

# GALERIE TSCHUDI

ANDREA BÜTTNER

Steine Moose und Zelte

27 July – 28 September 2019

There are very few artists so deeply invested in the notion of the passage as Andrea Büttner is. Her use of images and references resurface time and again the illusion that we may understand the nature of power, the nature of poverty, the nature of all the relations that condition our perception of relevance, but also the many different ways we are affected by the world surrounding us. It is as if she would propose to us a journey—to take life through a certain images—and the journey becomes a passage, a descend into a different time, and into extinct systems of beliefs in order to fool our senses into believing that these systems are eminently actual, and at work in today's world. And so, it would be wrong to take her research for a merely scholar work since the main goal of the images and the objects presented here is to produce a sort of a poem, a particularly moving mood strongly imbued with philosophical contemplation. Imagine this whole exhibition calling: „Majestic Life! Thou birth of unknown Time!“ to paraphrase a sentence of Humphry Davy, an eminent nineteenth-century British chemist who highly influenced Mary Shelley.

I name two British Romantic references here because Andrea Büttner shares with the Romantics the postulate that symbols and nature's geological processes move and activate their effect upon us through untold ages.

But unlike the Romantics, the images and objects of Andrea Büttner's work are not there only to propose an interior journey into a new self, they don't serve us to acquire a sense of the „authentic“ in us. In this respect, her work is deeply political, deeply anti-capitalist. But what do I see there in these stones and caves and moss and shepherds and kings that made me say the word „anti-capitalists? Because her thinking those elements move us away from focusing on the values of self-reliance, independence, ingenuity, competitiveness, and above all, freedom to self-interestedly seek one's fortune—which is what ultimately determines and fuels the free markets logic.

Her aspiration is to create a space emerging from art, from its history, from the unseen elements of life that art did not yet take care of—like moss—to create a new political history. And therefore, these elements call upon new behaviors that would profoundly transform all our institutions by the means of rethinking all the ceremonials that constitute our social understanding from political authority to motherhood, from religion to literature, from sexuality to technology and so forth...

It is in this way that we need to understand the centrality of the piece dealing with the shepherd and the king. The good "shepherd king" ideal is a very ancient Middle Eastern concept, dating back to even before biblical times. All Throughout Mesopotamian history, the king as a shepherd and as a representative of the gods was expected to rule with justice and to show kindness in counseling, protecting, and guiding the people through every difficulty. So, the king is the image of the master who has the right to command, to legislate and demand obedience, while the people has the right to obey... But the shepherd reverses this image of power providing us with a radical different one, the shepherd is instituted by the sheep. The sheep—an ancient metaphor for the people—have the agency to invent their own caretaker, their form of power, protection and shelter.

Oh but now, don't think solely on how the humans must or must not rule themselves but extend, for a moment, this thinking to the moss. Can the moss decide on the stone? Mosses existed as early as the Permian Period (298.9 million to 252.2 million years ago) so they have the right to decide how they want to define their lives, and so have the Oceans and the mountains and nature in general and we see in our way of endangering them the king, the rulers that decide the laws that rule their life

## GALERIE TSCHUDI

principles. But we could imagine in nature an agency, a force capable of define a shepherd that does not „rescue“ or „safe“ the planet like a master turn into a hero.

The work of Andrea Büttner constitutes an aesthetic but also a political space formed by a very thought through recurrent elements that invite us to reconsider the sequences in which we receive instructions: from the social body, from culture, from art history, from nature, from all the believe systems at work. The pieces can be seen independently from one another and yet we may always remember that they form a code that addresses the many genres that influence today our sense of power, powerlessness, and freedom. Her works could be interpret as a very ambitious attempt to to produce a miracle, that is, a change in the way we understand our relation to change, to transformation. Don't think here about anything particularly radical or monumental, but think of the miracle's of a person's face breaking into a smile when they see you. This very simple unmediated respond to the presence of someone you love possesses a quality of iridescence that is immediately transferred into you. It is this odd and beautiful sequence that intensely interest Andrea Büttner, since, there the imagined loved merges with how this feeling of love is sensorially reproduced in a smile.

Chus Martinez