



Media Information

A STORYTELLER IN BETWEEN TIMES

Jonas Burgert is one of today's most profiled figural painters. The pictorial space in his paintings is a cryptic, lucent reflection of human life. Through the visual dynamics of his multi-focal layers of activity, viewers are propelled into uninterpretable events, where they encounter mysterious figures and creatures. The book »Sinn frisst« (Meaning devours) is a companion to Burgert's solo show at the Arp Museum in Remagen. It reveals a fascinating artistic universe, not least through seven new, monumental paintings.

Bielefeld/Berlin, February 11, 2020 – An established, prominent figure on today's international art scene, Jonas Burgert (*1969) proves how exciting figural painting is these days. He has created seven new, large works especially for his exhibition at Arp Museum Remagen and the show and companion catalogue, *Sinn frisst*; in addition to several smaller portraits and sculptures, the works draw viewers into seemingly surreal worlds. In architectural scenes or interiors, often of ruins, we encounter figures in strange clothes, with bizarre accessories, frequently surrounded by animals. Although they gaze indifferently out of the surrounding confusion, they still capture the eye. One chases back and forth, trying not to miss any of the action—an attempt that proves futile. For even though the figures often seem to be interacting with each other, it is impossible to establish exactly what the activity may be. Even supposedly familiar objects and their environments remain mysterious in their magnificently colored, richly detailed inscrutability.

“In his overwhelmingly colorful paintings Burgert combines the classic traditional panel painting with a contemporary aesthetic,” says Oliver Kornhoff, Director of the Arp Museum. “Their dazzling color contrasts, fractured perspectives, and various dimensions make them look like collages. At the same time all of the elements are linked in a shared setting, with carefully placed sight lines. With confident mastery of his means, Burgert creates balanced compositions that are only superficially excessive and chaotic. He connects nearly abstract passages, emphasizing their painterly material quality, with a captivating representationalism that immediately captures the viewer.”

There is something theatrical about both Burgert's portraits and sculptures. The latter resemble shrunken or oversized figures, which practically seems to have leapt out of the paintings. They expand the stage-like pictorial space into the real space of the museum, obscure fragments mixing with the audience. The melancholy intensity of the light and dark contrasts and colorful accents of the portraits are enchanting. The persons depicted remain anonymous and their mostly neutral facial expressions seem oddly distanced, while at the same time radiating great appeal.

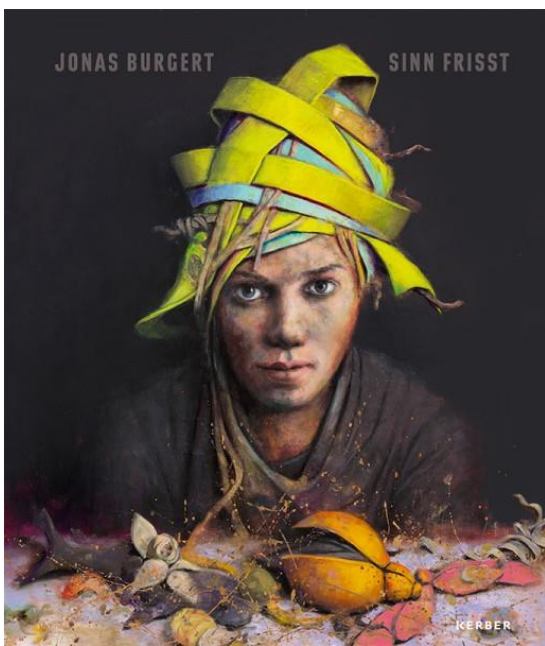
Burgert's art makes use of classic dramaturgical means, and is engrossing, even though it steadily avoids clear interpretation. A legible pictorial event turns out to be a fiction, simply reflecting the viewer's expectations instead. In an overarching way, Burgert tells us about the power of painting and the unbridgeable gap between image and reality. In the process, this gap becomes a productive source for his works of art: they consciously break with mere realism, but always remain tied to our experiential world. In a vague, nearly symbolic appropriation—always in the suspended state between the familiar and the foreign—Burgert tracks the mystery of existing in the world. With precision and an outstanding feel for the pictorial, he is on a search for ways to express the most profound humanity.

Burgert regards his new monograph as an extension of the exhibition. It was important to him to look at the book again in a different way: “It starts with the show, and then I very purposefully decided, now it

needs this figure and this painting and then another one from five years ago, which would make sense right here in this spot, in this context. I tried to give the book a structure that corresponds to my visual world. A pictorial logic, in which one thing builds upon the next, and so on. I stopped when I had the feeling that everything was rounded out.”

Monika Rinck and Ralph Dutli provide literary voices for Burgert’s work for the first time, and they play an important role in the book for him. “Now that there are many art historical texts about my paintings, I’ve asked myself how it would be possible to express through words what I’m trying to do visually with painting,” explains the artist. “You won’t find an explanatory gateway, but there is an associative proximity. Those two have managed it. Realized in language, not in visuals, but in just as crazy a manner. That was the goal, another artistic transformation. I’m very happy with it.”

Sinn frisst is both a profound survey of Jonas Burgert's oeuvre to date and the ideal introduction to his fantastic visual worlds.



Jonas Burgert | Sinn frisst

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