

## Neo Rauch

### Propaganda

26 March–4 May 2019

5–6/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong

Opening reception: Tuesday 26 March, 5–8 PM

Press preview with the artist: Tuesday 26 March, 3:30 PM



Neo Rauch, *Der Aufschneider*, 2018. © Neo Rauch / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Propaganda*, an exhibition of new paintings by German artist Neo Rauch. On view at the gallery's Hong Kong location, this exhibition marks his debut solo presentation in Asia and will be accompanied by a catalogue featuring a short story by novelist and playwright Daniel Kehlmann.

Rauch is widely celebrated for his visually captivating compositions that bring together the traditions of figurative painting and surrealism into an entirely new kind of aesthetic experience. As a young artist, Rauch studied at the famous Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, where he began developing his own unique style of figurative painting that was distinct from both the socialist realist aesthetic of his native East Germany and the Neo-expressionist styles that were popular at the time in the West.

Rauch's paintings are richly colored, sumptuous compositions that contain a repertoire of characters, settings, objects, and motifs that are at once realistic and familiar while also appearing enigmatic and inscrutable. They often hint at broader narratives and histories—seemingly reconnecting with the artistic traditions of realism—yet they are dreamlike and frequently contain disparate and overlapping spaces and forms. Visually, they call to mind such celebrated modernists as Max Beckmann and Balthus as well as old master painters such as Pieter Bruegel and Tintoretto. Though his art is highly refined and executed with considerable technical skill, Rauch himself stresses the intuitive, deeply personal nature of how he works. As the artist notes, "My process is far less a reflection than it is drawing from the sediments of my past, which occurs in an almost trancelike state."<sup>1</sup> The titles that the artist selects for his works are cryptic and multivalent, adding further layers of complexity and intrigue to the viewing experience. Sometimes using puns or double entendres in German or other languages, the artist considers the title part of the generative process of the work.

*Propaganda* introduces fifteen new paintings by Rauch—eight large-scale canvases and seven smaller, more intimately scaled works—that continue the artist's exploration of figuration, dreamlike imagery, and the ambiguous nature of meaning in visual art, while also suggesting new directions in his practice. Notably, while Rauch regularly depicts his figures and structures in overlapping spaces and configurations, in some of the larger works, such as *Luz* (2018), the saturation of the canvas with characters, objects, and surrealistic forms rendered at different scales and in conflicting arrangements has a collage-like quality—a figurative scrapbook of the artist's personal iconography. The works also testify to the range of ways Rauch applies color in his art. Several paintings use a highly restricted palette, while others contain an expansive array of colors. One canvas, *Der Aufschneider* (2018), featuring a figure who appears to hold a knife or saber and cuts at an eel-like creature or form, is rendered almost entirely in rose and amaranth shades of red with complementary green highlights. *Sperre* (2018), by contrast, which portrays a woman holding small flags assaulting or attacking a shirtless hybrid human figure against a bucolic backdrop, appears as though largely drained of color with select incidents of yellow and

<sup>1</sup> Neo Rauch in an interview with Ena Swansea, *Neo Rauch: Aus dem Boden/From the Floor*. Exh. cat. (New York: The Drawing Center, 2018), p. 28.

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aquamarine. He renders figures and structures in plush earth tones in *Die Herrin* (2018)—a work that depicts a group of figures huddled around and attending to an inanimate female figure—while adding highlights of electric pink, yellow, and orange, creating a dynamic tension between more traditional painterly tones and colors that call to mind street art and electric signs.

To coincide with this exhibition, David Zwirner will present an Online Viewing Room highlighting Neo Rauch's printmaking practice, which will launch on March 25, 2019.

**Neo Rauch** was born in 1960 in Leipzig, where he continues to live and work. Since 2000, his work has been represented by David Zwirner. In 2016, *Rondo* marked his first solo show at the gallery's London location. His solo exhibitions at the gallery in New York include *At the Well* (2014), *Heilstätten* (2011), *Neo Rauch* (2008), *Renegaten* (2005), *Neo Rauch* (2002), and *Neo Rauch* (2000), which marked his United States debut.

Rauch's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions internationally. *Neo Rauch: Aus dem Boden/ From the Floor* opened at the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, in 2018, and will travel to The Drawing Center, New York, where it will be on view from April 12 to July 28, 2019. In 2013, BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels presented a solo show of the artist's work entitled *Neo Rauch: The Obsession of the Demiurge, Selected Works 1993–2012*. Other venues that have presented solo exhibitions over the past decades include the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Germany (2012); Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Germany; Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, Austria (all 2011); Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (both 2010); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (both 2007); Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (both 2006); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2005); Albertina, Vienna (2004); and the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2002).

The Grafikstiftung Neo Rauch opened in June, 2012 in Aschersleben, Germany, where the artist was raised. The foundation is dedicated to maintaining and preserving Rauch's entire graphic oeuvre.

Museum collections that hold works by the artist include the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

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