

Harm Gerdes
Panorama
February 16 – April 6, 2023

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Panorama*, Harm Gerdes' (b. 1994 in Darmstadt, Germany) first solo exhibition with the gallery in Seoul.

In this series of paintings, Gerdes explores a range of ideas via abstract symbols and “characters” that unfurl across canvases to reveal visually imaginative and mysterious worlds. Like psycho-spiritual panoramas, the works offer a wide-angled perspective into the inner workings of the artist’s mind. While the motifs Gerdes explores are non-representational, their distinctive forms at times allude to objects found in the material world, indicating a bridge between interior psychology with physical reality.

In these works, Gerdes elaborates his fascination for thresholds, archways and portals, using the motif of the opening in order to test the logic of physical space on his canvases. The concept evokes many art historical precedents—principally, Italian Renaissance painting and the *pittura metafisica* of the early 20th century—which the artist draws on to construct a unique visual language that both simulates and distorts spatial logic. Indeed, Gerdes is interested in fields of view: adopting a structural approach to painting, he plays with an extreme flatness of surface by creating painted illusions of depth and dimension. Yet, while making reference to the mathematical precision of 16th century visual art, or the illogical perspectives of metaphysical-surrealist pictures, Gerdes extends his work further to capture something of the virtual landscapes of the 21st century. In these paintings, he layers and overlaps colorful and abstract forms that suggest a surreal and intricate mesh of cybernetic systems.

Gerdes handles his paintings like sculptural objects. Through the works in this series, he explores his interest in cloisonné, an ancient enameling technique used for decorating metalwork objects, in which colorful designs are held in place by thin metal strips. In Gerdes’ process, he fixes hardened material in various configurations across the surface of the canvas, later manipulating liquid paint poured into the gaps—or “lacunas”—between each solid strip, occasionally tilting the frame in order to guide the flow. The solid material organizes the composition into distinct fields of color, like an exoskeleton used to buttress bright and spontaneous layers of paint. Often merging various methods, art historical traditions and his own technique in this way, Gerdes is fascinated by the natural, sometimes unpredictable, qualities of the materials he uses. His practice is thus an interaction of control and spontaneity, exemplified in the “cloisonnist” style, in which he bridges meticulous composition with experiments in chance.

There is a tension between the perspectival distortion of Gerdes’ compositions, and the even, flat quality of airbrushed color. Compositionally, the artist is concerned with creating movement around the central axis of a painting: although his canvases gesture toward blotted, Rorschach-like symmetry, the forms Gerdes paints are carefully irregular. He attains visual balance by leading the eye fluidly over painted surface, on which he layers these semi-abstract forms. Some works are based on found motifs, for instance *Kallisthenous* (2022), inspired by an ornamental wrought iron door encountered by the artist on a street of the same name in central Athens. Others derive totally from the artist’s inner vision, and thus allow him to delve further into suggestion and illusion. Like extraordinary landscapes, the works in this exhibition constitute abstract panoramas of the artist’s inner, fantastical, and perhaps metaphysical, world.

This is Harm Gerdes’ third solo exhibition with Peres Projects and his first in Seoul. Gerdes has participated in group exhibitions at Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe, Tiroler Landesmuseen, Innsbruck, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Städtische Galerie Eichenmüllerhaus, Lemgo, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Darmstadt Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, and Peres Projects, Berlin. He graduated from the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf, in 2020.

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Please note that attendance will be subject to all local COVID-19 related requirements at that time. We will publish updated info prior to the event.