

MARC BAUER
The Default Brain

September 2 - October 14, 2022

Opening: Thu., Sept. 1, 6 - 8 pm

Zahnradstrasse

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to announce *The Default Brain*, a new solo exhibition by Swiss artist Marc Bauer (*1975 in Geneva; lives and works in Berlin and Zurich). *The Default Brain* will be presented at our headquarters in the Zahnradstrasse; it is Bauer's third solo exhibition at the gallery. The presentation will span all three rooms of the gallery and will reflect the wide range of Bauer's artistic repertoire in a new, extensive series of works. In addition to monumental wall drawings, new works on paper as well as paintings will be on view in both large and small formats. A sound installation featuring a composition by composer Thomas Kuratli / Pyrit will connect the rooms as a soundscape and in combination with the visual works create an immersive experience.

For his multi-layered series of works, Bauer takes inspiration from his interest in cultural-historical developments as well as current socio-political affairs. Relevant themes from art, history, science or geopolitics are fragmented and illuminated from different perspectives through large-scale paintings and detailed drawings that interact with site-specific wall drawings. Black-and-white drawings with pencil and charcoal continue to play an important role in Bauer's work, however, in recent years, colored surfaces with pencil, oil and crayon have established themselves as key supporting components. The combination of graphic and painterly elements forms Bauer's characteristic visual language, which translates narrative content into a powerful visual experience. The results are narrative spatial settings whose depth and intensity of color have an almost immersive impact on the viewer.

In his new exhibition, Bauer opens the door into our subconscious. The title *The Default Brain* refers to different modes of perception in a specific area of the brain that are stimulated by passive, subconscious processes. These are the impalpable moments between sleep and wakefulness when we remember, when thoughts digress, and we think uncontrollably about the past and the future. This concept is explored in the first exhibition room of nine large-scale drawings in charcoal and oil paint (on canvas mounted on dibond aluminum). It is a journey into dreamlike sequences that interweave with the artist's personal memories and elements of old masters.

A central motive of the new cycle of works is found in the work *Home* (160 x 120 cm, see invitation card), which depicts a detached family home in a landscape of surreal color tones. Deep red purple, midnight blue, and moss green form a cloud-like backdrop that, despite its alienation, recalls the topography of a suburb. Thoughts of places and moments from the past are often associated with colors in Bauer's work. For example, the work shows a very personal memory of his childhood home near Geneva. The sentence written in childlike letters at the bottom of the picture translates as: *One takes down the flag at night, at night the house is no longer under the rule of the country.* The house acquires a symbolic meaning for the personal associations with home, which can be completely detached from the context of a place or country.

The work *The Default Brain, On the Armchair* (160 x 120 cm) shows a young man who has fallen into a spontaneous sleep while sitting on an upholstered armchair. He is slightly slumped, his head resting on his propped-up arm. In a reference to the fresco *The Triumph of Death*, created in 1450 by an unknown author in Palazzo Sclafani in Palermo, the ghostly silhouettes of dogs and medieval-dressed figures stand out against the darkness of the background. As mysterious figures, they seem to emerge from the thoughts of the sleeping young man. A transparent coloring of violet, blue and yellow tones makes the figures and the armchair shimmer as if in an unreal intermediate realm.

An interplay of dream, memory and reality is emphasized by translucent color hues and runs like a thread through all the works in the room, linking them together in terms of form and content. In *The Default Brain, Mother* (160 x 120 cm), the calm features of a sleeping face, inspired by a portrait of the artist's mother, emerge as if from the smoke of a magic lamp. Sleeping elephants float before the relaxed facial features, caught in the delicate layers of diluted oil paint as if in a veil. Fluid colors contrast with a very precise linework that draws the characteristic outlines of eyebrows, lips and elephants.

In other works, the innocence of sleep is overshadowed by a sense of latent danger that often lurks half asleep in our subconscious. In *The Default Brain, On the Hill* (160 x 240 cm) a group of young men has fallen asleep on the edge of an elevated plateau. A dog seems to be watching over them, while in the background the ominous expanse of a big city stretches to a mountain range on the horizon. Our fascination with the under-researched phenomena of sleep and the subconscious turns us simultaneously into invading voyeurs and daydreamers as we view these works.

The dreamlike scenes are juxtaposed with a very present reality of the exploitation of nature in the three murals of the same exhibition space. On the left wall upon entering, the visitor is towered over by the monumental drawing of a gigantic diamond mine of the Russian city of Mirny. The hole of the mine gapes out of the ground like a wound, while the vastness of the landscape and the softly drawn contours create a magnetic depth. Two further murals show striking images of an oil spill in the Pacific Ocean and the destruction of a fertile forest through deforestation. Together, the works form a web of associations that question the logic between unconscious dreams, about being close to nature and our relationship with animals, and our very rational actions, by which we push nature to its limit

The second exhibition room is dedicated to a series of drawings of various formats of pencil, colored pencil and lithographic chalk on paper, which addresses the same theme of the first room in a mosaic-like manner. The individual drawings show dreamlike scenes, such as a sand castle on the shore of a turbulent sea (*The Sand Castle*, 70 x 50 cm) or a ship in a narrow bay with rough winding rocks and a deep black sea (*The Boat in the Rocks*, 70 x 50 cm). The scenes appear fleeting, as if fished from an ephemeral stream of thought. In the work *The Default Brain, On the Blanket with the Dog* (70 x 50 cm), a young man is depicted resting in absolute relaxation on a plump blanket. Lying on his back and wearing casual street clothes, he appears to be engrossed in a brief sleep while a dog, also slumbering, nestles against him. Above his head hovers an inkblot pattern, reminiscent of Rorschach's Psychodiagnostics personality tests. While the blanket's shape and dynamic hatching with lithographic chalk is reminiscent of a brain and its convolutions, the floating ink pattern with its flowing, silk-pale aesthetic seems like a visualization of a dream.

The purple coastal landscape in *Freud's Couch* (70 x 50 cm) also appears to show a dream, despite the absence of a sleeping protagonist. In the bottom part of the picture there is an interior with a sofa bed, which gives a glimpse of Freud's characteristic living room. The soft contours in surface of the landscape, worked out with chalk, contrast sharply with the patterns and small objects drawn with pencil in detail in the cluttered interior. Other works with variations of the Rorschach patterns conclude the circle of this cycle of works, in which each work refers to the other and forms poetic parallels.

In the last room of the exhibition, the idea of the "default mode" is cumulated in an installation of two wall drawings and a small painting. Entitled "Battlefield V, Devastation", a monumental scene of devastation stretches across the right wall, inspired by the video game episode of the same name and located in the scenario of World War II. The black and white charcoal drawing shows a city view shattered by bombs, reminiscent of the Schlesisches Tor, an elevated "underground" station in Berlin. On the wall opposite, the monochrome letters of an invisible author speak of the fascination of destruction, exploitation, power and the paradoxical desire for recreation. Like an answer, the painting reveals the vastness of the sea, from whose calm, colourful tides a person strides ashore, as if to the shore of a safe island. The immersive effect of the exhibition on the viewer is underlined by the sounds of the musical composition by Thomas Kuratli / Pyrit.

Marc Bauer's work have been exhibited internationally since 2000. His current solo exhibition in the Musée des Moulages, Paris with texts by Sophie Delpoux runs until end of November. Bauer will be part of the Congo Biennale in Kinshasa with a new project taking place from Sept. 16 to Oct. 23, 2022. Past solo exhibition have been held in the following institutions, among others: FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand (2021); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; Istituto Svizzero, Mailand; De La Warr Pavillion Bexhill on Sea (all in 2020); The Drawing Room, London (2019); Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2016); FRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, Marseille (2015); Museum Folkwang, Essen (2014); Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2013). Recent group exhibitions include (selection): "Dragonfly Meets Faun & Pixel Matter", Curuna Ardez, (bis 11. September 2022); The Roaring Twenties", Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2021); "Smoke and Mirrors", Kunsthaus Zürich (2020), "United by AIDS", Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich; "Fly me to the Moon", Kunsthaus Zürich (both 2019); 21st Sydney Biennale, Sydney (2018), "10 Years Drawing Prize", Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017) and "Il y a de l'autre", Rencontres d'Arles, Arles (2016). Bauer is represented in collections of institutions worldwide, such as Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (NMNM) as well as in several Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) in France, to name a few.

In 2020, Marc Bauer was awarded the GASAG Art Prize, which is specifically directed at artists at the intersection between arts and science and presented in collaboration with the Berlinische Galerie, following a solo exhibition and a monographic publication. In 2020, he was also awarded the Prix Meret Oppenheim.

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