

# PODIUM

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Like a Thief  
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幽 Thief  
In the  
Night  
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Dennis Scholl  
丹尼斯·肖勒

**OPENING:** 29 NOV 2025, SAT, 2-7 PM

**DATE:** 29 NOV 2025—28 FEB 2026

開幕: 2025 年 11 月 29 日 (星期六) 下午 2 至 7 時

展期: 2025 年 11 月 29 日至 2026 年 02 月 28 日



DENNIS SCHOLL. *From Now on We Will Only Speak of The Light*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 155 x 190 cm.  
© Dennis Scholl (2025), Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

PODIUM is proud to present 'Like a Thief in the Night', Berlin-based artist **Dennis Scholl**'s first solo exhibition in Asia and with the gallery. Known for his lush and phantasmagorical paintings and drawings, Scholl has been creating enigmatic worldviews where human and non-human beings oscillate between brutality and beauty, violence and tenderness. In this ambitious body of work, spanning 16 new paintings and a collection of drawings, the artist draws upon the pastoral as both a locus of sentimentality and a theatre of profound spiritual allegory. Centring on the recurring image of the shepherd—a guide of flocks—Scholl reimagines it as a sacred figure that commands cultivation and sacrifice across human and non-human life. Through his enchanting visual language and storytelling, Scholl invites the viewers to inhabit the crux of tension between comfort and foreboding, belonging and exile, nurture and disruption; reminding one that vigilance is not merely a stance of fear but also of attention and tenderness—that to live in anticipation of the unknown is to remain awake to care for oneself. The exhibition opens on 29 November 2025 (Sat) from 2 to 7 pm and is on view until 28 February 2026 (Sat).

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The poetic and evocative exhibition title imbues a biblical undertone that is both uncannily intimate and unsettling. To arrive *like a thief in the night* is to arise suddenly, secretly, without warning—echoing the words of the New Testament that describe the hidden hour of Christ's return and the coming of judgment. In Scholl's solo presentation, this idiom is neither a moral threat nor a promise of catastrophe, but a call to dwell in the charged space of unknowing. The thief-Christ is paradoxical: feared for intrusion yet awaited as saviour, disruptive yet redemptive. In this vein, Scholl leads the viewers into a world that outwardly recalls the serenity of the pastoral but is consistently shadowed by the weight of revelation. The pastoral, often idealised as harmonious respite, is reconfigured as a vulnerable realm always on the brink of exposure—where every gentle image of care or communion is shadowed by the creeping awareness that the traumatic truth will make an unannounced arrival. Through archaic and enthralling imagery such as goats and lambs, shepherds and flocks, skulls and flames, Scholl summons the gravity of Christian symbolism while tempering it with gestures of tenderness. His shepherds are not distant icons but caring presences, holding the vulnerability of human and non-human bodies with quiet intensity. These gestures of care, however, do not neutralise the undercurrent of danger; rather, they exist alongside the knowledge that revelation arrives stealthily, when the soul least expects it.



DENNIS SCHOLL. *The Fire that Called our Names*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 170 x 130 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

*The Fire that Called our Names* (2025) serves as a poignant focal point of the exhibition, weaving a rich tapestry of symbolism through the figure of a shepherd guiding us away from a menacing wildfire. Cloaked in pristine white robes untouched by the destructive flames behind, the shepherd descends calmly, embodying protection and solace amid danger; his compassionate gaze offers reassurance and calm. Nonetheless, the shepherd's restful advent juxtaposes with the uncanny maroon droplets that suffuse the surface of his skin. To Scholl, this bodily feature constitutes an earnest symbolism of one's permeability to enlightenment and goodness. Here, the shepherd's higher purpose is to become our paragon and save humanity; in this vein, therefore, the flock, represented by sheep and goats, symbolises those who accept guidance and those who resist it. Amidst the swirling smoke and devouring flames, the sheep emerges, leaping towards salvation, whereas the goats linger still, ensnared within the perilous mist. Though the flames edge ever closer, the shepherd extends a lasting compassion to the goats through the virtues of love and selflessness. At the heart of the composition, a white dove clutching a serpent figuratively symbolizes the triumph of hope and renewal over adversity. Scholl's complex imagery invites reflection on protection, sacrifice, and the enduring power of compassion in times of crisis.



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*From Now on We Will Only Speak of The Light* (2025) introspectively probes humanity's struggle between good and evil. At its centre stands an androgynous figure, wrapped in soft, unassuming cloth, as if sheltering thought itself. Behind them, an uninvited presence emerges—a figure adorned in elegance but trailing a shadow. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, he dresses in a debonair, white suit, yet the viscous, coal black droplets, which seep and trickle down from the skull atop, reveal his hidden malice. In the face of this incessant and lurking presence of evil, an ancient tree nearby stirs and burns from within, kindling small, urgent flames, a wordless warning to the soul at its roots. Looking closer, the central figure also alludes to **Michelangelo's** *The Creation of Adam*. The original fresco depicts a heightened and dramatised moment between God and Adam, who are verging on touching their fingers—a monumental episode celebrating the creation of a pure soul. However, Scholl replaces the iconic scene with the protagonist touching the goat's horn amidst fragile stillness: the moment before surrender, the hesitation before choice. Scholl recalls the gesture of creation, yet transposes its triumph into uncertainty. The hand no longer reaches for divinity but touches the horn of a quiet beast. It is a meeting not of salvation, but of reckoning. Here, the present moment is an inward one—the birth of consciousness trembling beneath desire. Light wavers; darkness listens. The tension continues, unseen, within each breath, where purity and temptation entwine like twin reflections in the same stream.



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*From Now on We Will Only Speak of The Light* (detail), 2025  
Oil on canvas, 155 x 190 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*The Evil One and His Flowers*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

*The Evil One and His Flowers* (2025) unfolds in a luminous amber haze, drawing viewers into a scene charged with haunting tension. Central to the composition is the same figure found in *From Now on We Will Only Speak of The Light* (2025), dressed with unnerving elegance in a crisp white suit and black bowtie. His iris-less eyes, vacant yet piercing, evoke a liminal presence caught between life and non-existence—a spectral state of limbo. Encircling this figure, once-vibrant flowers wilt and curl, submitting to a fiery metamorphosis as their petals crumble to ash before flaring into silent, blossom-shaped flames. This vivid imagery forms a compelling metaphor for the evil evoked in the title—an embodiment of desire and malevolence that consumes and transforms, flickering between beauty and destruction. The flowers, emblematic of life and fragility, become intertwined with decay and fire, reflecting the seduction and destruction of darkness and temptation. Through the intimate connection between the figure and his flowers, the painting reveals a precarious balance between allure and menace, highlighting the captivating and corrosive nature of evil.

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DENNIS SCHOLL. *Pastures of Time*, 2025, Oil and pastel on canvas, 57 x 67 cm (framed).  
© Dennis Scholl (2025), Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

The evening glow filters gently through branches and leaves in *Pastures of Time* (2025), enveloping the flora and fauna in a tender, golden embrace. From the soft fur of resting lambs to the lush petals and verdant greenery, and down to the rugged bark of ancient trees, textures merge and harmonise with the melting hues, blushing together beneath the warm light. Scholl invites the viewer to slip into a shared reverie with the tranquil lambs and the otherworldly landscape, shedding the constraints of time and place. Like the untouched garden before the first taste of the forbidden fruit, or the idyll of Shangri-La before humanity's unrest—the calm before the storm of desire, before the wolf in sheep's clothing emerges.



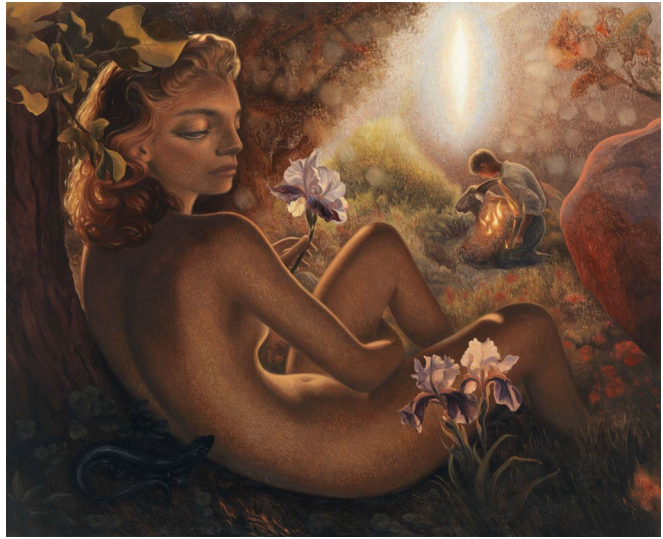
DENNIS SCHOLL. *The Great Relief*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 140 x 115 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

In *The Great Relief* (2025), the figure sheds a white suit to reveal a multitude of other guises, each gently tugging at our hidden desires. Here, the enigmatic character wears a ribbon tenderly wrapped around a skull, softening an otherwise unsettling presence. Concealed beneath a black mask and robe, this figure also assumes the guise of a shepherd, staff in hand—a seemingly trustworthy guide. Yet this appearance merely veils a deeper turmoil: a gathering storm of temptation and moral ambiguity that threatens to engulf the innocent. Flames begin to flicker, dance, and circle the man, who remains unaware of the subtle deception leading him astray, falsely convinced that yielding to desire offers solace. Through this paradoxical shepherd-like figure, Scholl gently warns of the dangers lurking beneath appealing surfaces. Before the lamb within us is consumed by this creeping fire, there remains a chance to stay vigilant, reflective, and safeguarded from corruption.



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Paying homage to the odalisque tradition, *A Shattering* (2025) unfolds as a surreal portal, weaving the reclining, idealised female nude into a layered narrative that reflects humanity's enduring struggle between light and shadow. At first glance, Scholl presents a serene and radiant scene: a lush garden bathed in glowing light, where a male figure shares the warmth of a bonfire with a caprine companion, while the female protagonist gently plucks a vibrant flower from the abundant greenery, captivated by its delicate beauty. Yet the bright backdrop gradually darkens as the eye is drawn toward a shadowed corner, where a serpentine creature silently slinks. In this suspended moment, the perfect image fractures like glass—reminding the viewer that even in seemingly idyllic surroundings, unrest can seep in, and vulnerability can invite disruption. Since **Édouard Manet's** *Olympia*, the reclining nude has symbolised the modern woman's awareness of her dual role as both object and subject—embodying desire and defiance. In Scholl's work, this form both lures the viewer into admiration and simultaneously challenges perception, urging cautious reflection rather than yielding to temptation.



DENNIS SCHOLL. *A Shattering*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 115 x 140 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025). Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong



DENNIS SCHOLL. *A Vessel of Perception*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 95 x 65 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

*A Vessel of Perception* (2025) is set amid a forest ablaze, where the natural world is simultaneously consumed and illuminated by fire's raw, transformative force. The protagonist, garbed in a protective suit, holds tenderly a donkey's severed head, its hollow eyes devoid of life yet crowned with smoke and flame. Deep contemplation fills the protagonist's gaze as they peer into the fire emanating from this spectral vessel, a moment suspended between destruction and revelation. Scholl's painting channels the symbolism of ancient sacrificial rites, where the severed head of a beast, humble yet burdened by human labor, becomes a ritual oracle, exhaling flames that mirror the pyre consuming the forest itself. This dismembered yet potent being transmutes into a vessel of apocalyptic vision, forcing a perception and reckoning with humanity's role as both destroyers and witness. *A Vessel of Perception*, through staging this ritual, provokes reflection on the uneasy tension between human progress and the natural world, eliciting both grief for loss and awe for enduring natural forces.

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DENNIS SCHOLL  
*A Reflection of Humility*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 50 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

*A Reflection of Humility* (2025) unfolds against a vast, pitch-black celestial void, where the cosmos becomes a silent witness to an intimate dialogue between human fragility and nature's enduring presence. The protagonist wears a futuristic yet primordial space suit, bearing the symbolic imprints of lambs and goats alongside delicate sunrays—icons that evoke innocence and steadfastness—marking an eternal bond between vulnerability and resilience. The suit is not merely protective armour but a permeable skin, as the saffron and rosy flowers flourishing around the collar and the moss gently creeping from the chest—nature's quiet reclamation, a testament to forces that cannot be subdued. This nuanced organic intrusion suggests that even in our most fortified states, the natural world softly, insistently penetrates our defences, symbolising a respectful alliance with nature rather than dominion over it. Through this delicate composition, Scholl's protagonist straddles the nexus of futurism and primal connection, embodying care, humility, and the humility necessary for survival within overwhelming natural forces.

*The Last Morning* (2025) presents a serene moment bathed in gentle hues beneath a clear blue sky at sunrise, suffused with tenderness and quiet strength. The protagonist, a young, female shepherd with eyes glistening with tears, embraces a goat standing tall beside her—a reversal of traditional roles where the caretaker becomes the protected. Wisps of the goat's wool billow softly in the gusting wind, heightening the painting's intimate and tender atmosphere. This tender tableau challenges conventional hierarchies, suggesting that those who nurture and sustain life are themselves sustained in return by the very beings they tend. The warmth and solace exchanged between shepherd and flock become a poetic metaphor for the grace of life, emphasising mutual dependence and shared strength. Scholl's work offers a quiet meditation on empathy and connection, revealing that protection is not a one-way act but a reciprocal embrace. The work, therefore, invites viewers to reflect on the delicate balance of care and vulnerability inherent in interspecies relationships, celebrating the light and hope found in moments of shared tenderness beneath the vast morning sky.



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*The Last Morning*, 2025  
Oil on canvas, 95 x 65 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong



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In *Young Saints, Shining Cherubim, Flaming Seraphim, Praise Be to You* (2025), Scholl reimagines the figures of Cherubim and Seraphim as a gentle goat-like being and a warrior, transforming these once awe-inspiring guardians into tender presences watching over the young figure at the centre. Cherubim are typically portrayed as formidable, multi-faced protectors wielding flaming swords, while Seraphim are depicted as beings of radiant intensity, the embodiment of unwavering devotion. In Scholl's interpretation, however, their stern grandeur yields to a quiet grace. The Cherub, now rendered as a caprine, smiles faintly; the Seraph, though still shrouded in flame, assumes a more humane form, meeting the viewer's gaze with calm warmth. Their hands, and that of the young figure, intertwine in soft communion, as the youth leans gently into the Cherub's embrace. The serenity of their gestures and the closeness they share evoke the tenderness of a familial portrait rather than the solemnity of celestial power. Scholl further composes the trio within a pyramidal structure that encloses the scene in balance and tenderness—borrowing the visual harmony often found in Renaissance art to suggest the coexistence of strength and compassion. The arrival of this triad, then, is not an omen of judgement, but a quiet assurance amid uncertainty.



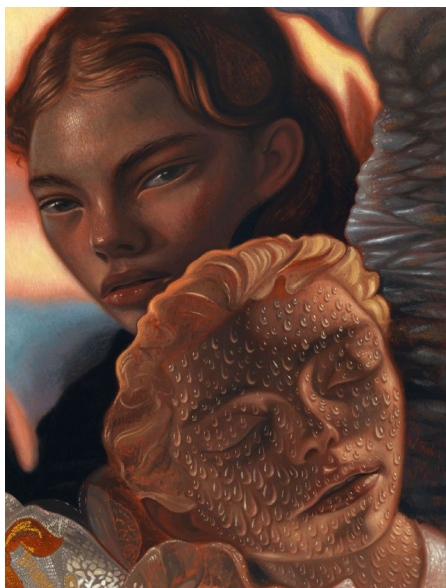
DENNIS SCHOLL  
*Young Saints, Shining Cherubim, Flaming Seraphim, Praise Be to You*  
2025  
Oil on canvas, 170 x 130 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

In a similar spirit, *To Become as Small as One Can Become – to Be Silent, to Cease One's Cries and Weeping* (2025) offers a prelude to *Young Saints, Shining Cherubim*...—tracing the early form of the Seraph before its transformation into the fully winged, fervently radiant figure. Here, the young Seraph appears fragile and withdrawn, curled into a corner of the canvas with its back turned to the viewer. Shattered and vulnerable, it has yet to embrace its profound purpose—the searing energy that slashes across its eyes and brings forth tears of pain. These stages are both inevitable and vital for growth: through enduring hardship and humility, and by recognising oneself as a small presence in the vastness of the world, can its spirit strengthen and flourish—ultimately rising as a powerful and enduring protector. The Seraph thus stands not only as a symbol of strength at its ascendance but also as an embodiment of grace and resilience amid trials.



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*To Become as Small as One Can Become – to Be Silent, to Cease One's Cries and Weeping*  
2025  
Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 67.5 x 52 cm (framed)  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

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DENNIS SCHOLL  
*Permeability - The Sleep of the Adolescent*, 2025  
Oil on wood, 52 x 40 cm (framed)  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

*Permeability – The Sleep of the Adolescent* (2025) presents a dreamscape centred on a teenager, quietly sleeping in a slanted pose, mouth gently parted and eyelids closed to shield from unseen disturbance. In the lower left corner, a fragment of mosaic art glimmers beneath the resting body. Echoing ancient architectural traditions, the tesserae flooring subtly recalls the weight of history and the traditions that simultaneously support and challenge the young dreamer. Across the serene face, countless water droplets remain poised; whether sweat or tears, each bead holds its place like a pearl set on velvet, catching the light in quiet defiance of gravity. For Scholl, these droplets serve as enduring emblems of permeability—marking the porous thresholds where the self encounters the rest of the worldview, and where personal transformation intersects with collective memory. Within the painting, these signs of interconnectedness are delicately composed, suggesting an order that safeguards vulnerability, while gently reminding the sleeper of its silent cost. A faint, indistinct figure stands behind, gazing outwards beyond the canvas, radiating a presence that is at once protective and insistent. In this suspended occurrence, adolescence hovers between inheritance and emergence, held in the fragile tension of openness.

In *The Intake of What Was Lost* (2025), a close-up portrait captures a woman mid-cigarette, her face cast in shadow as if forewarned of sorrow. Grief wells quietly in her eyes, faint glimmers of withheld tears shifting between desolation and numbness, as if news has emptied her spirit. The cigarette smoke defies expectation, rendered as iridescent liquid—silky, shimmering, threaded with crimson and indigo—that curls like visible tears and blood. This subtle transformation of ruin into light, and silence into luminous confession, places her at a fragile threshold where revelation is not articulated but borne, experienced as delicate tension within the weight of the unspoken.



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*The Intake of What Was Lost*, 2025  
Oil on canvas mounted on wood  
65.5 x 49 cm (framed)  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

Scholl's smaller figurative paintings enrich the layered narratives of his solo presentation. In *A Tear in the Fabric of the Sky* (2025), the subject's arresting gaze speaks of a burden too vast for words. Though composed as a calm portrait, the title hints at a subtle fracture—an unseen rift in the celestial expanse just outside the frame—echoing the unspoken truth lingering at the figure's lips. This delicate tension is mirrored by the presence of the Columbine flower and doves in the upper right corner,



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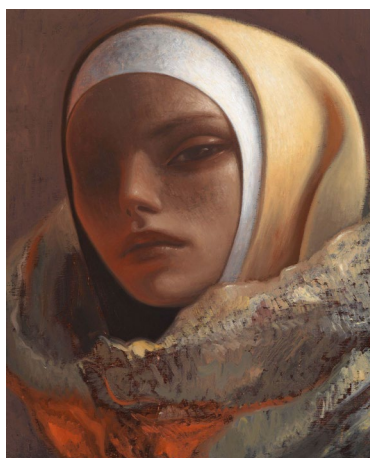
symbols of resilience, humility, and spiritual grace, gently framing the subject as a bearer of quiet revelation where the everyday becomes a gateway to the unknown.

In *Proximity of Light* (2025), a female figure meets the viewer's gaze with a solemn intensity. Her head tilts slightly back, casting a downward look that suggests an unwavering, unyielding presence. The deliberate blur over one eye deepens this ambiguity, inviting reflection on the tension between seeing and not seeing. The work distills a cautionary message: the more fiercely one tries to grasp transcendent power, the easier it becomes to lose sight of mysteries beyond comprehension—a call to remain poised in that charged space of uncertainty.

In *The Power of His Intonation* (2025), the male figure's eyes narrow against an implied glare, as if struggling to discern clarity amid overwhelming light. The strong set of his brow, faintly furrowed, conveys more than discomfort—it signals steadfast endurance, a silent resolve amid consuming fire, be they literal or metaphorical. Here, intonation is conveyed not through words but through tension: in the steely gaze and the tightened line of the mouth, a mute declaration that resonates with the poised tension of *A Tear in the Fabric of the Sky*. Both figures stand on the edge of revelation—one bearing the weight of cosmic rupture, the other forged by piercing clarity.



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*A Tear in The Fabric of The Sky*, 2025  
Oil on wood, 36 x 27 cm (framed)  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*Proximity to Light*, 2025  
Oil on wood, 34 x 28 cm (framed)  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong



DENNIS SCHOLL  
*The Power of His Intonation*, 2025  
Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 42 x 32 cm  
© Dennis Scholl (2025)  
Courtesy of the artist and PODIUM, Hong Kong

## About Dennis Scholl

Through his lush and intricate oil paintings and drawings, **Dennis Scholl** (b. 1980, lives and works in Berlin) creates an enigmatic worldview where human and non-human beings oscillate between brutality and beauty, violence and tenderness. Referencing Christian pictorial traditions, religious rituals, and mythological motifs, the subject matters in his works metamorphose into ritual offerings that capture the psychological turmoils arising from the everchanging tensions between sacrifice, vulnerability, and sanctuary. His recent solo exhibitions include M+B Los Angeles (2024), Kunstverein Göttingen (2024), and Museum Modern Art, Hünfeld (2022). He also participated in group exhibitions at Kunstverein Meißen (2025), Museum Reinickendorf, Berlin (2024), Kunstverein Göttingen (2024), Kölner Kunstverein, Cologne (2024), HAUNT, Berlin (2023), Kunstverein Gera (2022), among others. His works are collected by Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Bundeskunstsammlung, Bonn; Olbricht Collection, Berlin, and Robert Runták Collection, Olomouc. Scholl graduated from the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg.

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## About PODIUM

Founded in 2023, Hong Kong-based contemporary art gallery PODIUM operates as a robust platform for underrepresented emerging and mid-career artists whose creative practices reflect idiosyncratic aesthetics and resonate with current social discourses. Through dynamic exhibition programmes, publications, and institutional collaborations, the gallery remains steadfast in fostering transnational dialogues and synergic and experimental growth among the international artistic community.

**Website:** [www.podiumgallery.com](http://www.podiumgallery.com)

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