

Petzel

PIETER SCHOOLWERTH

Supporting Actor

September 5 – October 26, 2024
520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *Supporting Actor*, an exhibition of painting, sculpture, film, and an architectural installation by New York-based artist Pieter Schoolwerth. The show—Schoolwerth’s third solo exhibition with Petzel—will be on view from September 5 to October 26, 2024 at Petzel’s Chelsea location at 520 W 25th Street. Spanning the entire gallery, *Supporting Actor* continues Schoolwerth’s exploration of abstracted figures and forms, utilizing both computer-generated (CG) and hand-made media. The exhibition includes the debut of a CG-animated film, made collaboratively with artist Phil Vanderhyden, and accompanied by a soundtrack by musician Aaron Dilloway. Dilloway will stage a live performance on opening night at 7:45pm.

Extending Schoolwerth’s adventurous experiments with figuration, *Supporting Actor* explores painting’s thorny relationship with technology while posing urgent questions regarding the status of the real in an age of simulation, online echo chambers, and escapist apathy. A *mise en abyme* of spaces and objects, the show is anchored by a scale model of a domestic bathroom in the South Gallery, turned on its side and opened like a book. The bathroom’s mirror opens to a tunnel, leading to a miniature model of the gallery space on the other side of the wall. Meanwhile, the CGI-animated film *Supporting Actor* screens on a loop in a black box theatre space in the West Gallery, offering a key to the exhibition’s forking and interconnected paths.

The film follows an animated avatar of Dilloway through several sets: a tiled bathroom, a club, and a space akin to a studio or gallery. Our story begins in the bathroom, where, as the protagonist brushes his teeth, the sound conjures anthropomorphic stains on the Celotex ceiling tiles. Suddenly, a stain above opens a portal, welcoming him into a fantastical club. Equal parts *Star Wars* cantina and psychedelic cabaret, the luminous environment pulses with stain-shaped figures, dancing ecstatically to Dilloway’s soundtrack.

Meanwhile, Schoolwerth’s large trompe l’oeil tableaus blur authentic and simulated gesture. To execute these dynamic works, Schoolwerth first paints small improvised compositions, titled *Texture Tiles*, inspired by the film. He then photographs and extrudes these into 3D relief models, into which he embeds the photographic fragments of the paintings. The file is then printed on canvas and rearticulated with a final hand-painted layer that, as Schoolwerth describes, “puts the paint back into the painting.”

If the original *Texture Tile* painting is thus lost in translation, transformed into its avatar, this complex process allegorizes painting’s uncertain contemporary state, where most works are viewed via screens as so many pixels, echoes—images once removed. Here, scale also plays a pivotal role. Magnified 1000%, a delicate stroke becomes an aggressive slash in its enlarged corollary: a caricature of Action painting, reflecting the glaring inflation of personal details online.

Such translation from private to public also mirrors the passage from the private world of the recreated bathroom to the model gallery, and the shift from the private small canvases to the public larger tableaus in which the translated image is recontextualized—literally blown out of proportion. Between these registers, the film’s Dilloway traverses a wormhole from the bathroom to the miniature gallery—a channel transforming frail matter into luminous digital sublimation and our private lives into public performance.

Through such feints and proxies, *Supporting Actor* plunges us into a labyrinth of connections and regresses—an echo of the mirage in which we increasingly live via online doubles. Yet Schoolwerth also insists on connecting this digital hallucination to its material underpinnings via a handful of paintings hung opposite their relief sculpture twins: the very CG models through which the canvases were composed. Dubbed *Relief Routers* these monochromatic works lead to a mixing board controlled by a four-foot-tall 3D-printed model of Dilloway, a fitting mascot for digital immersion. Like us, the grimacing figure orchestrates the hypnotic spectacle enveloping him, a space into which he willingly— joyfully—disappears.

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About Pieter Schoolwerth

Pieter Schoolwerth (b. 1970, St. Louis, Missouri) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He works in a multitude of mediums including painting, sculpture, installation, and video. Since graduating from the California Institute of the Arts in 1994, Schoolwerth has exhibited nationally and internationally with notable solo shows at Kunstverein Hannover, Thread Waxing Space, New York; Greene Naftali, New York; Grand Palais, Paris; Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; What Pipeline, Detroit; Capitain Petzel, Berlin; Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Petzel, New York; Twelvetengallery, Chicago. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Marta Herford, Herford; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Sadie Coles, London among others. From 2003–2013 Schoolwerth ran Wierd Records, and the Wierd Party in the Lower East Side of NYC, releasing music by 46 bands and producing over 500 live music, DJ, and performance art events. This is his third solo exhibition at Petzel Gallery.

About Aaron Dilloway

Aaron Dilloway (b. 1976, Brighton, Michigan) is an American experimental musician. He is an improviser and composer who works with the manipulation of 8-Track tape loops in combination with voice, tape delays and various organic and electronic sound sources. A founding member of the industrial noise group Wolf Eyes (1998-2005), Dilloway now resides in Oberlin, Ohio, where he runs Hanson Records and Mailorder.

About Phil Vanderhyden

Phil Vanderhyden (b. 1978, Menasha, Wisconsin) lives and works in Troy, New York. He earned an MFA from Northwestern University in 2004 and a BFA from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2001. Vanderhyden's work, spanning paintings, videos, and curatorial projects, has been featured in *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*, among others. His current work consists primarily of large-scale, animated wall works and theatrical performances using special effects software and proprietary CG code. Recent work along these lines includes installations and performances at The Poor Farm, The Front Triennial, Issue Project Room and Carriage Trade.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.