

Jonas Burgert

STÜCK HIRN BLIND

Blain|Southern
4 Hanover Square
London, W1S 1BP

14 October – 22 November, 2014
Private view: Monday, 13 October, 6–8pm



immer, 2014, Oil on canvas, 90 × 80 cm (35 × 31½ in)

Blain|Southern is delighted to present a new body of work by the acclaimed German artist Jonas Burgert – his first solo show in London in over five years.

Entitled *STÜCK HIRN BLIND*, the exhibition includes his largest painting to date, a monumental work spanning eight metres, together with two figurative sculptures, each modelled from clay, cast in bronze and hand-painted by the artist.

Burgert's paintings present a world in which time is suspended, once removed from our perception of the every-day. In this paradigm – an environment which is in constant flux – human beings are depicted as unique, contorted creatures both familiar and fantastical. Often naked, sometimes splashed with the artist's trademark fluorescent colours – a melange of acid yellows, electric blues, purples, pinks and reds – each appears to be engaged in some form of quest, the purpose of which is not immediately apparent to the viewer or, it seems, to themselves. They appear as dream-like figures, frozen in a moment of time – on the cusp of a revelation or point of awakening.

The effect on the viewer is unsettling, creating a climate in which they themselves are drawn into an examination of their own temporal struggles. One of the smaller paintings featured in *STÜCK HIRN BLIND*, *immer* (2014), is illustrative of this. A serene face is framed in a headdress constructed of black bandages. While this unsettles, it is the unwavering gaze of a single eye – the other concealed – which draws in the viewer. Its effect is disquieting, but also immersive, exploring the notion of the ego and sense of self, both conscious and unconscious, thus forcing the question: how do I see myself and how might I define my identity in relation to others?

By contrast, *puls führt* (2014) appears to construct a story indicating a period of calm following a dramatic storm. Lying upon the floor is a horse, blindfolded and collapsed in the midst of a barren landscape void. Where is he going, or where has he come from? A similar conundrum is set up by the show's two sculptural works, both of which look as if they have crawled from a Burgert painting. In one, a suited man has a branch fixed to his head by a tourniquet. It is without reason, surreal and disturbing. In contrast, the second figure appears relaxed; however his corpulent body is covered in bandages, suggestive of injury or restraint.

The exhibition's largest canvas is described by Burgert as 'an abstract mountain of trash' that becomes distorted through the accumulation of multiple layers of paint. It is as if the detritus of mankind has suddenly fallen from the sky, or erupted from the earth, leaving a few surviving humans to contemplate what sequence of events led to this disaster.

Considered within the context of imaginative figurative painting, from Hieronymus Bosch through to portraits by Rembrandt and Van Dyke, Burgert is unparalleled in his contemporary construction of the figurative realm. However, while the paintings are unique spectacles in themselves, they exist only to allow the artist to meditate on the myriad complexities and conflicts of the human psyche. As Burgert says: 'It seems to me that we are human beings that recognise ourselves without actually understanding ourselves. This leads to a grotesque situation: man's battle with his own mirror image, struggling to define himself.'¹

A full-colour plate publication will accompany the exhibition, including texts by the writer Will Self and psychoanalyst Anouchka Grose.

A limited vinyl edition record will also be produced alongside the exhibition by The Vinyl Factory. An edition of 100, the cover of each will be hand-painted by the artist. If placed alongside each other they will form one unified image. The record itself features, on one side, music as composed by Burgert's late father, Achim Burg (Hans Joachim Burgert), and on the other, a remix by the Berlin-based DJ, rRoxymore.

¹ A Great Story: The Creator of New Worlds & Strange Stages. *Jonas Burgert: Hitting Every Head*, 2009.

For further information on the exhibition, please contact Mark Inglefield
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Notes to editors:

Jonas Burgert graduated from the Universität der Künste, Berlin, in 1996, and subsequently studied for a postgraduate title (Meisterschüler) under Professor Dieter Hacker in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Jonas Burgert: Enigmatic Narrative*, Victoria H. Myhren Gallery, University of Denver (2008); *Jonas Burgert*, Arndt & Partner, Berlin (2008); *Jonas Burgert: Hitting Every Head*, Haunch of Venison, London (2009); *Jonas Burgert: Lebendversuch*, Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany (2010); *Jonas Burgert: Lebendversuch*, Kunsthalle Krems, Austria (2011); *Jonas Burgert: Tricksplitt, Gemalte Geschichten; Gift gegen Zeit / Poison Against Time*, Blain|Southern, Berlin (2012); *Sticht: Jonas Burgert*, Produzentengalerie, Hamburg and *Schutt und Futter*, Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (both 2013). Burgert lives and works in Berlin.