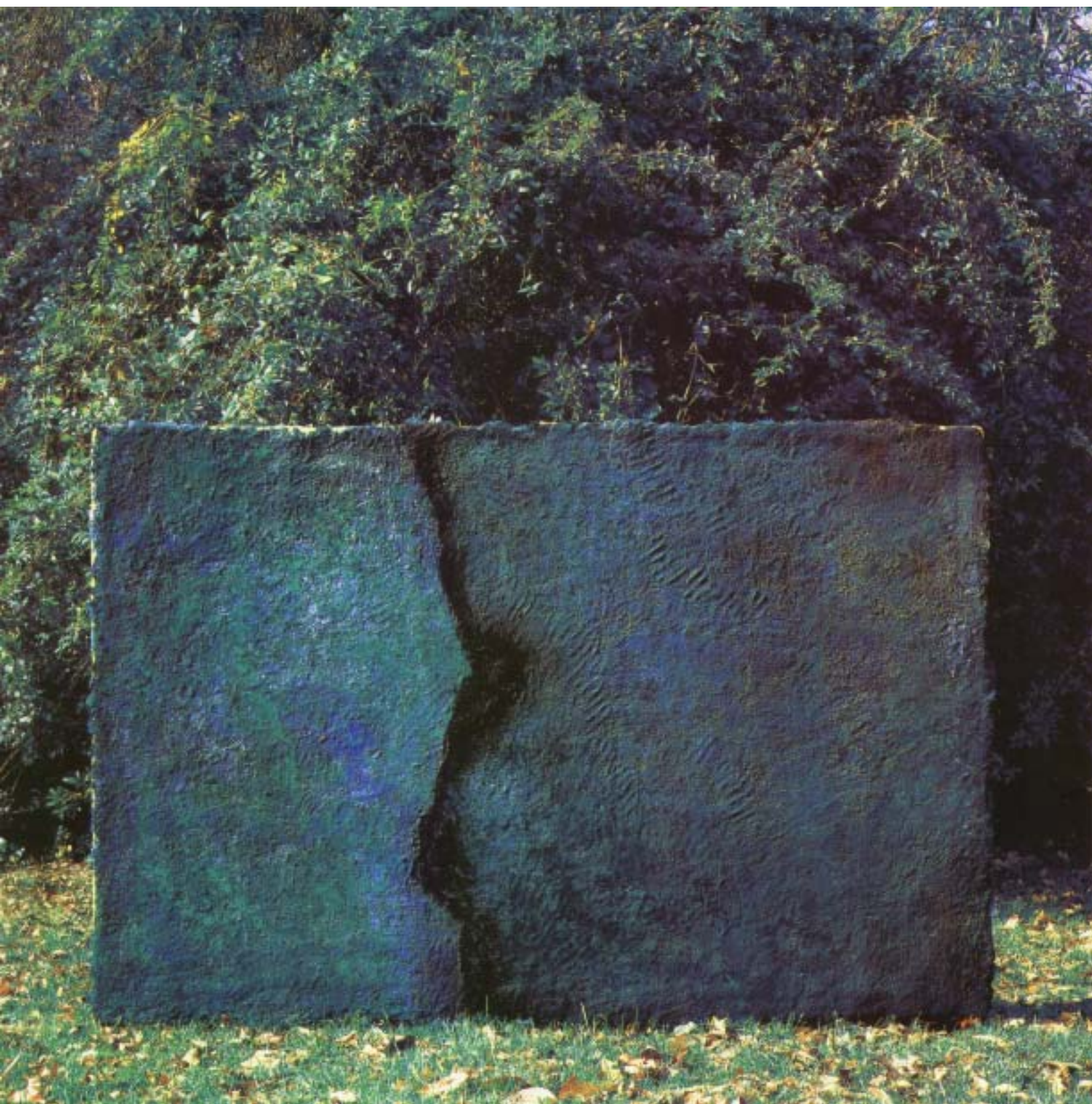




St. John's Episcopal Church

St. John's

St. John's



Grenze und offenes Feld

Gottfried Böhm

Jenseits der künstlerischen Tendenzen der sechziger und siebziger Jahre hat Batuz den Weg zu seiner Konzeption des Bildes gefunden. Der Künstler lebte unter Umständen und an Orten, die es nicht eben nahelegten, an die Malerei der Nachkriegszeit anzuknüpfen, sei es der abstrakte Expressionismus Amerikas oder das europäische Informel bzw. deren direkte Folgen. Wenn wir Batuz heute dennoch im Dialog mit der Kunst der alten und der neuen Welt sehen, dann ist seine Position die eines Fremden und eines Autodidakten, der auf seine Weise neu entdeckt und entwickelt hat, was Bilder sind. Dieses voraussetzungslose, dieses elementare Arbeiten macht ihn jenen Künstlern der Nachkriegszeit geistig verwandt, mit denen er sonst nichts zu tun hat, die ihm weder als Vorbild noch als Orientierung dienen, z.B. Barnett Newman, Clifford Still, Franz Kline und andere. Wichtiger als Vergleiche, Wertungen oder gar kunstgeschichtliche Etiketten erscheint es fürs Erste, einige der Erfahrungen und Umstände kennenzulernen, die den lebenspraktischen Ort dieser Kunst ausmachen. Denn die Spur seiner Erfahrung zeichnet sich auf unübersichtbare Weise in die Bilder des Künstlers ein.

Es bedarf dazu keiner langen biographischen Nachforschung. Allein der Weg, den der Ungar Batuz zurücklegte lehrt auch seine Bilder besser zu sehen. Nicht, weil er eine unfreiwillige Bildungsreise unternahm, die ihn mit Land und Leuten vertraut machte. Es war eine existenzielle Form der Bewegung. Batuz überquerte zuerst jene historische Barriere, die seiner Generation (er wurde 1933 geboren) durch die Geschichte gesetzt wurde. Sie trennte am Ende des Krieges die kommunistische Mitte Europas, zu der die Kronländer der alten Monarchie: Ungarn und Böhmen aber auch Polen zählten, vom verbleibenden Rest der österreichischen Republik. Batuz überquerte 1945 ein erstes Mal eine Grenze, die sich weiterhin als besonders abschnürend und schwer überwindbar erweisen sollte. Kaum zur Ruhe gekommen entschloß er sich 1949 die ärmliche Situation der europäischen Nachkriegszeit zu verlassen und nach Argentinien auszuwandern. Dieser zweite Aufbruch trennte ihn von jenem kulturellen Rückhalt und den Stilmustern, die die europäische Moderne bis dahin ausgebildet hatte. Batuz bemerkte dies selbst wohl erst nach und nach, als er sich im fernen Süden Argentiniens als Kopist älterer Bilder (z.B. der Impressionisten) bzw. als ein expressiver Interpret von Natureindrücken betätigte. Er ahnte, daß er damals seine eigene künstlerische Spur noch nicht gefunden hatte. Die dritte Grenze, die er über-

schrift (1973) war die zwischen Argentinien und den Vereinigten Staaten. Wieder war es ein völliger Neubeginn, das Durchschreiten eines Nullpunktes, eine Krise, die ihn in tiefste Verzweiflung und Not gerissen hat. Es gehört zu den besonderen Talenten von Batuz, dem Wanderer zwischen den Welten und Kulturen, dem Grenzüberschreiter, diese Situationen exemplarisch zu erleben. Er definiert sich darum als ein Pionier im wörtlichen Sinne, einer der sich als fähig erweist, sich im unwegsamen Gelände zu orientieren und zu verteidigen, der begierig ist, Grenzen auszukundschaften und zu überschreiten, den das Unbekannte, vielleicht auch die Gefahr, locken.

Eine vierte Grenze scheint Batuz nunmehr zu überqueren, da er sich daran macht, einiges von seinem Gepäck an Erfahrungen und Werken nach Europa zurückzubringen, es hier niederzulegen. Vermutlich ist auch dieses keine Heimkehr, nicht das Ende eines Weges, sondern nur Station. Denn das bewegende Motiv des Nomaden steckt zu tief in ihm, als daß er nicht in regelmäßigen Abständen an seine alten Plätze in drei Kontinenten zurückkehrte. Ein Zugvogel, dem der Instinkt die richtigen Weltgegenden und Jahreszeiten zudiktirt.

Eine Lebensskizze wie diese enthält schon die Metaphern um derentwillen sie hier angelegt wurde. Wir sehen, welche elementare Größe für ihn die Erfahrung der Grenze ist, wir sehen die Lust des Pioniers, die Welt als unbekanntes Gelände zu begreifen, das entlang der Linie des eigenen Weges erkundet, durchschritten, erobert werden will. Dafür bedarf es vor allem einer Fähigkeit, der wir auch in den Setzungen seiner Bilder wieder begegnen, eines starken Willens nämlich, der durch ungeklärte Situationen hindurchträgt. Die willentliche Selbstbehauptung gehört zur stärksten Qualität seiner Malerei: Batuz, so darf man sagen, war in dem Augenblick zum Künstler geworden, als er durchschaute, daß die Struktur seiner Biographie zur Struktur des Bildes werden konnte. Thema und Stoff seiner Erfahrung transformierten sich dann zwanglos in Malerei.

Jeder Betrachter sieht sehr schnell, daß die Bilder in allen koloristischen und formalen Variationen ein gemeinsames Merkmal besitzen: eine (auch mehrere) Grenzlinien, die zwei (oder drei) Felder abgrenzen. Batuz gehört zu jenen Künstlern, die ein einziges Bild erfunden haben, dessen künstlerische Idee sich als unendlich variantenreich erweist. Wir tun gut daran, die Linie, die seine Bilder definiert, nicht so sehr als Kontur einer Fläche oder Form zu sehen, sondern als eine primäre Setzung aus der sich danach Formqualitäten unmittelbar ergeben. Gar nicht wichtig genug kann man nehmen, daß die Grenzlinie stets

eine Vertikale ist bzw. mindestens an der Vertikale orientiert. Wir wissen aus anderen Werken der Moderne, daß die elementare Setzung der Vertikale den aufrecht stehenden Menschen impliziert, genauer: den handlungsfähigen Körper eines stehenden Menschen. Es ist alles andere als ein Zufall, daß Batuz diesen bewegungsbereiten homo, den Wanderer, der er selbst ist, in der Grenzlinie indirekt, d.h. seiner Struktur nach, mitveranschaulicht. Am deutlichsten wird diese Prägung, wenn Batuz ein topographisches Sehen auf Natur, den Blick auf Natur aus der Vogelperspektive, in seine Bilder mit aufnimmt. Einige Reiseziele

der Sammlung in Schloß Schaumburg belegen dieses Sehen: die Grenzlinie spielt auf

Bezirke, das Anlegen eines Weges in der Wildnis, das Ziehen einer Ackerfurche – das sind einfache Handlungen, in denen die Natur, die naturwüchsige Wirklichkeit erste Zeichen eines kulturellen Gesichtes erhält. Viele der frühen Götter haben mit Grenzssetzungen und Grenzziehungen zu tun. Die griechischen Götter bewohnen den *temenos*, d.h. den ausgrenzten Bezirk; der römische Gott Terminus ist erklärtermaßen ein janusköpfiger Grenzgott – um nur zwei Beispiele herauszugreifen. Wir spielen darauf an, weil Batuz in seiner Lebenserfahrung diese ursprüngliche Bedeutung der Kultur setzenden Grenze offenbar nacherlebt hat. Seine Bilder wiederholen dieses Geschehen. Die kulturgeschichtlichen Anspielungen machen den möglichen historischen Hintergrund der bildnerischen Aktion deutlich und geben zugleich einen Hinweis auf ihre latente Semantik. In aller Vieldeutigkeit ist sie doch mehr als eine rein formelle Maßnahme.

Michel Butor hat die Rolle der Grenze im Werk von Batuz analysiert und erläutert. Darauf können wir hier nur verweisen, ohne diese Überlegungen aufzunehmen. Unser Blick richtet sich jetzt ausschließlich auf die Malerei, wie sie sich in der Sammlung des Schlosses Schaumburg präsentiert. Daran lassen sich zwei verschiedene Aspekte der Bildkonzeption beobachten. Auch sie hängen mit einem wechselnden Verständnis der Grenze zusammen, ihrer Funktion und Wirkweise. Die Differenz läßt sich vielleicht so zusammenfassen, daß die Grenze einmal die Berührungszone zweier Flächen bezeichnet. Sie zum anderen auf einer Fläche zur Geltung kommt, selbst zur Figur wird, von der Fläche getragen ist, sich aber nicht als Resultante einer Begegnung zweier Teilformen verstehen läßt. In diesem Falle wird die Grenze zu einer linearen Figuration, die sich wie ein aufgeworfener Wall in der planen Ebene des Bildes abzeichnet. Überhaupt ist die rauhe, z.T. collagierte Textur der Bilder bedeutsam. Ihre materielle Struktur tritt z.T. in Konkurrenz zur Farbe, wirkt wie die Oberfläche eines Gegenstandes, büßt die neutrale Gleichmäßigkeit des planen Bildgrundes ein. Sie neigt dazu, sich als Körper zu präsentieren. Entsprechend ist die Linie auch ein materiell formiertes Gebilde, ein erhabener Grat, der zusammen mit der Textur der Fläche und der Überdramatisierung des Spotlights der Malerei ein reliefartiges Erscheinungsbild gibt.

Vor allem wenn die Grenze als Bildfigur thematisiert wird kommt der Betrachter dahin, sie als energietragende, kraftleitende Bahn wahrzunehmen. Damit hängt jene Willentlichkeit zusammen, von der wir bereits gesprochen haben. Sie zeigt sich darin, daß die bildbestim-



mende Linie eine betonte Setzung ist, die eine ansonsten univoce Fläche erschließt und erobert. Zum anderen hängt das Voluntative mit der Auffassung der Linie als kraftgeladener Bahn zusammen. Entlang ihres Weges tasten sich die optischen Kräfte gerichtet voran. Batuz dimensioniert die Formate seiner Gemälde meist so, daß sie in der Horizontale die Spannweite ausgebreiteter Arme übertreffen, im Falle von Hochformaten z.T. erheblich über Körpergröße aufstreben. Die anschauliche Weite, z.T. Unabsehbarkeit des Bildfeldes gibt der Energie der Linie eine besondere Auszeichnung, ein mitunter pathetisches Feld der Wirksamkeit. Je weiter, offener die Fläche, um so mehr ist die Kraft und Einsamkeit des linearen Geschehens betont. Sie erscheint ausgesetzt, zugleich wird aber auch ihre beherrschende Macht unterstrichen. Batuz, der Pionier des Unbekannten, zeigt darin sehr deutlich seine biographische Handschrift. Zu überprüfen bliebe, welche Beziehung diese big-canvas-Bilder zur Wand bzw. zur Architektur einnehmen. Die jetzige Präsentation meidet die Einbindung in den architektonischen Verbund eher, als daß sie ihn sucht. Die Bilder werden dadurch in ihrem Dingaspekt gestärkt, die Materialität ihrer Oberfläche und der Grat der Grenze erinnern an aufstrebende Stelen oder, wie gesagt, an Reliefs.

Der zweite Aspekt dieser Malerei hat mit der Grenze als Korrespondenzzone zweier Teilflächen zu tun. Ihre Funktion ist dabei weniger, auf sich selbst zu verweisen, ihre gleichsam figurale Qualität zu betonen, sondern zwei Bildzonen zu trennen und zu beziehen. Wichtig ist jetzt, die Linie als gemeinsame Grenze beider Flächenteile zu sehen. Sie ist das Ende der ersten und der Beginn der zweiten Zone und umgekehrt. Sie ist entsprechend auch den optischen Kräften beider Felder ausgesetzt. Dies um so mehr, als sie sich windet, schlängelt, ihren Weg sucht, von der geometrisch eindeutigen Vertikale abweicht. Entsprechend ist sie der Bereich, wo die beiden Felder gegeneinander ankämpfen, vordringen, zurückgedrängt werden. Als elastische Zone des Ausgleichs macht sie die Kräfte der Farbfelder sichtbar, läßt sie zu einer Form erstarren. Auch was wir als Form erkennen ist Resultante jener Aktion einer linearen Setzung, umso mehr als der Kontur des einen Feldes zugleich auch Kontur des anderen ist. So wie sich ein Ring oder ein Gefäß an einer Bruchkante nahtlos verbinden, so ist die Form auch hier eine verbindende Naht.

In einer malerischen Konzeption wie dieser hat die Farbe unterstützende aber keine tragende Funktion. Batuz betont dies, wenn er durch Beleuchtungsmaßnahmen die Textur



No. 60; January 1980, 45x53 in. Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

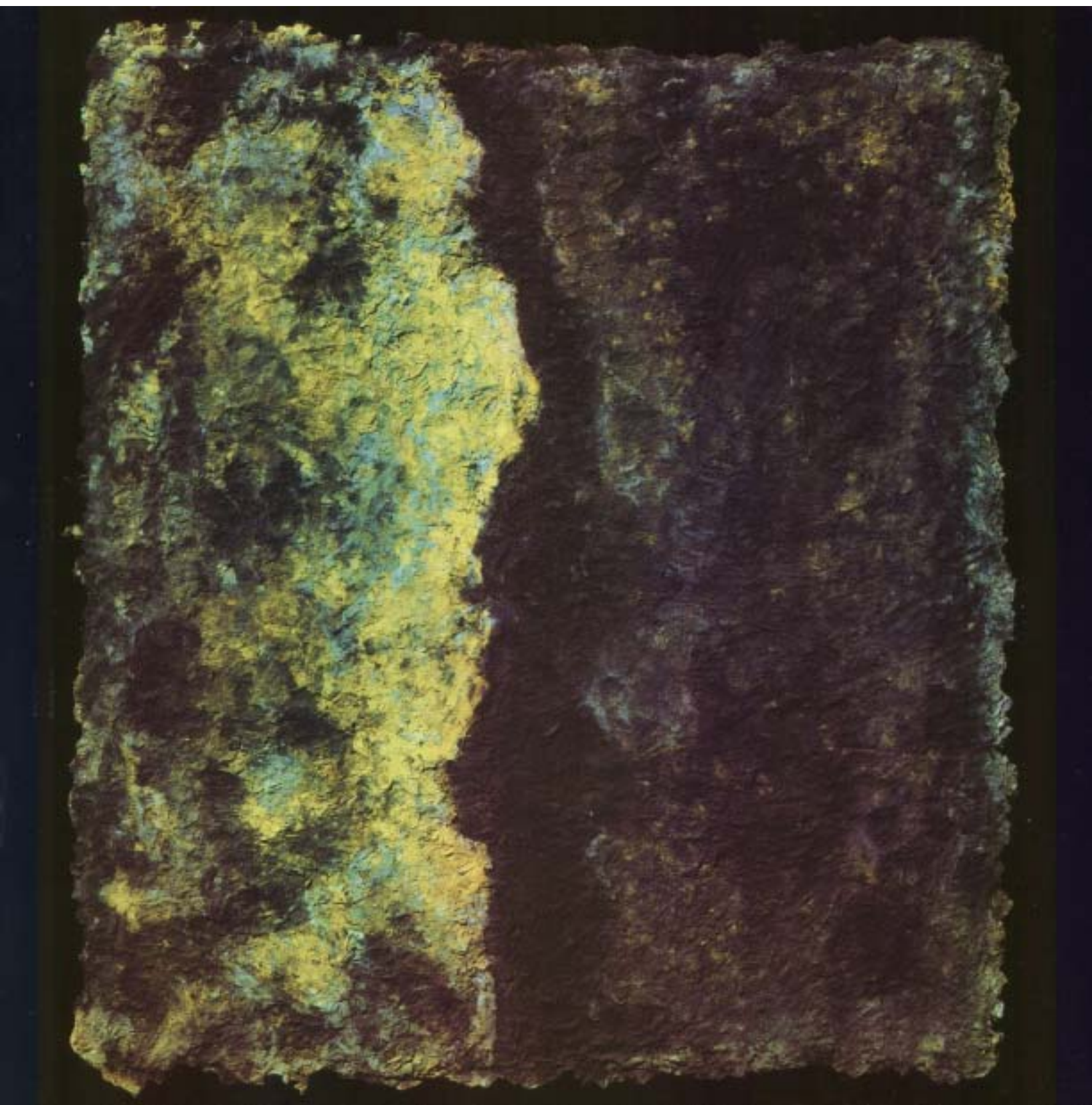
der Oberflächen und den Schattenwurf des erhabenen Grates unterstreicht. Die Lichtkegel drängen den farbigen Eigenwert der Flächen zurück, lassen sie als Träger von Licht erscheinen. Die Dramatik des bildlichen Geschehens stützt sich insgesamt auf die krafttragende Linie, danach auf ihre Formwerte und schließlich auf das alte Mittel des Helldunkels, das Batuz aber nicht als innerbildlich und fiktiv begreift, sondern als Folge realen Lichtes, der realen Materialität der Bildfläche und ihrer Struktur.

Die schon angesprochenen Beispiele, in denen die Bildfläche unter dem Blick einer Vogelperspektive erschien, als ein zerklüftetes Land, in dem sich Höhenzüge, Täler, Gebirgsformationen und Hügel abzeichnen, geben der Grenzlinie eine inhaltlichere Semantik. Nicht, daß wir irgendwelche Hinweise hätten, die Identifikation mit der landschaftlichen Topographie wörtlich zu nehmen. In jedem Falle haben wir es aber mit einem gegliederten Gelände zu tun, dessen formale Eigenwerte, ansetzende Kurven, aufgeworfene Grate udgl. aber niemals so stark sind, die Kraft der Linie in Frage zu stellen. Wie eine chinesische Mauer zieht sie unangefochten ihre Bahn.

Daran bestätigt sich, was man die Grundsituation des Künstlers Batuz und die seiner Konzeption nennen könnte. Wirklichkeit wird uns in diesen Bildern als ein Terrain des Willens veranschaulicht. Was wir beobachten können ist das Drama einer Selbstbehauptung, eines Aktes der Setzung, der die weiten Flächen erschließt, ihnen Zugänge und Gliederungen verschafft ohne sie anzueignen. Soweit sich die Entwicklung von Batuz bis jetzt verfolgen läßt, ist dieses Drama voller Spannung und auch voller Optimismus. Daß die Lineare Aktion scheitern könnte, sich verlaufen, untergehen, daß der anonyme und weite Raum über die grenzsetzende menschliche Hand triumphieren könnte, diese tragische Wendung zeichnet sich nicht ab.

Gottfried Bollmann

1) Vergl. vom Verf. Die Dialektik der ästhetischen Grenze, Neue Hefte für Philosophie Nr. 5, 1973.



Border and Open Field

Gottfried Böhm

Batuz developed his own conception of the picture in isolation from the artistic trends of the 1960s and 1970s. He lived under conditions and in places that did not exactly favour establishing links to post-War painting, be it American abstract expressionism or European *art informel* and the art that followed directly from it. Thus, if Batuz is nevertheless to be seen as an artist in dialogue with the art of the old and the new worlds today, then we must realize that his vantage point is that of a stranger and an autodidact who, in his own way, has rediscovered and developed anew what pictures are. Batuz's work as an artist, which is both elementary and absolute in nature, makes him a kindred spirit of those colleagues of the post-War period such as Barnett Newman, Clifford Still, Franz Kline and others with whom he otherwise has nothing in common and who served neither as models nor as sources of orientation for his work. It would thus seem appropriate to begin by describing some of the experiences and circumstances in Batuz's life that gave rise to his art, rather than embarking on comparisons and evaluations, let alone on assigning artistic labels. For there are traces of Batuz's experiences etched into his pictures in such a way that they cannot be overseen.

There is no need to conduct extensive biographical research in this context. Only the path which Batuz, by birth Hungarian, has travelled can teach us how to view his pictures from a

better angle. It was not as if he involuntarily set out on a study trip to acquaint himself with a country and its people. His journey has been of a more existential nature. Batuz first of all had to traverse the barrier that history had laid in the path of his generation (he was born in 1933). At the end of the Second World War this barrier separated the now Communist middle of Europe, which included the crown jewels of the old monarchy, i.e. Hungary, Bohemia and also Poland, from what remained as the Republic of Austria. Batuz crossed a border for the first time in 1945, a border that was henceforth to prove both to have a particularly tight stranglehold on the countries within it and to be difficult to cross. He had hardly settled when, in 1949, he decided to leave an impoverished post-War Europe and emigrate to Argentina. This, the second time he had set out on his journey, took him away from the cultural support and the styles which had taken shape in European modernism up to that point. Most likely, Batuz himself only gradually became aware of this, while working in the far south of Argentina as a copier of older paintings (e.g. the Impressionists) and as an expressive interpreter of nature. He sensed that he had not yet found the course his own art was to pursue. In 1973 he crossed a third border, moving from Argentina to the United States. Once again he had to start from scratch, had to traverse an abyss, a crisis that plunged him into the depths of utter despair and deprivation. It is one of Batuz's special talents that he is able to live out these situations in an exemplary manner: Batuz, the wanderer between the worlds and the cultures, the crosser of borders. This is why he defines himself as a pioneer in the literal sense of the word: someone who proves himself capable of finding his bearings and defending himself in impassable terrain, someone eager to hunt out the borders and cross them, someone lured by the unknown, even perhaps by danger.

Batuz now appears to be crossing a fourth border, as he has begun bringing back to Europe some of the "baggage" of experiences and works that he has accumulated over the years in order to house them permanently here. Presumably this, too, is not a homecoming, not a final destination but only a station along the way. For the transient motif of the nomad is so deeply engrained in him that he will inevitably keep returning at regular intervals to his old haunts on three different continents. A migra-

tory bird, whose instinct tells him when the season is right to travel to a certain part of the world.

A biographical sketch such as this one contains the very metaphors for which it was intended to serve as a backdrop. It reveals the fundamental significance for Batuz of the experience of confronting a border and it uncovers the pioneering spirit who sees the world as unknown territory waiting to be explored, traversed, conquered along the path he has taken through it. This requires above all an ability which we will come across in the axiomatic positioning in his paintings – namely, that of a strong will which presses ahead through unresolved situations. Willful self-assertion is one of the strongest qualities of his painting: Batuz, one can say, became an artist at that moment when he realized that the structure of his biography could become the structure of the picture. The themes and material of his experiences then effortlessly transformed themselves into painting.

Anyone who views his paintings will soon see that the pictures, despite all their colorist and formal variations, have one thing in common: one (or sometimes more) dividing or border lines which delineate two (or three) fields. Batuz is one of those artists who has invented a single picture, the underlying artistic idea of which gives rise to a wealth of infinite variations. It is important to see the line defining his pictures not so much as the contour of a surface or a form, but rather as the primary act of positioning from which different qualities of form are then directly derived. One cannot overemphasize the significance of the fact that the border line is always vertical, or at least follows a vertical line. We know from other modernist works that this elementary positioning of the vertical line implies the homo erectus, and more precisely, the body of homo erectus capable of action. It is hardly coincidental that Batuz also highlights this "homo mobile", this, the wanderer that he himself is, in the implicit form of the dividing line, i.e. in terms of its structure. This mark of Batuz's art becomes most manifest when he builds a topographical view of nature, a bird's eye view of it, into his pictures. A few examples from the Schloß Schaumburg collection attest to this way of seeing: the dividing line alludes to the courses of rivers, geological structures of the earth, and similar features.



April 6, 1984;
11x8 1/2 in.



No. 25; April 11, 1979; 70x60 in.

As close as he thus comes to the genre of landscape painting in an abstract or abstracting manner, he nevertheless does not adopt its fundamental, perhaps its only fundamental structure — namely, the flat line of the horizon. In other words, assuming that the pictures mentioned can be considered paintings of nature (a view that Batuz's own remarks have served to encourage), then nature is nevertheless measured in terms of the paradigm of the vertical line, an aspiring force and dimension that alludes to *homo erectus*. Indeed, nature appears furthermore as an outspread field in which man inscribes his mark, and which bears the stamp of his will. It appears as a field that is defined first and foremost by the action of the line, which opens it up, divides it into sections, and gives it visual form.

The fundamental quality which the viewer experiences when studying these pictures has to do with the fundamental nature of the pictorial means in Batuz's art. Essentially, Batuz delineates the picture by repeating in his painting the simplest axiom of positioning (or at least one of the simplest ways of creating a picture): he divides the empty space through a single action. The only trace of it is the perpendicular line that generates such distinctions and also such relationships as allow us to speak of a "picture" in the first place. The border line sets fields off from each other, separates them, but also connects them, lends articulation to the whole surface as a configuration that contains many different meanings for the viewer. The elementary act of drawing a border line is repeated in Batuz's pictorial art. This act alone produces the picture which, by virtue of it in turn exhibits a fundamental quality. There can be no question that the act of drawing a border line is not only a paradigm for the original forms that pictures took, and cannot only can serve as a model for aesthetic experience¹, but also marks the very beginnings of culture itself. Findings in the fields of cultural anthropology, paleontology, archeology and ethnology provide increasing concurrent evidence for the assumption that elementary processes of enclosure via delineation marked the beginnings of human self-determination.

Delimiting sacred areas, cutting a path through the wilderness, ploughing a furrow in a field — these are simple actions in which nature, reality prior to man, is imbued with the first signs of a cultural countenance. Many of the ancient

gods are associated with drawing and laying down boundary lines. The Greek gods inhabit the *temenos*, i.e. a restricted area in the temple; the Roman god *Terminus* is a declaredly Janus-faced border god — to name just two examples. We allude to this because, as part of his own life, Batuz apparently reexperienced this original meaning of the border as the property that delineates culture. His pictures repeat this occurrence. The allusions to cultural history elucidate the possible historical background of the pictorial action and at the same time refer to its latent semantics. For all its equivocality, this action is thus more than a purely formal measure.

Michel Butor analysed and explained the role of the border in Batuz's work. Rather than going into this in detail, let us now direct our attention exclusively to the paintings as presented in the *Schloß Schaumburg* collection. Here, two different aspects of pictorial conception are to be observed. Both are again linked to an alternating understanding of the border, its function and the effects it may have. The difference might perhaps be best summarized in the following terms: on the one hand, the border marks the zone of contact between two surfaces; on the other, it makes itself felt on a surface, becomes a figure in its own right, is borne by that surface, and yet is not to be understood as the product of the meeting of two partial forms. In this case, the border becomes a linear figuration which stands out as a dike raised up in the flat plane of the picture. Indeed, the texture of the pictures, rough and partially using collage, is itself significant. Its physical structure competes, to some extent, with the colour, resembles the surface of an object, forfeits the neutral evenness of the flat background of the picture. It tends to present itself as a body. The line is also a materially formed construct, a raised ridge, which, together with the texture of the surface and the over-dramatisation of the spotlights, gives the painting the overall appearance of a relief.

The viewer is led to perceive the border — above all when it is dramatized as a pictorial figure — as a track, charged with energy and conducting a force of its own. It is in this context that the quality of wilfulness arises which we mentioned above. This quality is reflected in the fact that the line determining the picture is emphatically positioned so that it dominates and conquers an otherwise univocal surface.

On the other hand, this volitional element is linked to the view of the line as a track charged with force. The optical forces feel their way along this track in a purposeful manner. Batuz usually dimensions his paintings in such a way that, horizontally, they exceed the span of arms spread wide, and in the case of some high canvases, they rise considerably above normal body height. The visual breadth, and, in some instances, the sheer immensity of the field of the picture gives the energy of the line a special quality, lends it at times a bombastic field of effectiveness. The broader and more open the surface, the greater the force and solitude of the linear movement. It appears exposed, but this at the same time also underscores its dominating power. It very clearly bears the biographical handwriting of Batuz, the pioneer of the unknown. What remains to be examined is the relationship of these big canvases to the wall and/or the architecture. The current presentation tends to avoid integrating them into the architectonic environment rather than seeking to accomplish such an integration. The character of the pictures as entities is thus reinforced; the materiality of their surfaces and the ridge that the border constitutes both remind one of ascending stelae or, as already mentioned, of reliefs.

The second aspect of this painting has to do with the border as the zone of correspondence between two partial surfaces. In this context its function is less one of referring to itself, of emphasizing its equally figural quality, but rather to separate and relate two zones of the picture. It is important here to see the line as the common border between two parts of one surface. It is both the end of the first and the beginning of the second zone, and vice-versa. Accordingly, it is also exposed to the optical forces of both fields — all the more so, in that it twists and turns, feels its way, and deviates from the geometrically perpendicular. Consequently, it is the area where both fields struggle against each other, intrude, and are repelled. As an elastic zone of balance, it makes the forces of the colour fields visible, allowing them to crystallize as form. What the viewer recognises as form is also the result of the act of linear positioning, all the more so since the contour of the one field is at the same time the contour of the other. Just as a ring or vessel has no seam along a line where it has cracked, so the element of form provides the seam for the two fields.

In a painterly conception such as this, colour fulfils a supportive but not a primary function. Batuz emphasizes this when he positions lighting in a manner that serves to underscore the texture of the surfaces and emphasize the shadows cast by the raised ridge. The beams of light compel the colour value of the surfaces to recede, allows them to appear as bearers of light. The dramatics of the dynamics in the picture is based overall on the line charged with force, then on the formal values of the line and finally on the old medium of chiaroscuro — although Batuz does not consider the latter an internal, fictitious element of the picture, but rather as the product of real light, of the real materiality of the picture's surface and its structure.

The examples already cited in which the surface of the picture appeared from a bird's eye view, as a fissured countryside in which mountain ranges, valleys, mountain formations and hills are to be traced, give more content to the semantics of the border line. Not that we have any reason to take the identification with landscape topography literally. In any case, however, we are dealing with a terrain which has been divided up; the intrinsic formal values of which, its implied curves, raised ridges and similar elements are, however, never so strong that they question the force of the line, which, like the wall of China, wends its way undisturbed.

This confirms what one could call the basic situation of both Batuz the artist and of his conception of art. In his pictures, reality is visualized for us as a terrain of volition. What we can observe is the drama of self-assertion, an act of positioning that opens up the surfaces, creates paths of access and divisions, but without appropriating them. What can be said about the course of Batuz's development thus far is that this drama is full of tension and also full of optimism. There is no reason to believe that, tragically, the act of linear positioning might fail, that the line could lose its way, or go under, or that the anonymous, wide-open spaces could triumph over the power of the human hand to lay down the borders.

Gottfried Boehm

© See the author's "Die Dialektik der ästhetischen Grenze," in: *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, No. 5, 1973.

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D-50; April 1983, 40x26 in.
Collection Mr. & Mrs. Julio Landmann



BIOGRAPHY

1933

Born May 27 in Budapest Hungary.

1949

Emigrates with family to Argentina. Starts to paint in the fall, painstakingly copying old masters and then Impressionists.

1955-1962

Style turns toward and expressionistic interpretation of nature.

1963

First one-man show in Buenos Aires.

1964

Moves with family to a solitary place (Villa Gesell) in the south of Argentina to dedicate himself exclusively to painting, remaining there eight years. Work gradually turns toward abstraction. Builds own studio with chicken wire and concrete over two years. Begins to make sculpture from lava rocks as well as concrete.

1970

Wildenstein Gallery becomes his exclusive representative.

1973

Settles with family in the United States.

1976

Exhibits in West Germany. The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne and the Kunsthalle in Zurich acquire his work.

1977

Works are shown in the acquisition exhibitions of the Hirshhorn Museum and the Sculpture Gardens in Washington, DC, and the Kunsthalle in Nuremberg, West Germany.

1978

One-man shows at the Museo de Arte de São Paulo in Brazil and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. His book *Interrelation of Form*, with texts by Rafael Squirru, Frank Getlein, Dieter Ronte and Joseph H. Hirshhorn, also serves as catalogue for these shows.

1979

Works in collage with various materials. The Phillips Collection acquires two of his works. Starts to "paint with pulp". Completes his large work, *Omen* in September. The Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, acquires the yellow *Botond No. 2* for permanent collection.

1980

Creates several large works in paper. The Kupferstich Kabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, West Berlin, acquires his work in paper No. 40. Makes the work in grass.

1981

One-man shows at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; Kunsthalle Nuremberg, West Germany, which acquires the work in paper No. 44; Museum Moderner Kunst, which acquires the work in paper No. 78. A hard cover monograph on Batuz:

works in paper came out, designed and printed by Haery N. Abrams and published by Rizzoli, with 176 pages, 120 illustrations, 80 in color, with texts by Dieter Ronte, Ronald A. Kuchta, Rafael Squirru and Curt Heigl.

1982

From January to April works on huge paintings in Blanton, Florida. One-man shows at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan, which acquires the work in paper No. 152 and Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana.

1983

Begins the series of drawings on large size paper in pastels.

1984

One-man show at the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, which acquires three of his works. Through the intervention of the cultural authorities of West Germany, and the generosity of the owners Prof. Franz and Dr. Gertrud Schilke, Batuz is given a huge working space at Schloss Schaumburg. There he paints *Lahtal I* and other large size paintings of mixed media. The Senate of West Berlin invites him to create a project for a monumental sculpture for that city. The maquette 10 x 5 meters is presented in Bad Ems, it is a "living wall" of plants and water.

1985

Exhibits at the Caixa des Pensions in Barcelona. Returns to his studio at Schloss Schaumburg, where he paints *Omen II*. Albright-Knox Galleries, Buffalo, NY, purchases painting No. 85. Batuz spends the winter in Argentina, builds his own studio near Buenos Aires, prints the portfolio *Grey Botond* as well as a series of "colographs".

1986

West German authorities, private sectors and the owners of the castle of Schaumburg created an institution, which has as a goal to establish the Batuz Foundation, which will provide a permanent place for his works. Batuz sees it as a possibility to share the place with other artists by exhibiting their works, as also a meeting place for writers from Eastern European and South American countries. The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, purchases work M-25 and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City No. 114.

1987

Several Argentinian industrial companies are backing Batuz's project to invite South American writers and artists to Schaumburg and an agreement was signed by him and George Soros in New York, who is privately backing a similar project for the Eastern European artists and writers. In Argentina from January to May, Batuz completes a major work, "la méditation sur la frontière" with handwritten and engraved texts by Michel Butor. At Schloss Schaumburg, Batuz plans and works on the installation for the future exhibition spaces, giving special importance to the illumination of his paintings.

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Translated by Dr. Jeremy Gaines

Photography by Andras Mahr, Don S. Ross,

Monika Nähr, Peter Nähr, Perez-Celis

Printed by

Pallottnerdruck und Lahn-Verlag GmbH



WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A.
Caixa des Pensions, Barcelona, Spain
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, West Germany
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, U.S.A.
Kunsthhaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
The Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, U.S.A.
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Museum Ludwig, Cologne, West Germany
Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil
Museu de Arte Moderno, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela
Kunsthalle, Nuremberg, West Germany
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid, Spain
Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Argentina
The Metropolitan Museum, Miami, Florida, U.S.A.
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay
The Litchfield Historic Museum, Connecticut, U.S.A.
The Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut, U.S.A.
Museum of Art, Science & Industry & Planetarium, Bridgeport, Connecticut, U.S.A.
The New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, Canada
Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, U.S.A.
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse & Onondaga County, NY, U.S.A.
Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, West Germany
Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, Portugal
Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan



SOCIÉTÉ IMAGINAIRE

In 1986 West German authorities, private sectors and the owners of the castle of Schaumburg created an institution, which has a goal to establish the Batuz Foundation, which will provide a permanent place for my works.

As a living American artist, I consider this a rare honour, but also a great challenge.

The fact that I was born a Hungarian attests to my interest in Eastern Europe. The 20 years of my life spent in South America bind me to the western hemisphere. Having lived in both places, I am keenly aware of the surprisingly great similarities which exist between them.

These peripheral cultures – each with an outlook from a different vantagepoint, from a different world – can thus be conducive to the creation of new, different *Weltanschauungen*.

In art as in scientific investigation it is of utmost importance to start from different, separate, sometimes mutually ignored points of departure – to have several points of *entry* and *reentry*, which can therefore provide us with the different pictures and experiences from one and the same situation.

Peripheral cultures, through their geographic, political and psychological situations, observe and comprehend differently the world events than does the mainstream. It seems to me important, therefore, to investigate their statements and ideas in literature as well as in the visual arts.

Several Argentinian industrial companies are backing a project to invite South American writers and artists to Schaumburg and an agreement was signed by George Soros and myself in New York. Mr. Soros is privately backing a similar project for the Eastern European artists and writers.

Spontaneous meetings should form the basis of collaboration between artists. The works thus created, texts with illustrations will be published in English and German by the Batuz Foundation.

The results of these encounters, talks, writings, drawings, videos, in sum the whole process will be documented and stored at the Batuz Foundation as an "idea-bank", which will be open to our contemporaries as well as future generations.

Not only nations, which seem or are excluded from the decisions or influences of world events, are to be considered per-

ipheral cultures, but also individuals, who, through destiny or by their own free will, do not participate immediately in events, but rather distanciate themselves and undergo an *apparent* isolation.

This isolation is only apparent in nature since these are the individuals who build our culture and lay the power lines through which the energy will flow in the directions they have set. This is how I see Cézanne, who in his solitude set the guidelines for the whole century that followed him.

This is how I see the life of Reuben Nakian, his detachment of the art scene, which surrounded him, was painful but conscious.

Everybody who deals with art must learn that a transcendental renewal can only be achieved through detachment, be it in Aix-en-Provence, Tahiti or Stamford, Connecticut. But what is important is not the geographic, but the *mental-spiritual* distance attained: the challenge is to find another point of *entry* or *reentry*. Every artist should be an *outsider* in the real sense – since his task is not to participate in events, but to create from past, present and future events a picture, whose form and content differs from those of his contemporaries, and will even be fought by them. Nevertheless, it is his work and what it represents that will come to be viewed as history, and not that of the others.

From these encounters "through the continents" in which personalities meet and collaborate, a structure can grow which has the likeness of a society.

As the world has grown out of all human proportions, so the mind has become incapable of grasping all the facts, the majority of which have nothing to do with the individual. This is why, I believe, people who culturally have much in common should create a structure like a polis in which they can feel at home, move freely – even though they may actually be separated by thousands of miles. This is the reason I call this imaginary polis: the "société imaginaire".

Bery



Batus

SCHAUMBURG EDITIONS I.

BATUZ STIFTUNG · BATUZ FOUNDATION · FUNDAÇÃO BATUZ · BATUZ ALAPITVÁNY · FUNDACION BATUZ · BATUZ FONDATION · BATUZOVA NADACE