

WERNER BÜTTNER

*Reflections  
in a pilfering  
eye*

Curated by  
**Andrew Renton**



# Werner Büttner

## *Reflections in a Pilfering Eye*

*Reflections in a Pilfering Eye* is the first solo exhibition in Portugal by the German painter Werner Büttner.

Büttner has been a crucial figure in German art since the early 1980s. Together with his early collaborators, Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen, he sought to upend the dominance of conceptual and minimal art through an unabashedly disruptive and disrespectful return to painting. As Professor of Painting at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg from 1989 until 2021, he exerted a huge influence over generations of painters, including Daniel Richter and Jonathan Meese.

In 1979 Büttner took part in the now legendary exhibition *Elend [Misery]* at Kippenberger's Büro, and in 1982 his work was included in *Zeitgeist* at Gropiusbau Berlin, which was considered a breakthrough exhibition for a new generation of artists of that time. In 2013 Büttner was the subject of a major retrospective at ZKM, Karlsruhe, accompanied by a major monograph published by Hatje Cantz. A retrospective survey of Büttner's work is currently on show at Yuz Museum, Shanghai.

*Reflections in a Pilfering Eye* offers an indirect reference to Carson McCullers' *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, made famous in 1967 by John Huston's film adaptation of the novel. As always with Büttner's traces, you can look for parallels, but ultimately he teaches us that you can't always trust what you read, or what you see.

Nevertheless, the title does reveal a persistent trait in Büttner's work – thieving, looting, pilfering. It's as if all culture is up for grabs. He should not be able to get away with how he handles these eponymous immovable monuments, but Büttner has looked hard and read deeply. Far beyond artistic practices of appropriation, Büttner appears as the gentleman thief who always acts in plain sight. He pulls off a simultaneous analysis and skepticism over all that he surveys.

The selection of works in the exhibition revisits moments in cultural history from an inquisitive perspective. As Büttner noted recently, "The parents of good pictures are other good pictures." And indeed, there is this endless pleasure in his work to tease out the references - from Tristram Shandy's doodles, to Duchamp's bottle rack as a crown of thorns. Cumulatively, Büttner maps out more complex perspectives and obligations as to how a painter might paint today. Coming at it from all sides, in all genres, it's an encounter of persistent attrition that somehow sustains what it critiques.

Equally, it's important to emphasise that Büttner doesn't make art about art, but rather the recognition that to look at art is an act of engagement. And no-one looks harder. Even at its most ironic, his work is an ethical activity.

The exhibition has been curated by Professor Andrew Renton, who has collaborated with Büttner on several exhibitions, in addition to editing two major monographs in English on the artist.

Andrew Renton

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17



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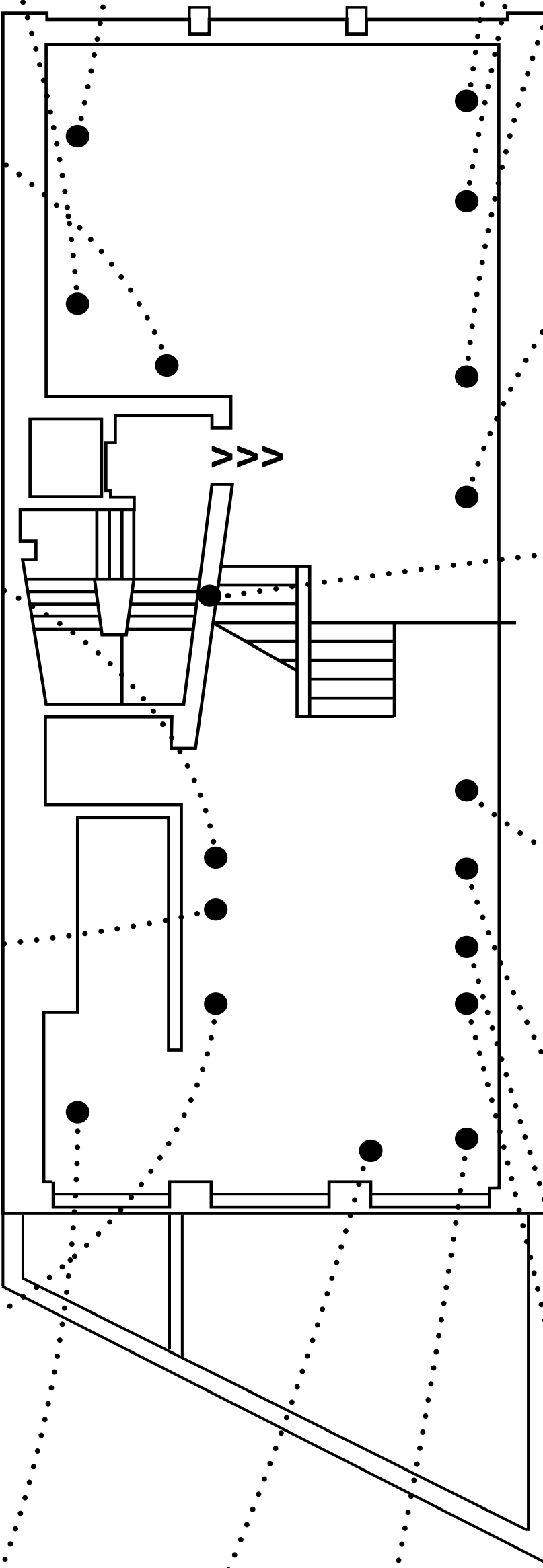


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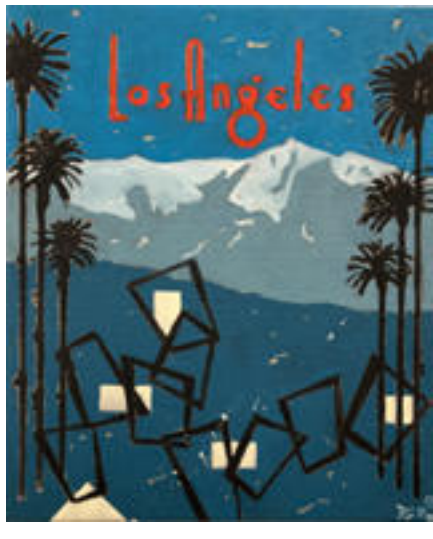
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Los Angeles

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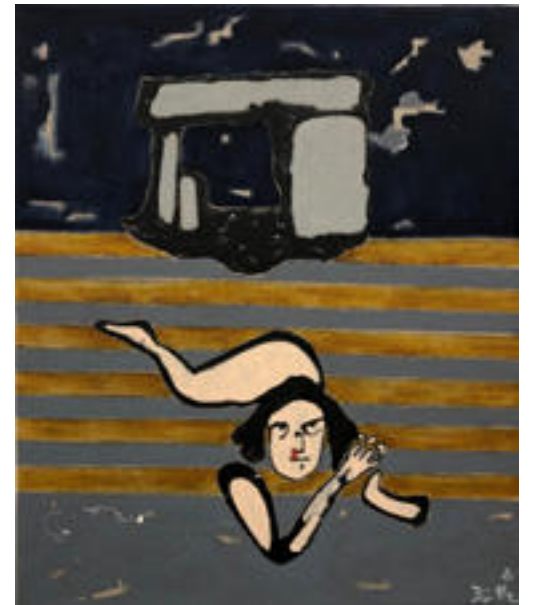
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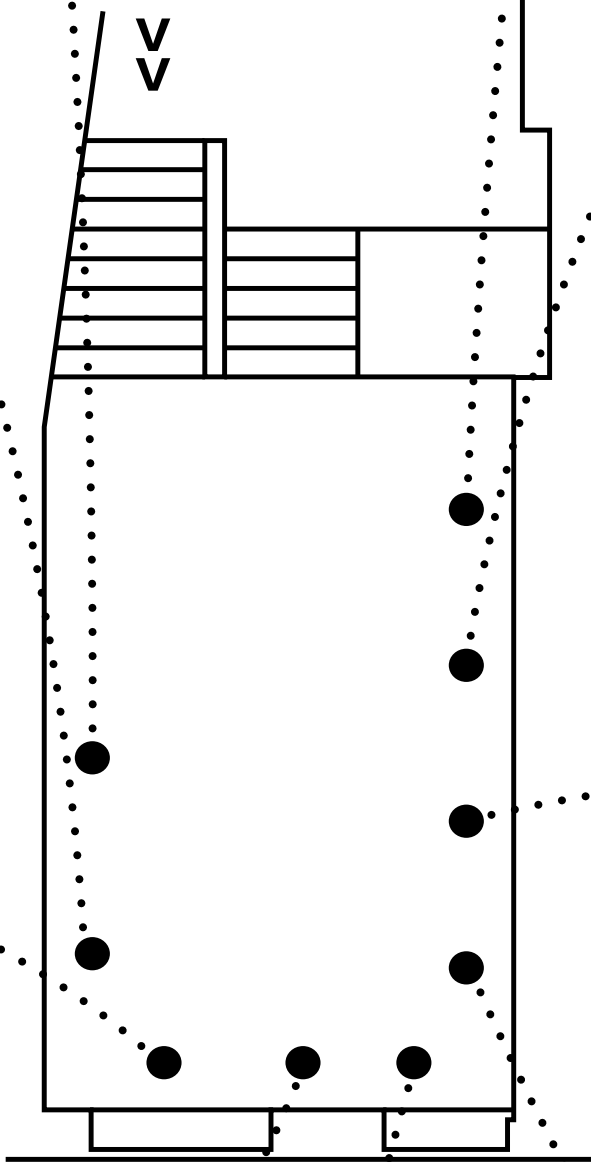
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mezzanine



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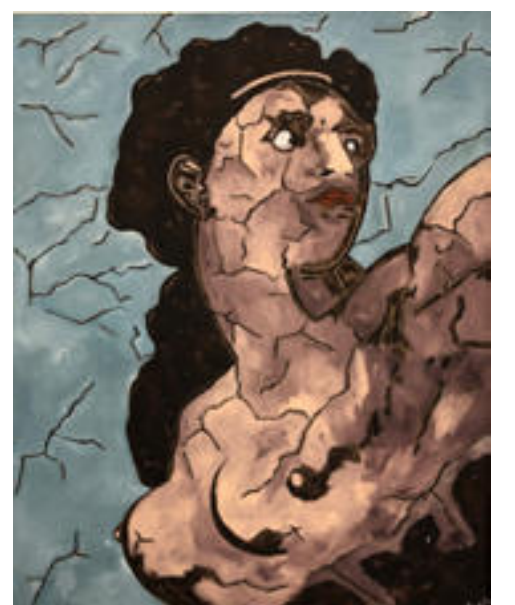
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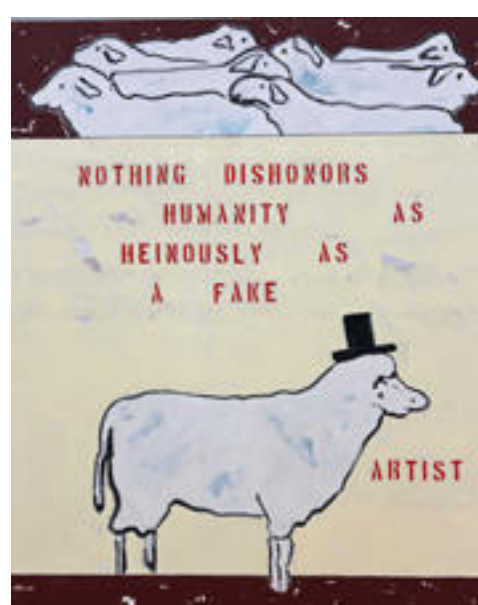
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1.

**No Scene from My Studio**

***Keine Szene aus meinem Atelier***

2020

oil / canvas

74,9" × 59,1"

2.

**Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (The Storylines)**

***Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (Die Verlaufslinien der Erzählung)***

2023

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

3.

**For Lovers of Executions**

2020

oil / canvas

74,9" × 59,1"

4.

**Crown of Thorns**

2022

oil / canvas

74,9" × 59,1"

5.  
**My Take on Emperor Maximilian's Shooting**  
***Meine Kaiser Maximilian Erschiessungs-Version***  
2020

painting in oil  
59,1" × 74,9"

6.  
**Hommage to Francis Picabia**  
2024

oil / canvas  
23,6" × 19,7"

7.  
**Dawn of Abstraction: The Lion Man of Ulm**  
***Dämmerung der Abstraktion: Der Löwenmensch  
von Ulm***

2021  
oil / canvas  
74,9" × 59,1"

8.  
**Change of Perspective**  
***Perspektivwechsel***  
2022

oil / canvas  
59,1" × 47,3"

9.

**The Youth of the Venus of Willendorf**  
***Die Jugend der Venus von Willendorf***

2019

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

10.

**Basashi**

2024

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

11.

**Styles Hit the City**  
***Stile treffen die Stadt***

2022

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

12.

**Ms. Confucius Leaves Her Husband, Who Endlessly  
Found Fault with Her Cooking**  
***Frau Konfuzius verlässt ihren ewig am Essen  
mäkelnden Mann***

2022

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

13.

**Taboos are Hard to Find these Days**

2020

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

14.

**Back to Battle, Coward!**

***Zurück in die Schlacht, Feigling!***

2024

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

15.

**The Revelation of the Pocket Torch**

***Die Offenbarung der Taschenlampe***

2019

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

16.

**Truman Capote at the Masked Ball**

***Truman Capote beim Maskenball***

2023

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

17.

**The Envable Monsieur Balthus**

*Der beneidenswerte Monsieur Balthus*

2023

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

18.

**World-Prehistoric Shaman**

*Weltberühmter prähistorischer Schamane*

2024

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

19.

**Shouganei**

2022

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

20.

**Bal surealiste '72**

2023

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

21.

**Faith Love Hope**

***Glaube Liebe Hoffnung***

2021

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

22.

**Winter Is Coming, According to De Cirico**

***Der Winter kommt, nach De Chirico***

2023

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

23.

**Nothing Dishonors Humanity as Heinously as  
a Fake Artist**

***Nichts entehrt die Menschheit so abscheulich wie  
ein falscher Künstler***

2024

oil / canvas

59,1" × 74,9"

24.

**Michelangelo's Eve before Restoration**

***Michelangelos Eva vor der Restaurierung***

2022

oil / canvas

59,1" × 47,3"

25.

**Pretty Old Matchbox**

***Hübsche alte Streichholzschachtel***

2020

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

26.

**Mistreated Woman in Front of Dolmen**

***Misshandelte Frau vor Dolmen***

2021

oil / canvas

23,6" × 19,7"

27.

**How to Paint a Saint**

***Wie man Heilige malt***

2024

oil / canvas

59,1" × 74,9"