

Bernhard Buhmann

The Pursuit of Unhappiness

February 9 – March 16, 2024

Marinaro is pleased to present *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*, Bernhard Buhmann's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

The title of the exhibition is taken from the 1983 book *The Situation Is Hopeless, But Not Serious (The Pursuit of Unhappiness)* by Austrian psychologist Dr. Paul Watzlawick. In *The Situation Is Hopeless*, Watzlawick takes a satirical path to illustrate how we create the discontent we so often wish to avoid in our lives. A proponent of communication theory and one of the developers of brief therapy, Watzlawick viewed a patient's learned strategies or coping mechanisms for an underlying psychological issue ultimately as a contributing factor to that very issue. Buhmann himself sees this kind of negative self-fulfillment being carried out broadly across contemporary social relations.

Throughout his practice, Buhmann has centered his paintings around the figure, although in recent years has continued to move his figures further into abstraction. Buhmann began this body of work by creating preliminary collages, destroying them, and using the remnants to develop the final arrangement. The resulting paintings contrast geometric forms and gradients against elaborately complex compositions.

All of Buhmann's figures have a mood of precarity, with their many moving parts poised to unravel. These works feel reflective of our current culture that often destabilizes one's self-conception and subjectivity through technology, which in turn encourages a breakdown of a larger social structure. In returning to Watzlawick's book—a guide to how to be unhappy—Buhmann's investigates the unmooring and frenetic experience of living in a digitized world while using painting as a convincing argument for nuance and contemplation.

Bernhard Buhmann (b. 1979, Bregenz, Austria) received a master's degree from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, and a master's in Sociology and Communication Sciences from the University of Vienna. He has had solo exhibitions at Charim Gallery, Vienna; Carbon 12, Dubai, UAE; Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles; Galerie Lisi Hammerle, Bregenz, AT, and Strabag Kunstforum, Vienna, AT. He has been included in group shows at Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, AT; Forum Frohner, Krems, AT; Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck, AT; Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE; Muzeul de Arta, Cluj-Napoca, RO, and the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Bucharest, RO. He lives and works in Vienna, Austria.