

Jonas Burgert. Sinn frisst

16 February - 13 September 2020 (extended)



Sinn frisst | Jonas Burgert | 2019 | © Jonas Burgert | Photo: Lepkowski Studios

Press conference: Friday, 14 February 2020, 11 a.m.

Opening: Sunday, 16 February 2020, 11 a.m.

Content

Press information » Jonas Burgert. Sinn frisst «	3
General Information	6
Press Photos	7
Exhibition Overview 2020/ 2021	10

Press information

Jonas Burgert. Sinn frisst

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»The fact is, we live with an existential question within us all the time: This constant up and down between hope and failure. (...) And this irritation (...) besets us as a permanent question and at the same is time very beautiful.« **Jonas Burgert**

Mysterious and enigmatic scenes on huge colourful tableaus capture our imagination. Stage-like rooms are populated by strange figures, surrounded by animals and everyday or bizarre objects. Their creator Jonas Burgert (b. 1969, living and working in Berlin) is one of the main figures of the current international art scene. Especially for the large solo show at the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck he has created new monumental paintings and expansive sculptures. At its core one finds human existence with all its abysses, desires, fears and joys.

»To present an internationally celebrated artist like Jonas Burgert in Rhineland-Palatinate reveals the radiance of the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck.«

Malu Dreyer, Minister-President of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate

»We are very proud to have realised this project in mutual trust with Jonas Burgert and his studio. To plan an exhibition mainly based on newly created works is a venture for both sides. The result shows that the journey was most rewarding. Jonas Burgert demonstrates how exciting figurative painting is today.« **Dr. Oliver Kornhoff, director of the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck**

Jonas Burgert investigates the human condition, the perpetual quest for the meaning of life and our self-definition. The artist comments on this: *»My interest is not the real individual, but his or her mental borderlands, where the archaic, the inner and the illusionistic principles are in force.«*

The **humanness and vulnerability** of Burgert's figures contrast with the perfect old masters painting style. They walk between hope and failure, are driven by fears, desires and existential questions, are hurt, wounded and confused. We encounter **anti-heroes**, with whom we immediately form a close union. They move on the scene as lone fighters, in groups or as veritable »human clusters«. Occasionally they are exaggerated in a mannerist way, with overlong limbs and in distorted shapes, they are embedded in absurd, enigmatic, metaphorical and destructive sceneries. They all strive in their own way for their human existence – their being in the world. Burgert paints the battlefield on which this strength-sapping, psychological struggle takes place. On the monumental canvases (four of them at 5.40 m x 3.60 m), turbulent events unfold, with people, animals, plants and bizarre objects being interwoven in them. Some of them are extremely detailed and most elaborate, yet in places they also remain abstract. They fascinate and touch us and, like set pieces of

unrelated dream sequences, they give something surreal to the paintings. Quite unmistakably, Jonas Burgert's fascinating paintings coalesce with the masterpieces of **Salvador Dalí** presented on the floor above. In the **theme year »Totally Surreal«** both artists are united in painterly mastery, most elaborate details and a form of perfectionism that can hardly be surpassed.

»The absurd, imaginative materializations that Jonas Burgert develops in his painting also belong to our reality. Jonas Burgert is not driven by any political sense of mission, but his paintings can be read as images of human states of being within socio-political contexts.«
Jutta Mattern, curator of the exhibition

The backdrops for the events in the picture are urban landscapes in ruins, interiors or architectural set pieces. The creative process of his large-format pictures often originates in the location, inspired by real architecture (e.g. in *singt sich*, 2020). Once the basic framework has been created, he inserts the figures that become intertwined or remain in a static pose. As a rule, Burgert does not need preliminary sketches, as his subjects unfold directly on the canvas and are refined through experiments with colour and form combined with overpaintings. The backdrops partially dissolve into patterns of colour and patches or in some places form an ornamental surface.

In his smaller format portraits, Burgert manages with precision and distinct painterly intuition to walk the **fine line between strength and sensitivity.** In front of dark, light or coloured backgrounds, human faces or entire figures emerge from the dark background as if illuminated by a spotlight. Draped with birds, insects or fish, arms and hands are partly given a special meaning by a striking colourfulness. Sometimes they seem to reach out from the picture (*feinwund*, 2019). The heads are often crowned with plants (*schmiege*, 2019) or ribbons (*sinn frisst*, 2019 / *immer*, 2014), reminiscent of the voluminous headdresses in Jan van Eyck's paintings. The depicted persons do not spring from a real vis-à-vis, but from the artist's imagination. Owing to the intimate spatial situation of the Kabinett of the Arp Museum, visitors are surrounded by the piercing glances of those depicted.

Burgert's expansive sculptures, however, range between destruction and poetry. Already at the entrance to the museum, and later again outside the Richard Meier Building, we encounter a figure in a strange posture and tattered clothes (*stirnstand*, 2012). It appears to have sprung from one of the monumental paintings and one can also see in it the destructive power that can be felt in the paintings. Inside the building we then come across *puls spur stop* (2012), a male figure on a pedestal which seems to be crawling and whose **arms and hands** are expanded into the space in an unnatural way. With a frozen gaze, the figure struggles to reach for something and get hold of something. In a logical final step, the artist dissociates the reaching arms and turns them into an independent sculpture (*staub*, 2014). As a link between past and present, between suffering and hope, these sculptures establish **an element of the in-between.**

Quite different, however, we find the two larger-than-life **women's sculptures** (*Sie blieb & und blieb*, 2019). Beautiful, mysterious and graceful, the twin statues stand like keepers in pink pastel shades in front of the pictures in the room. Folds, ribbons and floral elements adorn their bodies wrapped in clothes. One of the two figures is in the process of disintegration and reveals the fragility of its base material – clay. Their eyes are closed, and

in their arms folded backwards they each hold a bird – either protecting or captivating it. In their proud posture and enormous size they symbolise poetic femininity. Similar to the monumental painting *Ihr wir* (2020) on the lobby wall, they are oversized by almost a third. A representation that is usually only granted to heroic male figures. Burgert, however, awards this grandeur to the women.

Jonas Burgert's sculptures are **cast in bronze and then painted with oil paint**. In this way, even as a sculptor, he remains true to his individual handwriting as a painter and creates a consistent, homogeneous style across various media.

The **manifold dimensions of human existence** seem to unite in the paintings and sculptures of Jonas Burgert. The artist focuses on the **individual**, and as tragic as some works may seem, it is palpable that the artist is not a misanthropist, but a philanthropist. Our world is colourful and this includes every nuance of darker shades. To be tolerant, sympathetic towards each other, to look closely and to be attentive in dealing with each other – all this matters a lot in today's world.

Catalogue

Along with the exhibition a catalogue (ed. Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck and studio Jonas Burgert) will be published by Kerber Verlag (65 Euro, designed by Claas Möller) in German and English, with articles by Oliver Kornhoff, Jutta Mattern and specially written literary articles by Ralph Dutli and Monika Rinck, which address Jonas Burgert's painting in a remarkably poetic fashion.

Number of works of art

16 paintings (the largest at 360 cm x 720 cm)

8 sculptures

General Information

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Opening hours:

Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays 11.00 – 18.00

Admission:

Adults (all exhibitions) 11 Euro, concessions 9 Euro

The complete programme: www.arpmuseum.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/arpmuseumbahnhofrolandseck

Twitter (#arpmuseum)

Instagram (#arpmuseum)

PRESS MATERIAL on the homepage of the Arp Museum at:

<http://arpmuseum.org/museum/ueber-uns/presse.html>

The complete press kit including press photos is also available digitally and in high resolution on our enclosed USB card.

Press photos

schlag Luft | Jonas Burgert | 2019
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Schlier | Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Ruhsuch | Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



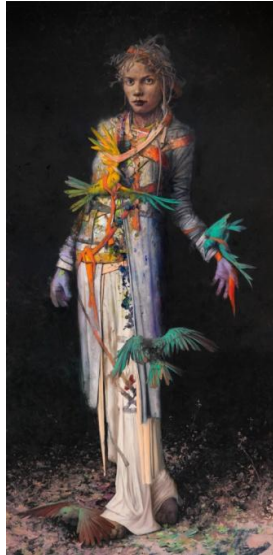
singt sich | Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



immer | Jonas Burgert | 2014
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Ihr Wir | Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Sinn frisst | Jonas Burgert | 2019
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



puls spur stop | Jonas Burgert | 2012
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Stirnstand | Jonas Burgert | 2019
© Jonas Burgert, Photo: Lepkowski Studios



Installation views

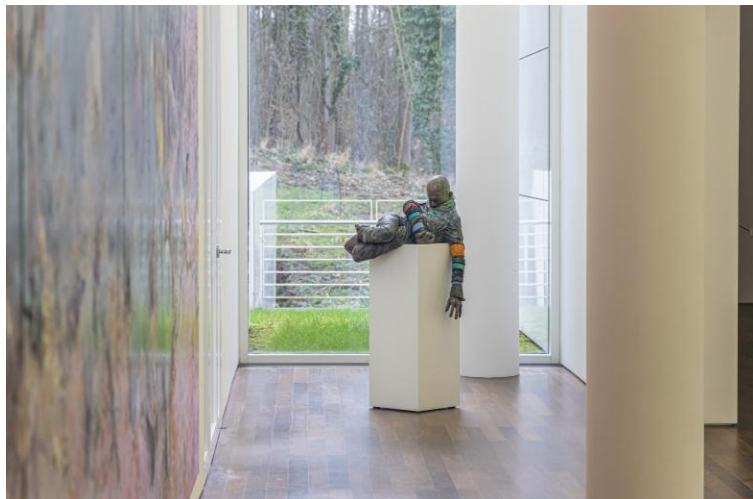
singt sich | Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert,
Photo: Helmut Reinelt



Sie blieb (hinten)
und blieb (vorne)
Jonas Burgert | 2020
© Jonas Burgert,
Photo: Helmut Reinelt



duldet | Jonas Burgert | 2019
© Jonas Burgert,
Photo: Helmut Reinelt



Exhibition overview 2020/2021

Theme year 2020: »Totally Surreal«

16 Feb to 10 Jan 2021 (extended)

**Salvador Dalí and Hans Arp.
The Birth of Memory**

New Building, upper floor and
Bahnhof / Station building

16 Feb to 13 Sept 2020 (extended)

Jonas Burgert.

Sinn frisst

New Building, ground floor

21 June 2020 to 7 March 2021 (ext.)

Kunstkammer Rau:

Dreams and Visions. 1500-2000

Pavilion

10 Oct 2020 to 24 March 2021

Antonius Höckelmann.

All in All

New Building, ground floor

Salvador Dalí and Hans Arp. The Birth of Memory

16 Feb to 10 Jan 2021 (extended)



Salvador Dalí, Lobster Telephone, 1938, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

© Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020

For the first time, a large-scale exhibition will show the hitherto unnoticed parallels in the work of the two avant-garde artists Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Hans Arp (1886-1966). On the basis of groundbreaking works from international collections, Dalí's verist surrealism and Arp's abstract surrealism are juxtaposed. Dalí's great interest in spatial illusion and multimedia becomes palpable in the exhibition through his films as well as augmented and virtual reality. Compositions by Beethoven, who fascinated Dalí throughout his life, makes Dalí's works come alive both in the exhibition and in a concert series.

Kunstammer Rau. Dreams and Visions

21 June 2020 to 7 March 2021 (extended)



Head of the Medusa, Franz Xaver Wölfle (1887 - 1972), n.d., Collection Rau for UNICEF © Photo: Mick Vincenz

The exhibition is part of the surreal worlds that occupy the entire Arp Museum in 2020. Since the art of the old masters has always been a source of inspiration for Salvador Dalí, the Kunstammer Rau takes up the visionary red thread in the Middle Ages and pursues the theme right up to the modern age. The great treasures of the Rau Collection for UNICEF are complemented by loans from major international museums and private collections.

Some 60 paintings, sculptures and manuscripts are proclaiming dreams, apparitions, revelations, end times and are depicting angels in conversation with saints, sibyls and prophets. Visions are part of many world religions. The Bible, the Talmud and the Koran testify to the divine revelations of the prophets. Some of them prophesied apocalyptic end times like that of John. In a nightmarish way others even evoked hell on earth. The exhibition illustrates these fantastic dream worlds with a wealth of examples ranging from the anonymous medieval Master of the Life of Mary, Hieronymus Bosch and Jusepe de Ribera, to the large-scale bloody demons of Peter Gilles and the expressive visions of Antonius Höckelmann in modern times.

Antonius Höckelmann. All in All

11 Oct 2020 to 24 May 2021 (new dates)



Antonius Höckelmann, Golfer on nude, bird and flowers, 1993, Privatsammlung © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019

Antonius Höckelmann (b. 1937 in Oelde – d. 2000 in Cologne) worked as a resident artist at the Künstlerbahnhof Rolandseck in the early 1970s. It is therefore a great pleasure to be able to present his expressive, colourful works at the Arp Museum. In his paintings and drawings, freely created and figurative forms are woven into an impenetrable whole. The amorphous, imaginative sculptures and reliefs spread into the space and impress with their intensity. In the dynamic play of lines and colours, representations of women, sexuality, animals such as horses, fantasy creatures and wild plants take shape. With this exhibition on Antonius Höckelmann the work of a sculptor and painter who had a decisive influence on the Rhenish art scene is paid tribute to. He was highly appreciated by prominent fellow artists such as Markus Lüpertz. We owe the Höckelmann works presented in the exhibition not only to a wide variety of lenders but also to the generous donation from the Mronz Collection Cologne. In the future it will enrich the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck with an extensive collection of works by this hitherto underestimated German artist. The exhibition is realised in cooperation with the Kunsthalle Bielefeld.