

Federico Solmi – The Red Desert

Opening: July 5, 2023, 7 to 9 p.m.

Exhibition: July 6 – August 26, 2023

We are very pleased to present Federico Solmi's first solo exhibition at the gallery after years of collaboration. The exhibition features a selection of new works previously on view at the Guardini Foundation in Berlin. Next to multimedia video paintings and an immersive VR experience, large-scale drawings and paintings by the New York based and Italian born artist will be on view. In addition, we will present for the first time in Germany the video trilogy Chinese Democracy And The Last Day On Earth, created between 2011 and 2014, for which the artist was awarded with a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. Its apocalyptic screenplay seems like an anticipation of the current political developments in our contemporary world. In response to the exhibition Brüder und Schwestern by Andreas Mühe and its national-political approach, we now take a global perspective with Federico Solmi.

Most recently, Federico Solmi made an impactful appearance in Frankfurt in 2017 with an extraordinary presentation in public space. During the B3 Biennale, his work The Great Farce was projected for several weeks on the over 100-meter-long exterior facade of the Frankfurter Schauspielhaus.

The exhibition The Red Desert immerses us in colorful fantasy worlds full of grotesque faces and staggering figures. Here, despots, conquerors, dictators and presidents from the past and present meet and outdo each other in absurdity. Drunk on their own power, they stagger through virtual spaces and, with their expressive, mask-like grimaces, appear ridiculous and sinister at the same time – like puppets of a world theater that, in the face of current political developments, comes frighteningly close to the reality of our present. What's new is that visitors can use VR glasses to

become actors and enact their own mischief in the depths of virtual reality as Christopher Columbus, George Washington or Empress Theodora.

Federico Solmi's unique combination of contemporary technologies such as 3D animation and video game engines with painting and drawing is based on an elaborate process of creation, and shows the Bologna-born self-taught artist to be a technically skilled virtuoso. In doing so, he not only combines media from different eras, but also visual elements of American pop aesthetics with the art history of his European roots. The list of Solmi's influences range from Renaissance artists such as Paolo Uccello with his large-scale battle paintings, to the genius of the early Baroque Annibale Carracci, to the satirist Francisco de Goya, and the great 20th-century dramatists of the visual arts and film such as Giorgio de Chirico, George Grosz, and Fritz Lang – Solmi has studied all of them in depth and developed his contemporary and expressive visual language from them.

Living in New York since 1999, the multimedia artist deals with historical as well as contemporary events and personalities whose status is fragile and critically questioned through the artistic filter. In her text on the exhibition at the Guardini Foundation, Larissa Kikol is convinced: "Those who engage with Solmi's works for a while will never be able to watch a state performance in an unbiased way [...]" Federico Solmi's schemes of the world merge in their surreal paintings not just with video technology, but also with the images that we consume through the media. Ultimately, not just the one, but every reality becomes much more questionable."