

Matthias Groebel

Skull Fuck

17 January – 22 February 2025

Helmet Row, EC1

Modern Art is pleased to present *Skull Fuck*, German artist Matthias Groebel's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Groebel is known for using television imagery, as well as his own photography and films to produce machine assisted paintings and film. This exhibition features rarely seen paintings, as well as new paintings and a film work.

Creating his first machine painting in 1989, he translated television signals into code which instructed the machine to apply paint in thin layers onto canvas. This coincided with the advent of 24-hour satellite television. Watching obscure channels on mute, he captured images that stayed with him, that he then manipulated with the software Deluxe Paint to create sequential layers to be applied by the spray gun. The technology for his first machine was taken from a children's construction kit, which he modified by scaling up its painting area, replacing the original pencil with a spray gun and adding scrap components to personalise its function. His use of toys, consumer electronics and scrap reflected the Cyberpunk attitude of the time, a DIY spirit that is still part of Groebel's approach.

The exhibition features examples of Groebel's early television paintings, a selection that reflects on the variations of painterly marks the machine produced at first. In the 2000's when television companies introduced subscription models, Groebel started using his own imagery for source material. Included in the exhibition are two multi panel paintings, *Collective Memories* and *Virgins* – both deriving from his own imagery. Also included are new paintings made with a new machine, here Groebel's own photography is rendered with a pen connected to a machine, which uses the travelling salesman algorithm, where the drawn line never goes over itself as it creates the image incrementally. The film work *Skull Hop* features two animated skeletons caught in a dance macabre, and a soundtrack produced by musicians Matthias Mainz and Alexander Peterhaensel.

Groebel has never believed in the concept of content. By doing so, Groebel frees his works from the constraints of representation. Across his career and different media, he has repeatedly created parameters and conditions that allow for an intuitive mental workspace. For Groebel the work of the Situationists and the scores of John Cage are comparable constructions, especially how Cage asked his musicians to act without intention within the conditions he sets. Groebel's work of the 1980s was created a decade before the first colour ink plotters and is in dialogue with artists such as Wade Guyton and Kelley Walker who also explore what it means to paint once you relinquish a brush. To experience Groebel's work is to understand the cultural effects of the past and how they persist. The frozen tableaux quality of his paintings lends them the sense of being in media res, decontextualised, and extracted from a constant flow of signals. His practice resonates with our contemporary conditions by examining the allure and power of images. Suspended in a recursive time, his work actualises, as well as unpacks the psychological effects of our rampant image consumption. Groebel's work across painting and moving image sears itself into the viewer's mind.

Matthias Groebel (b. 1958, Aachen) lives and works in Cologne. Solo exhibitions include: *chemical*, Schiefe Zahne, Berlin; *phantoms all around me*, Gathering, London (both 2024); Ulrik, New York (2023); *A Change in Weather (Broadcast Material 1989-2001)*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2022); *Avid Signals (Broadcast Material 1989-2001)*, Galerie Bernhard, Zurich (2021) Group exhibitions include: *Machine Painting*, Modern Art, London; *new technologies*, DREI, Cologne; 15th Gwangju Biennale, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, Gwangju, South Korea; *Multi-User Dungeon (MUD)*, curated by Simon Denny, Petzel Gallery, New York; *Hoi Köln, Part 3: Albtraum Malerei*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (all 2024); and *Tele-Gen*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2016).

For more information, please contact Pascale de Graaf (pascale@modernart.net).

Reception



Skull Hop, 2003/2024
video loop
27:14

Gallery 1



untitled, 1992
acrylic on canvas
95 x 95 cm
37 3/8 x 37 3/8 in



untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in



untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in

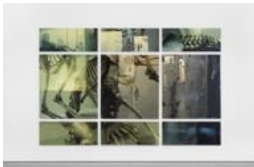


untitled, 1990
acrylic on canvas
95 x 95 cm
37 3/8 x 37 3/8 in

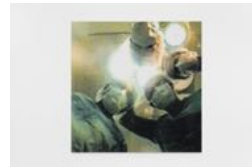


untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in

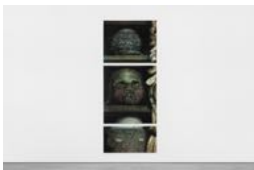
Gallery 2



collective memories, 2003
acrylic on canvas
200 x 315 cm
78 3/4 x 124 in



untitled, 2000
acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm
39 3/8 x 39 3/8 in



virgins, 2002-2003
acrylic on canvas
250 x 100 cm
98 3/8 x 39 3/8 in