

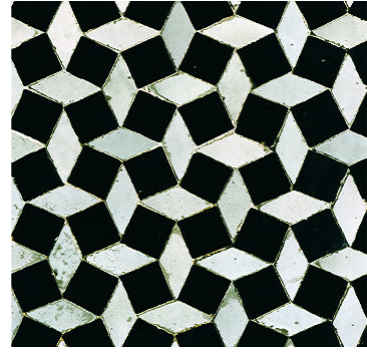
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Gérard A. Goodrow »Just A Façade?« -124-



Svenja Pitz »Please Touch The Glass« -140-

The Art Of Hamburg: Machinist -160-



Uta Seelos »Anastassija« -164-



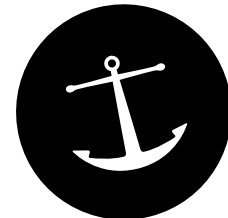
Label -174-

Imprint -176-

THE ART OF HAMBURG

„ONLY IF YOU ARE NOT TOO GOOD TO MAKE YOUR HANDS DIRTY, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE WORLD“

A beautiful, hundreds of years old warehouse not far from the river Elbe is the studio of the Hamburg based artist Frank Bürmann. This is the place where his wearable art comes to life: As 'canvas', Bürmann uses T-Shirts, shirts and bags of all sizes. Not only the material he uses is unusual, it is also the way he paints and prints that makes his work unique. Instead of computers, silkscreen- or offset-printing, he uses his whole body and unusual methods to create his 'wearable pictures': a dust mop turns into a paintbrush, a hand brush is great for creating structures, and with the help of unevenly carved strips of wood, Frank Bürmann prints ringed T-Shirts. Cardboard, glue, hot glue and small pieces of wood create the basis for hundreds of handmade rubber stamps in all sizes. When an idea is to become reality, it can happen that a shelf that has just been put up is taken down again — the length of the shelves had the perfect length he needed. Since 2006, Frank Bürmann, born in 1964, has been selling his one of a kind art under the label 'The Art of Hamburg'. His career as a freelance artist began after he started working at the Police in Niedersachsen. Works like his paintings 'Kleiner König' in 1992 or his project 'Welt-raum-Traumraum' in 1998 (Bürmann created a pilot's chronograph for the Swiss watch manufacturer Fortis in 1998 which the cosmonauts of the Sojus Tm-10 mission took to the space station MIR together with the original sketch of the watch) caused a lot of attention across the international art scene. Bürmann already had numerous solo- and group-exhibitions, amongst other places in Paris, Brussels, Biarritz, Athens, Chicago, NY, London and – of course – Hamburg, Germany, the city where he lives and works for 12 years now.





However, at some point he got bored displaying his art in galleries. He began to think about affordable, payable art in day-to-day life. „Of course it is great to get a lot of money for big paintings. But I wanted to create a place from where the whole world could be just a little bit more colourful and beautiful – independent of the gallery business and the usual rules of the art world.“ In the beginning there was a small paper boat. It sailed over large posters for the Jungfernstieg festival in Hamburg. Shortly after, it was seen on the first limited edition T-Shirts and is sailing the world so far. Then, born from a 'dirty idea', the 'Maschinist' was born – T-Shirts that look like as if they were worn by a man working in the large machine room of a ship who rubbed his oil dirty hands off on his shirt. Rapidly they became a bestseller at 'Art of Hamburg' and still each shirt is personally dirtied up by Frank Bürmann.

We asked Frank Bürmann to tell us more about his art.

Frank, why the machinist? Is this your way to fulfil a childhood ambition?

On close look, the whole world really is a machine room. Only if someone isn't above getting his fingers dirty he can change the world. That is the main thought going into my machinist pieces. And yes, I guess my romantic idea of seafaring influenced my work, too. In reality I was pretty much disenchanted by an intern on a containership when I was 15 years old.

Do your customers realize that they are buying a piece of Art?

[laughing] Some do. Others don't – those I fooled! They can't make excuses anymore that they don't have a free space on their wall to hang a work of art or that they have no notion of art or even that they can't afford it. Those people still believe they have just found something nice to wear. And this way they start collecting without actually realizing it. How cool is that, don't you think? It's like having a never ending circulation exhibition out there!

Does it make a difference to you painting on canvas or on a piece of clothing?

Just as with a big painting, the picture itself, its subject, comes to life in my head. In principle there is no difference from painting or printing a piece of art on canvas. However, I develop and craft my tools, too. My stamps have to handle me standing on them so I can reach a certain contact pressure. I build them in my very own way and they become durable pieces of art themselves. Later this year, I am having an exhibition just for the tools I use and create!



Is fashion itself art? Or is it a painted T-shirt?

Of course, a painted T-Shirt is art. A work of art doesn't care whether it's made on canvas, on wooden panels or on a piece of fabric. The main difference is that a 'T-shirt-Painting' runs free and can be seen by everyone. If the owner wishes to, he might even put it into a frame and hang it onto the wall. Like some of my customers did. Generally speaking, I think fashion becomes art if an artist had the idea and created it himself to convey a meaning.

What is the message of your work?

Every subject has its own central idea and message, like the machinist for example. Very often my emotional attachment to my adopted home Hamburg impacts what I do. I have never been a politically motivated artist but rather someone who keeps his heart and mind open, like children do – I keep a positive view of the world. I am sometimes told: „My kids could do that, too!“ My answer is always: „Precisely. And YOU can't anymore.“

Art and Craft – where do you draw the line?

Really a good question. I would say most of the time Art doesn't have a practical effect. A clothing piece, by all means, can be practical – whether painted on or not. An artist should control or command his craft. Am I, therefore, a craftsman? No, I am always on time. Kidding aside: Being an artist means for me to have a vision, a fundamental idea of life. For me, its reinventing myself every day and to create something new, never seen before.

What is it that makes the biggest difference of your work in comparison to artists developing collections for big fashion brands?

I create every single piece myself. Every time. Not just one showpiece, which is then replicated in more or less, automated mass production. In comparison, I like teamwork. I actually love it. Jutta von Perfall, who is my creative partner, is the perfect sparring partner. Together we get better and better – in fact we sometimes goad each other too much. Especially when we start to create a whole new world from a simple thought. This is our way of reaching the perfect level of imperfection. Which is what we strive for. On top of this, our own two shops are very important to us: they are a vital part of the world we made up. They are not just the point of sale or gallery but rather a further, three-dimensional canvas. Here we kind of create pictures you can walk into. A client, with the purchase of a T-Shirt, becomes part of that work of art himself bringing it to life by simply walking into the world outside our store.

