

DAVID  
KORDANSKY  
GALLERY

# Tobias Pils

## *Redeemers*

November 13, 2021 – January 8, 2022

Exhibition Binder

# DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Redeemers, its first exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Tobias Pils. The exhibition opens on November 13, 2021, and will be on view through January 8, 2022. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, November 13 from 6 – 8 PM.

Over the last decade, Pils has become increasingly recognized for his rigorous, open-ended pursuits into the heart of painting. Working within a grisaille palette limited to shades of white, grey, and black, Pils utilizes formal compositional strategies that play with scale, depth, and surface alike to create small moments of inquiry within larger pictorial spaces, allowing his intuitive relationship with the painterly medium to guide his compositions. A project with abstraction at its core, Pils's work nonetheless moves fluidly into—and through—figuration, generating forms rich in collective symbolism.

The new paintings in Redeemers depict a bulbous, feminine figure with biomorphic irregularities. A recent addition to Pils's visual vocabulary, the eponymous Redeemer emerges from the canvases with arms stretched outward, as if tasked to hold together the world in which she is situated. Throughout the exhibition, she is seen participating in activities such as riding on horseback, giving birth to baby Redeemers, and rising like the sun above an allegorical landscape. Two smaller, circular canvases introduce shifts in scale and format, and take on the rounded shape of the Redeemer herself. They also feature groups of other mysterious figures that tunnel into, intertwine with, and collapse into one another. The overall impression is one of self-generative creation, with images of transcendence and decay suggesting natural—and supernatural—life cycles.

In each of the works on view, brushstrokes of deep greys and muted white pigment create ripples in the Redeemer's flesh, forming images of folds, creases, and other skin-like textures. While the Redeemer's body language is suggestive of the desire to embrace, the figure is alternately contained, guarded, and propped up by a cast of characters—including distorted horses and hybrid beings—that recur throughout Pils's previous works. And

though the paintings defy any single reading, the Redeemer evokes the kinds of spiritual transitions that animate many religions, albeit from an alternative conceptual standpoint in which improvisation and non-objective visual forms are as important as narrative or myth.

To this end, concentrated passages in which discernible brushstrokes, surface textures, and shifts in tone and hue prevail are reminders that Pils's ideas and intuitions always exist in the physicality of the painterly medium. Areas defined by solid, blackened voids, for instance, become portals into the multiple worlds on display in each composition. In these cases, the Redeemer herself can be considered a metaphorical void, since she too functions as a container that holds the arsenal of signs (apples, eggs, etc.) populating the artist's images. As he moves from one canvas to the next, Pils paints against predictability. He allows linework to guide him through his compositions, each of which constitutes an opportunity for world-building.

Installed in an adjacent gallery are a group of recent works on paper. These include both ink and pencil drawings that underscore the more overtly spontaneous facets of the artist's methodology. Smaller in scale than the paintings, the works on paper also showcase the importance of linework throughout his oeuvre. They are animated by energetic inkblots and occasional splatters, and weave in and out of the pure abstraction and recognizable motifs also found in the canvases. Frenetic and open, intuitive and energetic, the works on paper find Pils breaking down the forms that exist at the core of his project and creating spaces in which he can build them anew.

In 2020, a permanent, large-scale installation of paintings by Tobias Pils was inaugurated at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, and a major permanent fresco was installed at the Renzo Piano-designed campus of École normale supérieure Paris-Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France. He has been the subject of solo and two-person exhibitions at the Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop, Germany (2017); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (with Michael Williams, 2017); Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas (2016); and Secession, Vienna (2013), among other

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institutions. Recent group shows include Picasso et la bande dessinée, Musée Picasso, Paris (2020); Jay DeFeo – The Ripple Effect, Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2018); Le Consortium Collection, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2018); and Spiegelnde Fenster, 21er Haus, Vienna (2017). Pils's work is in the permanent collections of Albertina, Vienna; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany; and Le Consortium, Dijon, France; among other institutions. Pils lives and works in Vienna.

**Tobias Pils**  
**Redeemers**

**November 13, 2021 - January 8, 2022**



**Tobias Pils**  
*Redeemer (4)*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
89 3/8 x 67 3/4 inches  
(227 x 172 cm)  
framed:  
91 3/4 x 70 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches  
(233 x 178 x 6 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.018)



**Tobias Pils**  
*Redeemers*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
39 3/8 x 39 3/8 x 1 7/8 inches  
(100 x 100 x 4.5 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.020)



**Tobias Pils**  
*Redeemer (5)*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
89 3/8 x 67 3/4 inches  
(227 x 172 cm)  
framed:  
91 3/4 x 70 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches  
(233 x 178 x 6 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.022)



**Tobias Pils**  
*Redeemer (2)*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
89 3/8 x 67 3/4 inches  
(227 x 172 cm)  
framed:  
91 3/4 x 70 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches  
(233 x 178 x 6 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.014)



**Tobias Pils**

*Redeemer (1)*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
89 3/8 x 67 3/4 inches  
(227 x 172 cm)  
framed:  
91 3/4 x 70 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches  
(233 x 178 x 6 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.015)



**Tobias Pils**

*Redeemers*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
39 3/8 x 39 3/8 x 1 7/8 inches  
(100 x 100 x 4.5 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.021)



**Tobias Pils**

*Redeemer (3)*, 2021  
oil on canvas  
89 3/8 x 67 3/4 inches  
(227 x 172 cm)  
framed:  
91 3/4 x 70 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches  
(233 x 178 x 6 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 21.017)

**Viewing Room**



**Tobias Pils**

*Passengers*, 2020  
pencil on paper  
16 1/2 x 11 5/8 inches  
(42 x 29.7 cm)  
framed:  
19 1/2 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches  
(49.5 x 37.1 x 3.8 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 19.005)



**Tobias Pils**

*Passengers*, 2020  
pencil on paper  
16 1/2 x 11 5/8 inches  
(42 x 29.7 cm)  
framed:  
19 1/2 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches  
(49.5 x 37.1 x 3.8 cm)  
(Inv# TPI 19.010)



**Tobias Pils**

*Passengers, 2020*

pencil on paper

16 1/2 x 11 5/8 inches

(42 x 29.7 cm)

framed:

19 1/2 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches

(49.5 x 37.1 x 3.8 cm)

(Inv# TPI 19.008)



**Tobias Pils**

*Passengers, 2020*

pencil on paper

16 1/2 x 11 5/8 inches

(42 x 29.7 cm)

framed:

19 1/2 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches

(49.5 x 37.1 x 3.8 cm)

(Inv# TPI 19.007)



**Tobias Pils**

*Untitled, 2021*

ink on paper

39 3/8 x 26 1/4 inches

(100 x 66.7 cm)

framed:

44 7/8 x 31 3/4 x 2 inches

(114 x 80.6 x 5.1 cm)

(Inv# TPI 21.023)



**Tobias Pils**

*Untitled, 2021*

ink on paper

39 3/8 x 26 1/4 inches

(100 x 66.7 cm)

framed:

44 7/8 x 31 3/4 x 2 inches

(114 x 80.6 x 5.1 cm)

(Inv# TPI 21.026)



**Tobias Pils**

*Untitled, 2021*

ink on paper

39 3/8 x 26 1/4 inches

(100 x 66.7 cm)

framed:

44 7/8 x 31 3/4 x 2 inches

(114 x 80.6 x 5.1 cm)

(Inv# TPI 21.025)



**Tobias Pils**

*Untitled, 2020*

ink on paper

39 3/8 x 26 1/4 inches

(100 x 66.7 cm)

framed:

44 7/8 x 31 3/4 x 2 inches

(114 x 80.6 x 5.1 cm)

(Inv# TPI 21.009)

**TOBIAS PILS**

born 1971, Linz, Austria  
lives and works in Vienna, Austria

EDUCATION

1994 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

(\* indicates a publication)

- 2021 *Redeemers*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Joe Bradley – Tobias Pils*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany
- 2020 Bonner Raum, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany (permanent Installation)  
*3 Paintings 2 Drawings 1 Triptych*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, New York, NY  
*Adam and Eve*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland  
*Alpha, Omega & Infinity*, 2020, École normale supérieure Paris-Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France (permanent Installation)
- 2019 \**Primordial Flow*, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, Germany
- 2018 \**Antiparos*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Kastro, Antiparos, Greece  
*Tobias Pils, Bernhard Fuchs, Justin Matherly*, Josef Albers Museum  
Quadrat, Bottrop, Germany
- 2017 Galerie Eva Presenhuber, New York, NY  
\*Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop, Germany  
\*Kunstalle Krems, Krems an der Donau, Austria  
*Tobias Pils / Michael Williams*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France
- 2016 *Loge Capitain Nr 1*, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, Germany  
Chinati Foundation, John Chamberlain Building, Marfa, TX  
Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany
- 2015 *Two Drawings*, Galerie am Stein, Monika Perzl, Schärding, Austria  
\*Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland

- Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, Germany
- 2013 \*Secession, Wiener Secession, Vienna, Austria
- 2009 Gironcoli Museum, St. Johann bei Herberstein, Austria
- 2008 Tresor BA Kunstforum, Vienna, Austria
- 2005 Tobias Pils and Patrick Pulsinger, Österreichischer Skulpturenpark Graz, Austria
- 2003 \*Landesgalerie des Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, Linz, Austria

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

(\* indicates a publication)

- 2021 *Enjoy, The mumok Collection in Change*, Museum moderner Kunst (mumok), Vienna, Austria  
*LA BOHEME*, Alfonso Artiaco Gallery, Naples, Italy  
*\*Part 2: Au rendez-vous des amis: Modernism in dialogue with contemporary art from the Sammlung Goetz*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany
- 2020 *Picasso Poet*, Musée Picasso, Paris, France  
*Picasso et la bande dessinée*, Musée Picasso, Paris, France  
*Group Show*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland  
*Drawing 2020*, Gladstone Gallery, New York, NY  
*Bruno Gironcoli, Elfie Semotan, Tobias Pils*, Galerie am Stein, Stift Reichersberg, Austria  
*room enough for former teasers*, curated by Marcel Hiller, Christof Lötscher and Marco Zeppenfeld, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Köln, Germany  
*Nur nichts anbrennen lassen. Neupräsentation der Sammlung*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany  
*Drawing Wow 2*, curated by Anna Gille, Philip Loersch and Tim Plamper, Kunstsaele Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
*With Wings That Beat*, Skarstedt Gallery, London, England  
*\*Part 1: Au rendez-vous des amis: Modernism in dialogue with contemporary art from the Sammlung Goetz*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany

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- 2019 *Monopol*, Spritmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden  
*Some Trees. Inspired by John Ashbery*, organized by Christian Malycha,  
Nino Meir Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 *Bernhard Fuchs. Justin Matherly. Tobias Pils – Malerei. Fotografie.*  
*Skulptur*, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Bottrop, Germany  
*Le Consortium Collection*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France  
*Smooth Transitions*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland  
*Jay DeFeo – The Ripple Effect*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France; Aspen Art  
Museum, Aspen, CO  
*Group Show*, Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2017 *Spiegelnde Fenster*, 21 er Haus, Vienna, Austria
- 2016 *Detour – Bruno Gironcoli, Eva Hesse, Tobias Pils*, curated by Wills Baker,  
Albus Greenspon Gallery, New York, NY
- 2015 *Works on Paper*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2014 *Justin Matherly, Oscar Murillo, David Ostrowski, Tobias Pils*, Galerie Eva  
Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland  
Open Studios, ISCP, New York, NY
- 2011 *April*, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY  
*\*Faistauer Preis*, Galerie im Traklhaus, Salzburg, Austria
- 2010 *Tenda Gialla*, Pogon Jednistvo, Zagreb, Croatia  
*4<sup>th</sup> Beijing International Art Biennale*, National Art Museum of China,  
Beijing, China  
Rezan Has Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2009 *Zauber der Zeichnung*, Galerie im Lanserhaus, Eppan, Italy
- 2008 Genia Schreiber University Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel
- 2007 *Kienzer, Pils, Wilfling*, Museum Stift Admont, Admont, Austria
- 2006 *Ins Leere*, Zacherlfabrik, Vienna, Austria
- 2004 *Sepp Auer, Bruno Gironcoli, Michael Kienzer, Tobias Pils, Franz West*,  
Galerie am Stein, Schärding / Schlosspark Vornbach, Vornbach, Germany

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Österreichischer Skulpturenpark, Graz, Austria

- 2003 *Steirischer Herbst*, Galerie CC, Graz, Austria  
Museum Stift, Admont, Austria  
*Günther Förg, Tobias Pils, Roman Signer, Annelies Strba*, Verein für  
Originalgraphik, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2002 Steindruck Urban Stoobm St. Gallen, Switzerland  
Herforder Kunstverein, Herford, Germany  
Kunsthalle Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany  
Städtische Museum, Gütersloh, Germany  
Galerie Eugen Lendl, Graz, Austria
- 2001 Museum der Stadt Ratingen, Ratingen, Germany
- 2000 Galerie Paul Hafner, St. Gallen, Switzerland
- 1999 Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Linz, Austria
- 1997 Kupfersichkabinett, Vienna, Austria
- 1996 *Kunst aus Österreich 1896 -1996*, Kunst Ausstellungshalle der  
Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany
- 1995 Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna, Austria  
Palais Liechtenstein, Feldkirch, Lichtenstein, Austria  
*Linea Infinita*, Villa Domenica per l'arte contemporanea, Treviso, Italy  
Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Linz, Austria
- 1994 Waltherhaus, Bolzano, Italy  
Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck, Austria
- 1993 Galerie Würthle, Vienna, Austria
- 1991 Haus Wittgenstein, Vienna, Austria

## GRANTS, AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2016 Chinati Foundation, Artist in Residence, Marfa, Texas

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- 2014 ISCP Scholarship, New York, NY
- 2011 Anton Faistauer Prize for Painting, Salzburg, Austria
- 1994 Otto Mauer Prize, Vienna, Austria

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(\* indicates non-periodical book, catalog, or other publication)

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Bagley, Christopher, "In David Kordansky and Mindy Shapero's Home, Art Always Comes First," *W Magazine*, September, 2021, pp. 72-79  
Naters, Luzie, "In conversation with...Joe Bradley and Tobias Pils," *Gallery-Weekend-Berlin.de*, September 16 – 18, 2021  
Zheng, Elaine YJ, "Gallery Weekend Berlin: Shows to See," *Ocula.com*, September 9, 2021  
Cascone, Sarah, "Editors Picks: 11 Events for Your Calendar This Week, From a Chess Grandmaster at the Rubin to a Modern Spin on Artemisia Gentileschi," *Artnet.com*, May 3, 2021
- 2020 \**A Letter from Home*, edited by Galerie Gisela Capitain, text by Tobias Pils, Cologne: Galerie Gisela Capitain, 2020  
Kim, Seungduk, "Architecture-Sciences-Arts, The Good Mix: ENS Paris-Saclay," *SPACE*, December 2020, pp. 36-43  
Waddoups, Ryan, "At Art Basel's Latest Virtual Edition, Timely Works Abound," *SurfaceMag.com*, September 25, 2020  
Waddoups, Ryan, "At Art Basel's Latest Virtual Edition, Timely Works Abound," *SurfaceMag.com*, September 25, 2020  
"Editors' Picks: 14 Events for Your Art Calendar This Week, From All-Day Chelsea 'Openings' to a Van Gogh-Themed Corn Maze," *Artnet.com*, September 7, 2020  
"Tobias Pils 'Adam & Eve' at Eva Presenhuber, Maag Areal, Zurich," *MousseMagazine.it*, March 2020
- 2019 \**Primordial Flow*, with text by Richard Shiff, Cologne: Gallery Gisela Capitain, 2019  
\**Contradiction*, ed. Felix Hoffman and C/O Berlin Foundation, Berlin, 2019, pp. 248- 249

- 2018 \**Antiparos*, with text by Seungduk Kim, Zurich: Galerie Eva Presenhuber, 2018  
Lettman, Achim, "Fuchs, Matherly und Pils im Bottroper Quadrat," *wa.de*, October 29, 2018  
Aschendorf, Dirk, "Drei spannende Begegnungen im Bottroper Quadrat," *waz.de*, October 27, 2018
- 2017 \**Tobias Pils: Doves*, ed. Florian Steininger, Krems and Vienna: Kunsthalle Krems, 2017  
\**Tobias Pils – Untitled (Room) & Marfa Paintings*, Bottrop and London: Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, 2017  
\**Mentally Yellow. High Noon. The KiCo Collection at Kunstmuseum Bonn and Lenbachhaus München*, with text by Stephan Berg and Irene Horn, ed. Christoph Schreier, Munich: Kunstmuseum Bonn, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau München, 2017  
"Ausstellung: Tobias Pils," *metropoleruhr.de*, September 2017  
"Nach der Malerei widmet sich das Quadrat wieder der Fotografie," *waz.de*, August 9, 2017  
Winkelbauer, Hannah, "Vom 'Außenseiter' zur internationalen Kunst-Karriere," *nachrichten.at*, August 2, 2017  
Lettman, Achim, "Der Maler Tobias Pils ist im Quadrat Bottrop zu sehen," *wa.de*, August 9, 2017  
Gerold, Roman, "Kunsthalle Krems: Wolzig und mit Farbgewittern," *derstandard.at*, July 2, 2017  
Roffino, Sara, "Seeing in Color: An Interview with Tobias Pils," *blouinartinfo.com*, June 9, 2017  
Smith, Roberta, "What to see in New York art galleries this week," *nytimes.com*, June 8, 2017  
Scobie, Ilka, "Tobias Pils," *brooklynrail.com*, June 1, 2017  
Hoffman, S., "Tobias Pils in Bottrop," *kunstmarkt*, May 29, 2017  
Ho, Yin, "New York. Tobias Pils," *artforum.com*, May 27, 2017  
"Malerei als Sprachersatz," *rheinische-art.de*, May 2017  
"Neu in New York," *Monopol*, May 2017, p. 127  
"Alte Meister, von neuen geliebt," *Monopol*, May 2017, pp. 16, 38  
Ponesch, Reinhold, "Ausstrahlung und Bestand: Tobias Pils in Manhattan," *derstandard.at*, May 23, 2017  
Ashendorf, Dirk, "Schwarz-Weiß-Spannung im Großformat," *waz.de*, May 19, 2017  
"Tobias Pils. Sondermarke," *Austria-forum.org*, February 3, 2017
- 2016 \**Tobias Pils*, with text by Richard Shiff, Zurich and New York, 2016

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- \**Tobias Pils*, with text by Elena Brugnano, Heinz Liesbrock and Matthew Simms, Bottrop: Josef Albers Museum, 2016  
Asthoff, Jens, "Tobias Pils. Capitain Petzel," *Artforum International*, October 2016, pp. 284-285  
Meixner, Christiane, "Lauter Licht," *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 6, 2016  
Thalmair, Franz, "Tobias Pils," *artforum.com*, July 1, 2016
- 2015 \**Tobias Pils*, with text by Heinz Liesbrock, Zurich and Cologne: Galerie Presenhuber and Galerie Gisela Capitain, 2015  
van Stein, Emmanuel, "color would be too exciting," *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, June 16, 2015, p. 21
- 2013 \**Secession*, with text by Roberto Ohrt and Richard Shiff, Vienna: Wiener Secession, 2013  
Fessler, Anne Katrin, "flushed into the underground," *derstandard.at*, November 25, 2013
- 2011 \**Anton Faistauer Preis 2011: für Malerei des Landes Salzburg*, Salzburg: Galerie im Traklhaus, 2011
- 2010 *Spring*, with text by Thomas Assheuer and Ferdinand Schmatz, ed. Teresea Rotschopf, Vienna, 2013
- 2007 \**Michael Kienzer. Tobias Pils. Wolfgang Wifling*, with text by Daniela Zyman, Admont and Vienna: Museum Stift Admont, 2007
- 2006 *Das Haus. Der Berg, der See, die Wäsche, der Paravent, die Tür, das Auges*, with texts Elisabeth von Samsonow, Rainer Fuchs, and Ferdinand Schmatz, Vienna, 2006  
*Garten der Kunst: Österreichischer Skulpturenpark*, ed. Österreichischer Skulpturenpark Privatstiftung, Ostfildern, 2006
- 2004 \**Zeichner 9. 9 Zeichner aus Österreich*, Städtische Galerie im Schloßpark Strünkede, Herne, 2004
- 2003 \**Tobias Pils*, with text by Herbert Achternbusch, Rainer Fuchs, and Ferdinand Schmatz, ed. Martin Hochleitner, Linz and Weitra: Landesgalerie des Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, 2003  
*Die Wand*, 2003  
*Die Geschwister*, with text by Jonas Musil, Weitra, 2003

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- 2001 *Klangstaub*, with text by Emil Breisach, Weitra, 2001  
*Privates*, with text by Friederike Mayröcker, Vienna, 2001  
*Vielleicht jetzt* with text by Ferdinand Schmatz, Vienna and Zurich, 2001
- 1999 *Eng am Thema*, with text by Martin Prinzhorn, Galerie CC, 1999
- 1998 *TOBIASPILS*, with text by Ferdinand Schmatz, 1998  
*Der Affenfritzi*, Weitra, 1998  
*Tobias Pils*, with text by Friederike Mayröcker, Vienna, 2001
- 1996 *Es finstert 1 (zweifelhafte) Liebeskummernis durch Buchenhecken hindurch*, Friederike Mayröcker and Tobias Pils, Gotha and Berlin, 1996
- 1995 *Keine Zeichnung*, with text by Matthias Boeckl, St. Gallen: Galerie Hafner, 1995
- 1994 *Damenbuch*, Tobias Pils, Weitra, 1994
- 1993 *Betblumen*, Friederike Mayröcker and Tobias Pils, Weitra, 1993
- 1990 *Zeichen auf Papier*, with text by Olga Litorna, Weitra, 1990  
*Aufgebote des Zweifels*, Tobias Pils and Franz Rieger, Weitra, 1990

# frieze

## BOOKS

### FIVE PAINTERS ON THEIR FAVOURITE PUBLICATIONS

**LATIFA ECHAKHCH, MICHAEL KREBBER,  
XIE NANXING, TOBIAS PILS and  
SHAHZIA SIKANDER share the books  
they frequently return to for inspiration**



#### MICHAEL KREBBER

I would like to recommend *A Wild Note of Longing: Albert Pinkham Ryder and a Century of American Art* (2020), a comprehensive book accompanying the 19th-century American artist's very charming exhibition at New Bedford Whaling Museum. It was published a year ago, but the exhibition was postponed to this summer because of COVID-19. Ryder was an outsider. In this book, Marsden Hartley, his great admirer, relates him to William Blake, and he definitely belongs to the family of Blake, Adam Elsheimer, Hercules Seghers and, of course, Samuel Palmer. I was told that Francis Picabia also liked these works. I have no proof of this, but it makes perfect sense to me.

**Michael Krebber** lives and works in New York, USA. His solo exhibition 'Studio Floor and Diamond Paintings' is currently on view at the Fondazione Antonio Dalle Nogare, Bolzano, Italy, through 8 January 2022. In November, he will present a solo exhibition at Greene Naftali, New York. Krebber is represented by Greene Naftali, New York, and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, Germany.

#### LATIFA ECHAKHCH

Over this past year, I have read lots of books about music and sound, and some of my first points of entry on the matter were *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago* (2016) and *The Infra-World* (2015) by François J. Bonnet, a sound artist and composer who works under the *nom de plume* Kassel Jaeger. In these books, instead of analyzing sound as a conceptual object, Bonnet maps a whole universe of experiments, phenomena, philosophical concepts and technologies that brought me a deep awareness of the process of listening and opened up completely new dimensions in my perception of the world.

**Latifa Echakhch** is an artist based between Martigny and Vevey, Switzerland. In 2022, she will represent Switzerland at the 59th Venice Biennale, Italy, and present her first solo exhibition with Pace at the gallery's new space on Hanover Square, London, UK.

#### Above

Latifa Echakhch,  
*L'air du temps – Prix  
Marcel Duchamp 2013*,  
installation view, 2014,  
Centre Pompidou, Paris

#### Right

Michael Krebber,  
*KAN IN CHEN 15*, 2020,  
acrylic on linen,  
60 × 50 cm



**XIE NANXING**

A year or so ago, I read *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* (What We See Looks Back at US, 1992) by Georges Didi-Huberman, which has been translated into Chinese by Wu Hongmiao. I didn't have any prior knowledge of the author but was drawn to the title. (I have since learnt a little more about him and discovered that, in addition to his extensive writings, he has curated a number of interesting exhibitions.) I felt it might touch upon something that I had previously read about religious paintings: the idea that, for believers, a painting of Jesus was not only an image to be looked at but an embodiment of Christ that would look back down at them.

In fact, the book focuses on minimalism and, in particular, on Tony Smith's *Black Box* (1962). Didi-Huberman envelops this work with every conceivable kind of knowledge and analysis, but I feel that, in the end, he is just asking us to really pay attention to how we look at and read art. He explores forms in a way that acknowledges the full extent of their content – formal, historical, mythological, psychological – which resonates with how I think about painting. We shouldn't be afraid when confronted with unfamiliar forms that we don't understand because, with time, the forms will speak for themselves.

This made me think about my own practice – how I conceive ideas and how they develop. When I paint something new, the mark that has come from my hand or my mind demands that I study it, that I analyse and try to understand it. Then finally, perhaps, I can make use of it. This process brings me closer to my thoughts and putting all of this into my work helps to create more layers and more possibilities.

**Xie Nanxing** lives and works in Beijing and Chengdu, China.



**Above**  
Tobias Pils, *Coupling 1*, 2020, mixed media on canvas, 2.2 × 2 m

**Below**  
Xie Nanxing, *Solitary Painting #4*, oil on canvas, 2.2 × 3 m



**TOBIAS PILS**

*Agnes Martin: Writings / Schriften* (1991) has accompanied me for many years now. Sometimes I open it randomly and read a whole page, sometimes just a column. Its lying around in my studio, quietly talking to me. It's almost like a physical place I can go to. Maybe the woods. Or it's like a glass of water. Sometimes I copy passages and hand them to friends with whom I have been talking about certain subjects – like side notes to our conversation, written much more eloquently than I could have said it – as though I'm talking from my soul. I like to think of it as my handbook for spirituality, with methods on how to survive whilst doing this work, teaching me how to get through any circumstance this life brings me. Or, sometimes, it's just talking to me about formats and formulas. Martin delivers precise statements on artists and their work – on solitude, notions, beauty, inspiration, truth. On friendly scepticism, soft impatience. 'My paintings have neither object nor space nor line nor anything – no forms,' she writes. 'They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form.'

**Tobias Pils** creates mixed-media paintings full of abstract and representational elements. His solo exhibition 'Redeemers' will be on view from 13 November to 8 January 2022 at David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, USA. He lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

**SHAHZIA SIKANDER**

Painting, to me, is like poetry: imaginative and emotional, precise and epic; a profound pursuit for truth and the sublime. I often read poetry to spark inspiration for my paintings. Solmaz Sharif's *Look: Poems* (2016) and Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) are two timeless and deeply visual poetic expressions that I highly recommend. My paintings also deconstruct traditional South Asian painting vernacular to explore the avant garde. South Asian pre-modern manuscript painting traditions are diverse in their virtuosity. In his book *The Spirit of Indian Painting: Close Encounters with 101 Great Works, 1100–1900* (2014), B.N. Goswamy provides a concise and gorgeously illuminated dive into the syncretic tradition of painterly history and process through some of the most iconic works. Last but not least, I want to share *Ninth Street Women* (2019) by Mary Gabriel. It's a rich and gutsy account of the turbulent lives, loves and illustrious works of five female abstract expressionist painters: Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Elaine de Kooning, Lee Krasner and Joan Mitchell. I moved to New York in 1997 and caught a glimpse of the shifting art world. Reading this book allowed me to grasp how much the art world has changed in terms of diversity while so much of it remains uneven in terms of gender bias.

**Shahzia Sikander** is a performance artist, muralist, mixed-media artist and installation artist based in New York, USA. This October, she will present solo exhibitions at Pilar Corrias Eastcastle Street, London, UK, and Jesus College, University of Cambridge, UK.



Shahzia Sikander, *Sub Blues*, 2019–20, ink and gouache on paper, 2.5 × 1.3 m

## GALLERY WEEKEND BERLIN

# In conversation with...Joe Bradley and Tobias Pils

Questions by Luzie Naters



Photo: Shauna Summers

The exhibition Joe Bradley – Tobias Pils opens at Capitain Petzel during Gallery Weekend \*Discoveries 2021 and marks not only the American artist Joe Bradley's debut in the Berlin gallery, but also the first time the two befriended artists' work is being brought into dialogue with one another.

At first glance, two opposing practices collide in this show of new paintings and drawings – Bradley's explosive and colorful abstract paintings meet Pils' grey-toned, suggestively figurative scenes. On closer examination, surprising similarities and contrasts reveal themselves between their respective individual and unique practices.

Here, the artists discuss the themes and ideas that run through these new bodies of work, the process of working together on this show, and the foundational similarities which connect them and their practices.

***Joe and Tobias, the two of you have known each other for some time and have developed a close friendship over the years. How did your relationship begin?***

**Joe Bradley:** I was introduced to Tobias' paintings through Eva Presenhuber. I felt an immediate connection to the work and recognized Tobias as an authentic voice and a painter of real power and depth. I met him personally not long after at an annual gathering of gallery artists in Antiparos, Greece. We hit it off and have remained close friends since.

**Tobias Pils:** Painting, like friendship, is chemistry.

***You both make use of figuration to varying degrees in your practice. Are there certain figures or shapes that you continually return to? Or do new ones appear in this body of work? What role does figuration play as a whole?***

**JB:** I usually describe my work as "abstract painting" even though I know this is not entirely true. There has always been a baseline of figuration in my work, and this is very much the case in this group of paintings and drawings. The drawings are full of recognisable imagery, and taking just a quick glance at the paintings, I see a couple of faces, an elephant, a still life and some sort of alien dog.



Photo: Shauna Summers

**TP:** I try not to return to any given shapes or figures initially, however of course one body of work reflects the next. For me it's about not making any habits, if something repeats itself it's probably time to leave it behind, even though similar shapes do appear, which makes this a paradox. The body of work which I will be showing in Berlin centres around the common theme of children resting on horses.

***Do you consider your work to revolve more around personal and biographic elements, or are you more interested in representing existential and universal themes (or both!)?***

**JB:** Both! I consider it all fair game and potential fodder for painting.

**TP:** If it's personal it is universal.

***How does narrative, or a lack thereof play into your work? Do you consider there to be a certain narrative theme running through this particular body of work?***

**JB:** I'm not so interested in storytelling in my own work. In painting, beginning, middle and end are present on the surface and available all at once. This is what I find interesting, this rush of information one gets when standing in front of a painting.

**TP:** Same, I'm not interested in any storytelling. These paintings are about travelling – without a beginning, a middle, nor an end. Maybe in the end Joe is more of a figurative painter, and I'm more of an abstract one!

***Aside from the paintings on view, the exhibition also presents new works on paper. Do these drawings function as a separate side of your practice, or do they form a part of the preparation process for subsequent paintings?***

**JB:** The stakes are low in drawing – the materials that I work with are relatively accessible and this makes it an excellent medium to play around in. I try to maintain an "anything goes" policy when drawing. If an idea works, fantastic. And if not, it's just paper.

**TP:** There are two different kinds of drawings: my pencil drawings are more often new concepts or sketches, on which I might base a painting on. Ink drawings, such as the ones in this exhibition, are more like meditations on already realised paintings.



Photo: Shauna Summers

***On that note, do these paintings and drawings arise out of spontaneity or strategic pre-planning and continuous editing?***

**JB:** All three strategies are put to use at various times in the process of painting. Pre-planning in the form of day dreaming and visualization, as well as the nailing down of formal nuts and bolts concerns (material, scale etc.) Spontaneity is of course key – the ability to improvise and problem solve on one’s toes, as well as editing- knowing what and when to give up and throw out.

**TP:** The paintings I chose were finished in my mind’s eye before I started to work, while when I was actually getting them done I had a quite distanced and almost “conscious unconscious” approach. However, every painting has to have its own temperature, or consciously chosen concept. For example, the painting *The Rest* was planned with rain in mind – although it didn’t work out that way in the end, the temperature of the painting was set by the image of rain in my head. The ink drawings, as I said before, are more like meditations on a certain theme – so the opposite, somehow. There’s hardly any editing or coming back.

***Is humor a relevant factor in your practice?***

**JB:** To build levity into a work of art seems to me an act of generosity. If the artist lets the viewer in on the joke, it may ease the sense of boredom and tension that sometimes arises when looking at art. If the viewer smiles, it will help them to relax and look with an open heart.

**TP:** A humorous state of mind is not present for me while working. However, the open heart that Joe speaks about is essential.

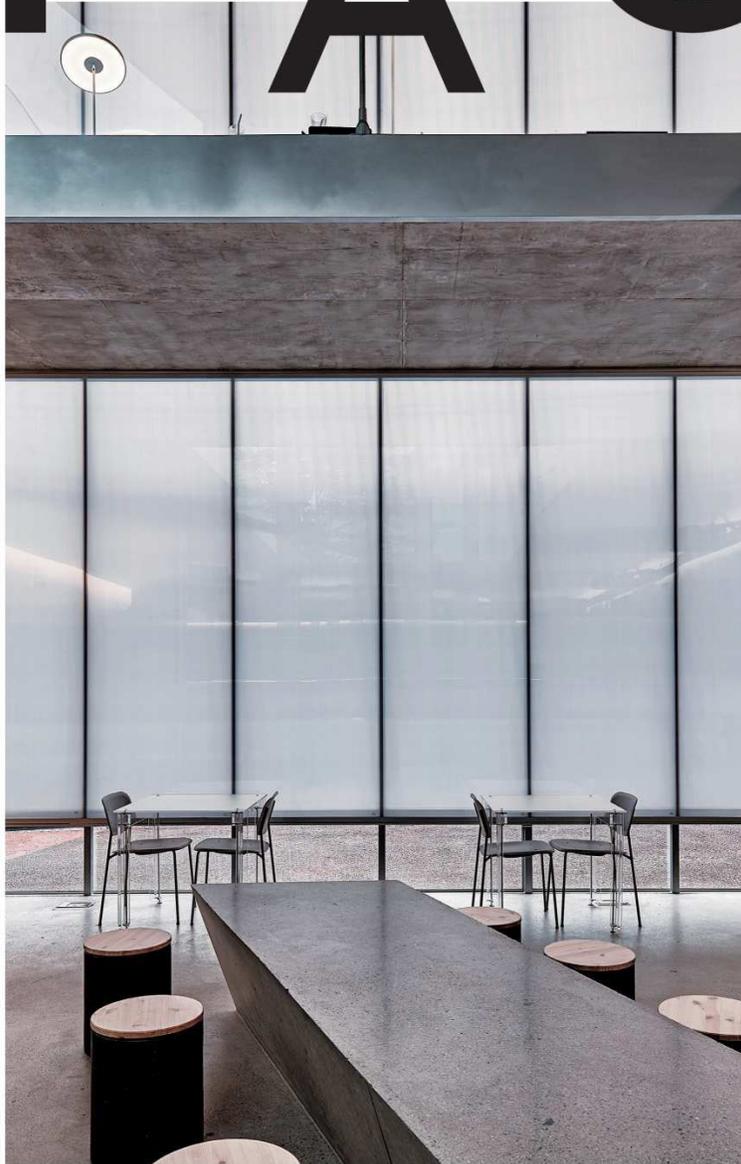
***How was the process of working on this exhibition together – but separately? To what extent were you sharing your works and ideas during the actual preparation?***

**JB:** I had a general idea of what Tobias would bring to the table for this exhibition as we had both agreed to make five or six paintings and a group of works on paper, but we didn’t share images of the work with one another until fairly late in the game. That being said, I did think quite a bit about Tobias’ work while working on my own paintings for the show, and just knowing that I would share the stage with Tobias made for a light and easy-going atmosphere in the studio.

**TP:** I’m only capable of painting the paintings that need to be painted after the one I did last and the one I will do next. But I knew quite early on in our friendship that I would love to see Joe’s and my work together, coming from these different backgrounds but still sharing this mutual understanding about painting itself. I loved seeing glimpses of the paintings Joe was working on during our FaceTime conversations, knowing something was going on, sensing the energy and choosing paintings of mine that I thought might correspond.

***Thank you both!***

# SPACE 637



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**REPORT** How Permanent Is Our City?: Kiruna Forever  
**REPORT** Architecture-Sciences-Arts the Good Mix: ENS Paris-Saclay  
**REPORT** A Roundtable in Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of HAAHN  
**PROJECT** Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Museum – Studio Zhu-Pei  
**PROJECT** Tesoro Nursery School – Alaska Architects' Atelier  
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**SPACE ACADEMIA** The Meaning and Value of the 'Voided Center' in John Hejduk's Architecture



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# ARCHITECTURE-SCIENCES-ARTS THE GOOD MIX: ENS PARIS-SACLAY

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## 건축, 과학, 예술의 융합: ENS 파리-사클레

프랑스에는 엘리트층 양성을 위한 전문 교육기관 그랑제콜이 있다. 그중 고등사범학교인 에콜 노르말 쉬페리외르(ENS) 파리-사클레가 학교 건물 이전을 위해 렌조 피아노에게 설계를 맡겼고 최근 이사를 끝마쳤다. ENS 확장인 피에르-폴 잘리오를 김승덕이 인터뷰했다.

The French academic system promotes the notion of an educated elite through its circle of schools known as les grandes écoles. One of them, École normale supérieure (ENS) Paris-Saclay recently moved into a new building designed by Renzo Piano. Seungduk Kim interviewed Pierre-Paul Zalio who have led the project.

인터뷰 피에르-폴 잘리오 ENS 확장 ×  
김승덕 콩소르시움 뮤지엄 공동디렉터  
사진 미셸 드낭세(별도표기 외)  
자료제공 ENS  
진행 최은화 기자

interview Pierre-Paul Zalio president, ENS × Seungduk Kim  
co-director, Consortium Museum  
photographed by Michel Denancé  
(unless otherwise indicated)  
materials provided by ENS  
edited by Choi Eunhwa



Photos: ENS Paris-Saclay



프랑스의 교육제도 중 하나인 '그랑제콜'은 엘리트 계층의 양성 및 재양성을 목적으로 하며 통치(정치), 생산(경제), 지도 및 연구(교육)에 중점을 둔다. 그중에서 우리가 이번에 주목할 곳은 에콜 노르말 쉬페리외르(ENS, École normale supérieure) 파리-사클레다. ENS는 최근 렌조 피아노(렌조 피아노 빌딩 워크숍 대표)가 설계한 새 건물로 자리를 옮겼다. 이전한 사클레 부지는 사를 드 골이 1944년부터 원자력 센터 설립과 연구 중심지 조성을 위해 눈독을 들였던 곳이기도 하다. 최근 이곳에서 진행된 개발사업은 다수의 신축 건물을 포함하고 있으며, 프랑스 대학 연구기관의 15%가 이미 이곳에 위치하고 있다. 이번 인터뷰에서는 설계공모 개최부터 프로그램 계획서 작성과 예술작품 커미션에 이르기까지 프로젝트 전체를 총괄한 피에르-폴 잘리오(ENS 학장)를 만났다. 그는 계획 당시 품었던 생각들을 들려줬다. 약 10년간 이어진 프로젝트는 2020년 코로나바이러스감염증-19 사태로 다소 지체되기도 했다.

**김승덕(김): 가장 먼저 ENS 파리-사클레 교육기관에 대한 소개를 부탁드립니다.**

피에르-폴 잘리오(잘리오): ENS는 가장 차별화된 고등 교육기관 중 하나로, 특히 연구 분야에서 선두를 달리고 있다. ENS의 차별점은 기초과학에서 인문학에 이르는 모든 학문 분야를 하나로 연결한다는 데 있다. ENS만의 차별화된

환경 속에서 학생들이 대개 고등교사 자격과정과 연계된 박사과정으로 이어지는 연구 중심의 교육을 받는다. 대표적인 그랑제콜 명문들은 파리와 리옹에 몰려있고, 우리는 파리-사클레 캠퍼스에 등지를 틀고 있다. 프랑스 과학 연구의 15%가 파리 남부에 자리한 사클레 플레토에서 진행되고 있으며, ENS 설립에 참여했던 파리-사클레 대학은 현재 세계 14위(AWU 상하이 랭킹)에 올라있다. ENS 파리-사클레의 신축 건물은 이러한 우수성을 형상화했다.

**김: 프로그램을 구성할 당시 어떤 목표를 세웠는가?**

잘리오: 먼저 이번 프로젝트가 건축적인 부분에만 국한된 것이 아니라는 점을 분명히 해두고 싶다. 고등교사 양성전문 대학교는 어떤 형태여야 하는지, 대학의 목적, 후속 설계, 시공 현장 등에는 어떻게 대응해야 하는가에 대한 고민에서 출발했다. 무엇보다 우리는 교육과 연구가 일상에서 상호작용을 주고받을 수 있는 건물을 원했다. 초기 기획안은 교육과 연구가 각자의 건물에서 이루어지는 전통적 고등 교육기관 구성 방식과 비슷했다. 하지만 우리는 학생이 교실에서 나와 몇 미터 떨어진 연구소 실험실로 향할 때 거치는 장소에서 많은 기회를 접할 수 있기를 바랐다. 또 다양한 학문 영역 사이에서도 이러한 일들이 벌어져 가능한 많은 상호교류가 일어나길 원했다.

대형 아르데코는 에로 사리넬이 설계한 벨 연구소 홀름델 콤플렉스(Bell Labs Holmdel Complex)와 닮았다는 것을 금방 눈치챌 수도 있을 것이다. 솔직히 그런 평가는 유쾌하게 받아들일 수 있다. 학문 간 융합 유도를 위해 의도적으로 설계를 그렇게 했기 때문이다. ENS 파리-사클레는 학제간 연구기관으로 디자인, 토목 등을 포함해 역사에서 물리학에 이르는 기초 학문은 물론 인문, 사회과학에서 공학까지 광범위한 분야를 다루고 있다. 이러한 다학제성은 교육과 연구 양 측면에서 단순한 집적을 뛰어넘어 그들 사이의 교집합을 만들어낼 때 비로소 빛을 발할 수 있다.

**김: 개발, 연구, 문화 등과 같은 다양한 화두와 관련해 학교는 어떤 새로운 이슈에 주목하는가?**

잘리오: 학생들이 특정 학문에 대한 탁월한 수업뿐 아니라 맞춤형 학제간 교류까지하기를 기대한다. 예를 들어 2020년 ENS는 현안들에 대응하고자 인공지능과 양자공학 관련 새로운 교육 프로그램을 도입했다. 우리는 예술 작업과 과학 연구가 융합된 교육과정을 제공하기 위해 최선을 다하고 있다. 이러한 생각은 학교 중심에 자리한 전문성의 극장이자 프로젝트 대상지 중 하나인 '연구의 무대(La Scène de Recherche)'의 중심부에도 새겨져 있다. 이곳은 조성, 연구, 개방성 확대라는 세 가지 목표를 지닌 연구 및 창작 플랫폼이다.

**김: 학교이기 때문에 기술적으로 충족해야 할 주요 조건이 많았을 것 같다. 프로그램 계획서를 작성하는 것만 해도 오랜 시간과 많은 인내심이 필요했을 것 같다.**

잘리오: 프로그램 계획서를 만드는 작업은 2011년에 시작되어 2년간 진행됐다. 모든 개발 실험실의 세세한 기술적 특징에 대해 미래의 요구 사항까지 파악해야 했고, 학생 활동 공간마다 수시로 바뀌는 강의 방식의 변화 또한 고려해야 했다. 결과적으로 프로그램 계획서는 분량만 400쪽에 달하게 되었다!

**김: 설계공모를 개최하려면 심사위원을 선정해야 하는데, 이는 우리 모두가 알다시피 매우 중요한 과정이다. 이 과정에서 어려움은 없었나?**

잘리오: 프랑스의 공공건축물 설계공모는 모두에게 열려있고, 많은 해외 건축사무소가 참여한다. 결과적으로 세계 최고의 건축가들이

124개의 제안서를 제출했다. 발주기관인 나는 사업 주체로서 심사위원장이 되고, 위원단의 약 3분의 1을 임명했다. 나머지 3분의 2는 고등교육부, 지역기관, 건축가협회가 임명했다. 길고 일찬 토론 끝에 심사위원단은 이브 리옹 & 마크 밀렘 아키텍처 앤 어쏘시에, 장 게르빌 & 주앙 루이스 카탈류 다 그라사, 이브 르몽 & 자크르토, 라카톤 앤 바살, 렌조 피아노 빌딩 워크숍까지 총 5팀을 우승 후보로 선정했다. 그리고 프로그램, 예산, 건축적 완성도 등을 기준 삼아 각각의 제안서들을 면밀하게 분석해 렌조 피아노를 최종 우승자로 선정했다.

**김: 렌조 피아노가 당선된 이후 구체적인 작업이 시작됐다. 유명 건축가이자 오랜 세월 세계적 명성을 쌓은 인물인 렌조 피아노와의 협업은 어땠는가?**

잘리오: 렌조 피아노 빌딩 워크숍과의 논의를 통해 소통은 솔직해야 하고, 까다로우며, 대화에 집중해야 한다는 것을 빠르게 깨달았다. 그는 프로젝트에 전력을 다하는 훌륭한 협력자였다. 프로젝트의 프로그램이 매우 구체적이었기에 우리는 백지상태에서 시작하지 않아도 됐다. 렌조 피아노 빌딩 워크숍의 건축가들은 투명한 동시에 고고한 개방형 건물이라는 개념에 기반을 둔 해석을 제시했다. 여기서 또 말해두고 싶은 것은 우리 프로젝트가 모든 설계와 시공을 BIM을 활용해 진행했다는 사실이다. 유지관리 역시 같은 방식으로 이루어지고 있다. 이 정도의 규모는 프랑스에서 처음이다. 덕분에 바로 디지털 모델 작업에 들어갈 수 있었고, 사용자에게는 입체적 경험을 제공할 수 있었다. 시공 단계의 작업 방식도 바꾸어놓았는데, 사회학자인 나에게는 흥미로운 부분이었다.

**김: 축복과 지붕으로 주요 구조체를 형성하며 단조로운 박스형 건물에 투명성과 개방성을 가미했다는 점에서 건축적으로 뛰어나다고 생각한다. 또한 열리고 닫히는 정원을 중앙에 배치하여 사용자의 생활환경도 좋아졌다. 이러한 방식에 대해 당신은 어떻게 생각하는가?**

잘리오: 콘크리트와 유리의 사용은 렌조 피아노에게 중요한 이슈였다. 특히 콘크리트는 그가 잘 사용하지 않는 재료다. 콘크리트는 기술적으로 상당히 뛰어난 재료다. 예를 들어 대형 콘크리트 벽 사이에는 단열재를 둘 수 있고, 속이 빈 상태로 하중을 건디는 바닥은

가변형 대형 트레이의 설치와 생물기후학적 자연 환기가 가능하다. 결과적으로 건물은 성공적이다. 놀라운 정도로 간결한 이 방법으로 시대를 초월한 아름다움이 건물에 드리운다. 지극히 렌조 피아노다운 건물이라고 할 수 있다. 그는 항상 누구나 쉽게 알아볼 수 있는 디테일에 심혈을 기울인다. 정원은 교내에서 편안함을 느낄 수 있도록 하는 데 중요한 역할을 한다. 나무, 바람, 빛, 콘크리트, 유리의 대화는 7만㎡ 건물에 집과 같은 아늑함을 불어넣어준다. 건물 이용자들은 이곳에 오면 건강해지는 느낌이 들고, 다른 이들과 어울리기 쉬우며, 안락한 공유 공간을 즐긴다.

**김: 프로그램 계획서를 작성하는 초기 단계에서부터 학교 프로그램의 주요 구성 요소와 그것이 들어갈 건물의 물리적 영역 안에 문화를 포함시켰다. 당시 기본구상과 추후 발전 과정에 대해 듣고 싶다. 또한 프랑스의 건축물 예술작품 제도, 절차와 규정 그리고 그 목적에 대해 자세한 설명도 부탁한다.**  
 질리오: 나는 프로그램 계획안 속에 반드시 극장이 포함될 수 있도록 노력했다. 한 나라의 엘리트들을 양성하는 교육기관은 학생들이 비판적인 예술 탐구와 자아 성찰에서 멀어지지 않도록 해야 한다고 생각했기 때문이다. 1951년부터 프랑스에서는 공공건물을 지을 때 예산의 1%를 한 점 이상의 예술작품 커미션으로 할애해야 한다. 이 과정은 공격적이고 투명하게 진행되어야 한다. 이 제도는 1950년대 전후 복구 시기에 공공 발주를 통한 예술 창작 활동

지원을 목적으로 시작됐다. 예술위원회는 문화부와 예술 및 건축 분야 단체 대표자들로 구성된다. 의뢰인인 나는 위원회의 수장이 됐고, 자격을 갖춘 인사들을 위원으로 임명할 수 있었다. 그래서 현대미술에 대해서는 프랭크 고트루(콩스르시움 유지엄 관장)의 도움을 받기로 했다. 또한 예술작품을 구상하고 그 의미를 최대한 많은 이들과 공유할 수 있는 방법을 제시한 레 누보 코망디테(Le Nouveau Commanditaires)를 모델 삼아 참고했다.

**김: 예술작품이 위치하는 장소로 부지 곳곳의 입지와 학교 건물의 기능을 고려해 네 곳의 중요 장소가 선정됐다.**  
 질리오: 첫 번째 장소는 커다란 벽에 벽화가 그려져 있는 ENS 리셉션 홀이다. 두 번째는 길이 170m, 폭과 층고가 15m에 다다른 거대한 아트리움이다. 세 번째는 조경가 피스칼 크리비에가 디자인한 실의 정원이다. 그리고 마지막은 '연구의 무대' 안에 있는 극장이다. 리셉션 홀을 맡은 토비아스 필스는 작은 그림을 그린 뒤에 그것을 탭플릿처럼 활용해 작품을 완성했다. 프레스코화라 그린 것은 그의 선택이었다. 내가 강조하고 싶은 부분은 그가 그림을 그리던 중에 현장에서 자신의 기존 디자인을 새롭게 해석했다는 점이다. 그의 작품은 진정한 프레스코화라고 할 수 있으며, 그 뜻은 그가 작품을 한번에 완성해야 했다는 의미다. 그도 분명 주변 환경의 영향을 받았을 것이다. 몇 미터 떨어진 곳에 위치한 거대한 기술

플랫폼을 그도 볼 수 있었을 것이기 때문이다.

**김: 건물의 중심에는 170m 길이로 뻗은 실내 '가로'가 있는데, 이 공간은 연구 및 교육 영역의 핵심 공간이다. 이 부분의 설계공모에 당선된 마탈리 크라세에게 구체적으로 요구한 사항으로는 무엇이 있었나?**

질리오: 렌조 피아노는 건물 각 층에 아주 독특한 주황색을 적용했다. 색상이 방향성이나 상태를 의미하지 않는 건물에서 이러한 주황색은 강렬하고 매력적인 선을 형성한다. 실내 '가로'는 디자인/작품 가구(Art/Furniture Commission)를 설치할 두 번째 장소로 선정됐다. 마탈리 크라세는 색을 잘 쓰는 디자이너로, 렌조 피아노의 주황색과 대비되는 보색을 주로 사용했다. 건축물 미술작품 제도는 작가들을 위한 제도지만, 우리도 기능적이면서 예술적인 가구 디자인이 필요했다. 우리의 목표는 이 공간에 앉아서 잡담을 나누거나 휴식을 취할 수 있는 오브제나 장치를 설치하는 것이었다. 어떤 면에서는 마을 광장 같은 이 공공 영역에 마탈리 크라세는 '연결과 군도'라는 개념에 기반을 둔 하나의 시각적 문법을 제시했다. 여럿이 함께 앉을 수 있는 오두막, 휴식 공간, 모뎀형 테이블 시스템 등을 포함한 일련의 섬과 같은 요소들로 표현했다. 마탈리 크라세의 섬들은 다소 전통적으로 보일 수 있는 건축물에 알록달록하고 유쾌한 감성을 더해준다. 학생들이 각자의 필요에 맞게 그녀의 오브제들을 이용하는 모습을 보면 흥미롭다.

**김: 건물 중심부에 건축가가 조성한 열린 공간은 1ha(1만㎡)에 이르는 정원 공간을 확보해준다. 렌조 피아노가 '경이로움의 정원'이라고 부른 이곳은 휴식과 오락을 위한 조경 공간으로 한쪽에는 다섯 개의 '연못같은 수공간(basin)'이 있으며 사용자 커뮤니티 지향적인 시도라는 측면에서 높은 건축적 성취를 이뤘다고 생각한다. 미술품을 설치할 세 번째 장소에는 야외 조형물이 들어서야 했는데, 이를 위한 작가 선정은 어떻게 진행됐는가?**

질리오: 어떻게 보면 조형물 발주는 1%의 건축물 예술작품 예산을 집행하는 가장 일반적인 방식이다. 우리는 조형물이 설치된 장소 주변과 소통할 수 있도록 하는 데에 초점을 맞췄다. 주변이라고 하는 것에는 건물, 정원, 바람, 빛뿐만 아니라 ENS의 일상,

학생들, 이곳에서 진행되는 연구, 이와 연결된 지식 또는 논리 등을 모두 포괄한다. 장 마리 아프리카의 제안서는 바로 우리의 관심을 끌었는데, 작품이 공간을 점유하는 방식 때문이었다. 생명의 순환을 묘사한 조형물에 가장 잘 어울리는 곳이 '연못같은 수공간' 안의 물이라는 그의 생각이 옳았음을 바로 입증했다.

**김: 네 번째이자 마지막 장소는 학교 건물 현관 앞에 매달려있는 거대한 흰색 큐브 안의 검은색 공연 박스인 '연구의 무대' 내부다. 그곳엔 일종의 시청각 예술작품이 필요했고 때때로 소나공 연후에 작동되어야 했다. 예술가 겸 영화감독 사를 드 모는 올리비에 메시앙의 '새의 깨어남'(1997)과 관련하여 동물들 주제로 한 음악을 활용한 계획안을 제시했다.**  
 질리오: 당시도 언급했듯이 '연구의 무대'는 검은색 공연예술 박스이며, 몰입형 콘텐츠를 구현하기에 매우 적합한 장소다. 올리비에 메시앙의 '새의 깨어남'과 아름다운 균형을 이루는 사를 드 모의 작품을 설치함으로써, 촬영 및 편집 기술이 만든 새들을 통해 인간 활동으로 새들이 위협받는 환경 속에서 내부와 외부 사이의 소통을 일으킬 수 있었다.

**김: 과학, 건축, 예술이 세 가지 요소는 새로운 학교를 위한 이미지 메이커인가? 연구와 교육은 건축적 성취에서 중요한가? 예술과 문화가 필요 이상의 가치를 담고 있지 않은가?**

질리오: 연구와 교육의 공간에서 건축의 가치는 다양한 활동과 기능을 하나로 묶어주고 그들 사이의 상호작용을 이끌어주는 것이다. 렌조 피아노의 강점 중 하나는 장식 요소를 이용해 추기적 편의를 제공하는 대신 기능주의적 건축을 추구한다는 것이다. 이는 예술과 과학의 융합, 인본주의와 결부된 무언가 또는 렌조 피아노가 종종 예술과 과학이 분리되기 전인 르네상스 이전 시대 풍경의 환기를 통해 제시하는 이상과 관련된 것이다. 캠퍼스를 굽어보는 복잡하고 시끄러운 세상 가운데 자리 잡은 고고한 공간은 수도원을 생각나게 함으로써 중세 유럽 수도원 학교가 속했던 세상을 떠올리게 하는데, ENS 학생에게는 크게 놀라울 것 없는 경험일 것이다. 결과적으로 예술과 과학의 융합은 이 두 세상의 소통을 유발하고, 이러한 창조적 현상의 중심에는 우리 사회가 직면한 문제들을 돌아볼 수 있는 공간이 자리하고 있다.



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(38쪽) ENS 파리-사클레와 사클레 플레토의 전경  
(p. 38) Aerial view of the ENS Paris-Saclay and the Plateau de Saclay

(39쪽) 렌조 피아노와 피에르-폴 자리오의 인터뷰 모습  
(p. 39) Interview of Renzo Piano and Pierre-Paul Zilio

(위) 파스칼 크리비에가 디자인한 정원  
(아래) 토비아스 필스, '알파, 오메가 & 인피니티'  
(top) Garden designed by Pascal Cribier  
(bottom) Tobias Pils, *Alpha, Omega & Infinity*

(43쪽) 건물 중심을 가로지르는 실내 '가로'와 마탈리 크라세가 디자인한 디자인/작품 가구  
(p. 43) Indoor 'street' in the centre of the building and furniture designed by Matali Crasset

In France, the academic system promotes the idea of an educated elite, particularly through a circle of schools known as 'les grandes écoles'. The products of these institutions tend to rule (govern), produce (economy), teach & research (educate). Among them, École normale supérieure (ENS) Paris-Saclay is of particular interest as the school recently settled into a new building designed by Renzo Piano (principal, Renzo Piano Building Workshop). Pierre-Paul Zalio (president, ENS), who is in charge of the project, here answers our questions about his governing agenda when beginning the project and his plan for building this new school.

**Seungduk Kim (Kim): Can you give me a brief description of ENS Paris-Saclay?**

Pierre-Paul Zalio (Zalio): ENS is one of the most selective higher education institutions and one of the international frontrunners in research. What sets the ENS apart is that it brings together disciplines from all areas of knowledge ranging from basic sciences to the humanities. In ENS, a unique environment, normalien students receive research-intensive training leading to doctoral degrees, which are frequently coupled with an advanced teaching qualification.

**Kim: What ambitions did you set for yourself and for the programmes herein?**

Zalio: It is important to clarify that the initial design was not limited to architectural considerations: it consisted of reflecting upon what the design of a higher teacher training college should be, how it might correspond with its mission and aims, and how it might tailor these needs in the execution of the site. First of all, we wanted a building that was conducive to the daily interactions between training and research. At first we considered the advantages of originality compared to the more traditional layout and organisation of higher education

establishments, where training and research have their own buildings. We wanted for students, in the same corridor, to have every opportunity to leave their classroom and only after a few metres to enter the experimental spaces of a laboratory. In addition to our proposed close proximity between training and research, we also wanted to increase intimacy between the disciplines themselves, to intersect as much as possible. In the case of the large atrium, some observers immediately drew a parallel with the Bell Labs Holmdel Complex designed by Eero Saarinen. Naturally, this parallel is pleasing because it is guided by the same design intentions of encouraging cross-disciplinary activities. ENS Paris-Saclay is an omni-disciplinary research establishment: it covers a wide spectrum of sciences, from human and social sciences to engineering sciences, including fundamental sciences; from history to physics, including design, civil engineering, and others. This omni-disciplinarity, however, is only of interest if it goes beyond simple juxtaposition, and engages with these disciplines both in terms of training and research.

**Kim: Did this school project present unique challenges in terms of content development, research or other topics such as cultural activities?**

Zalio: Students expect not only discipline-specific courses of excellent quality, but also a tailor-made interdisciplinary offering of wider activities. In 2020 for instance, ENS delivered new training programmes in artificial intelligence and quantum technologies in order to meet demands that have now become vital. I am committed to ENS Paris-Saclay also offering courses that hybridise artistic work and scientific research; this idea lies at the heart of 'La Scène de Recherche' which is a site and a professional theatre at the centre of the school. It is a platform for research

and creative practice of three ambitions: formation, research and openness to a wider audience.

**Kim: Writing the programme must have been a long process requiring patience, particularly as the school has a lot of technical prescriptions?**

Zalio: The programming work, which started in 2011, was a two-year phase of the project. It was necessary to take this time to ensure we were taking into account all of the specific technical features required in the laboratories and also imagine future needs. It was also necessary to anticipate ongoing changes in teaching methods and tailored student workspaces. In the end, the programming document ended up being over 400 pages long!

**Kim: Organising an architecture competition also means the need to select a jury and we all know that this is a crucial moment in maintaining a certain control over the outcome. Was it a critical moment?**

Zalio: The selection of the jury was not that pivotal. Architecture competitions for public projects in France are open and many international architecture offices take part in them. As a result, there were 124 submissions from some of the best architecture practices worldwide. The project owner, the public contracting authority (i.e. me), heads up the jury and appoints approximately one third of its members. However, the other two thirds are appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education, by local bodies and by the Order of Architects which represents the architecture profession. Eventually, after a long and complex debate, the jury named five finalists: Yves Lion with Marc Mimram, Jean Guervilly with João Luís Carrilho da Graça, Yves Rémond with Jacques Ripault, Lacaton & Vassal, and finally the Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Following

some very rigorous technical analysis of the dossiers (informed by the criteria of their ability to stick to the programme, compliance with the budget and overall architectural quality), Renzo Piano was the clear frontrunner.

**Kim: Renzo Piano won and the concrete work started. How was it to work with him, a 'starchitect' and man of significant international experience?**

Zalio: It immediately became obvious that discussions and exchange with the Renzo Piano team would be frank, demanding and centre around a commitment to dialogue. Renzo Piano was consistently an excellent partner who is project-focused. The programme was very specific, meaning that we weren't really beginning from scratch. The architects put forward an interpretation of the project based on the idea of an open building, one that is transparent yet protective. It is also worth saying that the project was fully designed and constructed using BIM, and it is now being managed using the same approach. This is unprecedented in France for an operation of this scale. This made it possible to work directly into digital mock-ups and even offer users immersive experiences. This also changed the way of working at the construction phase, which is something that interested me as a sociologist.

**Kim: The design of the building succeeds in the mixing solid block architecture with transparency and openness through the side walls and roofs disconnected from the main structure. Moreover, the open and closed garden at the centre gives the building a living quality, one experienced by its users.**

Zalio: Using concrete, an unusual choice for Renzo Piano, the glass took on great importance. This concrete is in fact quite technical: for example large concrete walls contain an insulator, a clever system of

load-bearing but hollow floors that feature large reconfigurable trays which enable natural bioclimatic ventilation. Increment by increment, the building is a success. It has a deceptively simple style that lends it a timeless elegance, and it is very clearly a Renzo Piano's building. He always pays great attention to the quality of individual details, which is something that you notice immediately. The garden plays an essential role in creating a sense of comfort and belonging in the school. The dialogue between the trees, the wind, the light, the concrete and the glass, all provide this 70,000m<sup>2</sup> building with a surprising sense of solace that feels almost homely. All of the building's users tell me that they feel a sense of well-being in these buildings, find it easy to meet with each others and enjoy the consolation of its shared spaces.

**Kim: Devising the programme is the main point while being able to follow up on this is also necessary. From the beginning you signaled the importance of culture to the school but also to the ways it is hosted by the physical spaces. Could you tell us more about your basic ideas and their further development?**

Zalio: I had ensured that constructing a theatre would be included in the programme. I thought that a school that educated a country's elite had to ensure that its students do not shy away from critical and artistic exploration and a form of soul-searching. Since 1951, in France, 1% of a projected amount to construct a public building has to be allocated to one or more artistic commissions, which must be performed by following a public and open process. This regulation was initially set out to encourage artistic creation through public commissions, against the backdrop of reconstruction during the 1950s. The artistic committee is made up of representatives from the Ministry of Culture and from artistic and architectural trade unions. As the client, I headed up

this committee and I was able to appoint qualified people to it. I chose to be assisted by Franck Gautherot (founder, Consortium Museum) to signal my rigorous approach to including international contemporary art. I therefore drew upon the Nouveaux Commanditaires model, which introduced a break with how artistic commissions were imagined in the past and shared these new aims as widely as possible.

**Kim: Instructed by your jury members, four spots were selected according to their locations within the school (indoor and outdoor) and according to their functions. Can you describe these spots and how they called for specific forms of art?**

Zalio: We chose some iconic spots. The first is the ENS reception hall in which a large wall has been given over to a mural painting. The second is the huge atrium (170m long and approximately 15m wide and high), while the third is an outdoor garden designed by landscape architect Pascal Cribier. Finally, you have the theatre space in La Scène de Recherche. As for the reception hall, Tobias Pils prepared a small-scale drawing and created the work using that as his template for his fresco. What I mean to say is that he reinterpreted his design in the moment of painting. This is because it is a true fresco, meaning that it had to be created in one go. The environment surrounding him undoubtedly had a profound influence, as he could see the large-scale technological platforms only metres away.

**Kim: In the main building of the complex there is an indoor 'street' that runs over 170m, located at the centre of the research and teaching facilities. Can you tell us about the brief for Matali Crasset who won the commission for this spot?**

Zalio: Renzo Piano used a very specific orange colour for its floor. Within a building where colours are not vectors

or statements, this tone of orange is both strong and appealing. The street qualified as the second spot for an art-and-furniture commission. Matali Crasset draws on a more complementary palette to challenge the Renzo Piano's orange. The commission was for designers and called for proposals for functional yet artistic furniture. The aim was to furnish this space with objects or features on which one could sit, have a chat or relax. In this central public area (a village square, in a way), Matali Crasset pursued her very own method: she provided a visual grammar based on notions of links and archipelagos, which she presented as a series of islands and other features, which included huts where groups could sit together, rest areas and modular-table systems. The array of colours throughout this 'archipel tonique' was clearly plotted out in terms of their relation to the orange chosen by Renzo Piano for the floors. Matali Crasset's archipelago provides colourful yet delightful touches to otherwise rather traditional architecture. It is interesting to observe the ways in which the students now use these objects.

**Kim: The void created by the architect at the heart of the building leaves 1ha free for the garden. The 'Garden of wonder', as named by Renzo Piano, is a landscaped zone for rest and pleasure. On one side there are five pools—a pool like a basin. It appears to me that it is one the great achievements of this architecture project in its centripetal move towards its community of users. Spot 3 called for a work of outdoor sculpture. How was the artist selected?**

Zalio: In a sense, commissioning sculpture is the most conventional way of fulfilling a 1% artistic brief. A strong focus was placed on providing the sculptures with the opportunity to create a dialogue with their context from their position in the garden, such as with the building, the garden, the wind and the light, but also with ENS wider life, its students,

the research pursued in its centres and the connections to be made with knowledge or reason. Jean-Marie Appriou's proposal naturally caught our attention due to its ability to inhabit a space. He immediately championed the idea that the perfect place for a collection of structures, evoking the circle of life, was the pools and their expanses of water.

**Kim: The fourth and final spot is designated within the La Scène de Recherche, a black box for the performing arts nested in the large suspended white cube at the entrance of the school building. It required, let's say, an audio-visual art form, one that could be played on request, before or after the usual programme of spectacles and performances. Charles de Meaux, an artist and film director, made a proposal based on an animal driven music piece in relation to the Réveil des Oiseaux (1997) by Olivier Messiaen.**

Zalio: As you have noted, La Scène de Recherche is a black box for the performing arts and a place that lends itself perfectly to immersive experiences. By installing Charles de Meaux's piece, which is a perfect counterpoint to Olivier Messiaen's *Réveil des Oiseaux* – thanks to the recorded and mixed birds – a dialogue has been created between the inside and the outside (nature and birds) against a backdrop in which birds are threatened by human activity.

**Kim: Science, architecture, art; is this trilogy devising an impression of the new relocated school? Do research and teaching need impressive architecture in which to excel? Are art and culture new elements we can no longer ignore in our civic and educational spaces?**

Zalio: The added value of high quality architecture to a research and teaching building is that it can prompt the running of programmes that draw different activities and functions together and allows

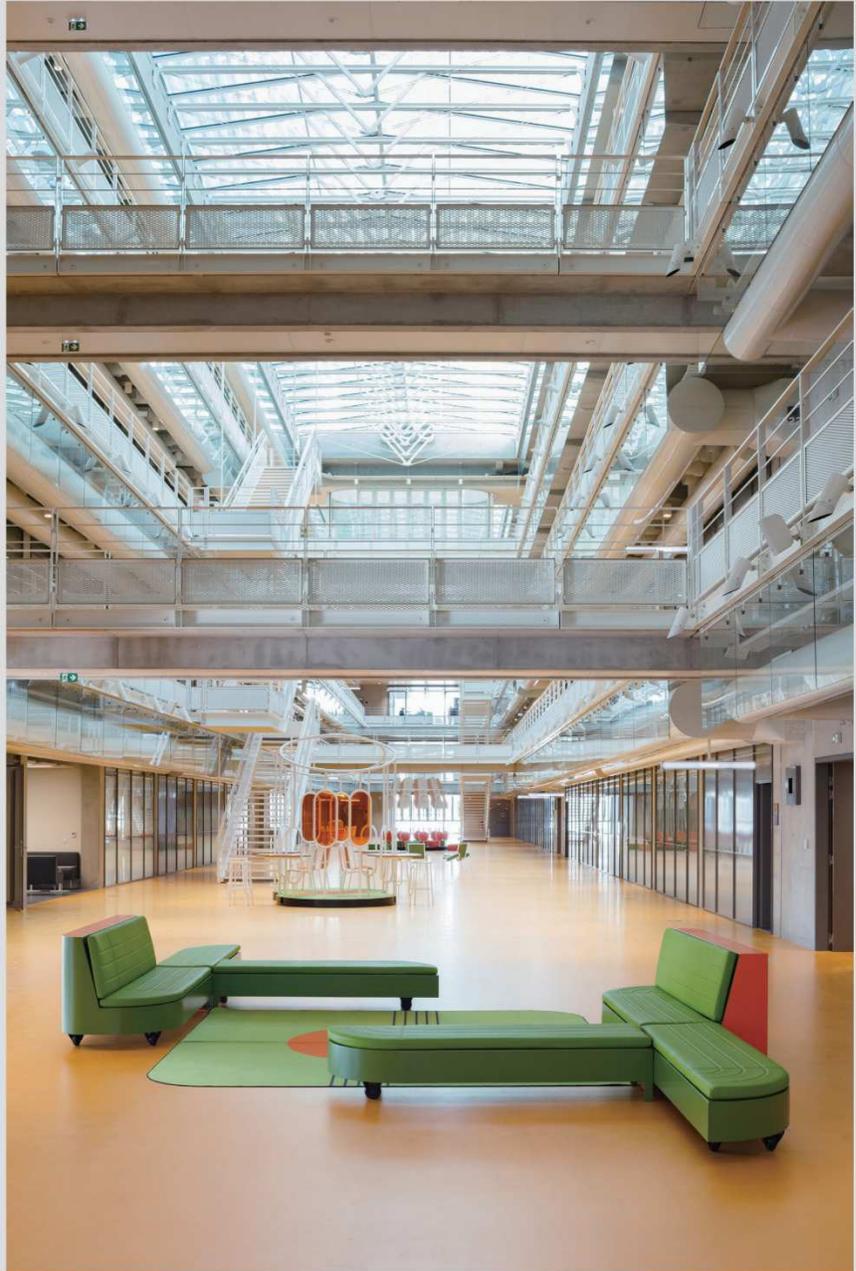
occupants to interact in new ways with each other. One of the strengths of Renzo Piano's architecture is that he always considers architecture based on functionality, with no unnecessary decoration. Your question refers to the marriage between the arts and sciences, something which is linked to humanism, an ideal often evoked by Renzo Piano, conjuring images of a pre-Renaissance world, before the arts and sciences were divorced from the other. By evoking a cloister, a protective space in a hurly-burly world that overlooks a campus, it hints at the monastic schools of the European Middle Age. This is not entirely surprising for a building in ENS. Finally, concerning the marriage of the arts and the sciences, a dialogue plays out between these two worlds, and at the heart of this creation, there is the space in which reflect on the challenges facing our societies.

**피에르-폴 잘리오**는 ENS의 학장이자 사회학 교수다. ENS와 시암스포를 졸업했으며 사회과학고등연구원에서 사회학 박사 학위를 받았다. 2008년 상하이 이스트 차이나 노원 유니버시티, 2014년 미국 센터 온 오가나제이션을 이노베이션에서 근무한 바 있다. 『기밀가 정산: 사회학 장편』(2014), 『20세기 마르세유의 그랜드스 패밀리스』(1999) 등을 출판했다.

**김승덕**은 파리에 거주하며 파리 퐁피두 센터 소장품 부서 객원큐레이터(1996-1998)를 지냈고 현재 콩소르시움 유지엄(구 르 콩소르시움)의 공동 디렉터다. 파리 팔레 드 도공의 프로그램 자원위원(2011-2015)을 맡았고, 카타르 도하 도시개발 공공미술 마스터플랜 프로젝트 디렉터(2011-2013)로 활동했으며, 2013년 베니스비엔날레 한국관 커미셔너를 맡았다.

**Pierre-Paul Zallo** is a professor of Sociology and President of the École normale supérieure (ENS) Paris-Saclay, France. He graduated from ENS, Sciences-po and holds a PhD in Sociology from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. He worked as advisory Professor at East China Normal University, Shanghai in 2008 and as a faculty affiliate at the Center for Organizational Innovation, Columbia University, US in 2014. He has published several notable titles including *Grandes familles of Marseille in the XXth century* (1999) and *Entrepreneurship: A Sociological Lexicon* (2014).

**Seungduk Kim**, based in Paris, was an associated curator in the collections department at the National Museum of Modern Art, Georges Pompidou Center (1996-1998). She currently works as co-director at Consortium Museum (former Le Consortium). She worked as a committee member for Programming at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2011-2015); project director of art consultant on an overall art strategy for a new urban development in Doha, Qatar (2011-2013); and as commissioner and curator of the Korean Pavilion in the Venice Biennale in 2013.



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*PRIMORDIAL FLOW: An exchange between Tobias Pils and Richard Shiff*

May 4, 2019  
Dear Richard,

*I came up with these thoughts. Do you have a short answer or idea in reply?*

*Looked at as a whole, these paintings might not make any sense. The little parts do. They stick to each other. They fit organically without questioning. Like one day gives to the other. There are weeks, there are years. A painting can be a life.*

*The brush, the paint, the canvas, the paper offer the limitations to realize this. Out of love, dirt, and the willingness to take the chance of destruction, the ideas can vanish.*

*To make space for something primordial.*

May 18, 2019  
Dear Tobias,

*Your suggestive remarks suit the exploratory nature of your work, and my reply has become not short but a bit long. One exploration produces another.*

*I see that your new images flow laterally, part to part across the surface of the canvas or paper—figure to figure, figure to pattern, pattern to pattern, pattern to figure. Also: a solid passes into a void; a line of division establishes a rhythmic interval. These are local relationships, "the little parts." Your images are like trains of thought with multiple linkages, or like isolated thoughts that generate diverse implications—images or thoughts that never reach a determinate end. I'll let my own thoughts flow along with your images—laterally.*

*As I view these new works, many of the links I perceive arise as intuitions that require no logical justification. Am I sharing your intuitions?—this might be impossible to verify. Viewing becomes a process of yielding my own sense of logic to the alien logic—the non-logic of your imagery. With each return to an individual work, the narrative configuration that I struggle to discern, always unstable, changes. The local, somewhat discrete areas of your large compositions are singular events that displace other events. This happens without any rational order or sequence emerging, as if chance were becoming the determining factor.*

*You say that "the little parts ... stick to each other." I recall C. S. Peirce's fundamental understanding of the movement of temporality, which he would identify as the course of an "event": "What, then, is a real event? It is an existential junction of impossible facts. ...*

*Though the two inferences cannot be combined, they can be joined. ... An event always involves a junction of contradictory inferences in the subjects existentially the same."*  
*Within your compositions, similar figures join but do not combine into coherence. Each element among the many is an event within a context that remains something less than a time-bound history. I don't know whether the figures I perceive are "existentially the same"—subjects that persist in time, each with its own life—or are imagined personages that assume different identities as they occupy their various pictorial locations. Your images play games with identity, with sameness and difference, with space and time.*

*Looking at the image that you title the lost egg or the one that you title the chain, I imagine a meditation on evolution or perhaps human fetal development, which passes through bestial stages. I remain free, nevertheless, to link the elements of these complexes of images in virtually any order. You create evolutionary narratives that lack a timeline—pseudo-histories that precede the institution of time. In your paintings, evolution can move backwards.*

*Accordingly, your pictorial "order" (this pseudo-order) follows no obvious structural rules. In night on earth, your graphic stars vary in their number of points, from four (one too few to be "correct") to seven (one too many to be "correct"). Each of these irregular star-figures appears as a spontaneous creation, out of a surrounding void, itself being generated by black pigment. Your "stars" follow no cultural or graphic convention.*

*"Primordial" is your crucial term, consistent with the timelessness of your imagery. Black and white as dark and light: this is already an instance of primordial differentiation, both mythical and biblical. What you say—"to make space for something primordial"—causes me to wonder how we might succeed in realizing, or becoming conscious of, a primordial substance, condition, or sensation. We are already so cultured, so ideological. Culture and ideology structure us as creatures of habit, far removed from the unformed condition of anything primordial. Ideology lies at the far end of whatever range of experience includes the primordial at its opposite or antithetical end. I ask myself what might support such a range of experience (from the primordial to the cultural or ideological). The obvious answer is the passage of time, for time equates to different qualities of experience. There are different "times." At one extreme, we experience the primordial as if it were timeless, whereas the ideological is bound to a configured time, a historical time, a context. Yet you claim that "ideas can vanish." The "ideas" or conceptual context of an ideology are themselves markers of time. Once an ideology has taken hold, its ideas remain in place, as if permanently valid. Such intellectual constructs are the rules people live by: ideology as another form of the timeless—as timeless natural law. But a work of art can become the counterforce to established rule, presenting an alternative to a "natural" order already long accepted.*

*The primordial has no historical context because it pre-exists the historical forces that would establish a context. When I imagine a time of no context, I also imagine, in opposition, a time that hardly seems to flow because it has become rigidified by behavioral habit and ideological thought. Through your art, Tobias, do you somehow deny all trace of*

context? This is unlikely, since your themes pertain to your daily observations, interests, and concerns. You would not have painted breastfeeding or pool unless you had observed some aspect of the scenes that you invent for these works, however fanciful they may be. Yet these observations (as in pool, for example) seem free-flowing – at least for a viewer like myself. Though identifiable, they seem universal rather than tied to a specific context. They may be the record of "one day gives to the other," both in daily life and, more significantly, in the studio where a sequence of works appears from under your brush ("the brush, the paint, the canvas, the paper offer the limitations," you say). The sensation of passage – "one day gives to the other" – is universal. It amounts to a sensation of time that is timelessly non-specific, a flow of time that lacks historical significance. It is the transience of life, nothing more – the flow alone, devoid of historical markers.

What, then, is the proper "time" of your paintings? They seem to course through their own linkages, as microcosms of lived temporality ("the little parts ... fit organically"). Yet, if the time of your images is primordial – or if you at least offer a glimpse of the primordial – your works must bring temporality to a standstill. The time of your Peirce-ean "events" slips away from any rational understanding. In this respect, I recall one of Walter Benjamin's formulations: "Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock."<sup>22</sup> (Here, Benjamin used a word alien to traditional German – Chock – perhaps a linguistic shock in itself.) An instance of shock is a moment of intensified awareness. Yet this consciousness lacks continuity. It connects to no logical, narrative train of perceptual experience. It is consciousness out of time, returning to primordial timelessness. Your paintings have organic links but no encompassing pictorial order of a conventional kind: you create orthogonals but no grid, planes but no perspective, space but no recession, tonality but no chiaroscuro. The organic life-force evident in your art – enhanced by your oblique references to contemporary life – re-enters pre-history. This constitutes a contradiction for history but not for art.

Your "primordial" imagery acts on a viewer in lieu of explaining a situation or even merely representing it. Representation is too much of a secondary condition – too dependent on a context of understanding – to suit the state of your imagery, which is primary in its materiality and its graphic insistence, its aggressiveness. There are figures marked as female and as male – for example, in the painting you title *couple* – but they fail to represent coherent bodies. The "idea" of a gendered body seems to shift even as the figures emerge as "little parts [that] stick together." The nominal male figure in *couple* becomes a crescent moon. The imprint of the tread of your shoe, left on the canvas as you work, violates the integrity of this figure, introducing "dirt."

The penultimate sentence of your commentary invokes conditions that are decidedly primary, even primordial: "Out of love, dirt and the willingness to take the chance of destruction ..." "Love" addresses the separation of subject from object and reduces the two elements to an immersive hybrid: the love relation can exist between any consciousness and any other entity, organic or inorganic. Love can bring a person to identify with another person, but also to identify with nature, to be part of nature. "Dirt" is a collective term that

*signifies all materiality—the collective substance from which both a subject and an object emerge, only to converge in “love.” And “the willingness to take the chance of destruction” is what we call “risk”—an assertion of organic will in a situation of unknown potential.*

*Within history, especially modern history, artists have been designated as cultural risk-takers. But nature also takes risks: it is a force of entropy and mutation as much as of “natural law.” The artist’s risk involves more than merely challenging and modifying pictorial conventions. In your case, with the local “fit” of your quirky “little parts,” you risk a more general coherence—narrative coherence, historical coherence, ideological coherence. It seems that you do this for the sake of attaining primordial love from within the primordial dirt of painting.*

<sup>1</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, “The Logic of Mathematics; an attempt to develop my categories from within: Triads” (c. 1896), *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks, 8 vols. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1958–1960), 1:263 (original emphasis).

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940, thesis XVII), *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 262.

**The Master of Wind, Ink and Water**

**Tobias Pils' Cycladic Drawings**

**By Seungduk Kim**

Tobias Pils went to Antiparos for a solo show at Eva's gallery at the Kastro. He brought a few mid-sized paintings for the gallery space comprising only one room.

Eva Presenhuber has been visiting the island of Antiparos for several years now. The Cyclades found their way into her "to-go" list again and again.

Antiparos has no freshwater, therefore drinking water must be brought by trucks in tanks on a daily basis. The situation is difficult.

Tobias Pils took advantage of his stay on the island to draw, using black ink on white paper.

Nowadays, a painting can take any shape, according to the artist's desire and mood. Are paintings becoming circumstantial works, depending on where they are made?

Are location and season replacing the artist's usual topics, or do they only trouble them minimally, by adding details of the local surroundings (such as landscape and light...)?

For instance, the *MARFA paintings and works on paper* (2016) bear quadratic shapes and are characterized by having more right angles than curves and more shapes, as in Donald Judd's art. These works were created during a residency in Marfa (Texas), upon invitation by the Chinati Foundation. So, yes, paintings can be circumstantial, as long as they are made outside of the matrix of studios.

Putting together a small number of paintings for a solo show on an island required a presentation capable of creating the right mood. The gallery space was not especially made for this exhibition, which is why it was all the more important to carefully select works that could inhabit the walls up there and to take the time to make new works during the journey.

Bringing Viennese paintings under the special light of Antiparos to share with friends and locals is a summer exercise, a pure pleasure. As a curator, I always like to play with context, in order to look at the works with a little sidestep — not a huge one, but big enough to play with chance. As an artist, Tobias will probably do likewise.

Choosing Eva Presenhuber's joint up in the Kastro also offers the opportunity to pair with Los Angeles' DoPe Press, who will publish a series of pamphlets in the form of an artist's book instead of the usual catalog.

Each pamphlet delivers readymade ideas of what kind of imagery a Greek island can provide — intense colors, minimalist details of landscapes... — but no human.

Clichés, but powerful ones. Tobias' pamphlet will focus on artworks: the ones that will be on the wall as well as the new series of drawings created on location during the spare time after swimming, partying at the Beach House, dinner at Pipino's or another restaurant, after children's hours.

Black, grey, white on raw linen canvas; the economy of signs and forms is rather controlled, forming a series of lines, grids, with superimposed curvilinear characters.

Black ink on white paper: the economy of signs and forms is rather minimal in this series of lines with some characters. The question the drawing poses is: does the line come first or does it come at the end?

Does the narrative dictate the arrival of graphic elements or is the narrative developed out of the spontaneous lines?

One and the other are at work and succeed in constructing a set of humans making love on the paper...

The quotes of the landscape are remarkable in that the recurrent elements of mountainous horizons, sea fronts and waves are at the service of humans — couples in action, standing figures or faces.

P. 13: concentric circles coming from the center, heading for a cheeky face blowing wind through them: the God Aeolus, master and ruler of the winds, appears here and makes me think of the strong *Meltemi* wind which bothers the new settlements on the north-west side of the island, erected by star architects on amazing sites looking onto the sea, where nobody ever built a house due to the roaring winds!

Drawings on pages 7, 8, 11 and 31 depict landscapes horizons, sea waves, mountains which are partially distorted by poorly defined animals or humans; on page 17 a standing male character bears the tectonics and the genitals of an arm-cut sculpture, thereby mixing a Picasso-type face with Alfred Jarry's hero *Ubu* whose belly is covered by a spiral; characters are at work similarly in some of the other drawings: on pages 24 and 25 humans raise their arms horizontally, hands are carefully drawn, on page 26 a couple makes love doggy-style under a radiating sun ... Nude people, hands, bosoms, exposed genitalia: the drive behind the composition are couples upon whom lines and deletions are superimposed, bringing imbrications and complexity. The lines could be organized into grids or crosses on which a female has been attached (page 47); on page 43 a naked woman with long hair is holding the two parts of a cut out board or the negative shape of a cross — a reminder of Gestalt theory and the perception of imbricated (positive and negative) forms.

Kim, Seungduk, "The Master of Wind, Ink and Water, Tobias Pils' Cycladic Drawings," *Antiparos*, Kastro: Galerie Eva Presenhuber, 2018, pp. 9-12



At first sight, Tobias' drawings are spontaneous, but a closer look brings all the complexity of the composition to the fore; in contrast to the paintings, the drawings depict inextricable situations.

The paintings, on the other hand, are layered hierarchically, in a way that sets apart the foreground from the background, main characters form secondary elements, all of which are well positioned on the surface of the canvas.

Temperatures were not that high thanks to the cooling breeze this summer in Antiparos, but comfortable enough to add quietness and silence to Pils' Antiparos series.

Summer drawings are like that.

RICHARD SHIFF

## A SUCCESSION OF QUALITIES

About four years ago, I became acquainted with the art of Tobias Pils. The first works that I saw were ink on paper. I soon discovered that his paintings, too, were limited to black and white. The chromatic restriction seemed to open the artist to an extraordinary range of feeling. In both drawing and painting Pils would appear to pursue a motif—a grid-like array of lines, a bulbous organic form—only to abandon it, as if he were suddenly affected by a turn of mood, whether his own or that of the emerging forms he was configuring. In each of its singular acts of expression, Pils's art appears to make contact with numerous aesthetic mentalities. He may be more than one person.

"I try to paint as personal as possible," Pils told me, "to get to a point where it's too personal and I lose the hint of my own persona in the painting." Here, the repetition of closely related terms—personal, persona—suggests an internal contradiction. Yet, to me, the statement makes remarkable sense. Why should it not? The artist ought to be in the best position to offer an explanation of his art. A context of critical discourse—postmodernism, late capitalism, deskilling, affect—is not necessarily an aid. The critical terminology in general circulation often blocks direct verbal paths to the crucial idiosyncrasies of the work in question. As a result, explanation reveals more about the social and historical context than about the work of the individual artist, presumably a product of this context. To remain close to his experience, Pils needs to keep his explanation "personal." His differentiation of the personal from the persona accomplishes this task.

A persona—a temperament, a personality—is so fundamental to a person's social identity that it seems established virtually at Ebirth and hardly changes. This, at least, is the

common opinion. Misfortune is unlikely to convert an optimistic person to pessimism. A person with a strong sense of irony does not lose it. We might think that to "paint as personal as possible" would ensure that a person's persona would be expressed in the process. Yet the persona constitutes a relatively fixed attitude and outlook. Although "personal" to you, your persona is more than personal to others, who recognize it as a social type. A persona constitutes a general orientation that shapes a person's experience. It regulates thoughts and actions in a way analogous to the cultural, ideological indoctrination that makes a person acceptable to others within a society. A persona amounts to a person's adopted rule of conduct. We might equate it to a person's ideological formation. It matters not that ideology is a product of external social forces, because a persona feels distinctively personal. It is yours. If your persona felt alien to you, you would be either a schizophrenic or a swindler.

"To paint as personal as possible": this implies that the experience of painting becomes as intimately unique as it can be. Personal experience happens only to you. So the personal cannot be guided by your persona. To the contrary, immersion in the personal becomes a means of release from the persona—from its fixations and cultural limitations—with no risk of developing schizophrenia. The release is temporary but informative and exhilarating. When the personal dominates the persona, an individual experiences the most intense, absorbing sensations.

How does Pils paint "as personal as possible"? To resort to an art-historical metaphor: Pils becomes a one-person Exquisite Corpse. I refer to the Surrealist practice of the early twentieth century, in which several artists would draw on a single sheet of paper in non-collaborative collaboration. They would fold the sheet so that only one segment of it remained visible as the top surface. After one member of the group completed an image in this initial area, the sheet would be turned to place a fresh segment at the top; and the next participant would begin drawing from the points at which the first artist hit the folded edge. The only restraint would be to start from the other artist's (the other persona's) points. And so on, proceeding to a

third or fourth or fifth fold, depending on how many individuals were playing the game. Unfolded, the collective image would express no single tendency or personality and would come as a surprise to all concerned. This collective practice defeated the conditions that each artist's personal habits would impose on free creativity.

But Pils works alone. He needs neither the device of folding nor the cooperation of collaborators. His compositions of marks have no representational intent to guide them yet often result in suggestive figuration. He likens a section of one of his recent paintings to the fronds of "palms," while another, which displays a similar sequence of feather-like branching, contains a section that becomes to his eye an "arrow." An entirely natural, virtually absent-minded stroke of the brush—a gentle curving motion that seems hard-wired into the functioning of the human hand—leads to such figurative resemblance. The representational associations that appear to Pils arrive after the fact, or perhaps even during the process of painting, but without guiding the outcome. Depending on how the curves cluster or branch, they may suggest feathers, leaves on a stalk, or hair. Or nothing.

Each of Pils's paintings contains marks and tones that seem to derive from inconsistent impulses. As in a completed *Exquisite Corpse*, the various parts of a single painting may seem to belong to various personalities. Some of the painter's gestures seem decisive and others seem tentative. Perhaps all are decisive at the moment of their making. In a single painting, they vary in character to an extreme degree: some strokes are translucent, some opaque; some have sharp edges, some are fuzzy and seem to bleed or blur. It becomes hard to imagine that these various qualities derive from a single mind with a single purpose—a persona.

The variation of surface qualities draws a viewer's attention away from the total composition and toward the details. This may be as true for the painter as it is for his viewer: each detail is all-absorbing as it comes into being. Each genre of marking among the many stands alone—a personal sign that lacks an integrating persona. Pils painted his recent body of work on exposed linen (sealed by primer on its reverse side).

The rough surface introduces bits of foreign color, light brown appearing among all the variations of white, black, and their combination as gray. Because of the absorbency of the linen ground, Pils can create infusions of black as well as a kind of dirty, muted white, a grayish white that contains no black. This dull variant of white results from laying thin, translucent strokes of white pigment over the raw linen, allowing Pils to contrast his dirty white to the pure, opaque white that he adds to the same canvas in a different area. Because of the various ways of applying the paint, not all whites look alike, not all blacks look alike. The differences are sometimes exaggerated because a black such as Payne's Gray has a cool bluish cast that will induce a warm brownish cast from a pigment such as Mars Black. With all this variation, both in temperature and tone, Pils's color remains chromatically restricted. The net effect is decidedly odd. His color is integrated in the manner of grisaille, consisting solely of neutrals. Yet it seems wrong to identify his use of grays with grisaille, for his compositions lack the continuous transition of tone typical of grisaille technique. Think of the situation this way: grisaille is a persona—an orderly, predictable type. In contrast, Pils's grays represent one distinctly personal experience after another. Each painting constitutes a single image, but, as with an *Exquisite Corpse*, the image expresses no integrating personality and no part of it predicts any other part. It represents discovery beyond the vision of the individual persona and its culture, neither of which are truly "personal."

Pils's painting is of the no-rules variety. I think of Albert Oehlen and Charline von Heyl as precedents—or, further back, Simon Hantaï, with his techniques of creasing and folding. And if we can fairly establish such a lineage, Pils is the minimalist among these painters of anything-goes. He discovers effects that are "too personal," too unique, and does so without resorting to chromatic color and extremes of texture. "Using color," he says, "would make the process of painting too emotional for me and further distract me."

Although Pils may not have been thinking this way, it occurs to me that the emotions we regard as the strongest ones are the least personal ones, the ones that everyone seems to

experience—the grand emotions that have general names: anger, fear, joy. The degree to which we express such emotion is conditioned by the general culture and its ideologically imposed patterns of behavior. The “little” emotions, the ones that have no names—emotions that parallel the experience of drawing a line with a certain curve or painting the jagged quality of a certain edge—these are the personal emotions that belong to no persona. Such emotions constitute experience without order or constraint. They give to painting an intensely felt quality, but directed to no purpose. When I view the art of Tobias Pils, I feel these little emotions and their succession of qualities. The experience is direct, converting little feelings into something grand.



# Tobias Pils



Tobias Pils. *Untitled (city)*, 2016. Mixed media on canvas. 202 x 152 cm, 79 1/2 x 59 7/8 inches.

Tobias Pils paints passionately. His exhibition, which inaugurates the gallery's New York space, is made up of mixed media works on canvas that shift between the loosely representational, the fantastic and the utterly abstract—often in a single work. The paintings in this show suggest a serial quality, but they are not so easily characterized.

Vaguely humanoid images emerge in Pils's exuberantly layered canvases, but they never resolve or completely cohere. The Austrian artist's brushwork is stunning: gentle washes rest alongside bold gestural marks. He paints on the floor and composes his pictures with a combination of oil, acrylic, and varnish, which adds energy and tactility to his pieces. The enigmatic and sophisticated mark-making echoes graffiti's staccato pulse while stretching painterly possibilities.

Edges reveal closely focused attention, soft arabesques bleeding into the unprimed raw canvas. The same linen peeks seductively beneath inky patches, or ochre shadow's dirty white expanses. *Untitled (window)* (2016) vibrates with texture—a diaphanous white field next to crackly obsidian stripes, and finally, the surprise of a small, ghostly grey hand. This enigmatic open palm anchors an architectural panel of expressive looking patterns that suggest an open doorway.

Pils restricts his palette to nearly all grey and out of this seemingly limited range he creates infinite shades of grisaille. Blacks range from smoky shadows to infinite darkness. His strongest compositions play with surface, depth, and scale. Biomorphic shapes transmute from flora to arrow, architectural allusions appear, weird shapes suggest off-kilter furniture, and his pared down humans are imbued with humor. *Untitled (figures)* 2016 manages to convey mood with four simple lines depicting a dissatisfied half of a conversant and cubistically simplified genderless couple.

The complex and fascinating *Untitled (City)* (2016) segues from a densely layered interior to abstract linear designs that invites viewer contemplation. Seemingly without any discernible subject matter, the painting can be interpreted as a kind of modernist mandala, or an aerial metropolitan view.

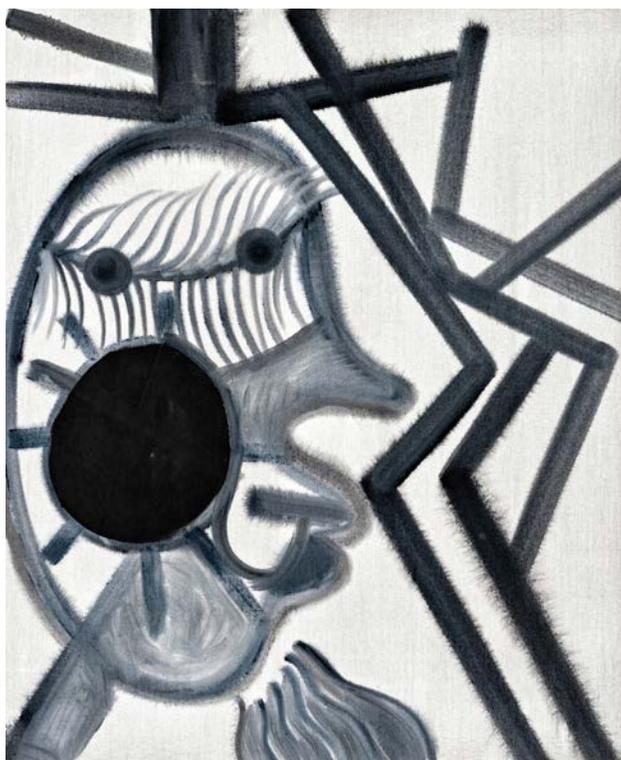
Is it a microcosmic space or pastoral hallucination that inspired *Untitled (flowers)* (2016)? The grey dimensionality breaks to white, suggesting blurred corolla, leaves, and stems. Nature blooms again, echoed in *Untitled(china)* (2016) where a fence of thrusting vines—ethereally brushed tendrils that recall the botanical patterns of German photographer Karl Blossfeldt—is hung adjacent to a real window, framed in white walls and verdant with a bucolic view of climbing ivy.

Rippling with vitality and unexpected iconography, these paintings employ gesture, shape and tonality to inject a bit of whimsicality into a profoundly creative endeavor. The juxtapositions of figure and form are intriguingly integrated, if not always identifiable. These works are conduits of pleasure.

## The New York Times

# What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By Roberta Smith | June 8, 2017



"Untitled (Viennese head)" by Tobias Pils is at the Eva Presenhuber gallery. Tobias Pils, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

### TOBIAS PILS

*Through June 17. Eva Presenhuber, 39 Great Jones Street, Manhattan; 212-931-0711, presenhuber.com.*

Eva Presenhuber, the powerhouse Zurich gallery, has opened a New York outpost in the beautiful space that Karma, the bookseller and gallery, so fruitfully occupied for four years. The inaugural Presenhuber show is the first New York solo of Tobias Pils, an Austrian painter born in 1971 and an exceptional improviser who uses numerous drawing and painting materials but no color. He sticks exclusively to black and white and the grays that those two can yield. Like many contemporary European painters, he dips into the styles and motifs of modernism's heroic early years. (His fellow travelers include Volker Hüller, Gert and Uwe Tobias, Tal R, Gerwald Rockenschaub and Katharina Wulff.)

Several of Mr. Pils's paintings harbor hints of Matisse-like windows, ferns and patterned textiles. The two faces of "Untitled (rome)" evoke those in Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror." A stronger work, "Untitled (arrow)," reads as a strenuous distillation of the shrieking woman of "Guernica" — to a stark white geometric shape. The ponderous table-shape and jumble of "Untitled (autumn 2)" could be the mother of all Cubist still lifes, while the buoyant "Untitled (Viennese head)" speaks for generations of cartoonish, possibly hat-wearing noggins from Klee and Chagall forward. Some canvases seem compositionally confused or too tasteful. But the lack of color adds an implicit gravity to Mr. Pils's peregrinations that slows you down, while also making his shifts in techniques and materials especially clear. Even when he doesn't quite pull things off, it's interesting to watch him try.

# ARTFORUM

REVIEWS

BERLIN

## Tobias Pils

CAPTAIN PETZEL

Tobias Pils paints with a reduced palette of black, white, and gray. If at first glance his pictures have a graphic, drawing-like character, however, this turns out to be deceptive: As paintings, they are as opulent as they are subtle. The Austrian artist's recent exhibition demonstrated that he has developed an idiosyncratic pictorial language in which figurative and floral elements seem to have been set loose among latently abstract, free-form ornamental structures such that each of these aspects—representation and abstraction—interpenetrates and interprets the other. The paintings remain, in their complexity, compelling and fluently composed. Traces of the artist's hand are always legible within them; paint is sometimes applied across broad swaths of the canvas in a rapid *alla prima ductus*, and sometimes details are built up in layered impasto. Elsewhere, the untreated canvas is left exposed, and its pale beige comes into play as the only "real" color. The austere color scheme often lends Pils's painting a severity that borders on the heroic. In turn, this rigor stands in productive contrast to his willful and subjective gestural marks, which seem forthright and outspoken as they move within the pictorial space without necessarily aiming toward expression.

The kind of subjectivity Pils pursues in his paintings has less to do with an impulse to self-expression than with a desire to work on free poetic forms. He is clearly concerned with compression (*Verdichtung*); one would almost like to say, with poetry (*Dichtung*)—just as if he were making visual haiku. Such poems to go beyond language via linguistic means. Pils has developed a painterly vocabulary that he uses to find the correct

emphasis, the right resonance that will open up a new, previously unseen kind of beauty.

There is a certain *chutzpah* in the way Pils does this within a classical genre of painting that is directly associated with beauty: the floral still life. In *Untitled (flowers)* (all works cited, 2016), the sheer size of the painting—the vertical-format canvas measures some twelve by six and a half feet—is already a bold statement in light of the traditional intimacy of the type. In terms of technique, it is a mixture of reductionist brusqueness and fragile elegance: In the lower part of the picture, Pils has created an emphatic visual weight with dominant black tones; two handle-like overhangs, which initially look like eyes, make this part of the canvas also vaguely legible as a jug or a vase. The rest of the picture is varnished white with a small strip of canvas left unpainted along each of the outside edges. Pils has painted gestural lines into the transparent white; they are so delicate as to change the impression of fluid abstraction into something botanical. The color he picked for them is called Payne's gray, and it carries tones of blue that are nearly indigo. In contrast to the solid, angular black in the bottom part of the picture, the striations gently fray into



Tobias Pils, *Untitled (flowers)*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 12' x 6' 8".

the white—an effect that Pils achieved by priming the back of the canvas beforehand. For the viewer, this mutes the dynamism of the gestural marks in favor of a delicate, organic structure. Alongside the sometimes very large works on canvas, the exhibition also included ink drawings on paper (all *Untitled*). In them, the centrality of process becomes clearer still—and thus sheds light on the richness of the paintings.

—Jens Asthoff

Translated from German by Alex Scrimgeour.

## ARTFORUM



View of "Tobias Pils," 2016.

BERLIN

### Tobias Pils

CAPTAIN PETZEL

Karl-Marx-Allee 45

June 9–August 13, 2016

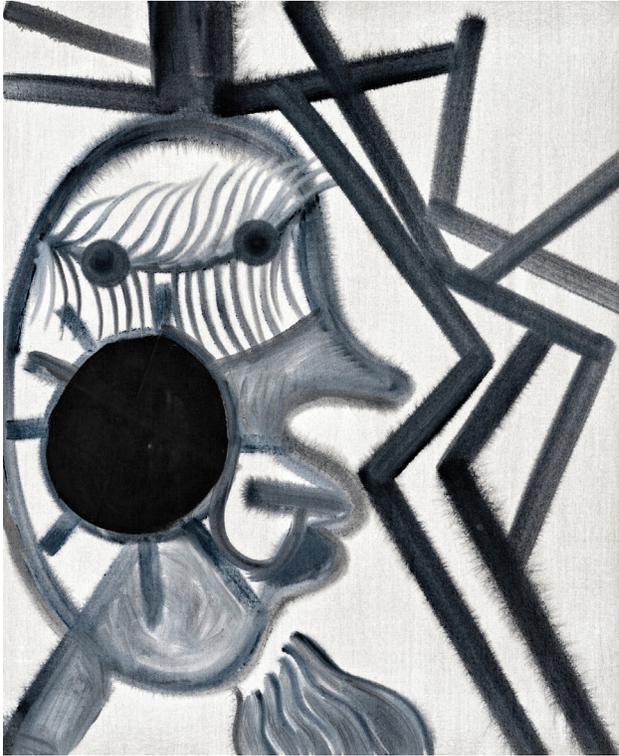
How multifaceted, rich in variants, and rhythmic can a concentration on black, white, and shades of gray be? For a demonstration, see Tobias Pils's exhibition here. The artist, who lives in Vienna, draws the beholder of his work into a cosmos of painterly and graphic forms—structures and gestures that, the moment they are applied to canvas or paper, seem to vanish. The most distinct quality in Pils's works is his play with ambivalence: The towering image *Untitled (Yes&no)* (all works cited, 2016), for instance, initially presents itself through illustrations of varying perspectives but is flattened out by a nearly endless arsenal of lines. In the smaller-format *Untitled (Palms)*, the artist confronts the organic with the angular as a grayish floral pattern encounters dark beams.

On the lower level of the gallery, the twenty-four-page artists' book *Tobias Pils* and five untitled ink drawings are on view. The musicality of the painterly works on the upper level, which is flooded with daylight, gives way in this artificially lit space to austere forms and a reduction to black and white. On the pages of the book in the display case, as well as in the unframed drawings on the wall, black expanses slide into the image space and across filigreed lines. Delicate lattices are disrupted by monochrome surfaces, a vortex of lines is arrested, and waves are interrupted. The images withdraw from any attempt at pinning them down, an elusiveness and vivacity that constitutes their charm.

*Translated from German by Diana Reese.*

— Franz Thalmair

## ARTFORUM



Tobias Pils, *Untitled (Viennese Head)*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 33 1/2 x 27 1/2".

NEW YORK

### Tobias Pils

EVA PRESENHUBER | NEW YORK  
39 Great Jones Street  
May 6–June 17, 2017

Tobias Pils's monochromatic exhibition here opens with *Untitled (Viennese Head)*, 2016, a black-and-white canvas featuring the profile of a deformed human head with a huge black void for a cheek. The eyes, however, gaze directly at you—they peer through a field of swaying lines that could be melting lashes, or even seaweed. It appears to be kissing a tangle of zigzags, some of which have edges that bleed delicately, as if they were rendered by an inky pen dragged down a sheet of wet paper.

To call the artist's paintings surrealist seems a bit limiting—they play quite liberally with a kind of mushy cubism, too. *Untitled (Arrow)*, 2016, shows a figure made from thick slabs of white paint, suicidally aiming a hard-edge white triangle with soft fletching toward its chest. Is

this picture disturbing? Funny? Elegant? Cruel? Pils's images ignite a variety of queasy sensations that are difficult to pin down. But we can access them nonetheless—deeply, intuitively.

It's worthwhile to read this show as an immersive dream journal overflowing with id. In *Untitled (Autumn 1)*, 2015, a bath-brush-like object grows out of a baggy gray creature that might be getting sodomized by a V-shaped demon. And whatever's happening to the juicy, jittering blobs in *Untitled (Flowers)*, 2016, looks just as fulsome, kinky. The artist's deft brushstrokes and rich tableaux activate all manner of sweet, libidinal pleasure.

— Yin Ho