

CHRISTIAN LINDOW

1980s

November 14, 2025 – Decemebr 10, 2026

Mai 36 Galerie is pleased to present *1980s*, a new solo exhibition by German artist Christian Lindow. After remaining in near-oblivion for more than two decades, Lindow's work re-emerges as one of the most singular voices in postwar German art. Born in Mannheim in 1945 and initially trained as a sculptor, he died prematurely in 1990 at the age of forty-five. Lindow forged a path that, while in dialogue with his contemporaries, resisted the dominant tendencies of his time, leaving behind a fierce, physical, and lucid artistic practice.

His trajectory unfolds at the heart of a pivotal moment in European art, during which German painting underwent a profound redefinition. While many artists aligned themselves with the Neue Wilde and Neo-Expressionism, reclaiming emotion and the heroic subjectivity of painting, Lindow followed a quieter and more rigorous path. He rethought the medium from its material and gestural bases to its relationship with the image. His paintings, executed in single and uninterrupted sessions, are imbued with deliberate coldness and distance. Rather than seeking catharsis or heroic self-expression, they approach painting as an inquiry into representation itself, exposing the fragile negotiation between image and matter. This method, in which rigorous yet impulsive brushwork constructs images that seem to emerge and dissolve simultaneously, reveals painting as an act of thought in motion.

Lindow's process involved projecting photographic slides, found images drawn from everyday visual culture, onto the canvas and painting them directly, without direct reference or perspective. The result is a paradoxical fusion of the cool detachment of photographic mediation with the visceral intensity of bodily gesture. An example of this pictorial approach appears in *Untitled (Lake)* from 1981, where a sunlit lakeside scene, borrowed from the banal perfection of a postcard or advertisement, is reimagined through thick and discontinuous brushstrokes. The image dissolves into matter and becomes a meditation on painting itself. It generates not a window onto the world but a closed, self-sufficient universe. Lindow absorbs the lessons of Pop Art and conceptual photography, with their emphasis on the circulation and dematerialization of images, and reintroduces them into the physical space of painting. His relationship to the image was aptly described by curator Fabrice Stroun as "ghostly," distant yet charged with presence.

Focusing on Lindow's trajectory throughout the 1980s, the exhibition highlights a decisive decade that marked both the consolidation of his visual language and his position within the international art landscape. Notable moments include his participation in major events such as Documenta 7 in 1982, as well as solo exhibitions at Le Consortium in Dijon in 1983 and Kunsthalle Bern in 1988. These projects situated Lindow at a crucial juncture for painting, when the medium was being redefined amid the emergence of a globalized art world. As critic Xavier Douroux observed, Lindow's disappearance from the art scene after 1990 reflects not only personal circumstance but also the volatility of art history itself, a field too often driven by distraction and amnesia.

Among his contemporaries, Lindow emerges as an exception. Unlike Baselitz or Immendorff, whose "loud" painting confronted German history through provocation and symbolism, Lindow's work is stripped of artifice, cool and restrained yet profoundly tactile. His palette, raw linen surfaces, and unpainted borders reject both illusionism and spectacle.

At the core of Lindow's practice lies a sustained exploration of repetition, understood not as reproduction but as renewal. His series of nearly identical canvases, such as *Untitled (Bergwiese)* and *Untitled (Gelbe Rose)*, trace the persistence of a gesture that continually measures itself against its own limits. Each iteration bears the residue of a unique duration and intensity, transforming the act of painting into a temporal event rather than a fixed image.

Through this method, Lindow shifts the motif from the realm of representation to that of process. What is repeated is not the image but the act itself. In this insistence lies the vitality of his work, guided by subtle deviations, the rhythm of redoing, and the quiet resistance to completion that keeps painting alive.

The dialogue between sculpture and painting in this exhibition underscores Lindow's translation of three-dimensional making into painterly time. The wooden sculptures and the canvases derived from them embody two facets of the same investigation. The sculpture asserts a terse and carved logic, less modeled than cut, while the paintings reanimate that incision through swift and corporeal brushwork. By privileging the tool and the act of incision, Lindow emphasizes a physical and even aggressive economy of making. Cutting and brushing become extensions of the arm that impose form by subtraction or by the concentrated application of paint. Rather than illustrating the sculpture, the paintings register its afterlife: the memory of touch and the echo of a removed mass. Object and image thus function as counterpoints, one condensed and material, the other temporal and transposed. Together they complicate expectations of faithful representation and reveal that both media, through repetition and residue, disclose the work's true operation, a sustained negotiation between presence and its reenactment.

Revisiting Lindow's oeuvre today means reconsidering the place of painting in an age saturated with images. His canvases stand as meditations on seeing and making, charged with a quiet intensity that resists spectacle. They remind us that painting, far from being exhausted, remains a site of dialectical encounter between image and gesture, memory and oblivion, presence and erasure. As Lindow himself once remarked, "A painter has no biography, only memories of the future." His work, rediscovered now, speaks precisely from that threshold, from the future he once imagined for painting.