

# BUBNA-LITIC : *A Passionate Artist*



Like any artist Patrick Bubna-Litic began his career as a ceaseless learner and untiring student. From the masters of Art Nouveau, he turned his attention to the pioneers of Abstract Expressionism. The emotion and the spontaneity of the paintings of works of Wassily Kandinsky, Pit Mondrian and Robert Delaunay fascinate him; likewise, their expressive, unrestrained and often irregular use of color. He is intensely concerned with the brilliant watercolors by Emil Nolde and is temporarily spell-bound in his indefatigable search by American Action Painting.

A variety of ethnic, cultural and religious influences of the multi-ethnic state of Austria-Hungary are part of his origins. His father was Czech, descending from a very old, aristocratic family with strong ties to the Habsburg monarchy. His mother comes from an Alpine valley, the „Stanzertal“, and she was born from a Slovenian mother. The maternal great-grandfather was an upper-class Jew from Vienna. Some of this heritage is found again, reshaped in color and form, in the work of the painter: Bohemian lust for life, Slovenian melancholy and Jewish Kabbalistic spirituality.

Despite all the local ties, Patrick Bubna-Litic has not got stuck in Styria. He has studied and worked in Australia in Canberra and Perth for eight years. He knows the world and yet he remained an Austrian in body and soul. His teachers have already discovered the drawing talent at boys' school and tried to encourage him. Wherever he was, at home in Styria, in Australia, or in Russia, he worked at his artistic style and completed several studies, while at the same time he followed his autodidactic way. Among his most important role models were the Vienna Art Nouveau painters, especially Gustav Klimt, and the Expressionists Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. He carefully studied their great works, not to copy them, but to get to the secrets of their art of painting. He admires their color, their luminosity, their sensuality and realizes: „a picture must have bite“, it must be “more than it appears“, it must disclose to the viewer a secret that is not obvious for him at first glance, it must make him curious enough to force him to get involved in the picture. It's the second glance that counts.





Finally, in his native Austria, Patrick Bubna-Litic finds Hermann Nitsch as the brilliant teacher who can bring his talents to their fullest development and helps him to find his own identity, his distinctive signature. Since then, at least an art connoisseur recognizes the work of Bubna-Litic at first glance.

Hermann Nitsch was the leading controversial figure of the Vienna Actionism at its high time in the seventies and eighties, but today he is recognized as an international artist. The now 75-year-old is still a rousing, enthusiastic personality who can bring other artists' inherent potential to development and perfection. Hermann Nitsch has called him „his best student.“

The artist has gone through Hermann Nitsch's school, he has learned from him, but unlike other Nitsch students he was not content to just copy the master, but has used the model as an incentive to reinvent himself. For Nitsch in his most important creative period painting was only a vehicle to express ecstatic feelings, sensations and visions.

For Bubna-Litic on the other hand, abstract painting itself becomes the focus and therefore is value in itself; for him a self-created, original work of art is a personal reflection of truth, beauty and goodness. While for action artist Nitsch, beauty itself was never a desirable goal - at best it was a collateral quality -, Bubna-Litic confesses his artistic pursuit of beauty and aesthetic perfection. He is looking not only for passing fashions, but above all for works that last and express lasting values.

The painting process resembles the techniques of a performance artist. His canvas usually lies on a table or on the floor. The flow of colors is often left to chance, so that the painter can experience the thrill of surprise. He then observes the drying process very closely and, if necessary, he intervenes with freshly applied color tints. It does happen that the artist starts off with a painting, then leaves it half - finished for half a year or so and then returns to it with new ideas and colors to give it, if necessary, a new expression.



In winter, Patrick Bubna-Litic paints under artificial light in his huge basement. In summer, he likes to go outside and be inspired by the light and shadow around his house. There is one thing that the painter cannot do without: it's music. He is striving to translate musical tones into colors and shapes. He paints with the inspiration of music. His paintings attempt to resonate and transmit the musical momentum of their creator into visible entities. When Patrick Bubna-Litic paints, he has music in his ears. Rock & Roll is here the driver. In his „Roaring Sixties“ youth, he never stopped listening to it, dancing and singing. He transforms the catchy tunes of the Beatles into eye-catchers, the fantastically sloppy sound of the Rolling Stones, the elementary power of Jimmy Hendrix as well as the



melancholy laments of Bob Dylan. Carried away by the rhythms, melodies and voices, he takes his paint brush in his hand and lets his spatula slide over the painting surface like a tango dancer. This creates landscapes of the soul. The musical painter turns his inside out. Many of his paintings have a very positive attitude. They convey feelings of happiness, bright spots, sensations of warmth and light. They speak to those who embark on the intense and meditative contemplation of abstract images, and have the talent to get emotionally touched. Patrick Bubna-Litic is a whole-hearted artist, painting with total dedication guided by his inner moods and vibrations.

Even though nature is not the model for Patrick Bubna-Litic, nature, the scenery of the mountains of his Styrian homeland is always at the back of his mind. Depending on the season, the different lights flow into his pictures. He has created an entire calendar, whose colors are based on the character of light, the brightness and the sun of each month. January, for example, presents itself in luminous white, incorporated in mild gray and blue. It is the light of the snow that lends its own splendor to the winter time.

The abstract paintings by Patrick Bubna-Litic are full of luminosity; they express the joy of life, the passion and peace of mind, and also the gentle melancholy. The artist uses black and white colors moderately. He prefers rich, symbolic, and mostly unmixed colors; he reaches his imagery very colorfully but not chaotically in the sense of Hermann Nitsch. He is recognizably milder in the usage of tones than his teacher, that is, his work is more moderate, less bombastic, and much less berserker-like, not just relying on power alone. Patrick Bubna-Litic glazes his pictures carefully and devotedly. His colors return in some way back to the „sky-light and gold undertones“ of the Baroque masters from the Admont Abbey. His blue represents the sky and the sea, his mild yellow and gold tones stand for spirituality and the light of the sun, his favorite color red stands for the fire of passion and the love that burns in every human being, owning a heart. Blue, yellow and red denote the basic co-



lors of the painter - like the Vienna Art Nouveau master or the baroque ceiling painter from Admont. burns in every human being, owning a heart. Blue, yellow and red denote the basic colors of the painter - like the Vienna Art Nouveau master or the baroque ceiling painter from Admont.

Only occasionally does the painter echo the real world, for instance in his colorful painting „The Clown“; in „Joshua Tree“, he apparently recalls the strong, bizarre agave plant of California’s deserts in North America, or his picturesque homage in „Jesus Christ Superstar“, was premiered in New York 1971 rock musical and made its young composer Andrew Lloyd Webber a global star with a stroke. Patrick Bubna-Litic’s expressive and evocative musical paintings act as if they are electrified by the rousing, sometimes they shrill, and sometimes they make quiet sounds like „Jesus Christ Superstar“. His work shows an unconventional and willful painter from the quiet village of Admont as an artist who is like nobody else; an artist capable of resound bringing the heartbeat of our epoch in symbolic pictorial compositions.

Dr. Peter Schütt



*mit Georg „Schurl“ Brandner*