2008 entstandene Edition für *Parkett:* eine ganz normale, 61 x 122 cm grosse Sperrholzplatte, die ganz in schimmernde Druckerschwärze gehüllt ist, deren Intensität je nach der Maserung variiert. Im Unterschied zu diesen skulpturalen Beispielen, bei denen Holz ein Grundgerüst bildet, das durch Pigment verdeckt wird, bieten Büttners Druckgraphiken Zugang zum Bild des Holzes, nicht aber zu dessen materieller Präsenz. Das Schlüsselloch gibt den Blick frei auf die weisse Fläche des Papiers, während das zweidimensionale Feld, das es durchsticht, das Material indexiert, auf dem die Begegnung insgesamt beruht. Tatsächlich versucht Büttner häufig die Oberfläche der Holzplatte zu ebnen, indem sie Löcher und Vertiefungen auffüllt, bevor sie ihre Drucke macht. Die Rauheit sieht für sie nicht mehr authentisch handgemacht aus, sondern erscheint «allzu fertig» – wie ein Photoshop-Filter, der ein digitales Bild so aussehen lassen soll, als stamme es aus einer längst vergangenen Zeit.

ANDREA BÜTTNER, CORNER, 2011, woodcut, 47 1/2 x 58 1/4" / ECKE, Holzschnitt, 121 x 148 cm. (PHOTO: BRIAN FORREST)



Während Ambivalenz und Antagonismus Büttner anfangs zum Holzschnitt führten, hat sich ihr Denken seither weiterentwickelt. «Mich interessiert es nicht mehr, auf kommerzialisierte visuelle Kultur zu reagieren», erklärt sie. «Ich mache die Holzschnitte jetzt, weil sie mir gefallen.»[5] In Büttners Worten, die subjektiven Geschmack an die Stelle von theoretischer Argumentation setzen, klingt die erbarmungslos bekräftigende Sprache der digitalen Kultur an – Facebook und Instagram bieten schliesslich das ultimative Forum fürs «Gefallen», für den Treueschwur auf einen Geschmackskonsens. Aber während Holzschnitte historisch mit Zugänglichkeit und Populismus assoziiert werden, ist das Medium dezidiert abgekoppelt von der Geschwindigkeit und Verbreitung heutiger Bildproduktion. Büttners Drucke zeugen stattdessen von Langsamkeit, Materialität und Kostbarkeit, da sie auf einer Bescheidenheit der Mittel beharren, die scheinbar zu den Anforderungen des globalen Kunstbetriebs im Widerspruch stehen.

Und dennoch verorten ebenjene Eigenschaften die Holzschnitte mitten in unserer Gegenwart, da dem Aufstieg des Digitalen ein neuerliches, energisches Bekenntnis zum «schönen, auratischen Objekt» entgegengetreten ist, das sich nunmehr in zahlreichen analogen Formen ausbreitet.[6] Sogar der kritische Diskurs hat sich parallel dazu verschoben, wie dies Jan Verwoerts hypophorische These beispielhaft verdeutlicht: «Weshalb malen Konzeptkünstler wieder? Weil sie es für eine gute Idee halten.»[7] Am

Moshayedi, Aram, “Andrea Büttner: The Woodcut Revisited,” *Parkett 97*, Collaboration, 2015, pp. 46-57

ANDREA BÜTTNER, PIANO DESTRUCTIONS, 2014, five-channel video installation, installation view, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre, Canada, 2014 / KLAVIER-ZERSTÖRUNGEN, 5-Kanal-Videoinstallation, Installationsansicht.
(PHOTO: RITA TAYLOR)

ANDREA BÜTTNER, PIANO DESTRUCTIONS, 2014, five-channel video installation, production still / KLAVIER-ZERSTÖRUNGEN, 5-Kanal-Videoinstallation, Produktions-Still.
(PHOTO: DICK JEWELL)

Ende ist es vielleicht unmöglich, in der heutigen allumfassenden, alles verzehrenden Kunstwelt eine entgegengesetzte Position zu wahren. Büttner ringt deshalb gerade mit dem Begriff dessen, was es heisst, zeitgenössisch zu sein, und den widersprüchlichen Anforderungen an Künstler in der Hypersphäre, die die Gegenwartskunst bestimmt. Würde man die Frage nach der Relevanz der Holzschnitte Büttners stellen, so hätte die Antwort wahrscheinlich etwas mit einem uncoolen Glauben an die Macht der Kunst und paradoxerweise an die konzeptuellen Gesten zu tun, die diesen Glauben in die Zukunft vorwärtstreiben.

(Übersetzung: Bram Opstelten)

1) Auf diese Themen ist u. a. Martin Herbert ausführlich eingegangen. Siehe Herbert, «Angle of Repose: Martin Herbert on the Art of Andrea Büttner», in *Artforum* (März 2015), S. 269.
2) Andrea Büttner zit. bei Gil Leung, «Artists at Work: Andrea Büttner», Afterall.org (25. Mai 2010), www.afterall.org/online/artists.at.workandreabttner (gelesen am 4. August 2015).
3) Büttner zit. ebenda.
4) Louise O'Hare, «Not Quite Shame: Embarrassment and Andrea Büttner's Engel der Geschichte,» *Afterall* 36 (Sommer 2014).
5) Büttner zit. bei Leung.
6) Siehe Claire Bishop, «Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media», in *Artforum* (September 2012), www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201207&id=31944 (gelesen am 4. August 2015).
7) Jan Verwoert, «Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It's a Good Idea», *Afterall* 12 (Herbst/Winter 2005), www.afterall.org/journal/issue.12/why.are.conceptual.artists.painting.again.because (gelesen am 4. August 2015).

Leung, Gil, “Andrea Büttner: Artists at Work,” *Afterall.org*, May 25, 2010

Afterall

Artists at Work: Andrea Büttner

Gil Leung

Andrea Büttner, Floating Figure, 2008, screenprint, 120x160 cm. Courtesy the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Andrea Büttner works across a diverse range of mediums - woodcutting, glass painting, clay sculpture, screen printing, video and performance - that reflect an ongoing concern with the boundaries between formal and more conceptual critical practices. Her works re-articulate the question of value in terms of aesthetic judgement: what it is to value something, what is acceptable and how it is possible to adequately express this judgement? As such, the works often utilise other people's work in the form of readings, quotation or interviews, and a central focus of the work is theories of reception and the relationship between emotion and visual art. Büttner studied both art history and philosophy, and recently completed her doctorate on the subject of shame and art at the Royal College of Art, London. She is the winner of the 2010 Max Mara Art Prize for Women, which will culminate in a solo show at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 2011, and has created a new series of woodcuts for an exhibition up now at Raven Row in London.

In the following interview, Gil Leung and Büttner discuss strategies of artistic practice and the problematic nature of production.

Leung, Gil, “Andrea Büttner: Artists at Work,” *Afterall.org*, May 25, 2010

GIL LEUNG: Though it is tempting to begin with a specific artwork, this interview is about your practice, or more specifically the ways in which you make a work - how you begin to make something. Some of your previous pieces, like *Nestbeschmutzer* (*Nest Dirtier*, 2007) where you used your father's drawings and, more recently your performance *Fallen Lassen* (*Letting Fall*, 2010) at Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart, have made specific use of other people's work - could you speak a bit about the point at which these referents enter your process?

ANDREA BÜTTNER: It differs from work to work. When I used my father's drawings or asked my father to do drawings of certain subjects like 'dirt sling' or 'birds dirtying their own nests' or 'drinking animals' it was important for the project that my father did these drawings.

GL: And how did you come to ask him? Did you feel like you wanted to draw them but couldn't?

AB: No, it was integral to the project that he draw them. He does really nice drawings and sends me these letters with them, and I wanted to show these. I wanted to work with the impulse of showing something because I like it and it is beautiful, no matter whether it belongs to the realm of contemporary art or not. In *Fallen Lassen*, I had wanted, for a long time, to find a gesture where I let something fall down - where the trace of what had fallen down was the work. But I didn't want it to be deliberate, like pouring a glass of water or smashing a vase. I wanted it to express an affirmative attitude to falling, something similar to what we say in German: 'to let your shoulders fall down'. I couldn't find an appropriate gesture so I asked friends, artists, my gallery dealer, a novelist, to give me instructions on how I could let something fall down in this way. In the exhibition I performed or fulfilled these instructions. Asking other people to contribute allowed me to hear other ideas that I had failed to find.

Basically, it is a question of whether I have to have ideas, how much I need to labour in order to create a valuable work. There is certainly a pleasure in the passivity involved, waiting for others to give me presents or have better ideas than I have or solutions that I myself would not have found.

GL: I would usually associate this idea of falling down, which is in some of your other works (most obviously *I want to let the work fall down,* 2006), with discourses on failure or critical negation. What I find interesting is that in your work this failure has a positive aspect. How does this affirmative quality fit into what you just described as a passive practice, as opposed to a more traditional notion of a critical practice, which is more active and negative? For instance, you have talked previously about this passivity in relation to the act of reading as a mode of production.

AB: On a very simple level, I make works where I read from other artist's texts, and then on a more conceptual level, these readings have to do with the processes every reader or person undergoes when they encounter a work of art or a book or a piece of music that they like: that somehow we feel this book is about us, or that we write this book while we are reading it, or that we add to it. In a way all theories of reception cover this, from Kant on, but this process of reception has always meant a lot to me as a distinct experience. When I see

a work of art or read a book I really like, I don't feel the need to do something better in a competitive way. It is rather that I want to find forms where I can let efforts to be original or inventive fall down, and then take my own process of reception as something productive. Reading is already an act of production. It is like reading a text you love and saying 'yes'. I have to find answers to the question 'how can I be productive and be adequate to this "yes" I find in myself?'

GL: When you use other people's work, is it that you want to share this enjoyment in the process of looking or reading something?

AB: It is definitely important to accentuate the gesture of showing. With my father's drawings or in *Little Works* (2007), where I gave a video camera to an order of Carmelite nuns in London and asked them to film themselves making their craft objects, this emphasis on demonstration is very obvious because I myself and other people get to a see a world that is otherwise hidden. These nuns show a world to us that I then, in my exhibitions, can show to others. The gesture of showing is inscribed into the work.

GL: How does this relate to your recent show of HAP Grieshaber's work at Hollybush Gardens in London, because in this instance you aren't showing his work as your own work?

AB: In the exhibition I showed a magazine Grieshaber published called *Engel der Geschichte* (*Angel of History*), which had 25 issues from the 1960s until his death in the 80s. Each magazine has a different political subject, like *Angel for Martin Luther King*, or *Angel of Psychiatry*, and one is called the *Angel of the Disabled*, which is about an exhibition Grieshaber organised of his own work in two homes for mentally disabled teenagers, one in East and one in West Germany, with photographs of the teenagers looking at his work and transcripts of their conversations. I enlarged and installed these photographs, which aren't mine or Grieshaber's - they just come from a magazine he published - but they are very close to my own practice.

GL: So how do you differentiate between this act of displaying someone else's work in an exhibition you have curated and your use of other peoples work in your own practice?

AB: I don't know. I want to show these photos again without the context of the *Engel der Geschichte* magazines, to stress the way they address a vulnerable way of looking at art which is less HAP Grieshaber's concern than my concern with art.

GL: We have talked about your use of other people's work; what about the clay sculptures or the reverse glass paintings? How do these figure in your practice?

AB: With the clay sculptures that I started in 2008, they were a way for me to replace my own body in the exhibition space. I have this image of myself lying in the gallery called *Dancing Nuns; A Stone Schwitters Painted in the Lake District; L, M, A (2008)* and I don't know whether this came from tiredness or exhaustion, but I was thinking about what the place of the body was in the white cube

- and also of course Valie Export's architecture photos, like *Starre Identität, Körperkonfigurationen in der Architektur* (*Rigid Identity, Body-Configurations in Architecture*, 1972). *Clay Sculpture* (2008) replaces this idea of myself and the feeling of myself lying in the white cube. It is just material so it dries and it cracks; it is like a sculpture before you give it a form. The form shapes according to the qualities of the clay itself. I took a photo of *Malin* Ståhl, one of the Hollybush Garden directors, holding a piece of the cracked clay after an exhibition. I used this as a screen print and one doesn't know if this clay is art or just a piece of material. So maybe it is also about letting a work fall down and about the material, just kneading and kneading and not giving it a final shape.

GL: When you made *Clay Sculpture* you wanted it to crack, to give itself these imperfections, whereas with your new clay work *Ahnenknödel* (*Ancestor Dumplings*, 2010), which you ask the gallery attendants to constantly keep moist, you wanted to keep it in its state of potential so that it never reaches a state of completion. Previously we were talking about your passive mode of production, this allowing of the work to become flawed or maintain its own potential, but your woodcuts, like *Crib* (2007) or your current project, are very laborious to make, how do you relate that to a passive mode of production?

AB: One aspect of the woodcuts is certainly skill, or the fact that it is important that there is one area in my work where I produce something beautiful, something like an auratic object. Obviously I have to give something to the audience and hard work is part of that giving. I have a fear of simple gestures, or the 'too easy' look of post-minimalist table sculpture. Not only in contemporary art, but since nineteenth-century modernity, we don't tend to put much effort into an artwork, and to do so would be seen as a bad, academic approach. Still, there is one area in my practice where I feel I need to make an effort. I am often unsatisfied with work that is too easily produced, but at the same time there is some amateurism in an overtly labour-intensive approach. I suppose I counter these problems in this part of my practice by making these other works, which I want to let fall down.

For me this whole labour question is unresolved; I am really embarrassed about it. It is such a petite bourgeois approach to demand skill and labour of a work. I don't have a totally amateur approach to art, but I still want to make something people like. I am interested in the discourse of amateurism because art isn't supposed to be laborious, diligent or skilled, like it is in craft. In many other practices, like academic writing, this labour is still very important, but in visual art is it seen as unimportant.

GL: Maybe it is more about the visibility of labour in the context of art and whether this is acceptable or not, than the question of whether labour, in and of itself, is or isn't good. I suppose that this sparse post-conceptual look you mentioned, despite, and in fact directly relating to, its effortless exterior, often belongs to a discourse that tries to deal with very heavy political issues around labour and the conditions of production. What is odd is this apparent inversion; that there can only be work that has minimal labour and maximum concept, or maximum labour and minimal concept. Why can't it be both? They shouldn't be mutually exclusive. Yet, seemingly there is this division that wants to separate the philosophical object of art from its labour of production, even down to the fact that many artists must do other jobs to fund their practices, yet this is something that cannot be talked about. It is unacceptable that someone performs two separate tasks.

AB: Yes, for me it was important to maintain this skilled labour - carving and working by hand. Philosophy is always so interested in art as the object of thought, but of course every artist goes through the same process of reflection and production when producing work. For instance, when I am making something I am always stepping back and looking at what I am doing. I would deprive myself if I stopped carving - I would stop being a conceptual artist, I wouldn't be thinking. In a way, I started making these woodcuts in a very strategic manner in Berlin in the 90s. I was making work in this context of straightforward political art, and I was interested in notions of shame - so I started making woodcuts because they were the most uncool thing I could do. Now I am no longer interested in reacting to commercialised visual culture or in criticising a discourse of commodified coolness so directly. The last statement I made using these notions was a graffiti on the shop window of fashion art brand Bless in Berlin; one of their collections that year was based on the theme of 'uncool', so I just wrote 'I was uncool before you were uncool'. This was in 2004 and for me it marked the turning point of a political visual culture of cool. I still make woodcuts, but I don't have the initial strategic reasoning anymore; I do the woodcuts now because I like them.

GL: They don't have this kind of obvious oppositional political strategy, which informs that kind of rigid separation or total collapse between high concept and low craft, or that pits critical practice against beautiful objects.

AB: Yes, they are much richer in their codifications: woodcuts are the first popular medium of mass production, in the fifteenth century, and they have religious connotations from their depiction of devotional images during the Middle Ages. They are also part of the history of German Expressionism, and HAP Grieshaber related to this history as he was responsible for the continuation of woodcutting in the 1950s. He is also connected to my interest in nuns, and 'nun-artists', because he taught a group of nuns how to do woodcuts, and one of these nuns was my art teacher at the Franciscan school I attended. In this respect, the woodcuts offer an alternative art history rather than a theoretical strategy.

GL: Do you find it harder to make work without some kind of strategic oppositional stance?

AB: Well, maybe this is like the first question? I think one thing that is important to me is that I am interested in complicated things; if I find something difficult - let's say when looking at things or doing things which can be shameful - then I won't avoid it. These complicated and troublesome things become quite productive. Sometimes I find it difficult to produce work, or certain kinds of works, so the cracking clay or using other people's work produces the shape for me; like how Dieter Roth spilled liquids on his drawings because he could not bear how ugly they looked, but then these disgusting moulds are quite beautiful, and they did the work of beauty for him.

GL: Although there are a lot of notions of falling and fallible and shame in your work, there are also a lot of notions of joy, like *Tanzende Nonnen* (*Dancing Nuns*, 2007) or *Little Works* (2007), a childlike wonderment or praise. These notions seem opposed, this suffering and joy, and likewise they have this similar relation in your practice as difficulty and affirmation, passivity and production. You face something difficult. How do these difficulties or vulnerabilities manifest themselves in your current work?

AB: I will go to Italy in April and work on a project about notions of poverty in the legends of St. Francis and Franciscan theology and mirror this in notions of poverty in Arte Povera. Maybe this is also about difficult things and joyful things, because both in Franciscan and monastic theology and Arte Povera, the awful state of poverty is seen as a positive, revolutionary, cleansing, critical state to be in. These ideas from the twelfth century reappear in the late twentieth century. St Francis, for example, was a rich man and similarly the development of Arte Povera as an anti-museum, anti-art world project very much took place in the museum and in the art world. Both come from this privileged position to embrace poverty.

GL: How do you relate these anti-museum strategies to your own abandonment of an oppositional strategy of critique?

AB: At the moment, I am more interested in traditional political content - in what is conventionally deemed to be a political agenda as opposed to the singularity of aesthetic judgement. That is why I was interested in showing HAP Grieshaber as these magazines *Engel der Geschichte* have these very old-fashioned ideas that art can change attitudes. I find the discourse on political aesthetics very empty at the moment; you have to at least perform aesthetic judgement's singularity so that it relates to politics.

GL: The problem is that even if you identify the political potential of aesthetics, you still have to do something or take a stand. It isn't enough to demand politics from a work; you have to put yourself in a vulnerable position, you have to speak about it.

AB: So, maybe you could say what you like about my work?

GL: I find it genuinely very difficult to say why. I suppose I would say I like it because I find it quite honest. I find the way you approach things generous, but not to the degree of an altruism, which can be quite self-aggrandising. I'm not saying it is totally selfless at all - in fact it is quite aware of how selfish it is, and that is what I mean about the honesty. In your work you seem aware that you are getting something as a gift and that you are using it for something, and you make that visible within the work. In terms of a conceptual or determinate commentary, that is what I could try to say about why I like it, but in another sense I like it because some of it is beautiful. So that is as close as I can get to a reasonable answer.

AB: Thank you. I think that is a very good ending.

Moshayedi, Aram, “Andrea Büttner: The Woodcut Revisited,” *Parkett 97*, Collaboration, 2015, pp. 46-57

ANDREA BÜTTNER, PIANO, 2013, woodcut, 56 1/4 x 93" / KLAVIER, Holzschnitt, 143 x 236 cm. (PHOTO: BRIAN FORREST)