

Aussagen des Galeristen Martin Muller, San Francisco

To find yourself in the same room as Gottfried when he is actually painting is a fascinating experience. It is more like dance than painting. There is rhythm involved, whether he is walking backward and forward to the canvas, or sideways. It's a choreography: all of a sudden there is syncopation and rhythm as he paints the canvas in a kind of rush and then walks away from it. So it's really a unique experience of choreography or a dance, where the music is in your mind. And depending on the picture he is working on, and depending therefore on the type of dance, you can go from electric Miles Davis to rock'n roll to Arnold Schönberg, to all kinds of rhythms and moods and musical environments in your mind.

It is interesting to me as an art dealer to have witnessed visitors who were very angry and upset when first exposed to Gottfried's paintings, collectors who questioned my daring in showing such works, who would then come back year after year to see the show and would finally end up purchasing a Gottfried piece. I would ask them, "What happened?" The response from a number of major art collectors has been, Yes, at first we were horrified and challenged by the toughness of the questions raised in Gottfried's work, but as collectors or as curators we see a lot of art, a lot of paintings every day, and somehow Gottfried's work has always stuck in our minds, in our subconscious. We couldn't get rid of the experience and that's why we would revisit it over and over, until after several years or decades we slowly accessed that place, that ethereal place, that makes Gottfried's work so unique, so powerful. And we felt the imperative to acquire one of his works.

I think that the great genius of Gottfried's art is its ability to transport us psychologically to a very deep inner place, both for better and for worse; a place of peace, a quiet space, where we can experience horror, pain and suffering at its worst. And I believe that one of the greatest strengths of Gottfried's work is the ability to convey, without gratuitous shock effect, a very profound emotional experience that is triggered by the opposition or the contradiction of those two extremes evoked in the same picture plane.

Over time, viewers of Gottfried's work learn to transcend their first reading of certain pictures and to go into that magic ethereal place, and I'm impressed by how often the experience brings tears to their eyes. I'm also heartened by this strong response to the work, because even if some people claim to hate it, there is a degree of passion in their response that exposes the intensity with which they have been moved. So even people who hate the work hate it with passion. In my opinion, this is because they are challenged in a way that makes them impotent: they don't know what to do about it, and therefore there is this reaction of anger.

And anger is often the result of impotence. You are angry because you can't do something about something.

To me, the series of works Gottfried developed called "The Angels", in which he used images of preserved fetuses from museums in Vienna to make very large paintings and billboards, are very interesting and powerful, since we are seldom if ever exposed to that type of visual. At the same time, they are no more strange, unusual or scary than the world itself today.

I think the success of Gottfried's work lies in its universality, meaning that there is something profound and meaningful in this work for everyone, independent of age, gender, race, location or education. There is something here that can press the hot button in everyone.