

September 27, 2025, to April 12, 2026

Press conference

Thursday, September 25, 2025, 10 am

Opening

Friday, September 26, 2025, 7 pm



Tobias Pils

Geist, 2024

Oil on canvas

150 × 180 cm

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich/Vienna, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles/New York

Photo: Jorit Aust

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Tobias Pils

Born in Linz in 1971, Tobias Pils is among the most exciting painters working today. Employing a heavily reduced color palette, he creates paintings and drawings that weave abstract and representational elements into associative pictorial worlds. What in terms of subject matter can be interpreted as an investigation of both elementary and personal themes like birth and death or becoming and passing, also negotiates central questions in painting at large. For in Pils' visual cosmos, one painterly mark leads to the next, one image to another, as if painting were constantly staging its own death and rebirth.

That Pils abstains from bright colors creates a certain distance. His preference for grayscale—more recently joined by muted shades of brown, blue or green—as well as for enigmatic constellations of what often remains a hint of architecture, a figure, or an object remove his paintings from reality and render them dreamlike. His pictures invite us to search for clues, to engage with their inherent logic and the grammar of the painterly language. Analogous to the process of painting governed by intentions and chance events, the viewing of the images also proves to be a processual event with an open outcome.

Recapitulating the painterly process is not limited to a single work. Pils' paintings are created in groups that the artist calls “families.” Their coherence presents itself in the way certain compositional elements reappear throughout—comparable to a musical theme whose variation creates different moods. The term “family” implies that the images are close to the artist, yet not limited to the personal. They illustrate universal experiences of intimacy and distance, opposition and fraternization—a cosmology of the creaturely.

The exhibition at mumok is the most comprehensive presentation of Pils' oeuvre to date. Along with an overview of his painterly works of the last decade, it also highlights the artist's extensive drawing practice. A site-specific mural, which references both the transitory and the spatial dimensions of Pils' work, is also part of the show.

Tobias Pils has been the subject of exhibitions at Bibliotheca Reiner Speck, Oswald-Mathias Ungers Haus am Kämpchensweg, Cologne (2023), the Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop (2017), Kunsthalle Krems, Krems an der Donau (2017), Le Consortium, Dijon (2017), the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas (2016), and the Secession, Vienna (2013). In 2020 Pils realized a permanent installation at Kunstmuseum Bonn as well as a fresco at the campus of the École normale supérieure Paris-Saclay in Gif-sur-Yvette.

Tobias Pils lives and works in Vienna.

Curated by Manuela Ammer

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