



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

RICHARD BUTLER *ahatfulofrain* at FREIGHT+VOLUME, April 18<sup>th</sup>-May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013

In Richard Butler's newest body of work – and in this case “body” can be taken quite literally – his portraits, brushwork and palette demonstrate a painter at the top of his game. The compositions are at once mysterious and ambiguous, as well as deft and graceful - nearly surgical - in their depiction of emotion. Mostly renditions of his daughter and a few close friends, Butler creates an intensely private vision - dark and dreamlike, as well as stark and unapologetic. Like the old adage about statistics and bikinis, what Butler's paintings don't reveal is just as important as what they do, and maybe even more so.

Recurring motifs in his work, such as his confessional booth latticework, black veils, distorted glass windows and shrouds of bubble wrap serve to further obscure his subjects. But the suggestive nature of his work allows the viewer to enter a new level of consciousness – of feeling, of reflection, of desire – offering a taste of the sublime. Butler's titles reveal much about his obsession to portray emotion. For example, *iliedwhensaidilovedyou*, *whentoldyouiwassorryilied*, and *loveasitmustwillreiventitself* help decode the inner dialogue lurking both in the artist's psyche and beneath his subjects' façade. Butler is never sentimental, however; he doesn't give into easy traps of nostalgia or preciousness, he is always direct and often Zen-like in his simplicity, his treatment of complex states of being.

I took an hour to interview the man and the mystery (and incidentally also the founder/singer/songwriter of one of the most popular bands of the nineties, *The Psychedelic Furs*) to try and shed some light on what makes him tick. The following Q+A might help illuminate the force behind these exquisite and enigmatic paintings:

NL: Why do you paint?

*RB: Who knows why people paint! The need to make things? An addiction to the space the act of painting puts you in? Watching one's subconscious become manifest? The enjoyment of paint?*

*Maybe a hundred different reasons!*

NL: Who is the mysterious girl in many of your paintings – are they all versions of your daughter?

*RB: Some ninety percent of the paintings I make are based upon images of my daughter, usually distorted in one way or another. She has become a cipher for me, an every man/woman.*

*Andy Warhol was once advised "paint what you love".*

NL: Why the limited palette?

*RB: The limited palette is neither conscious or intentional, it just feels right to me. My paintings tend to have a certain melancholy about them. Maybe this is why the palette I use feels right.*

*Maybe it's a Northern European thing.*

NL: Many of your paintings seem to have a surreal, somewhat sadomasochistic undertone. Latex masks, a bloody nose, a black eye, a face seemingly suffocating in bubble wrap. Would you agree? Or is this again an unconscious aspect to the work?

*RB: I feel that the paintings tend to have a certain surreal feel to them, it is not a conscious thing, it gets back to that thing of 'just feeling right', a recognition. I don't find them sadomasochistic at all. Bloody noses, black eyes, these are all things that happen to faces, and when you are, I suppose, essentially a portraitist, it would seem remiss to leave these things out.*

NL: Much of your painting seems like the product of a very quiet, private and introspective person, unlike the stage persona you project when performing with your band. How do you explain this dichotomy?

*RB: (no comment)*

NL: What music do you listen to when you paint? Do you prefer working in the city or country?

*RB: I listen to any number of things while I paint, it all becomes rather ambient background noise anyway.*

NL: How does the new work feel in comparison to the older work, for instance from your solo with F+V several years ago, *hypochondriacatthegramercyparkhotel*?

*RB: I think the paintings in this show are 'looser' in the handling of the paint, the themes are different, and as a whole the work is smaller and more introspective.*

NL: Do you intend your work to be political? In terms of what is currently fashionable now in the art world, perhaps your work makes a statement by being more classical and rooted in renaissance techniques?

*I, personally, am not interested in making political statements in my paintings. I have in the past, made them in other places, but political statements always seem rather obvious; I prefer the more obtuse.*

NL: Do you paint with a specific audience or person in mind?

*RB: I paint with no one in mind. All I am after doing is finding a certain 'truth' in my work, something that resonates with me in an honest sense. To address a certain audience or person would surely divert one's attention away from this.*

NL: When you sell a painting, do you feel a sense of satisfaction or loss, or both? Or neither?

*RB: When I sell a painting I feel both a happiness and hope that someone recognized in the image the same thing that I did. And often a kind of regret in letting it go. There is a certain justification in selling a painting though it must be said.*

NL: And what do you do with the money when your dealer eventually pays you?

*RB: Live*

NL: Are you happiest painting or making music, or both? Or neither?

*RB: (no comment)*

NL: Are your paintings generally based on fact or fiction? (Auto)biography or imagination?

*RB: I tend to project my own thoughts and feelings through the faces I paint. I suppose they are all in a sense self-portraits, as is arguably anything that one does as an artist. Are feelings facts or fictions? They are both, probably.*

NL: Any regrets?

*RB: (no comment)*

NL: That concludes our interview, thank you.

Richard Butler was born in Hampton Court England. He studied painting at the Epsom School of Art and Design. Seventeen years ago, after a successful career as founder and singer/songwriter for the rock band *The Psychedelic Furs*, Richard returned to painting. He lives and works in Beacon, New York. This is his second solo show at Freight+Volume.

Please join us for a reception to meet the artist on Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm.

For further information please contact Nick Lawrence @ 212-691-7700 or

[nick@freightandvolume.com](mailto:nick@freightandvolume.com).