

**Remarks for the opening reception of 'Dietmar Brixy – Garden of Eden in Berlin'
(10.08.2012–15.09.2012), Dr. Reinhard Spieler**

Ladies and gentlemen:

It may be some time before we can book flights to paradise from the new [delayed] Berlin-Brandenburg Airport. Those of us who don't want to wait so long, however, at least have the work of Dietmar Brixy to get them there.

We stand amidst a series of images recently developed by the artist, bearing the title 'Eden'. Eden, the Garden of Eden, paradise – all seem more accessible through Brixy's work. He leads us directly into the garden of paradise. We encounter canvases that at first glance present an overwhelming vision of nature. A sumptuous blaze of colour, Brixy's works bear little relation to the 'Paradiesgärtlein' or 'Little Garden of Paradise' in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt. The garden in that Rhenish panel is sweet, small, manageable, and completely peaceful.

Rather, here is a vision of nature that approaches us in the form of a monstrous, primordial soup. A formidable, elemental force that has yet to assume any actual shape or organisation, depicted before nature has taken on form. It is as though we are witnessing Creation in its very early phases, in which biomass is still present as pure energy, seared by flashes of lightning. Whether these organic forms are rivers, branches, serpents, or powerful lightning bolts remains an open question, and indeed, they could be several of these at once, as if the energy hasn't settled on its form. What we see in these works is simply organic energy in visual form. I hope however that the artist can forgive me for saying that these paintings were naturally not created by the hand of God, but by just one painter. And by saying 'just one', I don't mean that in a diminutive sense, but rather as a compliment.

So what exactly are we looking at here? This isn't God's work, but rather an artist's. We see an artist in the act of creation. And the pictures, of course, are of a painter's paradise. What we see here is a process of formation – the process of shaping the painting itself. The actual motif Brixy has selected for his images is the revelation of this generative process. His work demonstrates varied techniques, and reveals the creation of these images in different phases. We can imagine Brixy applying paint with the brush, smearing it, building it up with the palette knife, spreading it with his hands in different stages of relief. Thus, it is not the finished image that is presented here, but rather the process of formation – the process of becoming.

Generally speaking, Brixy presents us with an overwhelming celebration of nature. One might think of Claude Monet's final paintings in this regard. We are all familiar with Monet's celebrated 'Water Lilies'. The last images Monet painted are a grandiose celebration of nature that becomes perfectly abstract. Just like Monet, Brixy paints pure biomass and organic energy.

There is a second series of images that has been arranged rather differently. I am referring to the 'Bamboo Pictures', in which bamboo stalks and branches proliferate. These images are much sparser, often against whitish backgrounds like the one we see here, but with a greater intensity. They don't have the same baroque sense of exuberant colour; they are more focused. In nature bamboo is a structural, nearly architectural element, growing either in straight or slightly curved lines. Brixy incorporates this property into his compositions. They emerge as architectural supports, introducing order into chaos. Structure, clarity, concentration. Nearly the opposite of what we've seen already, although this too is nature.

There are some works that are not contained within a rectangular form, but rather in tondi, or round forms. The artist calls these 'bubbles'. Younger viewers may be familiar with bubble tea, and the colour scheme is indeed similar in places. In these tondi, these 'bubbles', we find particular colours that are highly reminiscent of Asia. Bamboo bears similar associations; it is a plant that is found all over Asia. This colour scheme – including 'cherry-red' and certain violet tones – comprises colours that we associate with the Asian continent. The bamboo structures are presented in almost calligraphic constellations, evoking a sense of concentration, peace, and internalisation – standing in direct contrast to baroque nature.

This second series also has a close connection with the garden of paradise. When we think of Asia and gardens, our first image is probably that of a Zen garden. These gardens elicit the same sense of concentration. They are places where nature is made spiritual, where one departs completely from the terrestrial to enter a spiritual realm. And I believe that this constitutes something essential in Brixy's visual world: the connection between the baroque, natural, elemental powers – a primordial energy – on the one hand, and the spiritual on the other, as evoked by Zen gardens.

There are other worlds, too, that have inspired this work. Europe – I briefly mentioned Monet – and its encounter with Asia. They are two completely different worlds, just like the worlds of nature and spirituality. This is the paradise Brixy offers us, the 'Garden of Eden'.

And if the airport BER does someday advertise flights to paradise, I can assure you that Brixy's Garden of Eden will offer a more pleasant passage – especially if it's hanging in your living room. Thank you kindly!

Dr. Reinhard Spieler,
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