

## PRESS RELEASE

Tobias Pils  
Between Us Space  
Featuring Gerwald Rockenschaub

April 2 – May 21, 2022  
Opening on Saturday, April 2, 11 am – 8 pm  
Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is delighted to present *Between Us Space*, the gallery's sixth solo exhibition with the Austrian artist Tobias Pils and the inaugural exhibition at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Vienna. *Between Us Space* features an intervention by fellow Austrian artist Gerwald Rockenschaub.

Tobias Pils paints pictures that might best be described as sleepwalking dances. A sole palette of black, white, and grays evokes dreamlike scenes from which ghostly figures occasionally materialize. In his new work, these are most often horses, but there is also a solitary rider, a pregnant woman, and a series of old men wearing strange masks. None of these seem to be really present, however: they appear as if on the threshold between here and now, between history and memory, between anticipation and oblivion. Though they almost physically extrude from the paintings, they are intangible, impossible to capture or classify in anything like stories. There are no over-arching narratives; each element stands for itself. Their visual entanglements result in something more akin to hidden-object puzzles: boisterous, sometimes overlapping elements that remain in mysterious suspense.

*Between Us Space* is the name of Pils' new exhibition at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Vienna, and it is true that we cannot help but feel a certain *distance* to these paintings: the hollow horses appear mystically animated and, against a bare background, the gaunt rider appears like a distant trick of the light. Pils never allows us to *fully* enter his realm of staged moments; his characters tend to keep to themselves rather than interact with the viewer. At the same time, this distance does enable a clearer perspective: instead of diving in and getting lost inside these paintings, we become aware of just what it is we are seeing and how we react. Seeing, contemplating, watching; the gaze certainly plays an important role for Pils: eyeballs appear again and again, perched atop bodies like oversized heads. They twist and turn towards other figures in the picture, but never outward, never at those looking at *them*.

With their absurd scenes and graphic style, Pils' pictures can be reminiscent of cartoons—yet their humor always stays below the surface. The atmosphere never feels *entirely* cheerful but rather surreal and psychologically charged. The artist always depicts his figures nude and engaging with rudimentary and quintessential themes such as love, death, and birth. But, however intractable the images may at first appear, the artist does incorporate his biography through personal, intimate ideas and experiences. A certain tenderness and closeness thus develop between the characters as they enter into unspoken relationships with each other: plants, humans, and animals all intertwine. Combined with classic forms and elements from art history (the cubists' combined perspectives, of course, and the horse and rider also represent a familiar motif), this creates condensed worlds that enthrall—and wordlessly invite us to follow what is happening on the canvas from our remote perch.

Alongside the new paintings, the exhibition features drawings that Pils calls "meditations" on his paintings that harken back to Japanese *Shunga*, explicitly erotic prints that reached their creative apex in the Edo period. In Pils' versions, traces of the erotic remain in fragmentary form, transformed through the mask-like features of his spectral beings.

In addition, Pils invited artist Gerwald Rockenschaub to conceptualize the exhibition's wall design in geometrical colors: thus, the exhibition space *itself* further underscores his paintings' juggling of both distance and intimacy.

# GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

Tobias Pils was born 1971 in Linz, AT, and lives and works in Vienna, AT. In 2020, Pils' commissioned fresco, *Alpha, Omega & Infinity*, was unveiled in the Renzo Piano-designed École Normale Supérieure (ENS) Paris-Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, FR. Recent solo exhibitions in museums include Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, DE (permanent installation) (2020); Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop, DE (2018); Kunsthalle Krems, Krems an der Donau, AT (2017); Le Consortium, Dijon, FR (together with Michael Williams) (2017); Chinati Foundation, John Chamberlain Building, Marfa, TX, US (2016); Wiener Secession, Vienna, AT (2013). Recent group exhibitions include *Enjoy – The mumok Collection in Change*, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, AT (2021–2022); *Au rendez-vous des amis*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, DE (2020–2021); *Picasso et la bande dessinée, Picasso Poète*, Musée Picasso, Paris, FR (2020); *Spritmuseum*, Spritmuseum, Stockholm, SE (2019); *Le Consortium Collection*, Le Consortium, Dijon, FR (2018); *Jay DeFeo: The Ripple Effect*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, US (2018); *Spiegelnde Fenster*, 21er Haus, Vienna, AT (2017); *ART UNLIMITED*, ART 47 BASEL, Basel, CH, 2016.

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