

Dr Freud and other music – what kind of an exhibition title is that? Doesn't sound at all like pictures. Sounds more like songs. Like a mixed tape, a homemade CD, a conceptual album, recorded by a musician, with thematically linked songs and many tedious ideas on psychoanalysis. What kind of a record would that be? A tough one, or a delicate one? An exhausting one, with many guitars and strings and atonal oboes, one that you couldn't listen to all the way through? One full of Greatest Hits, for singing along? Only the painter knows. Let's ask, let's bother him a bit!

If we can catch him! Baselitz is running through his studio in slippers, sometimes paint sticks to the soles and dots itself around the studio, like usually only cats can do when you oil their paws with motor oil. It is a beautiful, new, bright studio, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, directly on Ammersee; on the right and left inside, the canvases lean; outside, a dog passes by the panorama window in the snow, his breath creates fog. It is Bruno, the painter's dog, an Italian hound. He is probably cold, perhaps wants to come inside. Oh well, he won't die that easily.

'Mr Baselitz, what does Dr Freud, Sigmund that is, have to do with your new paintings?'

'Yes, no, come along!' Everything has to happen quickly now. A minute ago Baselitz sat there, relaxed, drank some coffee, spoke of Wolfgang Rihm's music, which he reckons is the only kind you can listen to with dignity nowadays, then he railed about the FAZ and Günter Grass, the nation's conscience ('I will never paint him'); quite, and then he fell back into the past, called himself not a modern, indeed deeply old-fashioned painter, as he often likes to do in order to be overly modest. He told me of his homeland Deutschbaselitz, of his father, of the narrow-mindedness of the GDR and also the one he encountered later in West Berlin, when he became world famous with his large themes, the penises, the little Hitler figure, the upside-down paintings – and became the Baselitz we know today: the one with the cropped hair, the yellow corduroy trousers, and the brash mouth. But now, quite suddenly, Baselitz gets impatient: Enough already with the old times. It's too beautiful here at the lake, Ammersee. 'Where are you from? Berlin? So sorry!' His wife, Elke, is waiting in the house vis-a-vis, some Luciano keeps calling. Venice tomorrow. So, quickly to the new pictures of Dr Freud and other music, answer the journalist's unavoidable stupid questions, and then on with the art.

'Look here, for example', says Baselitz and points to Victor Brauner besucht Dix, oil on canvas, 250 × 200 cm. 'Revolting, isn't it?'

'Yes?'

‘An adaptation of the woman-in-mirror-painting by Dix. A picture that makes you afraid, an ugly picture. A grotesque face. Therefore I painted it badly on purpose, unintelligently. Just look, the colours. Like a poster painter, on black.’

‘Why would someone paint on purpose unintelligently?’

‘Because intelligence at this point would have been stupid. Sometimes, intelligence isn’t at all wise. Sometimes it gets in the way, you understand?’

‘No.’ The painter touches his head, runs his hand across it. Everything is so exhausting! Questions, always questions about everything you do, for decades, ever since Große Nacht im Eimer and everything that followed. To be in the world and simultaneously outside it: the most difficult part of his job. He holds his head, rubs, presses, massages it, this robust, 71-year-old thing: fine, let’s explain it to the guy from Berlin.

‘When you paint such a picture, the paint mustn’t cover up the painting. You mustn’t, excuse me, shit all over it. The painting must leave gaps. It should look shot, like a holey retina! You can only paint crazy paintings if you delegate everything, by proceeding with determination, precision, and care. For goodness sake not participate, don’t try to be too clever! That is always the biggest mistake!’

Yes, what we see here are crazy paintings, crazy in the Baselitzian tradition: turned around, seemingly raw, sketch-like. They are pairings and dialogues of styles, types, influences of modernism – pop art, abstract/figurative expressionism, surrealism. Rauschenberg, the de Koonings, Brauner, Lichtenstein, Warhol. Sometimes one might think Hirst might also be there, but Baselitz dismisses that: No way, the grid of points I got from elsewhere, why don’t you find that out for yourself, you funny bird from Berlin. Frida Kahlo’s shoes dance discofox (or tango? waltz? It might be helpful to ask Mrs Baselitz, but she is in the house next door) in a square and in a swastika formation; the classic American school exercise book ‘Compositions’ seems like a view of a heap of skulls left behind by the Khmer Rouge on the killing fields; Elaine de Kooning dreams in a floating blue, amazingly

beautiful, she would be very pleased by that if she weren’t dead. This time, Baselitz quotes almost as much as a Tarantino film. Only Dr Freud is nowhere to be seen. Concept? Clever idea? Taking the piss? Or did he simply forget him? But who simply forgets Dr Freud?

Instead, again and again Dix. Dix, Dix, Dix. Dix you don't forget. Splotched photocopies of his pictures are on the studio floor. He has always been present in Baselitz's work, almost like a leitmotif, ever since Baselitz saw in the late fifties *Die sieben Todsünden* – but rarely did Dix get around so much as in this exhibition, rarely did he meet so many colleagues: *Dix besucht Goya*, *De Kooning besucht Dix*, *Die Witwe – Dix missing* (once only half turned); and *Familienbild* ancora quotes Dix's portrait *Meine Eltern*.

'Why always Dix, dear Sir?'

'It is above all his preference for ugliness which I so much approve of in his work. I, too, have engaged for decades, well, actually practically always, with ugliness; with the grotesque, the grimaces. Take the *Russenbilder*, take *Die große Nacht*, but also the sculptures – it is above all a great dissecting revulsion that is visually articulated here. In addition, we probably also share childhood experiences, the war experience, an outsider position etc.'

'What does de Kooning have to do with Dix?'

'There is of course the colourfulness, the application. The blue, however, is not from de Kooning, that is from Andy Warhol.'

'Oh yes?' 'For "General Electric" he made the logo from this blue and black.' Sudden scrapping and scratching at Herzog & de Meuron's picture window. 'Bruno is hungry. Ms Schell!'

Ms Schell is the housekeeper. Before, she brought in some very good coffee and yummy sparkling water. 'Do you also come up with the titles of your exhibitions, Sir?' 'Yes.' 'Do you start with the title, and then comes the picture?'

'No.' 'The other way round?' 'Usually.' 'Where between all these references are Dr Freud and psychoanalysis, Mr Baselitz?' 'Well, I'm not concerned with them here. I'm not at all interested in that! The Freudian topics are of course

in these paintings, immanently, in the childhood socialisation, socialisation as an artist, human socialisation. In the defect that we all carry within us.'

'You too?'

‘Of course I, too, have a screw loose, like any proper artist. Dix of course had a screw loose, and Lucian Freud, who is a grandchild of Sigmund, born in Berlin in 1922. And as a painter you are of course in the position that you have to ask yourself, how do I deal with that loose screw, how do I express it without going mad?’

‘And?’

‘Well, you can see that all around you! Those are the documents of coming to terms with the loose screw!’ He’s right of course. And while the Remix paintings of 2006/7/8, where Baselitz practically created cover versions of his great works, were a miracle in terms of colour and lightness, the new paintings are once again a little heavier: a lot of black, grey, brown. A further processing and refining of the classic Baselitz subjects, after he had achieved for himself with Remix a maximum of artistic freedom and nonchalance.

‘For a while, you aren’t free’, he said at that time about his path. ‘You are a slave, somebody who acts out of various compulsions. Then, suddenly, it is you. Now I’m me, I think. Now I’m ok with everything.’

In the language of pop criticism: while the Remix paintings were easy listening, Dr Freud und andere Musik is once again rock music and heavy metal. Elaines Welt on the other hand is a ballad, and the great black-and- white skull study of the ‘Compositions’ exercise book has something of a Johnny Cash song. Or Marilyn Manson, early period. He would also be a potential buyer.

‘Do you know Cash, Mr Baselitz?’

‘Heard it once, yes.’ That’s how he is: the serious music type, not entertainment.

‘Ok, understood, but where is the music in the title, Mr Baselitz?’

‘I don’t hear, see, feel it.’ Baselitz looks out on the lake, through the picture window where moments ago Bruno had been scratching.

‘A few days ago, Ammersee froze. Blocks of ice pushed against each other and into each other, in the shape of waves. Over night, the lake became very loud. Buzzing and humming everywhere. As if someone had thrown a thousand stones across the ice. It sounds funny, but: the lake was singing.

For two days, without interruption, while I was painting. A very unusual phenomenon. I had never heard anything like it.' 'Maybe that's the music I mean', says Baselitz.

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