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Jaargang 25 No. 125

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Jan Mot now representing Andrea Büttner



Andrea Büttner, photo by July Zimmerman © Andrea Büttner / VG Bild-Kunst.

BRUSSELS, JAN. 7 – The gallery is delighted to announce the representation of **Andrea Büttner** (°1972 in Stuttgart, lives and works in Berlin). Andrea connects art history with social or ethical issues, exploring broad-ranging topics such as poverty, labour, community, Catholicism, music, botany and philosophy. Her diverse practice is articulated through formats encompassing print, sculpture, weaving, but also photography, video, instruction pieces, and works with live moss and wet clay. Büttner recently had a solo show at the gallery titled *Karmel Dachau* and a duo show with Manon de Boer in 2018, a second solo show is planned after the summer this year.

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Exhibition
 23/01–13/03
 Opening
 23/01, 2–6 pm

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Jan Mot
 Petit Sablon / Kleine Zavel 10
 1000 Brussels, Belgium



Francis Alÿs, Mexico City, 2010.

About water – part 1

This text is the first part of a short series of contributions to the newspaper by Heiko Goelzer, a friend and a scientist working in climate research. He studies the role of ice sheets in the climate system on various timescales in past, present and future and their contribution to sea-level change. Goelzer's contributions are written on the occasion of our participation in GALLERIES CURATE: RHE, an international exhibition project organised by 21 galleries on the theme of water. Please see also our interview with the author in the previous issue of the gallery's newspaper.

By
Heiko Goelzer

OSLO, JAN. 6 – Our local pond would freeze over in the winters and was only a few minutes by foot from the house I grew up in. Long before my time and before the advent of electric refrigeration units, the pond was created by the local brewery so they could use the ice for cooling. For me, it was the place where I took my first steps on solid ice and learned

to skate. Many years thereafter, we went with the whole family every Sunday to an ice-skating rink, where we had artificial but consistent conditions most of the year.

That natural bodies of water freeze over when it gets cold enough for long enough, providing opportunities for ice-skating enthusiasts, may seem like a trivial and unspectacular event. But in fact, it is a remarkable and intriguing phenomenon that is worth a second look. While the density of most other liquids increases when cooled towards the freezing point, water reaches its maximum density around 4 °C. Further cooling beyond that point decreases the density, which makes that the coldest water is always on top and ice can form there. Without this *density anomaly* of water, our ponds and lakes would freeze from the bottom up, with dire consequences for the plants and animals living there. Whatever the underlying reason for the anomaly (a completely satisfying scientific explanation has yet to be found), it is not only at the root of facilitating the ice-skating experience on

natural ice, but pretty much facilitating life itself.

A layer of ice on top of a lake reduces the heat loss to the air above it quite considerably, so that the heat is trapped in the water and ice grows much slower than it would otherwise. And the thicker the ice, the better the separation. This insulating effect of ice on a body of water allows the coexistence of liquid water and air of several tens of degrees below zero, only separated by a few centimetres of ice, which again can be understood as protecting the life beneath it.

It needs a couple of days well below zero to freeze over a lake thick enough with ice to walk on. The famous speed-skating event Elfstedentocht in the Netherlands is only held when the ice everywhere on the almost 200 km long track on a network of connected canals, rivers and lakes is at least 15 cm thick. This only happened in three of the last 50 winters and the last time in 1997, with a near miss for the Elfstedentocht in 2002. For this event, the ice needs to safely support up to 15000 skaters passing through on that one particular

day, hence the strict requirements. More risk-tolerant Nordic Skaters on remote lakes, for whom probing that threshold has become part of the sport, have found an ice thickness of around 3 cm as the absolute lowest supporting limit. Close to that threshold, the ice is visibly bending and emitting laser-like sounds as the skater passes over it.

Most of the ice that forms by freezing of water in our environment is called “ice one h” (Ice I_h) and is one of the currently 18 known forms of crystalline ice made from water. The subscript h refers to the hexagonal crystalline structure that we know from our images of snowflakes. Most of the other forms of water ice only occur under conditions very different from our daily experience, high in the atmosphere, in outer space or in the laboratory. The ice that I am working with does not form by freezing of lakes and rivers overnight, it is created over years of snow accumulation high up in the mountains. Every year a new layer of snow is deposited, and lower layers are compressed under the weight of the new snow above. Over time, the air in the snowpack escapes or is compressed as the snow is compacted into solid glacier ice.

The first time I really got in contact with such ice was during a family summer holiday in Switzerland. The hike we did that day started at the Morteratsch railway station at 1900 m down in the valley and got up to the Diavolezza cable-car station at almost 3000 m elevation. On a sunny day, the view up there of the mountain range to the south, marking the border to Italy, is breathtakingly beautiful. On the way up, the key attraction of the hike and reason for my father picking out the route was the crossing of the Morteratsch glacier at around 2500 m. Close to the ice, we had to rope up and put crampons on for the traverse. I had good practice with the climbing harness, and I knew how to tie myself into the rope, but something didn't feel right. I can still remember the harness much too tight around my chest, I couldn't breathe well.

Stepping out on the ice is a curious and daunting experience. It may feel as solid as rock under your feet, but there is something uncomfortable, a sensation like fear of height when looking into the abyss. Is the fear transferred from the experience of walking on a frozen lake, not knowing how thick the ice is, if it will hold and what is underneath? It was probably to the better at the time that I didn't know about the ice

actually moving under our feet, even if it was only by several tens of meters a year. But there was also water on the glacier, a lot of it! In the summer this part of the glacier can be free of snow and the ice is melting in the heat of the day. Small streams of melt water collect into bigger streams of water and into rivers on the surface of the glacier. We had to jump over two or three of those on our way. We followed one of the rivers downstream to see where it went. And at some point it abruptly just disappeared from the surface and fell into a big hole in the ice with a screaming and grinding sound. In my imagination, I pictured myself being washed down the river and down the hole to disappear forever in the glacier.

The holes in the glacier are called moulins or glacier mills and form part of the network of conduits and channels that transport the meltwater from the glacier down the valley, on the surface, inside the glacier and under the ice. Walking towards the glacier along the valley floor in the summer, one finds a huge mouth in the glacier front where the water exits. I once met a group of researchers on the glacier that had just returned from exploring part of the internal network of channels. They had ropes and other climbing equipment with them that had allowed them to access the system through a dry moulin similar to the one I had pictured myself being washed down on my first visit to the glacier as a kid. I had mixed feelings about their choice of research method.

It was many years later that I came back to the Morteratsch glacier as part of the annual field trips we did with the research group of my post-doc position in Brussels. We would visit the glacier in early fall just before the first winter snow to measure ice velocity, ice thickness and the amount of melt at the surface. The process involves drilling several-meter deep holes in the ice and planting long plastic stakes that freeze in over the winter. Coming back the next year, the new stake positions are used to determine the ice velocity, while the height of the stake above the surface records the amount of ice that has melted. To plant the stakes and find back the ones from the year before, we would walk all over the glacier, and I had plenty of opportunities to revisit the places of my first encounter with the glacier. But even after years of going back and spending many days on the glacier, the first steps on the ice were always taken with a certain respect that never went away.

The glacier also holds memories well beyond our own timeline. The snow and everything else that is buried with it is well preserved in the upper part of the glacier, where the amount of snowfall exceeds the snow melt. Old ice from a glacier can therefore be used to reveal information about the past. The air trapped in small bubbles in the ice can even serve as direct sample of the atmospheric composition at the time of deposition. For very big, old and slow glaciers, such information can be preserved for hundreds of thousands of years back in time. In our case, the glacier flow transports the ice and enclosed material within a few decades to lower elevations where it eventually melts out. On our excursions, we regularly passed the rusted remains of an airplane wreck from World War II and other signs of human presence on the glacier, including the result of what must have been a more recent fatal skiing accident.

Over the seven years I went to visit the glacier, we documented and experienced an accelerating thinning and retreat of the glacier that was clearly visible from year to year. Places on the glacier tongue we had worked on one year were gone the next. Massive meandering meltwater canyons were carved out of the retreating glacier front. And it was getting more and more difficult to access the shrinking ice from the sides over steepening walls of rocks and debris left behind by the retreating glacier. Based on our measurements and related results from other glaciers, one of my colleagues recently projected that the glacier volume of the entire European Alps will be halved by the year 2050. For the Morteratsch glacier, a further retreat of several hundred meters has to be expected. The hundred meters thick ice I had walked over as a child will then be gone, and the path to the other side will instead go along the rocky valley floor.

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In memoriam Herman Daled (1930–2020)



Herman Daled. *Absence. Hommage à Philippe Thomas (détail)*, 1985, framed colour photograph and plexiglass label, photo: 80 × 60 cm, label: 2,5 × 12,5 cm.

Each collaboration starts with a dialogue Conversation with Jochen Meyer

BERLIN/BRUSSELS, JAN. 4 – Julia Wielgus: Before discussing specific collaborations, I would like to ask you a few general questions. Could you tell me what collaboration means to you?

Jochen Meyer: Collaboration is team effort, working together. As gallerists we are *per se* collaborators: first of all we collaborate with our artists. I think that this is the most important collaboration that we have because we are often the first partner of the artist: being supportive, being the first who sees the work in the studio, criticizes the work, develops ideas together, helps to realise projects in terms of financial means, content level, production, publication, but also research, writing, collaboration with institutions and so on. Therefore I think that it's part of our DNA to be collaborative. And it's something that I appreciate a lot about being a gallerist. But I am also not a lone fighter, that's why I decided or naturally developed the gallery together with my partner Thomas (Riegger). I really enjoy working in a partnership as well as working in a team at the gallery. We share a very collaborative, low hierarchy model of working together at the gallery. Each member of the team can grow within the structure, contribute ideas and participate in decision making. I am not so much interested in the idea of being the owner or boss, I am more interested in this institution becoming more open, more fluid and flexible. So collaborating is simply joining forces, bringing together all possible potential to realise ideas and projects.

JW: What is most meaningful for you that you learnt from collaborating?

JM: It's not surprising when I'd say that we grow and learn from one another. Each collaboration starts with a dialogue, sharing ideas, learning to listen to other people, sometimes being patient, being respectful of other individuals' opinions, working towards an idea together. And to learn all that as a participant of collaborations is something that is very meaningful to me.

JW: What do you consider the biggest challenge of working together?

JM: I need to learn to be sometimes



Melvin Moti's video *Interwoven* (2020, 4K video, 28 min) will be presented by Meyer Riegger as part of Galleries Curate: RHE. Courtesy of the artist and Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe.

more patient towards different opinions or speeds.

JW: Looking back at the past year, the confrontation with the pandemic produced a sense of urgency that became the basis of numerous collaborations. Collaborating is obviously not new in the art world but has this notion evolved over the last year? What was new or different?

JM: I think that collaborations started on a different level with the pandemic because we all felt that it is important to work together to foster the infrastructure of the galleries and this could happen on a local as well as international level because we were all facing similar problems. In Berlin from the beginning of the pandemic we bonded under the roof of the Gallery Weekend, the institution that was established in 2005 consisting of roughly 50 galleries. We managed to bring our infrastructures, knowledge, relationships, networks together in order to help resolve problems like legal issues, how to apply for public support, how to negotiate with the landlord etc. This type of acts of solidarity or efforts happened also in other cities, famously in London, in Los Angeles and led also to activities like the Gallery Platform LA. Both locally

and internationally, amongst galleries that share the same values in a broader sense, we felt that the artworld is an ecosystem that needs to be protected and that there is an interdependence which is far more important than competition. And out of this spirit a lot of things have grown out.

JW: And we needed to be hit by a crisis to come to that...

JM: It seems so indeed. Of course there have been activities, especially more local ones, such as the Gallery Weekend Berlin that I already mentioned which is a very successful collaboration between the Berlin galleries. It was developed from an understanding that galleries in the city can only achieve certain things when they join forces, when they do something where all galleries are at the same level, share the idea of doing exhibitions together and turn the city into kind of a festival. But with the crisis we had a different sensitivity about the ecosystem that we are part of. On the one hand there was the question of surviving the crisis but on the other hand many of us found the ecosystem before the crisis not a very healthy one. The pace for the galleries, artists, even collectors and curators was painful and we as gallerists

have a voice in that and can produce change.

JW: You are one of the gallerists who initiated Galleries Curate last year. Its first exhibition project entitled *RHE* has just started and will continue until May with exhibitions around the theme of water at 21 international galleries and presentations online. How do you start such a collaboration, how do you come together?

JM: We came together before the pandemic as members of the various committees of the Art Basel fairs. In Spring 2020 this group started to exchange ideas on how to deal with the crisis, to give each other support. Later the direction in which it developed was more organic and led to inclusion of additional voices from different areas, cultural contexts, generations and hopefully the project will grow further. It's been very important also on an emotional level at least for me over the past months to hear how other galleries are holding up, how we can support each other, how we can do things for the better in our ecosystem. It was great to meet every Monday with all those gallerists from around the world and to develop the idea of a collaborative exhibition.

JW: How do you take decisions within Galleries Curate?

JM: So far our decisions have always been developed out of conversations, in a soft way, and I mean it in a positive sense. There was no voting. Voting can be difficult because then it's black and white, in or out, yes or no. Many of the suggestions of the individual gallerists have been discussed and we found a decision for or against it together.

JW: How do you imagine the future of Galleries Curate, what do you expect?

JM: Wonderful exhibitions! For me the most interesting aspect is that it leads to physical exhibitions. I don't believe so much in "digital", especially not as a sales platform, as I believe in really visiting an exhibition. Even if Galleries Curate is also an online platform, I think that the most important thing for galleries to do, is to develop exhibitions together with our artists and this is what I look forward to. From the beginning, when everybody was in a lockdown in different countries, cities, with different regulations, there was the idea to host other galleries in our own physical spaces. I don't know in which

direction this project is going, but if it is intellectual, cultural exchange, doing exhibitions together, I would be very happy about that.

JW: In the past you were involved in establishing Gallery Weekend Berlin and art berlin contemporary. Recently you participated in talks with the German Government as a representative of galleries of contemporary art. Could you talk about this experience and what you achieved?

JM: The talks with the government came from under the roof of the Gallery Weekend, where we invited all the gallerists to come together in weekly zoom meetings. We found out among others that in the cultural politics in Germany galleries don't have a voice. We have the Bundesverband Deutscher Galerien und Kunsthändler (BVDG) but somehow this was not our representation. Via Thomas Schulte's contact to the Minister of Culture, Monika Grütters we learnt that she was looking for representatives the government could talk to and he thought we needed to approach that. Esther Schipper and me were selected next to Thomas Schulte. We called, like in a snowball system hundred of the most important galleries in Germany saying that we were starting this conversation to get support, to fight against the increase of the VAT etc. and asked if we had their support which was granted to us. Also the BVDG supported us. What we achieved first of all is financial support for exhibitions in the first part of 2021 (16 Mio. EUR) and each professional gallery could apply for funds up to 35.000 EUR. Most probably this will continue also in the second part of the year. And also the dialogue with the government is continuing. For us it was not only important to be this political group negotiating with the government but also to work on how what we do is perceived. Because the image of galleries is still very bad in Germany and maybe worldwide. In Germany, during the lockdown we were the only places that could stay open (for most of the period) and do exhibitions. We are part of the cultural life and are doing cultural work. We have a very long standing tradition going back to the beginning of the 20th century, especially Jewish, interrupted by the Nationalsozialismus. So it's not only about raising money or aligning the VAT for art in the EU. It's also about changing the representation of what we are.

JW: As exciting and relevant it sounds also for your gallery, all these collaborations must take a lot of your time. How do you

balance it with the work with the artists of the gallery?

JM: As I said I have a great team and luckily they let me go. It's an important part of our gallery that it provides this image of being very open to dialogue and collaboration. We also want to bring this quality back into the work on our programme, for instance by doing one to one collaborations and we started a few this year. What is the work of a gallerist? It can be a lot of different things. The pandemic offered a very special opportunity to be in touch on a much deeper level for instance with colleagues, we had more time to exchange but also to engage in various collaborations and to address for example political issues.

JW: We talked about the ecosystem that is not very healthy which made me think of an illustration I saw, representing an inhabited island and two waves approaching it: a very high one called Covid 19 and behind a much higher one called environmental crisis. I was wondering if aiming at reducing our environmental impact has been a topic within the collaborations you have been involved in and are there any action plans made?

JM: The gallery initiatives I know here in Berlin are not addressing it directly. But I have been also talking earlier about the pace of the art world and that I feel that this pace needs to slow down which implies the environmental question. We need other models. Not only the classical idea of changing the packing material and ship by boat instead of airplane etc. These ideas are in the pipeline and need to be executed. But there are also more general philosophical questions related to how as gallerists or artists we can work on that change. We have ourselves participated in the exploitation of the environment with our activity for instance by participating in fairs in America, Asia. And I don't know if we can survive as a gallery if we only go to Art Basel in Basel or do not visit our artist in Brazil or collectors in New York. So there is some contradiction between our political and ethical claim and the reality of our business. Therefore I am even more concerned that when we fought the pandemic wave the art world in general will fall back to the same kind of model in which we lived in 2019 and believe that now is the moment to change things. I feel that initiatives like the Gallery Climate Coalition or exhibitions like *Down to Earth* in which Tino Sehgal was involved

at the Gropius Bau (2020) are important and can help to work towards that.

JW: Do you feel that the energies from the collaborations that were created last year can be directed towards dealing with the environmental crisis?

JM: Absolutely. We should use all that collaborative groups in which we are engaged to address this question and to fight for change.

Jochen Meyer is an art historian, curator and gallerist. In 1997 Jochen Meyer and Thomas Riegger opened their gallery in Karlsruhe with AND THEN THERE WERE NONE, an exhibition showing pieces from the Marzona Collection. Conceived in reference to a certain era, the exhibition was at the same time a benchmark for the gallery program, in which Meyer Riegger have tried to use the political and aesthetic potential of these positions as a link to the present. The gallery focuses on conceptual positions that emphasize the emancipatory potential of art as well as underlining the transcendent capacity of their existence, while always remaining aware that art, as a product of human labor, also reflects society's condition of dependency. The juxtaposition of international artists from different generations in solo and curated group shows puts these interests into practice. Since 2008 the gallery has also a space in Berlin.

This conversation took place in the context of the participation of Jan Mot and Meyer Riegger in Galleries Curate: RHE and is the start of a series of contributions in the Newspaper reflecting on the subject of collaboration.

An important tool and measured entry

Please visit our website (Broadcast 16/12/20) to read David Lamelas's letter to Jan Jambon, the reaction of Bart De Baere (director M HKA), the response to this by David Lamelas and Jan Mot, the list of co-signatories, and more.

Lamelas' work in Antwerp to be dismantled in February

BRUSSELS, JAN. 7 – Almost 900 people have co-signed with David Lamelas a letter to the Flemish minister of Culture Jan Jambon asking to preserve the work *Quand le ciel bas et lourd* (1992) on the site of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. Due to renovations of the museum and the surrounding park this outdoor installation was initially planned to be slightly moved and reconstructed but kept on the same site. The minister however has refused until now to allocate the necessary financial means and the existence of the piece is threatened. The work is in the collection of the M HKA museum in Antwerp after a donation by Lamelas in 2011. In response to the artist's letter and the support of the many co-signatories, Bart De Baere (director M HKA) recently declared that the responsibility for the work is 'currently, and unambiguously, in the hands of M HKA'. The artist and the gallery have welcomed this statement but remain very critical as the museum has yet to make clear how it plans to finance the restoration of the work described by M HKA as 'a key reference' in their collection. It is obvious that the Flemish authorities have a responsibility to protect the collections of its public museums and should not rely solely on private funding for maintenance and restoration. At this moment, knowing that the dismantling of the work is planned for February this year, this seems unfortunately the underlying strategy. To be continued.



David Lamelas, *Quand le ciel bas et lourd*, 1992 (Photo by Julia Wielgus, 22/10/2020).

In Brief

A replica of the living room of **Seth Siegelau** and Marja Bloem is on view in the exhibition *Stichting Egress Foundation Salon* at Tilde, Amsterdam until February 14.

The website of Galleries Curate: RHE launched on January 4th with an online presentation of works by **Francis Alÿs**, **Giovanni Anselmo** and **Latifa Echakhch**, extending the exhibition *A buoy if not a beacon*. Galleries Curate is a larger exhibition project initiated by 21 international galleries in response to the COVID-crisis. The project entitled *RHE* will consist of a series of solo and group exhibitions, performances, public interventions, text, etc. involving artists who work around the theme of water. It is organised in collaboration with the French curator Clément Delépine and will take place in different cities in the world between January and May 2021.

