

Executive Style

Apr 9 2020

Inside the wild mind of Celine collaborator André Butzer

By Annie Brown

<http://www.executivestyle.com.au/inside-the-wild-mind-of-celine-collaborator-andr-butzer-h1mukh>



When Hedi Slimane took over as creative director of Celine in 2018 he was always going to shake things up. That was the point. As he told the French newspaper Le Figaro, "We arrive then with our own stories, our own culture, a personal semantic that is different from the ones of houses in which we create. We have to be ourselves, without any stance, against all odds."

Art is part of Slimane's story. His own photography work has been exhibited in galleries such as the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. The new Celine stores include the Celine Art Project - collaborations with nearly 20 painters and sculptors from around the world.

Slimane has a finely honed vision - lean, cool and as he digs through Celine's history BPP (before Phoebe Philo) , bougie - but he is open to hearing other people's ideas. As LA-based sculptor Oscar Tuazon told The Guardian, "[Slimane] has developed a very distinct visual vocabulary and I think it thrives in contrast or an unexpected juxtaposition of elements."

Introducing menswear was part of Slimane's remit and for the Celine spring/summer 20 menswear collection he collaborated with five artists. This included the New York painter David Kramer who emblazoned incredibly prescient for right now slogans such as "I have nostalgia for things I have probably never known" on straw totes and the German artist André Butzer who reinterpreted two of his works, Wangerung and Friedens-Siemens across t-shirts, polo shirts, sneakers, and woven basket bags.

We spoke with Butzer over email about the collaboration, which lands in boutiques this month, and well, it certainly made for an interesting conversation. A fitting one, you might imagine, for the strange, isolated times we find ourselves in.

And while right now, like Butzer we are all alone, may we all one day find a 5th dimension of happiness ...

How did you first come into contact with Hedi Slimane and what kind of conversations did you have?

IT WAS GODLIKE. IT HAPPENED OUT OF NOWHERE. THE CONVERSATION WAS A NON-VERBAL MAGIC THING.

What was it like working with Slimane and with Celine? How did the collaboration come together?

IT CAME TOGETHER THROUGH A GOLDEN BELL AND THROUGH SILENTLY RINGING FREQUENCIES IN A 4TH OR 5TH DIMENSION OF HAPPINESS.

What kind of parallels do you see between your work/approach to art and that of Hedi Slimane? What do you respect about his work?

MY RESPECT COULDN'T BE BIGGER. INSPIRATION IS SOMETHING ENTIRELY ALIEN. YOU CAN'T GET IF YOU WANT IT.

Were you familiar with the work of the other four artists Slimane worked with on the collection?

NO. BUT I RESPECT OTHER ARTISTS VERY MUCH.

Were you at the show? How did you feel about seeing two of your designs re-worked into pieces in the collection?

I WAS AT HOME. MOST OF THE TIME I AM HOME. I DON'T GO ANYWHERE BASICALLY.

What is your view on the "is fashion art debate?"

I CAME TO CONFIRM, NOT TO CRITICISE.

You describe your work as "science-fiction expressionism," how did you come to this and what does it mean to you?

THIS WAS A LONG TIME AGO. SO LONG, I CAN BARELY REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS. OF COURSE I AM AN EXPRESSIONIST. IT SEEMS LIKE I AM THE LAST EXPRESSIONIST ON THIS PLANET EARTH. SO I WANTED TO PROVIDE SOME FUTURE.

Where have you found inspiration for your work recently? And how do you stay inspired and connected?

I AM ALONE.

Is playfulness and subversiveness important to you/your art?

NO. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS. I HAVE TO FOLLOW AND CAREFULLY LISTEN.

Are you interested in fashion? Or, what interests you about fashion?

MY INTEREST LIES IN FATE ONLY. I AM A GRAVE GUARD.

What is next for you?

I TRY TO AVOID ANYTHING THAT WOULD SIMULATE PROGRESS OR INNOVATION TOWARDS MYSELF. SO I TRY TO AVOID THE NEXT THING.