

MARTIN EDER IN BERLIN AND ZÜRICH

The German artist Martin Eder (°1968, Augsburg, lives and works in Berlin) works in various media: he makes watercolours, paintings, photographs and sculptures. HART had an interview with Eder in his studio in Berlin Mitte on the occasion of his exposition at Neue National Gallery Berlin and Hauser and Wirth Zurich.

Can you elaborate on the mirroring effect your recent works have?

Martin Eder: "The paintings are watercolours, mixed with salts and then sealed with a glaze, because I wanted to have them shiny and almost frozen in a state that they look wet. I prefer watercolours the most when they are still wet and not dried. The epoxy layer makes it look closer to the wet stadium."

Your oeuvre has very different visual strategies which also refer to musical influences. For example the dark paintings and the performances have references to doom and gothic music.

Eder: "Yes."

That giant black Styrofoam cloud you are showing in Zurich at Hauser and Wirth right now, is it accompanied by sound?

Eder: "It is a sculpture without sound and the structure is very subtle: in Zurich it also has a wall of deep red glass on one side (he shows us the model for the installation, Err & Ss) where the light enters the gallery, about 11 meters in length. The layer of red foil gives you a sensation that your brain wants to correct; the colour input is excessive. Your brain corrects it into a less red and also adds yellow. But once you exit the exhibition space, the world will appear green to you. It is just an illusion, a sort of natural high when you are standing inside the gallery. The red colour fills you physically and once you exit, you have another vision. I love to play with these visual tricks. I also worked before with wallpaper which influences your mind and vision – you would see dots where there are no dots. This pattern is called Hermann Grid illusion. It all has to do with perception and believing what you see or not see. It works around visual truth and illusion and this brings us back to physics and also to advertising ..."

And to renaissance painting as well.

Eder: "Yes, and also for example, the visual tricks that a magician used. I saw a magician in New York who used a disc with a spiral on it – he made people look at this huge 2m spiral which was spinning. Then the lights went off and the audience could only see his head – the result was: his head was getting amazing shapes, it bloated like in a comic ... it was as if you were on LSD. One was fixed on this internal direction of the spiral and then your brain corrected this ... an unbelievable trick, and I was sitting in the audience and was amazed by how it worked."

We had to think of the Elephant Man when we saw your Richard Ruin performance (an alter ego of Eder which has huge black lumps hanging from his face).



Martin Eder, 'Traum / Dream', 2013, oil on canvas, 187 x 141 cm, VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2013, courtesy the artist, Galerie Eigen+Art, Hauser & Wirth, foto Uwe Walter

Eder: "Actually this comes from a guy whom I have seen in Portugal. He was a homeless person with huge tumours, red and blue spongy things coming out of his face ... he was all blue and red, you just could see the eyes."

Must have been horrifying. Speaking of which ... Your work has both Beauty and the Beast in it. There are the reoccurring motifs of kittens, beautiful young nudes, etc. But their abundance becomes eerie at a certain point.

Eder: "It's actually not about the cats and nude Lolita's, but more about how you can sum up the symbols and the exploitation and how society deals with certain needs. Of course Andy Warhol did it way better and much more precise in giving back society their suicides and their death traps and their food and their buttoles or whatever he printed on his art works. It was a great concept, and I somehow missed it in the present when I

started thinking about art. I always loved that subject of giving back the people what they deserve instead of creating new desires. Because, you see the pictures are already there, one just needs to take these pictures and mirror them back into society. And when the onlooker sees it hanging in the museum, he suddenly likes it. But the transformation and the process are very important."

So you bring these images back and then you want the onlooker to reflect on this? We are not living in communist times, where the artist's purpose is to educate us. Nevertheless everybody educates his customer, even commercials.

Eder: "No, I am not trying to educate the onlooker, I am more like a journalist, who is telling people things which they have not seen or noticed yet. Or tell stories from places I have visited, not geographically but content wise."

There was an important statement of yours about the nude which we would like to talk about. You have discussed before that the nude is not important for you erotically, but as an image as such. Does that mean art historically?

Eder: "No, it is more the exploitation of female sexuality in media and society. For example when you look at internet traffic, more than 90% is pornography. This tells you something about how mankind wants to live and what it needs, for example the need for seduction or the substitutes for real life."

In your work we could have seen a certain development, away from surrealism to hyperrealism.

Eder: "Well, I don't want to tell stories any more, not in a way a comic does, from left to right. I prefer to use symbols ... and to stage my work more. Hence the red windows in Zurich and the epoxy layer on the watercolours, which mirror the space and the viewer and thus integrate them into each other."

Getting back to your current exhibition at the Neue National Galerie, which is part of the running concept of Painting Forever. You are one of four artists presented there. Could you tell us more about the show?

Eder: "These are mainly older paintings and one new one: 'The Ass (Traum / Dream)' is the most recent painting. The concept of the curator was to make a kind of a retrospective of these four artists, and show the works from over more or less the past twenty years. It's nice to see old paintings, old friends back, which I have not seen in a long time and see how these work together. So basically Udo Kittelmann made a selection of his favourites or most hated and so did I and then we combined the selection. So now there is a selection of eleven paintings that illustrate the idea of what I wanted to say quite well."

What did you want to say?

Eder: "I don't want to say too much because it is visual content and not something I can explain in textual form."

Just tell us something about 'The Ass (Traum / Dream)'?

Eder: "It's hard to describe."

Could 'The Ass' be showing your ass to the world?

Eder: "The title of the exhibition is 'BubeDame-KönigAss', and I like the last word because I wanted to put the second S into it. 'As' is grammatically correct in German but 'Ass' is the old way to write it, before the last the spelling reform. So 'Ass' is the card ace but also the ass. So I insisted on having the second 's'. I like the fact that there is a big ass in the Neue National Galerie."

Ekaterina RIETZ-RAKUL & Steve SCHEPENS

Martin Eder, 'BubeDameKönigAss' until 24 November at Neue Nationalgalerie, Potsdamer Straße 50, Berlin, DE. www.smb.museum

Martin Eder 'The collective unconscious' until 19 October at Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Limmatstrasse 270, Zürich, CH. www.hauserwirth.com

Francis Bacon & Henry Moore at the Ashmolean Museum Oxford

FLESH AND BONE

Fifty years after their last joint exhibition, and for the first time after death of the artists, the works of Francis Bacon and Henry Moore are reunited at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Romina PROVENZI

According to Professor Christopher Brown, director of the museum, this is an exhibition that critically links the work of Francis Bacon and Henry Moore – and that after decades of limited opportunity to do so. The 'Francis Bacon Henry Moore Flesh and Bone' exhibition had been jointly curated by Richard Calvocoressi, director of the Henry Moore Foundation, and Mr. Martin Harrison, editor of the Francis Bacon 'catalogue raisonné', with advice from Dr Francis Warner, Emeritus Fellow of St Peter's College Oxford and friend of both artists.



Francis Bacon, 'Study from Portrait of Pope Innocent X', 1965, oil on canvas, 198 x 147,5 cm, © The Estate of Francis Bacon, all rights reserved. DACS 2013, lent by Private Collection

In the stunning galleries of the Ashmolean Museum, the curators display sixty works in three large rooms. The works selected for the exhibition are twenty iconic paintings by Francis Bacon, twenty sculptures and twenty drawings by Henry Moore. And a superlative selection of drawings by Michelangelo and small sculptures by Rodin from the Ashmolean Museum collection: works that influenced both artists. The aim of the exhibition is to find similarities between Bacon and Moore, juxtaposing Bacon's large paintings to Moore's massive sculptures in the gallery space and creating a dialogue between them.

According to Calvocoressi, it took almost three years to organize the exhibition with works coming from a mixture of British and continental Europe public institutions and private collections.

THE HUMAN BODY

At a certain point in his career, Moore stated that "a great deal can still be done with three dimensional forms as a mean of expressing what people feel about the world around them. But I don't think that we shall or should ever get far away from the thing that all sculpture is based in the end: the human body". As figurative artists, both Bacon and Moore worked on studying

and recreating the human figure as never before in contemporary art. They applied their specific techniques to transform their main subject into abstract forms.

Along the years, Bacon's work became more plastic, more three-dimensional, more abstract and larger in size. The style of Henry Moore evolved as well: it became more minimalistic and elegant and distanced itself from the practice of other sculptors such as Giacometti. If Moore's sculptures keep the viewer at a distance, Francis Bacon's paintings do the opposite, they take the distance away and absorb the viewer. Bacon's paintings on show at the Ashmolean contain an element of darkness as well, and they are amazingly sculptural for a painter.

Bacon had a strong interest in sculpture, and a desire at a certain point of his career, to create sculptures instead of paintings. In 1971 Bacon said "I think I would be able to do the figures in a really different way by painting them as a transposition of how I was going to do them in the sculptures". Maybe his increasing success stopped him from taking the step to become a sculptor. Moore had a strong interest in a different medium as well: drawing. Many of his amazing drawings in the exhibition come from the Henry Moore Foundation.