

Tom Król

Luz & the Doomsday Bar

September 6 – October 11, 2025

Opening: Friday, September 5 / 6 pm

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I.

With *Luz & the Doomsday Bar*, Tom Król (*1991) presents his fourth solo exhibition at fiebach, minninger in Cologne—and his first since becoming a father. For Król, painting is inseparable from life and experience: *one conditions the other, each exerting mutual influence*. His works arise not in a vacuum but in dialogue with external impressions, inner states, and biographical circumstance, and they invite viewers to encounter them within this same framework.

From a sense of arrival—as painter, father, and member of a community—emerges the impulse to look back. Król regards his earlier exhibitions as stations along a path whose meaning only becomes legible in retrospect, filtered through the lens of the present.

II.

What remains when we fix on detail? What recedes when we take in the whole? This oscillation between proximity and distance constitutes both method and attitude for Król. Painting, for him, is less a linear progression than a continual act of questioning, revisiting, and recontextualizing. His three previous exhibitions at fiebach, minninger punctuate this process: in looking back, Król does not produce a neutral inventory. Instead, it is moods, memories and the atmosphere of past and present situations in life that come into play.

His first solo exhibition, *Goodnight people, here I am* (2018), followed his studies in Belgium. Travel, collecting, and experimentation shaped his practice, as found motifs, compositional structures, and colors entered the work. Already here, collecting appeared as strategy, openness as guiding principle. Geometric forms, words, and symbols were consciously reused, recharged, and set in shifting contexts—generating ambiguous messages that resist fixed interpretation. In *Petrichor* (2020), heads came to the fore—initially as voids within the image, later as commanding presences. They gazed back, confronting the viewer, taking on a life of their own. For Król, *Petrichor* marks the beginning of a break with what came before.

Finally, *NEUE BILDER (HAUPTSACHEN)* (2022) coincided with his move to Berlin. The disappearance of the heads, so prominent in earlier work, proved both laborious and liberating. Open forms and unsettled motifs reflected an inner state of transition; in retrospect, the paintings read like psychograms of a turning point.

What emerges is an ongoing process of repetition, renegotiation, and concentration. “Zoom in”—the act of drawing close to a detail, shifting from distance to proximity—becomes his guiding principle. It refers not only to the focused gaze within the painting process but also to the retrospective glance at detail: a constant practice of engagement. The paintings look back.

III.

Against this backdrop, *Luz & The Doomsday Bar* emerges as the next station: at once linked to earlier exhibitions and attuned to the present moment. The past returns, but its meaning shifts; simultaneously, it opens onto contemporary concerns and attitudes. The new works depict pregnant bellies, everyday objects, and familiar signs. Recurring symbols are quoted, transformed, and recombined—not as illustration but as a layered visual language that continually generates fresh interpretations.

The “Doomsday Bar” is not an apocalyptic site but a space of gathering and reflection, a place where art is thought through and discussed. It signals an ongoing engagement with painting itself. “Luz”—light—is not merely a motif but an attitude: a concentrated way of seeing that renders the visible anew. Amid uncertainty and change, painting remains for Tom Król a space of free thought, research, and reflection. He invites viewers to share in this way of seeing: to look closely, immerse themselves, and enter into dialogue.

– Katrin Rollmann

The exhibition Luz & the Doomsday Bar is dedicated to Walter Swennen.