

## Street Art

### Andre Butzer – Gallery 2



**André Butzer**  
**Ahnenbild 2411**

2006

oil on canvas

280 x 460cm

Ahnenbild 2411 (2006) is overrun with a roughly executed, psychedelic use of colour and the frantic repetition of a hollow-eyed mask, at turns grinning like early 20th-century cartoons or expressing ugliness and terror à la Munch's *Scream* or de Kooning's *Woman* paintings.

The painting is mural-like, but more graffiti than classical mural. In the same way that graffiti allows invisible sub-cultures in society to have their voice heard, this painting is like a contemporary *Scream*: a publicly visual motif for contemporary angst and anger.

The painting's title means 'ancestral portrait', and this is also a clue to the work's subtext: he references generations of painting styles that have gone before him in order to make a comment about where we are in the present. Butzer juxtaposes American pop art gestures with German Expressionism to convey angst and horror at the consumerism and globalisation of post-war and contemporary culture, whilst the clear references to street art culture act almost like a label for Protest. The whole composition brings to mind the rambunctious street art references in Basquiat's abstractions.

## Olympic

### Isa Genzken – Gallery 3



Isa Genzken

MLR

1992

lacquer on canvas

126 x 91.5cm

Genzken's MLR (More Light Research) painting series (1992) depicts gymnast's rings frozen moments after their release in mid-air. The image is created with lacquer paint on canvas.

The canvas is painted with a mesh-like texture, echoing the metal of the rings – or perhaps suggesting a metaphorical kind of cage: the capturing, or caging, of a moment in time. The movement of the rings through the air is traced through the chalk-like images in the background. The white colour suggests chalk to us and chalk, in turn, suggests the chalk used by the gymnasts to create the friction needed in their hands on the rings. The background is blurred – similar to what the gymnast would see as they move through the air. The artist is (as suggested by the title of the piece) concerned with light, and the visual perceptions of it as it, or things, move.

The image also invites the viewer to ponder the symbolic, allegorical act of letting go. Letting go might be seen as freedom – the gymnast has escaped the canvas and the captured moment. Movement could be seen as a kind of freedom.

## Cityspace

### Isa Genzken: Gallery 3



Isa Genzken

Urlaub

2004

glass, lacquer, plastics, metal, wood, photograph

227 x 165 x 55 cm

The column for Isa Genzken is a recurring motif: its linear purity becomes a critical field on which she explores the relations between art, architecture, design, and social experience.

Isa Genzken is particularly concerned with the urban landscape and how it has come to define us. Looking at *Urlaub*, the mirrored panels come to suggest the windows of a high-storey office block and the photograph of toy cars, the cars on the street below. In this way, we are immediately placed in a cityscape.

Drawing on the concept of the traditional totem, drawing communities of people together, and imbued with a spirit, or personality of its own, she has arranged a collection of eclectic-seeming objects together on top of this structure. The composition of the objects is far from random, however, and taken in as a whole, the structure starts to resemble something more human – a glass for a head (with a hat!), two small balls for eyes and leaves for arms. Through the medium of objects, she has endowed the sculpture with personality. It has a “spirit” all of its own – one that is firmly situated in the cityscape. Isa Genzken leaves us with the question, if a traditional totem held a community of people together by giving it spiritual identity, do everyday objects give us our identity, and what, in a large impersonal city, holds us together?



**Isa Genzken**  
**Kinder Filmen I**

2005

Mirror, metal, adhesive tape, magazine and book pages, stamps acrylic, lacquer, spray paint.

280 x 100 cm each panel (Wall Installation of Four Parts)

In *Kinder Filmen* (2005) mirrored panels, covered in a chaotic collage of adhesive tape, magazine and book pages, lacquer and spray paint, create an illusion of space, drawing attention to the power of art to subvert our preconceptions. They are suggestive of architectural façades and the information overload of urban experience.

## Gather

### Alexandra Bircken – Gallery 6



Alexandra Bircken

*Drape*

2007

wood, concrete, cloth, wax, screws, wire & steel

240 x 300 x 236cm

Alexandra Bircken's unmonumental stretcher frame sculptures are informed by her background in fashion design and interest in the radical aspects of handmade culture. A fragmentary array of irregular objects and organic shapes, often coloured by the artist, is hung and displayed on strings and aluminium rods.

In *Drape*, she has gathered together a collection of dyed fabrics, wooden branches and a block of cement. She has put them together to form a kind of alternative dwelling, suggestive of the homes created by alternative communities on the margins of mainstream culture. Where the cement block suggests a grey, urban setting, and serves as a kind of anchor for the piece, the wood and the drapes – or fabric – are light, colourful, with associations of gathering in woodland. The structure without the cement block feels as though it could blow away in a strong wind. It feels temporary and fragile and the dwellers would be vulnerable, exposed to the elements. The gathering together of eclectic elements allows her to put contradictory visual statements together and create a tension for the viewer. The tension encourages us to ask questions of the piece – about the tension between urban culture and its alternatives.

The structure is drape-like in its gentle attempt to block out the outside and shield, but it is also a drape that has been drawn aside, revealing something about the marginal communities who are normally invisible to us. In this way, too, the piece draws on the concept of “gathering” – gathering fabric together, or aside, to shield, or reveal.

## Giants

### Thomas Zipp – Gallery 8



Thomas Zipp  
World Kantzler Office - detail

2004

Mixed media

300 x 400 x 250cm

This setting – or office – is immediately apparent as the office of a figure of world power. The map behind the desk suggests plans to take over the world and the size of the desk suggests great size and power. It is a giant plan.

The setting is created by the artist himself – he made the table for example. Where there would normally be flags pinned to the map to illustrate the plan of attack, there are, instead, deliberately amateur drawings of Mount Vesuvius over Italy, an atom bomb over Japan – each drawing refers to a specific event, or disaster. In this way, Thomas Zipp undermines the machinations of power, turning political calculation into an amateur and bad-taste joke.

The table is intentionally too large. It makes a statement, but one that is so exaggerated to no longer be believable. It is a part of the joke questioning and undermining the settings of power. The chair is empty, but if there were someone sitting there, the setting would dwarf him/her – making the person look ridiculous. At the same time, however, the suggestion is there that power resides not in the person, but in his/her setting and presentation. Powerful people are made to look powerful and “giant” through presentation. Without these dressings, they are as small as the rest of us. The political giants of history – those who have waged and won wars – the artist is suggesting, are mythical figures, presented to us in a way that has little, or no, relation to reality. Real giants don’t exist for Thomas Zipp!

## Cut & Paste

### Kirstine Roepstorff – Gallery 11



**Kirstine Roepstorff**  
**You Are Being Lied To**

2002

Paper, glitter, pearls, sequins, paint, on wallpaper,  
collage, mounted on aluminium

274 x 388 cm

Roepstorff's billboard sized collage depicts a seemingly random assortment of cut out magazine figures arranged on a golf course. In a magazine, these figures would appear ordinary; photographs of the everyday. But cut out and rearranged on their new surroundings, they become extraordinary- a gathering of characters from different eras, social backgrounds and races. People who wouldn't usually stand side by side are grouped together, all with their own individual reason for being there, playing off one another, and creating extraordinary contrasts and conflicts of interest.

The artist is interested in the idea of worlds within worlds – how small groups and cultures can exist inside and with larger ones. In this image, the characters' inability to engage with their surroundings – to see what is around them - makes them ridiculous. It is as though they are wearing blinkers, and cannot see the bigger picture – or some larger, unifying purpose. In the context of all the other activities, each activity loses its meaning, because they have no relation to each other. The artist asks us to ask the question – is there something that can unify us all, despite sometimes huge differences.

Further, if we look closely at the piece, we can see that almost all of the figures are men; men engaged in stereotypically manly activities. We see a man playing golf, a group playing football, an army marching, a muscle man lifting weights, someone commandeering a tank. The female artist is commenting on the superiority of men- they dominate in every culture, in every era, in every profession. Perhaps then, in light of the title, it is the men who are doing most of the lying? The viewer is able to tell that this is a protest, rather than an admiration of this dominance.

It is by taking these images out of their original contexts that they have become so extraordinary. This is aided by the medium of collage, where you can appropriate images to your heart's content. Roepstorff calls this appropriarranging. On a basic level, though, it is cutting and pasting!!

## Dried Flowers or Seed Pods

### Stefan Kurten – Gallery 12



Stefan Kurten  
*Long Time Now*

2002

Oil on Canvas

145 x 190cm

The busy pattern and soft furnishings of *Long Time Now* (2002) contains a slightly aggressive sense of wild, untamed beauty. Rich metallic tones imbue Kurten's motifs with an unreal, oneiric, displacing them from their usual context, as if referencing the look and connotation of religious illuminations. As the artist puts it, 'the paintings are differing versions of an idyll, or rather stages of disappearing idylls. They seem to find a last refuge in all sorts and styles of picturesque houses with manicured lawns and cosy living rooms, or tamed and domesticated versions of nature, the gardens and parks of our communal recreation, counter-images and escapes from the quotidian and its purposeful rationality...'

Nature is seen as something that can be tamed and re-shaped to provide us with an escape to our everyday lives, on our own terms, but also as something which is innately wild and which, left to grow unchecked, will take over completely. Flower patterns suggest nostalgia for a lost past, while literally hiding that past beneath it. It is as if the attempt to perfect and beautify our constructed environment has gone too far. There is no space to breathe, no window view to look out on, and, instead, the plant life traps you inside the room, blocks out the light and threatens to destroy the fabric of civilised living completely.

As in the title of this piece, nature is a puzzle – is it something that can be tamed and civilised (like dead and dried flowers), or does it contain the seeds of growth that are ultimately untameable? Do the attempts to cultivate and perfect our environment work, or are things most beautiful left just as they are – as in nature?

## Star

### Julian Rosefeldt – Gallery 13



Julian Rosefeldt  
Soap Sample V

2000-2001

Lambda print

130 x 130 cm

Since the mid-1990s Rosefeldt has been producing complex film and video installations, as well as photographs, through which we can observe from a cool, detached perspective the formulaic imagery and content that is generated by contemporary media.

Global Soap (2000-2001) was made by sifting through a massive collection of headshot stills taken from a source as contemporary and ubiquitous as reality shows: televised soap operas from around the world. Rosefeldt has argued that ‘soaps have taken over the function of the church’ and, making an implicit reference to the work of German art historian Aby Warburg and his systematic study of the iconography of religious painting, he terms his distilled arrangements ‘icons of the media age’.

Traditionally, the word ‘icon’ has been used to refer to images in religious painting. The Cross, for example, is a religious icon. In Global Soap, the melodramatic expressions of the performers can be traced back to expressions found in Renaissance paintings, and so the suggestion of the work is that these soap opera stars are at the centre of a modern religion. We have invested them with a kind of religious power – they bring us together, whether in conversation, through shared gossip, or because, at a certain time of day we can all be found watching the same thing. Rosefeldt’s analysis of the repetitive gestures, facial expressions and situations appearing again and again in the soaps points to the genre’s universal vocabulary.

What is the role of the star in contemporary culture – is star a contemporary word for icon, and is celeb culture a new religion?