

## Press information

### Erik Schmidt | The most beautiful hunter in Germany

26th April – 28th May 2005, Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Vernissage 23rd April, 6 p.m.

We are delighted to announce Erik Schmidt's forthcoming solo exhibition. Erik Schmidt is presenting the first phase of his extensive cycle *The most beautiful hunter in Germany*, an artist's exploration of the aristocracy in the Weser area of Germany and the constitutive rites of this class. The exhibition in Arch 52 comprises paintings (oil on canvas) and a photo series.

Erik Schmidt's works engage with the artist's relationship to closed social groups. In the process he reveals how their codes, permanently re-staged, make social relationships possible in the first place.

Direct experience lies at the heart of this new work by Erik Schmidt, and is transposed into various media. Through the process of multiple transfers into different media, the experience is transformed into an image cast as a shadow, alluding to its own status as representation. It becomes an image of an image – a gesture.

The hallmark of Schmidt's painting is its photographic qualities, just as there is something inherently painterly about his photographs. The paintings are created in the spirit of photography, as manifested in the importance of the angle of the "shot" and in the type of temporality in these works. Fragments of everyday experience are thus immortalised on the canvas and, through the aestheticization peculiar to painting, elevate this to a perception of colour at a specific moment.

Here we find the time of the experience, the time of the photograph and that of painting, in other words, the time when the experience is transformed and created anew through the artist's own creative powers. The time experienced is subsumed into the process of painting, at the end of which the work of art emerges. In contrast to this, photography appears to wipe out all that preceded the existence of the actual photos. It is the hybrid of the moment, etches itself into our memory, and is like an exclamation mark, a signifier that appears to bind all meaning to itself with its magnetic force. Sometimes we no longer know what we have experienced or have only seen as an image and tucked away in our recollections.

Erik Schmidt meshes together these various modes of representation. He paints snapshots and photographs tableaux. He renders the moment perceptible, by elevating it into the painting, whilst deploying the emblematic power of photography, along with its ability to fix a scene, in order to create tableaux: staged scenes that will be forever tied to the desire for representation of the figures depicted. And is this not indeed the function portrait painting traditionally fulfilled for the aristocracy? The sequence of photos develops a form of staging that focuses attention primarily on the language of gestures: the self-perpetuating rituals of the nobility coagulate into a catalogue of signs. These are captured as photographs and can then be consulted, almost like a reference work. The ritual – in this case hunting – thus becomes an orderly structuring, which can itself survive solely through its reiterated performance. In contrast, the paintings adopt an impressionistic register to narrate a sense of the forest, the rite, the hunt, which the artist participated in as both voyeur and chronicler. The moment of experience is immortalised as a perception through the colour impressions.

The motif of the hunt however serves as a pars pro toto for Erik Schmidt. In aristocratic circles the hunt, originally an essential part of maintaining and cultivating the land, has become a ritual to preserve their own traditions. The painter thus picks up on a classical topic depicted in paintings, as seen in countless works throughout the history of art. The practice of hunting becomes the subject-matter through which a class engages in self-representation. Erik Schmidt is however not primarily interested in plumbing the depths of a conventional artistic theme. His approach is instead conceptual in nature: via the historical evolution of the motif, the artist gains access to the aristocracy and thus to the ritual of hunting, the hunter and the hunted.

Just as the hunt initially emerged from the need to survive and has now become a social "game", contemporary urban space is permeated by social circles whose rituals serve above all to reinforce social roles and assert their own self-image. In this way the motif of the hunter, which is merged with that of the artist, as he enters into this role, becomes a metaphor for the dialectic of hunter and hunted, assailant and victim, along with the dialectic relationship between necessity and game. Role-based clichés of masculinity, carrying connotations of eroticism, strength and superiority, are acted out (by the artist too). Both the social and symbolic scope of the hunt are depicted in all their many facets through the various modes of representation. In 2006 Erik Schmidt will present a video in the Marta Herford Museum; this work is part of the cycle *"The most beautiful hunter in Germany"*.

For detailed press information and photos, please contact Philipp Selzer at [ps@carliergebauer.com](mailto:ps@carliergebauer.com) or by phone +49 (0) 30 280 81 10.