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## ANDREA BÜTTNER: WHAT IS SO TERRIBLE ABOUT CRAFT?

Preview: Thursday 16 May, 18:00-20:00  
Exhibition: 17 May - 22 June 2024

'I am interested in the reactionary roots, politically speaking, of the retreat into craft that is happening everywhere and that signals a form of anti-modernity.'<sup>1</sup>

Hollybush Gardens is pleased to present *What Is So Terrible About Craft?*, an exhibition of new and recent works by Andrea Büttner which continue her research into recurring instances in modernity where craft and design appear as a form of solace, or retreat. The exhibition includes two videos, a selection of large-format woodcuts, a photograph and a group of hand-blown glass vases displayed on a wooden table, which together critique the supposed human warmth of anti-modern aesthetics and consider the reactionary legacy that craft carries in contemporary art.

Büttner's videos *Liberty and Morris: Simple Life and so on* (2018) and *Coventry Cathedral* (2023), filmed in the UK and presented as a diptych, look at two instances within British art and architectural history that relate to contemporary thinking regarding the relationship between craft and cultural politics. Both works explore the paradigm that craft is seen as something that might heal the wounds of modernity.

*Liberty and Morris: Simple Life and so on* is dedicated to William Morris, a leading figure of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, which formed as a response to the damaging effects of industrialisation and machine-led production. In the video, Pauline Paucker, an artist, art historian, socialist and long-time customer of the London department store Liberty - an early purveyor of Arts and Crafts design - discusses the socio-economic context of the Arts and Crafts movement and her fascination with it.

*Coventry Cathedral* centres on the city's modernist cathedral, a Brutalist structure designed by Sir Basil Spence and built between 1954-62 after the former medieval cathedral was destroyed during the Second World War by German air raids in 1940. Constructed adjacent to the ruins of the Gothic cathedral, the new Cathedral Church of St. Michael was built to serve as an offering of solace, and a global symbol of peace. Büttner considers the politics of the experience of beauty in post-war architecture: the video focuses on architectural details and artworks commissioned by Spence, including the stained-glass baptistery window created by John Piper and the large glass West Screen, hand engraved by John Hutton, which links the architecture of the old Cathedral with the new. The sounds of musicians rehearsing and the tuning of a piano audible in the background - which Büttner encountered while filming - allude to the idea that peace is an ongoing process that must similarly be practiced and rehearsed.

Büttner's interest in the relationship between craft and solace stems in part from her longstanding use of woodcut. The woodcuts in this exhibition feature motifs which recur throughout the artist's conceptual practice: potatoes, bread, a hazelnut tree and a woman at rest on a mattress - images and objects that are small and low.

The artist's glass vases, a series begun in 2021, respond to the organic shapes of flowers. Their forms recall Delftware and vases designed to hold flowers grown from bulbs, such as tulips; two are adorned with spherical nodules which denote both the undergrowth of the bulb and the blossom above. Another vessel is appropriated from a still life painting by Claude Monet in which a vase decorated with a floral pattern holds a bouquet of gladioli, lilies and daisies. Büttner's vessels are displayed on a handcrafted wooden table, an exact replica of those in the dining room at the Carmelite convent in Dachau, Germany, founded in 1964, a modernist building which is sited on land that abuts the Dachau concentration camp memorial.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Büttner in conversation with Ellen Mara De Wachter, *Art Monthly*. Issue 467, June 2023

**Andrea Büttner** (b. 1972, Stuttgart, Germany), lives and works Berlin, Germany.

Significant solo exhibitions include *No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion*, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (K21), Düsseldorf; *The Heart of Relations*, Kunstmuseum Basel (both 2023); *Shepherds and Kings*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein at the Johanniterkirche, Feldkirch, Austria (2022); *Andrea Büttner*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2021); *What is so terrible about craft?*, Kunstverein München, Germany (2019); *The Heart of Relations*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2019); *Shepherds and Kings*, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2018); *Hammer Projects: Andrea Büttner*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2017); *Beggars and iPhones*, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria (2015); *Andrea Büttner*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2015), *BP Spotlight: Andrea Büttner*, Tate Britain, London, UK (2014); and *Andrea Büttner*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2014). Selected group shows include *Fruits of Labor*, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Sint-Martens-Latem; *Aimless: Confronting Imago Mundi*, Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani de Palma; *Le Retour*, Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie / PyrénéesMéditerranée (MRAC), Sérignan; *Saint Francis of Assisi*, The National Gallery, London (all 2023); *The Acid Lab: Etchings from Albrecht Dürer to William Kentridge*, Kunstmuseum Basel; *Anidar en el gesto: unas estanterías de Alberto*, Fundación Cerezales Anonino y Cinia, Cerezales del Condado, León; *Reading a Wave*, Palomar, Pognana Lario; *YOYI! Care, Repair, Heal*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; *Fluxus Sex Ties / Hier spielt die Musik!*, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden; *Was von 100 tagen übrig blieb ...*, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; *Radical Landscapes*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (all 2022); *The Botanical Revolution*, Centraal Museum, Utrecht; *Donation Outset – KW Production series*, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany; *The Roaring Twenties*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain; *The Displacement Effect*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany (all 2021); *Parliament of Plants*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; *Smoke and Mirrors*, Kunsthaus Zürich; *Amish Quilts Meet Modern Art*, Staatliches Textil- und Industriemuseum Augsburg, Germany; and *The Botanical Mind*, Camden Art Centre, London (all 2020); *On Vulnerability and Doubt*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019); 33rd Bienal de São Paulo (2018); *Turner Prize*, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, UK (2017); *Broken White*, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2016); *British Art Show 8*, UK touring exhibition (2016); and dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany (2012).

Büttner's work is held the collections of art institutions internationally, including Tate, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; National Museum Cardiff, Wales; MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Lenbachhaus, Munich; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf; Reina Sofia, Madrid; Kunsthaus Zürich; Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Canada; Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (K21), Düsseldorf, Germany and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

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Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm; or by appointment.