

HAVERKAMPF LEISTENSCHNEIDER

MAXIMILIAN KIRMSE *DIE BRILLENSCHLANGE*

March 14 – April 26, 2025

Like a diary, the paintings and drawings of Maximilian Kirmse record both the happy coincidences and stubborn refrains of everyday life. The 'event' of these images might be the smashed window of a crime scene, or nothing more than the *Feierabend* hum of a hundred car engines, a kiss at the traffic lights, or the glow of a late-night cigarette.

In English, *Brillenschlange* translates literally to “glasses snake”. Referring to a cobra with dark markings resembling spectacles, it can be used as a playful nickname for someone who wears glasses – like “four-eyes” – but can also describe a lanky, snake-like physique or a certain slippery quality. In his third solo exhibition with Haverkampf Leistenschneider, Kirmse invites us to see through his own spectacled gaze as he approaches the slippery nature of images and memory. Shifting between breezy sketches and lurid, pointillist detail, his work speaks to the way an image can be both burned into your retina and always slipping out of reach.

Plans for a painting often begin in the sketchbook: a sparse tangle of lines recording the geometry and coordinates of a scene. Kirmse rarely works from photographs, choosing instead to work with what’s stuck in his memory. In one new painting, “Drive By” (2025), the punctured window of a car—remnants of a shooting in the neighborhood—are overlaid with images from family life; the alarming proximity of these two realities conveyed through their mingling depictions. A similar work, “Tatort” (2025), layers another view of the same crime scene with the ghostly sketch of an earlier painting: a figure half-slid into an MRI scanner. This palimpsest again evokes a jumbling coexistence, but also brings into relation the forensic scrutiny of a crime investigation and the clinical objectivity of an MRI—two modes of looking which attempt to reveal what lies beyond immediate perception.

Kirmse’s techniques move between soft, airbrushy blurs and bitty textures built from mosaic-like patches or grainy dots. While these hazy visions owe something to the Impressionists, Kirmse’s influences also include the unruly caricatures of Georg Grosz, the heavily patterned surfaces and lusty slapstick of William N. Copley, the slanting architectures of Max Beckmann. Kirmse’s view of city life, however, is looser, less neurotic. Combining ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture without fuss, his works make room for both cartoonish parody and a heartfelt sincerity towards his subjects.

Maximilian Kirmse (*1986 Berlin) lives and works in Berlin. He studied at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig and the Düsseldorf Art Academy. His works were part of various institutional exhibitions, including Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Museum Wiesbaden; Kunsthalle Bozen, Bolzano or recently in the solo exhibition Berlin Mon Amour at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung | Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and are part of private as well as institutional collections, such as the Collection of Contemporary Art of the Federal Republic of Germany; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Staatliche Graphische Sammlung Munich | Pinakothek der Moderne; Collection of the Kunstfonds des Freistaates Sachsen; Sammlung Haus N, Kiel & Athens; Hort Collection, NYC.