



EVENTS BERLIN / PIETER SCHOOLWERTH AND THE RELIEF OF THE SOUL

BERLIN EVENTS NEWS

Pieter Schoolwerth and the relief of the soul

by Elda Oreto

Pieter Schoolwerth twists the medium of painting, leading it beyond its limit, and into new narrative possibilities, through the virtual world, towards reality.

In his latest artworks, made for Virtual Relief, exhibited from April 26th to July 13th 2019 at the Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler gallery in Berlin, the artist, who lives and works in New York, presented a series of bas-reliefs.





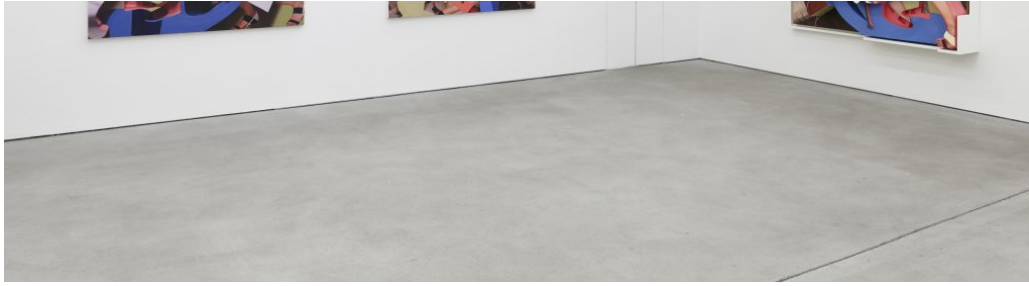
Pieter Schoolwerth, Virtual Relief – Courtesy of Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery

The theatrical scenario of the relief presents a broken up scene: some figures, faceless puppets, stand out on the surface, which melt into the background.

In *Personality Settings Retractions* (2019) there is an interior of a living room where some shadows, tangled up in one another, to the point that it is difficult to discern, become a unique creature. A formless torso with a thousand ends. A leg and a shoulder emerge from it, three or four heads of different sizes are side by side. It is a unique body that assimilates many others. Everything is very colorful. Blinding.

The technique developed by Schoolwerth to create bas-reliefs follows a complicated process. First of all, the artist takes an image and makes one or more shadows. He often uses himself as a model or his friends. Then he takes a wallpaper from the internet. Synthesizes and superimposes the images like a digital collage that he prints on a foam core (a type of material used to make posters). At this point he executes the painting in oil and acrylic and in this case shapes the bas-relief.





The basic idea of his research is that our body is slowly fading away. Even if our times are dominated by commodification and consumism, the body is getting alienated from its most impure but authentic nature. Loses weight, little by little it thins and slowly evaporates leaving a two-dimensional copy as a trace.

The virtual reality and Internet are just perfect tools for this concept. Above all, Social Networks that sink people into an abyss of isolation instead of connecting them with the world and bringing people together. But let's be careful, Schoolwerth is not a moralist, he doesn't hate the Internet, but he translates an ambivalent, deeper feeling. Perhaps it is the body's resistance to evaporation.



Pieter Schoolwerth, Virtual Relief – Courtesy of Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery

Two of the bas-reliefs on display: *Model for Personality Inventory* (2018) and *Model for Behavioral Surplus Capture* (2019) go beyond the relief and in a vortex of shades and colors claim their own independent presence in fact they can be seen on both sides. Like magic doors, these artworks invite us to cross a dimension that leads to a parallel universe where time, memories and emotions merge with images, leaving subtle traces that have more of the mystery of shadows than of the purity of the soul.

In *Compromised Personality Inventory* (2019) we enter a domestic interior with the jagged but clear outlines, underlined by bright colors. There are two female silhouettes, one sitting on a chair and another is standing in front of her. They are discussing animatedly. Between them, some arms emerge and they mix with other shapes in a monochromatic hint that seems to swallow the first two. A Hydra hidden in its den.



Pieter Schoolwerth, Virtual Relief - Courtesy of Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery

The tangle of shadows that lives inside the apartment in *Privacy Settings 8* (2019) is the ghost that inhabits a haunted house; the anguish of a world that feeds on images. These are projections, echoes of our multiple virtual personalities. These images that define our personality are contradictory. It's a schizophrenic monster that camouflages with the environment that surrounds it.



Pieter Schoolwerth, Virtual Relief - Courtesy of Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery

Schoolwerth received his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts and exhibited at the Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson (2018), the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016), the Center Georges Pompidou, Paris (2002) and his works are in the collections of the Los Angeles

Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver Art Museum; the Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco. In May 2019, his first monograph “Model as Painting” was published by Sequence Press, New York. From 2003 to 2013, Schoolwerth organized and produced concerts and music with Wierd Records and Wierd Party at Home Sweet Home on the Lower East Side of New York.



Pieter Schoolwerth, Virtual Relief – Courtesy of Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery

The artist has the ability to show how anxiety and loss are constantly hiding in our daily life. He does it using the media of painting and the structure of the Internet and Social Networks like Instagram and Facebook. And he does it turning these tools upside down and then turning them around, to reveal the power they have striking our Fantasies.

Every shadow at the end is a self-portrait. In Schoolwerth’s practice, colored ectoplasms are the matrix that generates the painting and the bas-relief. Cast by shadows, as for revenge, the artwork gains a physical presence, becoming a real body of a thousand souls, a body that inhabits space of the gallery, haunting it.

Elda Oreto