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WELCHE TECHNIK LIEBEN WIR?

GOLDSCHMIED UND BILDHAUER CLAUS BURY

Von Martha Schmidt



Anhänger, 1975.
Gold, Weißgold,
Kupferlegierungen

Claus Bury hat schon Autorenschmuck gemacht, als es das Wort noch gar nicht gab. Als sich der Begriff dann etabliert hatte und Schmuck als künstlerische Aussage anerkannt wurde, war Bury längst unterwegs in einem anderen Feld. Er hatte sich für die Bildhauerei entschieden.



Fantasiemaschinen:
Ringe, um 1971. Gold
und diverse Materialien.

CLAUS BURY



Farbe und Geometrie:
Broschen, 1970 und
1969. Acrylglas.



Pop Art als Schmuck:
Anhänger, 1969. Weiß-
gold, Acrylglas.

Ein Jahrzehnt arbeitete Claus Bury als Goldschmied und seit drei Jahrzehnten entwickelt er architektonische Skulpturen. Dennoch fehlen seine Schmuckarbeiten in keiner namhaften Sammlung und in keiner Übersicht zeitgenössischer Schmuckkunst. Inzwischen macht Claus Bury auch seine Schwarz-Weiß-Fotografien *Bauernarchitekturen* als Teil seiner Arbeit öffentlich. So nennt Bury die von Bauern aufgestapelten Heuballen, die ihm zunächst zufällig vor die Linse kamen. Im Grunde ist es intuitive Landschaftskunst, die er inzwischen gezielt fotografiert. Anfang 2010 hat er in einer großen Retrospektive alle drei Arbeitsfelder in der Ausstellung *Maßstabssprünge* in Nürnberg gezeigt.

Angefangen hat der heute 65Jährige mit einer Lehre als Goldschmied. Das lag nahe und war ganz im Sinne seines Vaters, der ihn als seinen Nachfolger in dem traditionsreichen Goldschmiedeunternehmen sah, das inzwischen sein 250jähriges Bestehen feiert. Claus Bury lernte in der Hanauer Zeichenakademie solide Goldschmiedearbeit und machte sein Design-Diplom 1969 an der Kunst- und Werkschule in Pforzheim. „Da hat sich für mich die Kunstwelt aufgetan“, erinnert er sich. In die Fußstapfen seines Vaters wollte er nicht mehr treten. 1968 begleitete er seinen Vater noch einmal mit zwei Schmuckkoffern zu den Kunden, und stellte fest: „Das ist nicht meine Welt.“ Und sagte es auch dem Vater. „Um

den Abstand zu gewährleisten, bin ich nach London gegangen.“ Von 1969 bis 1970 war er dort zu einem Studienaufenthalt und arbeitete in dem renommierten Goldschmiedeatelier Andrew Grima. „Vom Handwerklichen her habe ich da enorm durch die Arbeit an den Omega-Uhren profitiert.“ Und er tauchte ein in „eine verrückte Epoche“. Die Pop-Art schlug gerade in England Wellen. „London 1969 war für mich, als kleiner Provinztyp aus Hanau kommend, die Offenbarung.“ Künstler wie Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Allen Jones, R. B. Kitaj und Eduardo Paolozzi begeisterten und beeinflussten ihn. Und er griff die neuen Formen und vor allem die neuen Farben auf für seinen Schmuck. Die leuchtende Farbigkeit der Ära ließ sich durch die traditionellen Materialien, Edelstein und Emaillé, nicht einfangen. Es war die strahlende Leuchtkraft, die Transluzidität und die Farbreinheit von Acryl, welches er für seine Schmuckstücke nutzte. Das Kunstglas war Ende der 1920er Jahre in mehreren europäischen Ländern entwickelt und in Deutschland von Otto Röhm unter dem Handelsnamen „Plexiglas“ angemeldet worden.

Alle Schmuck-Fotos Eva Jünger

Claus Bury entwarf Ringe, Halsketten und Broschen in einer ganz ungewöhnlichen Formensprache und erzeugte mit dem Acrylglas sprühende Farbspiele. Pop-Art meets Goldschmuck. Als versierter Goldschmied konnte Bury die Acrylglasplatten fein aussägen und minutiös zusammensetzen. Im weiteren Verarbeitungsprozess halfen allerdings die tradierten Techniken nicht weiter. Statt Hämmern, Löten, Schmelzen, Schweißen, Schrauben und Verklammern waren nun Sägen und Kleben die Techniken für den Umgang mit dem neuen Element. Claus Bury kombinierte das aneinander- und übereinandergesetzte Acrylglas mit Gold, Weißgold und Silber. So schuf er nie dagewesene Form- und Farbwelten. Für die Pop-Art fand er mittels neuer Materialien und Techniken einen eigenen Ausdruck in Schmuck. Er holte die Pop-Art ins Goldschmiedehandwerk. Und machte Schmuckkunst.

Zurück in Deutschland experimentierte Claus Bury mit verschiedenfarbigen Metalllegierungen. Doch die eher zufälligen Ergebnisse seiner praktischen Versuche befriedigten ihn nicht mehr und er suchte die Unterstützung und das Spezialwissen von Chemikern und Metallurgen.

1976 erhielt er ein Stipendium des Kulturkreises im Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI). Damit konnte er seine intuitiven Experimente mit verschiedenfarbigen Metalllegierungen auf geplante Studien umstellen. Er machte sorgsam vorbereitete Farb- und Herstellungsstudien und erfasste sowohl die ästhetischen wie technischen Eigenschaften der Legierungen. So entwickelte er ein System, um Legierungen entsprechend

seiner ästhetischen Absichten realisieren zu können. Er setzte die Metalllegierungen als Farbe ein und schuf regelrechte Metallzeichnungen. Claus Burys Schmuckstücke aus dieser Periode spiegeln nicht nur die Fülle der Farbnuancen von Metalllegierungen, sie bringen auch ganz neuartige Formen zutage, etwa seine Container-Serie. Wie mit seinem Acrylschmuck sprengte er auch mit dem Schmuck aus Metalllegierungen das bisher Dagewesene und setzte neue Maßstäbe.

Dennoch, Claus Bury wurde es zunehmend eng in der Schmuckszene. „Ich habe Schmuck gemacht, der nie getragen wurde, sondern immer bei Sammlern im Tresor gelandet ist. Das fand ich etwas unbefriedigend“, erläutert er sein wachsendes Unbehagen. „Ich wollte Kunst machen. Damals gab es den Begriff des künstlerischen



Seit 1979 arbeitet Claus Bury als Bildhauer. Hier der Bitterfelder Bogen, 2006, in Sachsen-Anhalt.

Landungssteg Ladenburg, 2005, in der Nähe von Mannheim, Baden-Württemberg, links und rechts.



Schmucks noch nicht.“ Und der Radius des Arbeitens im Sitzen mit der Hand – typisch für den Goldschmied – wurde ihm zu eng. „Ich wollte nicht nur meine Hände bewegen, sondern ich wollte meinen ganzen Körper bewegen.“ Er wollte Teil der Arbeit werden, in die man hineingehen kann. Er weiß noch genau den Ort und die Zeit, als er sich entschloss, die Goldschmiedearbeit aufzugeben. Das war in Australien. 1979 hatte ihn das Goethe-Institut dorthin eingeladen. Der Ortswechsel, das Nachdenken, das andere Firmament hätten die Entscheidung in ihm bewegt. In Noojee in Victoria/Australien hatte er seine *Black Sculpture* in der Landschaft aufgebaut, eine Anordnung von mehreren Metallgestellen mit schwarzen Kunststoffplanen, die – je nach dem, von wo man sie betrachtete – ein Dreieck auf dem Feld bildeten. „Den Moment habe ich noch genau in Erinnerung“, sagt Bury. Als er seine *Black Sculpture* abends in der Dämmerung sah, stand sein Entschluss fest. Er sagte eine bereits geplante Schmuckausstellung ab und arbeitete seit diesem Tag nicht mehr als Goldschmied.

„Ich stehe zu meinem Beruf“, bekräftigt Bury jedoch rückblickend. 1965 hatte er seine kleinste Schmuckarbeit gemacht, eine 4,5 cm x 2 cm große Brosche für seine Großmutter, und bis 1978 als Goldschmied gearbeitet. Seit dem Abend in Australien konzipiert Claus Bury raumgreifende architektonische Skulpturen, die größte ist knapp 30 Meter hoch und 80 Meter lang, eine begehbare Metallkonstruktion, von der aus man die Landschaft überblicken kann. Es ist der 2006 errichtete Bitterfelder Bogen, eine Landmarke in Sachsen-Anhalt, der die

Schriftstellerin Monika Maron zu dem Titel ihres letzten Buches angeregt hat: *Bitterfelder Bogen*. Von derartigen Landschaftsstegen hat Claus Bury eine ganze Reihe gemacht: 2004 in Ladenburg den Landungssteg am Neckar und 2009 ebenfalls am Neckarufer die Landungsbrücke Fellbach. „Die Landschaftsstege müssen nicht unbedingt als Kunst erlebt werden, sondern die Menschen können eine neue Landschaftserfahrung machen.“ Diese neue Sicht auf die Umgebung durch seine Werke ist es, die Claus Bury „unheimlich schön“ findet. So sind seine architektonischen Skulpturen auch immer für einen gewissen Ort geplant. Seine Kunstwerke erfüllen zunehmend – neben der Erfahrung des Ortes – auch durchaus praktische Funktionen. So hat er 2008 im Zusammenhang mit der *EuRegionale* ein Kunstprojekt für die Stadt Aachen realisiert: eine Brücke für Fußgänger, Radfahrer und Pferde, die den Grenzfluss zwischen Kerkrade in den Niederlanden und Herzogenrath in Deutschland überquert. „Die Leute sind unheimlich glücklich, dass sie jetzt eine Brücke haben, um ans andere Ufer zu gelangen“, kommentiert Claus Bury seine architektonische Skulptur. Kein Wunder, dass er „auch gerne mal ein Hochhaus bauen würde.“ In seinem Frankfurter Atelier hat er bereits etliche Hochhausmodelle aus Holz gefertigt. Er gehört noch zu der Künstlergeneration, die Modelle machen anstelle von Computeranimationen. Für die Realisationen seiner Arbeiten, seien es die Skulpturen oder die Architekturen, arbeitet er eng mit Handwerkern und Technikern zusammen. Und für den präzisen Planer ist klar: „Ich bin immer bei der Produktionsphase dabei.“



LIGHT IN MOTION

DESIGN DRIFT

By Sarah Schuhmacher

For the team of *Drift*, a Dutch design studio, light is not only meant to illuminate the dark but, in their opinion, also brings about a special kind of “enlightenment”. The lighting installations they create are as technically sophisticated as they are magically enchanting.

Ralph Nauta and Lonneke Gordijn founded *Drift* in 2006, one year after they concluded their studies at the Design Academy of Eindhoven, pursuing the idea of both reacting to and questioning human behavior with their creations. Nauta’s experience and skill in terms of craftsmanship and technology and Gordijn’s feel for shapes and concepts complement each other perfectly. Their designs inventively unite nature and technology, ideology and reality. Using the best materials

available as well as state-of-the-art production technologies to implement their highly original design projects, they have already been honored with several awards, for example in 2008 for their *Fragile Future* lighting installation in the *Light of the Future* competition held by the German Design Council. Their latest award was the *Moët Hennessy – Pavilion of Art and Design London Prize 2010* for their *Concrete Chandelier* from the *Fragile Future* collection, an installation that was purchased by the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

“In our day and age of sensory and information overload, we hope that our work will emphasize the metaphysical aspects of human perception, that it will provide some compensation for all the contradictions of our daily life and will highlight immaterial values, i.e. spiritual and emotional ones.” Based on these desires, light has become Ralph Nauta and Lonneke Gordijn’s favorite medium “because light lends itself to expressing emotions very directly.” Just like the Romantics reacted to the Industrial Revolution around 1850, these Dutch designers respond to our modern digital revolution by conveying some sense of lightness, by giving us an idea of the state of weightlessness by means of their creations. Works such as *Flylight*, *Fragile Future* and the *Ghost Collection* intend to take the beholder to a metaphysical level that these designers think is missing in our everyday life.

One of their most fascinating works is the *Fragile Future III* light installation, created in 2010 as a limited edition in collaboration with

the Carpenters Workshop Gallery in London. To create this extremely elaborate installation, dandelion seeds were glued individually to small LED lightbulbs. These delicate spheres, reminiscent of withered dandelion flowers, are attached to a phosphor bronze frame. The complex structure looks very much like an electronic control panel. The lighting sculpture, designed as a wall installation, is mounted to transparent acrylic glass plates and makes the luminous dandelion heads look as if they were hovering. Another variant in the *Fragile Future* collection features “flowers” that alternately “open and close”, thus symbolizing the eternal cycle of life. This installation simultaneously conveys a sense of timelessness and of the fragility of nature, of immortality and transience. Nauta and Gordijn thus want to encourage the beholder to think about the vulnerability of our environment. It’s the installation’s combination of nature and technology that produces such wonderful effects. This is also why, of all of these designers’ creations, this collection is no doubt the most obvious epitome of their conviction, i.e. that we should endeavor to reconcile nature and science.

Another creation of theirs was also inspired by a natural phenomenon. Their interactive *Flylight* lighting sculpture consists of 160 glass tubes with integrated halogen bulbs that react to the approaching beholder and “follow” him when he walks around the sculpture. This installation was inspired by the fascinating, seemingly random formations of a flock of birds in the sky. Yet these formations are not as random as it seems because each bird has to keep a safe distance from its neighbor in front, above, beneath and next to it. Lonneke Gordijn and Ralph Nauta translated this principle into a digital “DNA” and visualize it via light. Ultrasonic sensors, similar to those of bats, measure the distance between the beholder and the installation. A central computer sends signals to each individual bulb. However, the bulbs’ reaction has not been programmed so that one can never tell what the “flock” will do next. The glass tubes always light up in different patterns whenever one gets closer to them or several people approach them from different directions. For these Dutch designers, the most exciting thing about this installation is what seems to be the “flock’s free will”. Will the flock of lights “attack” the beholder or will it split up and “flee”? Nevertheless, the flock always has to find its way within predefined boundaries. This example alone shows how innovatively Lonneke Gordijn and Ralph Nauta implement the latest technological developments in their artistic design concepts. In their installations, light seems to have been endowed with an almost transcendental quality and even reacts to people. Appealing to us on an almost metaphysical level, these lighting sculptures inevitably put us under their spell.



GOLDSMITH AND SCULPTOR

CLAUS BURY

By Martha Schmidt

Claus Bury was making jewelry d’auteur even before the concept had been conceived. By the time the idea became established and jewelry gained recognition as a valid medium for artistic expression, Bury had long since left jewelry behind and had embarked on a different disciple: sculpture.

Claus Bury worked as a goldsmith for a decade and has spent the past three decades developing architectonic sculptures. His jewelry creations can be found in every renowned collection and every compendium of contemporary art jewelry. In the meantime, Claus Bury’s publicly displayed oeuvre also includes black-and-white photographs called *Farmers’ Architectures*, a name he uses to describe heaped bales of hay that chanced to come into the purview of his camera’s lens. He showed artworks in all three disciplines at an exhibition entitled *Maßstabssprünge (Parameter Pole Vault)* in Nuremberg at the beginning of 2010.

Now in his 65th year, Bury began his career by studying to become a goldsmith. This was a logical career choice and wholly in accord with the wishes of his father, who expected him to take over the family’s traditional goldsmithery, which recently celebrated its 250th anniversary. Claus Bury acquired a solid training in the goldsmith’s métier at the drawing academy in Hanau and received a diploma as a designer from the arts and crafts school in Pforzheim in 1969. “The art world really opened up for me there,” he recalls. He no longer wanted to tread in his father’s footsteps. For one last time, he accompanied his father and two valises of jewelry on visits to customers in 1968, when he realized: “This is not my world.” And he shared this realization with his father. “To put some space between us and to gain perspectives, I went to London,” where he studied and worked from 1969 to 1970 at the renowned Andrew Grima goldsmith’s atelier. “From a craftsmanly point of view, I benefited tremendously from our work with Omega wristwatches.” He also immersed himself in “a crazy epoch.” Pop Art had just begun to make waves in Europe. “London in

DOUBLE HONOR

OTTO KÜNZLI

By Martha Schmidt

Honored with the *Swiss Grand Prix Design* and the *Golden Ring of Honor*, bestowed by the German Association for the Promotion of the Goldsmith's Art, Otto Künzli received two awards of central importance within a short period of time.

Professor Otto Künzli earned these awards in recognition of his personality, his lifework and his unique artistic position. And, quite likely, it's this specific and untypical approach to goldsmithing which, up to the present day, has been regarded as a certain obstacle by other representatives of his trade. This is no coincidence. After all, Künzli, who was born in 1948, is one of the members of the generation that first had to try and define their genre by means of hard mental work and relentlessly did so in their early "series of experiments".

The focus, however, has long since shifted from seeking to finding and postulating. By crafting "solitary" jewelry creations Künzli shapes striking signals in an overstimulated jewelry landscape. He combines the worldly-wise consciousness of a grand old master of his trade with the youthful freshness of a rebel and bothersome noncompliant who does not stop questioning things and always puts the hook where it hurts most – not only by means of irony or by a

Spartan compacting of his statements regarding form, but also by means of provoking aloofness and intellectual understatement.

Today, there are many approaches as to how to contemplate jewelry. But where the aesthetics of an object coincide with the underlying idea and the content, there is nothing that could be added. Thus, Otto Künzli, who enjoys an international reputation as a professor at the Academy of the Fine Arts in Munich, works as an eloquent imparter and is recognized as a world-wide authority. He expresses his thoughts and opinions in cycles, circling the core of a matter as if in orbit until it assumes the "one and only" shape. During his regular visits to Japan he always encounters new challenges and new sources of inspiration.

One of these visits led to the creation in 2008 of the group of Binchotan rings entitled "Hana-bi" (the Japanese word for fireworks) made of particularly hard and dense charcoal. Black and beautiful, plain and simple yet mysterious, they testify to the process that is the very foundation of Künzli's work which is about scraping free an idea, eliminating any superfluous loquacity and distraction, about omitting, about a certain absoluteness and concentration. What is left is the tangible equivalent of this path.

One does no longer want to refer to Otto Künzli as a goldsmith (although he insists on it), but at least as a jewelry artist or, even better, as the exponent of an uncharted terrain where certain threads converge and interlace: where jewelry reveals itself as an independent aesthetic and spiritual position, as a cultural exercise with a multitude of ramifications and crossovers that firmly and irrevocably anchor the genre in the overall panorama of the arts. In 2013, when the Neue Sammlung – The International Design Museum Munich will dedicate a comprehensive retrospective to Otto Künzli, we will finally have the opportunity to get an overview and an impression of the full scope of this new terrain.



1969 was a veritable revelation for a little fellow like me from provincial Hanau." Artists such as Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Allen Jones, R. B. Kitaj and Eduardo Paolozzi enthused and influenced Bury, who incorporated the new forms and above all the new colors into his jewelry. But traditional materials such as gemstones and enamels couldn't capture the vibrant colors of the era, so Bury used the radiant luminosity, translucence and chromatic purity of acrylic for his jewelry. This artificial glass-like substance had been simultaneously developed in several European countries in the 1920s and had been patented under the trade name "Plexiglas" in Germany by Otto Röhm.

Claus Bury developed an utterly unconventional language of forms for his rings, necklaces and brooches. The translucent glass-like acrylic material enabled him to generate extraordinarily plays of color in an encounter that might be described as "Pop Art meets gold jewelry." A skilful goldsmith, Bury could finely saw and meticulously assemble Plexiglas panes. But traditional goldsmith's techniques were of no use in the further phases of the production process. Instead of hammering, soldering, melting, welding, screwing and pinning, Claus Bury discovered that sawing and gluing were the best techniques for working with the new material. He affixed panes of Plexiglas over and alongside one another and then combined these with gold, white gold and silver. Through his work with novel materials and innovative techniques, Bury evolved a unique way to express Pop Art in jewelry. He brought Pop Art to the goldsmith's métier. And he made art jewelry.

After returning to Germany, Claus Bury experimented with variously colored metal alloys. No longer satisfied with the mostly accidental results of these practical experiments, he sought assistance in the specialized expertise of chemists and metallurgists. A scholarship from the Federation of German Industries (BDI) in 1976 enabled him to adapt his intuitive experiments with varicolored metal

alloys to planned studies. He invented a system for developing alloys according to his aesthetic intentions. He then used these alloys as colors and created veritable metal sketches.

But the jewelry scene was becoming too narrow for Claus Bury, who explains the dissatisfaction he felt: "I made jewelry that was never worn and always landed in collectors' safes. That was rather disappointing. I wanted to make art. The concept of 'art jewelry' didn't yet exist at this time." Likewise too confining was the scope of a sessile goldsmith's work, which is typically no greater than the length of his or her arm: "I didn't want to move only my hands. I wanted to move my whole body." The Goethe Institute invited him to Australia in 1979: the change of location, the opportunity to think things over and the unfamiliar constellations in the Southern skies combined to motivate him toward a decision. He built his *Black Sculpture* in the landscape at Noojee in Victoria, Australia. The piece is an arrangement of numerous metal scaffolds and black plastic tarpaulins. Depending on the vantage point from which it is seen, the *Black Sculpture* forms a triangle on the field. He reached his decision while viewing this sculpture by twilight early one evening: he canceled a planned jewelry exhibition and never again worked as a goldsmith.

"I'm proud of my profession," Bury nevertheless retrospectively affirms. He made his smallest piece of jewelry (a 4.5 cm by 2 cm brooch for his grandmother) in 1965 and he continued to work as a goldsmith until 1978. Ever since that fateful evening in Australia, Claus Bury has conceived spatially encompassing architectonic sculptures, the largest of which is nearly 30 meters tall and 80 meters long. It's a metal construction which can be entered. From its interior, one commands a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. Erected in 2006 in Sachsen-Anhalt, Bury christened it *Bitterfelder Bogen*. Its name afterwards served as the title of the most recent book by the author Monika Maron. Claus Bury has made a whole series of similar landscape jetties, including a landing jetty on the Neckar River in Ladenburg in 2004 and a landing bridge in Fellbach, likewise on the shore of the Neckar, in 2009. "Though my landscape jetties needn't necessarily be experienced as works of art, they enable people to experience the landscape in a new way." For example, in the context of the EuRegionale, he made an art project for the city of Aachen in 2008. Bury's creation is a bridge for pedestrians, bicyclists and horses spanning the river that forms the national boundary between Kerkrade, Holland and Herzogenrath, Germany. Commenting on his architectonic sculpture, Claus Bury says: "The people there are very happy that they now have a bridge which they can cross to reach the other shore."

