

**Press release**

**Erik Schmidt | *Mutanten***

15.04.-17.06.2023

Opening: Saturday, 15 April, 2023

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce *Mutanten*, the first solo exhibition by Erik Schmidt in the Madrid gallery.

Erik Schmidt traces a path of vibrant colours in constant movement, which begs to be explored in a state of physical and identity mutation. Through the use of gesture and colour, Schmidt persists in amending a document which results from an obstinate reality that continues to move forward, unstoppable. The artist paints over an image of one palm tree and another and another until their full dissolution. He records and gives colour to a delirious, failed *parkour*, which suggests the idea of escaping towards otherness, towards the palm trees, as the only escape route. He paints over newspapers that are up to date but indiscernible in terms of their violent, daily, inescapable content. He pastes on and reframes a group of teenagers, an eternal, reclaimed youth. And, whilst incessantly searching for a parking space, repeating the same exercise in different ways, he reflects. Once the document has been intervened in and its reiteration annulled through the artist's personal, living and visionary inner gesture Schmidt's memento mori materialise.

In *Palm Bombs* (2022) the perspective places the reclining viewer under a palm tree, exposed to the danger of a falling coconut. Sexuality is the counterpart of death, an other death, as much as otherness strikes a balance with identity and contributes to its definition. Thus, the worn-out palm trees are also sensual explosions: manifestations of the physical and sexual tension that reappears in the artist's work, in his paintings and in his videos. *The Bottom Line* (2018) is another example of how Schmidt uses his own body to mutate into others, extending the invitation to the viewer. An exercise that he also practises in a visible, though less evident manner, in his street portraits. The artist abandons himself as an expressive vehicle for a living death.

In *Parking* (2001), a young Erik Schmidt at one point declares: 'I often travel and seek interesting motifs to calm my senses'. A 'young and modern' Erik Schmidt, another I... because 'everything is dissolving... our bodies alter their shapes...'. This early video piece reveals some key interpretative features of his work. The interior monologue that runs throughout the film becomes a layer of paint that the artist applies in oscillating brushstrokes caught between otherness and identity. Whilst the repeated and absurd action of parking, the excuse for the digression, turns out to be a document of the inexorable happening of life and nature, mutant and static at the same time. The inner voice in *Parking* concludes by saying: '...and the next day she had forgotten everything'. Which brings to mind a verse from Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*: '...those I met perhaps did not see me'.

**Erik Schmidt** (1968, Herford) lives and works in Berlin. He has participated in group and solo exhibitions at institutions such as Kunsthalle Hamburg, Hamburg; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Artists Space, New York; MARTa Herford, Herford; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Matsumoto City Museum of Art, Matsumoto; and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg. His work appears in public collections such as the Taguchi Art Collection, Tokyo, Japan; The Rubell Family Collection, Miami, USA; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Belvedere, Vienna, Austria; Deutsche Bank Collection, Germany; MARTa Herford, Germany; Fundació la CAIXA, Barcelona, Spain; Leopold-Hoesch-Museum Düren, Germany; Bundesrepublik Deutschland collection, Berlin, Germany.

Text: Yara Sonseca Mas