

# 2011 PETER KILLER

Peter Killer, born 1945 in Zurich. Education as a primary school teacher. 1969-1973 Coeditor of the magazine "du" alongside Manuel Gasser. 1974-1994 freelance art critic at the Zürcher Tages-Anzeiger and exhibition organizer. 1983-2001 Director of the Olten Art Museum. Since then freelance, lives in Olten. - Numerous book publications on the subjects of art, folk art, architecture, but also on various aspects of cultural history.

## Alfons Bürgler – love and play

Anyone invited by Alfons Bürgler to his apartment at Herrengasse 11 in Steinen will get to see much more than in his tree figure cabinet and in his studio. More works of art, his own and those of his colleagues, found objects that he brought home from his hikes and orange, lemon, apple, carrot, cucumber, peach and other bowls that he skilfully cut and dried. (These bowls have become the subject of a beautiful photo series.) His art and his everyday life are marked by a deep love of nature. The small garden, his balcony garden and the many things that forests and meadows offer him in food and tasty food make Alfons Bürgler largely self-sufficient.

"Ohalätz": Whoever does not know Alfons Bürgler has a completely wrong idea after reading the first paragraph, thinks of a sectarian ecofreak, a herbal man - Alfons is also a passionate and excellent tango dancer, has travelled the world and is socially well connected, radiates cheerfulness, wit, even wisdom.

The psychoanalyst, social psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm (1900-1980) distinguishes two basic human character structures: the biophilic and the necrophilic character. "Most people are individually distinct mixtures of necrophilic and biophilic orientations, and it depends on which of the two tendencies dominates. Alfons Bürgler is on the biophilic side to an unusual degree.

Erich Fromm defines biophilia as "the desire for growth, be it of a person, a plant, an idea or a social group. The biophile prefers to build rather than possess. He is capable of wondering and prefers to see something new rather than find confirmation of the old. He wants to shape and influence through love, reason and example, not through violence. Because he loves life and all its manifestations, he is not a passionate consumer. He has his own principle of good and evil. Good is everything that serves life. Good is respect for life, everything that promotes life, growth, development".

Another basis of Alfons Bürgler's creativity is his play instinct. In the standard work on the subject of "play", in "Homo ludens - vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel" by the Dutchman Johan Huizinga (1938) one reads: "Whether one thinks of the sacred or magical dances of the primitive peoples or of the Greek cult, of the dance of King David in front of the Ark of the Covenant or of the dance as a festive amusement, one can say in the fullest sense of the word that dance itself is play, indeed that it forms one of the purest and most perfect forms of play". Dance has long been a main theme of Alfons Bürgler's art. This applies to the tree figures - and also to the two-dimensional works: the figures, which the artist paints and draws in ever new ways, not closing himself to any technical experiment, are never motionless. They gesticulate, dance, jump - and in spite of all their exuberance they do not get in each other's way! In this community in which they find themselves, it is good to be.

According to Huizinga, the game is "outside the process of immediate satisfaction of necessities and desires, yes, it interrupts this process". The purposeless playing is a cultural achievement. So Alfons Bürgler should actually include in his fictitious oeuvre catalogue the many sand and snow castles that he built, his snow caves, labyrinths and installations, as well as his giant pine worms made of snow. The same applies to his collection of algae balls, the nest of reed with snowballs as "eggs", and the numerous spontaneous sculptures made of stones, branches, waste iron, and other materials. That there are no photos of most of these works is clear from the definition of the game. "The game has its course and its meaning in itself" (Huizinga).