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Bernhard Buhmann's third solo exhibition with Carbon 12 opens in Dubai

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Carbon 12 presents Bernhard Buhmann's third one-man exhibition at the gallery. *Modern Times* is a new bench in the painterly development of the artist's body of work since *The Pretenders* in 2014.

Referencing Charlie Chaplin's film of the same name, Bernhard Buhmann questions the effects of globalization and fragmentation on personal identities in his upcoming solo exhibition *Modern Times*. In the film, Chaplin's character faces the consequences of industrialization during the 1930s. In this exhibition, Buhmann's characters, which were first presented in his 2014 show *The Pretenders*, have responded to a shift from an illusionary homogenous society to the ubiquity of an extremely pluralistic society. Both Chaplin and Buhmann's characters confront the question of how one shapes their identity within a changing societal landscape.

In *The Pretenders*, disguised clown - and jester-like figures reflected one's ability to constantly alter his or her identity through social media. In *Modern Times*, Buhmann's figures still assume playful forms, however they appear in their natural states of being, without any disguises. Through this elimination, the characters have embodied their masks; there are no longer any malleable fixations to their identities.

Rather, the characters have internalized their external presentations; their various disguises have become integral parts of their self-understanding. As we have seen within our own society, what was once just an alter ego on social media is now an intrinsic part of one's permanent ego, one's identity.

Alongside four figures, Buhmann also presents six geometric abstract paintings. For the first time in his career, he worked concurrently on all ten of the works, resulting in connections between his figuration and abstraction that were previously less overt. For example, a wide blue semi-circle balancing at the bottom of one canvas reflects the crown of a woman's head whose blue hair is obscured beneath a hat in another. A circle of negative space, outlined by red fading from crimson to light coral, inverts the rouge on a woman's cheek, providing the viewer with an imaginary window into the unseen, unknown side of her existence.

The overarching theme of identity is reflected in *Modern Times*, much like it was in *The Pretenders*, but it is clear that Buhmann now questions how external identities are being internalized, how a singular identity is formed in our pluralistic society. "The pictorial designs shown are fragile and provisional," the artist says. "They are building blocks of a preliminary self-understanding." Collectively, the paintings beg viewers to question their own existence and identities. As Buhmann continues, "Knowing that you can always become someone else, deciding how you want to live is an integral component of any identity construction."

Bernhard Buhmann b. 1979 Austria. Lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

Buhmann studied painting and sociology at the University of Applied Arts (AT) and the University of Vienna (AT). His paintings are spirits of the times, sensitive mirrors of the stages of everyday life. The spectrum of protagonists is commensurately broad, a motley crew ranging from clowns and creatures of fantasy, to bizarre flying machines and beyond, all the way to colorful abstractions. All of the periods and various subjects of work are characterized by questioning the (re)construction of identity and performative.