

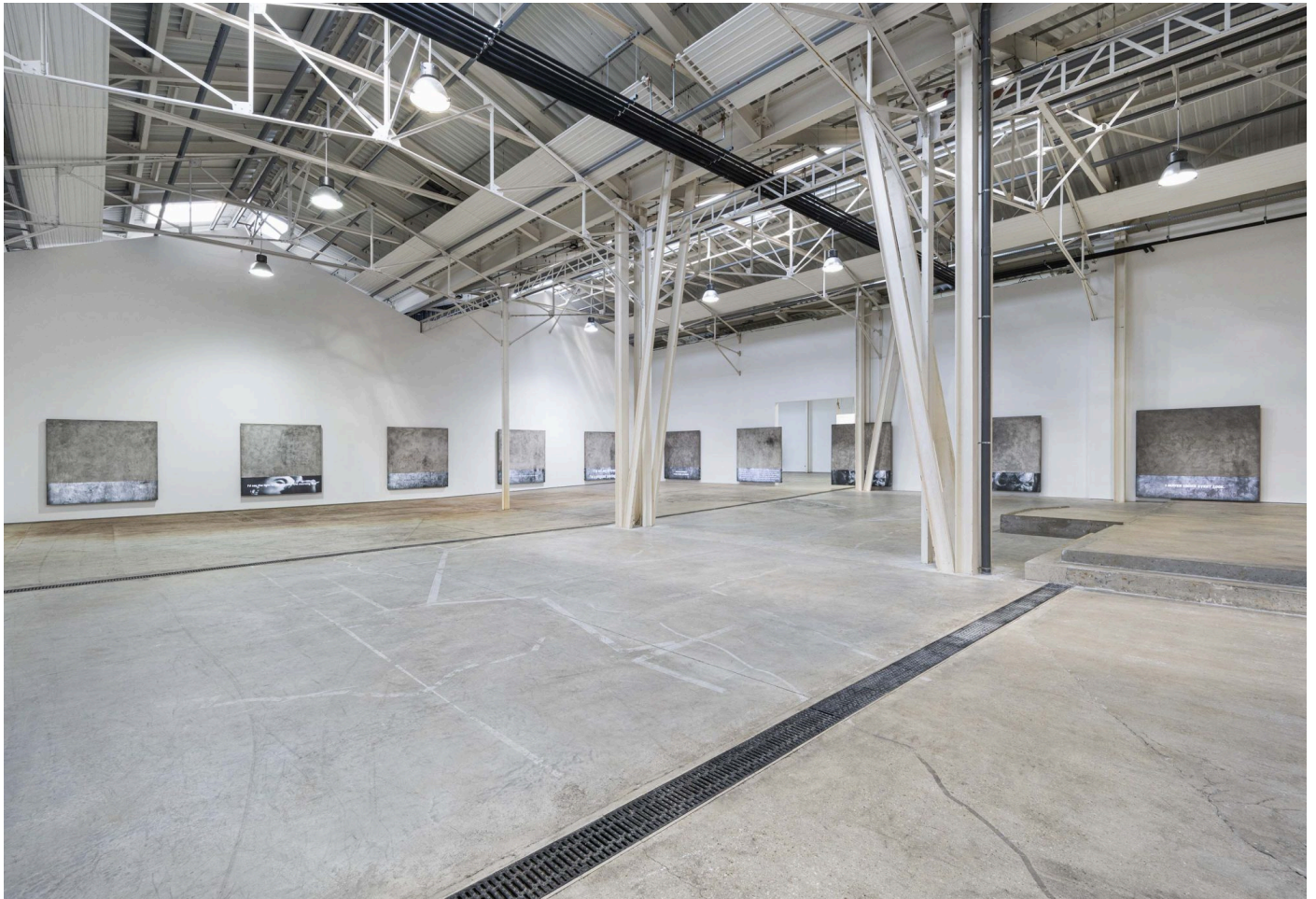
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Philipp Timischl “How to tastefully plagiarize myself” at Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers

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“Comment me plagier avec goût” is based on three installations that exalt Timischl’s obsessions from his early days as an artist in his native Austria in the 2010s, namely the fluidity and performativity of identities, mediums, and cultural objects (from masculinity to the bourgeoisie). Through paintings and screen-paintings, video installations and texts, he questions, in a camp, naive, corrosive or determined register, the reality of incarnations and the way they inform us. Social distinction, gender and class passing, the politics of taste, the omnipresence of the image and the authenticity of the work are at the heart of this exhibition.

Ten monochrome gray paintings dominate the central hall of the Confort Moderne. These large, severe-looking volumes initially evoke the trophy paintings that museums fascinated by the pomp of the avant-gardes tend to favor. While the monochrome is alternately seen as an object of spiritual elevation, revolutionary, sacred, pure, mediumistic, materialistic, conceptual, or hermetic, it has above all become bourgeois. Through their parodic repetition, they become prototypes, gold standards of authorized good taste. However, by attaching screens at their bases, Philipp Timischl primarily practices an expanded field of painting—impure, hybrid, and porous to the flow of new image networks. By transforming his preppy canvases into circulation spaces for queer, pop and emo films, he makes the unlikely junction between Gertrude Stein and Cardi B, Clément Greenberg and Avicii, Barnett Newman and Lady Gaga. Despite their serial appearances as bipolar clones, the canvases each have their own personalities and assume a script or roleplay: punk and hostile; depressive; hungry for hookups on Grindr; a traumatized survivor of the American reality TV show Jersey Shore; non-binary; hard-edge intellectual. They all play and question their states, their identities, but also who you are: the contemporary art audience. Passing from melancholy to arrogance, from lament to euphoria in 24 frames per second, they end up synchronizing to embody a diagonal of emptiness and guide the gaze towards the monumental screen wall that splits the space. SLAY.

This leviathan of LED screens, which could originate from the Tomorrow Festival or a gay party for Circuit Boys in Sitges, adopts the artist’s perspective and drifts through the Confort Moderne exhibition. In an endless loop, the spectator can visit the exhibition through the eyes of Timischl’s phone, from the restrooms to the white cube. From now on, the exhibition will take place inside the screen. In this panorama, six of the artist’s videos are shown like a mini-retrospective mixing reality TV and concrete poetry, private and public images, tacky and low-key tones. We see Philipp Timischl

during road-trips through Corsica (*Corsica 2013*, 2013) and the USA (*Reality is the worst-case scenario*, 2022), dramatic extracts from dozens of TV series like *Lost* or *True Detective* (*PROBLEMS*, 2014), or his former studio in Vienna (*FULL MOTION*, 2012). This screen on steroids, with its jerky editing, forces viewers to move from one end of space to the other. Move Bitch!

Like the incessant scrolling on social networks or the visual stimulation of advertising screens, the work creates a dizziness, a sense of floating, or an impossibility to absorb all the signs. The artist, like the institution, is always in command, directing and dominating the viewer, and Philipp Timischl could be the Cashmaster (These BDSM internet figures dominate virtually in exchange for money or symbolic retribution). The video ends with an image shot from behind the screen, doubled by the cumshot of his own porn / self-released sex tape (*BEN PORN*, 2015). The front is the back. The top is the bottom. And vice versa.

In the adjacent room, a painting levitates majestically. In contrast to the communication overload of the multimedia room, this abstract expressionist style canvas with textured flat areas refers to the sacrosanct interiority of the artist. Here again, the canons of modernism are treated irreverently. There is nothing more to add.

A final canvas tells the adventures of Ronny Raccoon, a cruel and demoralizing children's book turned poem, in which we follow a raccoon from a modest family and his attempts to change his social class. This unlikable anti-hero, dazzled by glitz and glamour, and rejecting his parents and his heritage ends up devoured in a brutal, hierarchical world. Victim of a series of accidents: a disfiguring champagne cork, a fall from a yacht or an opera box, he ends up crushed by a Greek sculpture when he should and could have just stayed at home and watched reality TV . . . In this anti-initiation novel conceived by AI and ChatGPT, Philipp Timischl breaks the myth of social class transgressors and provides a stark reality check, questioning the inevitability of determinism and illustrating the harsh truths of societal structures.

Following in the footsteps of the German capitalist realism of the 60s, a cranky cousin of American pop art, Philipp Timischl sets up the figure of the artist as a caustic commentator on the social postures and false pretenses of the art world. Borrowing from modernism, cartoons and mainstream cultures, Timischl reveals a fluid, elusive reality that renders our assumptions obsolete. The notion of the author is cannibalized by the machine, the supposedly mute works are extroverted, and the desire for self-determination is confronted with the violence of reality. Philipp Timischl is the illegitimate child of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the queen of drag queens, RuPaul. The artist's practice intersects the first's analysis of culture as a weapon of social differentiation with the second's idea of pastiche of taste, irony, and foolishness as a mode of political engagement. Against the neo-liberal fiction massively disseminated by images that everything is possible, he proposes an outrageous, hypertrophied drag reality that simultaneously demystifies. *How to tastefully plagiarize myself*.

Curated by
Pierre-Alexandre Mateos & Charles Teyssou

At Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers
until August 25, 2024