

# *Future of Melancholia*

Philipp Timischl: *Molded*

8.3. – 4.5.2025

Opening: 6.3.2025, 8 pm

Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art  
Belgrade, Pariska 14, 11000 Belgrade

Cooperation: Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade (MoCAB),  
HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark (HK Styria)

Press talk: 6.3.2025, 7:30 pm

Artist talk: 8.3.2025, 8 pm

Curator: Sandro Droschl; coordinating curator: Miroslav Karić

Philipp Timischl is one of Austria's most significant emerging artists, advancing a distinctive practice that engages a wide range of media and materials. By transforming topical images, Timischl processes personal and critical reactions to the impressions and challenges of an everyday life increasingly shaped by forms of populism and a lack of orientation. The artist has produced his most recent cycle of works especially for the exhibition series *Future of Melancholia*.

For *Molded*, Timischl created nine paintings that intentionally eschew stylistic consistency and undermine artistic authorship. The exhibition title, *Molded*, which can mean both "formed" and "decayed," reflects a shifting focus within the artist's serial production process. Each painting in the series adopts a distinct visual style: one is text-based, another incorporates a collaged SKIMS advertising poster, another features a gray, concrete-like texture, and a further depicts a cloudy sky.

Despite this intentional stylistic diversity the series also has a number of unifying elements. The formats of the works in *Molded* are identical, and they are all trimmed with so-called 'moulure,' a kind of ornamental (wooden molding), which gives the series the look of a construction set for wall coverings and recalls typical French interior design. These decorative frames and paneling, inspired by traditional craftsmanship but industrially produced, are attached to the lower sections of the canvases as a recurring sculptural element. Lacking consistent artistic style, the works are unified by their external structure, which in turn raises questions about authorship, identity, and artistic ownership.

The titles of the paintings seem to add a further layer of meaning to the artworks, either descriptively or as humorous commentary on the medium of contemporary painting, alluding to the broader theme of repetitive trends in arts and culture, which is a central topic running through the exhibition as a whole. The cloudy painting entitled *If you don't like the sky, who even are you?* portrays a cloudy blue sky and gives an ethereal impression while simultaneously suggesting a ceiling, and *Not so good looking at the moment* appears to depict a wolf's eye. *The rumors are true: Contemporary painting* (a green-ish color field abstract painting featuring green wooden wall paneling), *The question remains: How to possibly squeeze another painting into this world* (consisting of four grey moulure) and *I was never going to be a good painting*, all use their titles to question the necessity of new paintings and new cultural production, thereby scrutinizing the values and validity of art. While these titles might remind us of the absurd theatre of Samuel Beckett, which depicted drifting characters, their questions are more pertinent than ever, given the absurdity of the political developments we now face daily. In this vein, the paintings *Really hard time in this time period*, which seems to be a concrete canvas, and *How does one even go to school for four years at this point?* even emphasize that with the rise of populism, its denial (and thus acceleration) of crises such as climate change, the near future looks very bleak indeed.

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HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, press contact: Helga Droschl, +43 664 3935718, [hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at](mailto:hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at); press download: [halle-fuer-kunst.at/press](http://halle-fuer-kunst.at/press)

In addition to the *Molded* series, Timischl also presents the two works *Monochrome Siblings* (2024). On the lower quarter of canvases made of ‘tadelakt,’ a traditional Moroccan wall finish, the artist has attached LED panels that correspond directly to the paintings with a video piece alluding to the theme of twins. At first, the lower LED strip simply matches the colors of the canvas, creating an illusion of subtle motion. Soon, however, various pop-cultural and historical twins appear, including the cartoon characters Chip n’ Dale, the Ambassadors from Hans Holbein the Younger’s painting of the same name (*The Ambassadors*, 1533), Chucky, the murdering doll and his bride Tiffany, as well as Snoop Dogg und Martha Stewart. Here Timischl again appropriates pop-cultural imagery, this time more directly, but now the texts he adds to the famous couples depicted in the video are even more significant. While Timischl’s appropriation here is humorous, there remains an underlying sense of melancholy.

A particularly important theme in Timischl’s solo exhibition within *Future of Melancholia* is his allusion to the concept of the future, or rather its cancellation. Again, the dual interpretations of the title *Molded* are significant, inviting us to question form and its transformation, as well as its transience. Timischl’s works have what is often called an uncanny quality, with a palpable unease, not only about an increasing overshadowing of melancholy in the present, but in the future too.

Timischl’s series reflects what writer and philosopher Mark Fisher called the “slow cancellation of the future” (2013), an expression which builds on Jacques Derrida’s concept of hauntology—the idea that cultural elements from the past persist like ghosts, continuously reappearing in the present. Fisher argues that modernity’s goal-driven understanding of time has collapsed into an endless loop of recycled cultural and social forms, making true innovation seem impossible. Timischl works with this idea in stylistic terms too, drawing on different styles from multiple epochs and generating a form of temporal ambiguity that not only engenders a sense of disorientation, but also subverts established ideas about authorship. In particular, his text-based painting that questions the obligation to go to school reflects the insecurity of our time, anticipating not only a *Future of Melancholia*, but a melancholic future in which stability and continuity oscillate as seemingly unattainable goals.

Timischl’s intricate classical designs and the unified dimensions of these works set them into dialogue with one another. Their construction evokes the precision of industrial production and the aesthetics of mechanical printing, with a nostalgic look at the past itself, whose boundaries with the present are blurred. Drawing on pop-cultural symbols from the past, *Molded* creates a visual language that embodies the melancholic idea of a “cancelled future.” Timischl’s series invites viewers into a fragmented world—his works reflect a moment that swings between the traditional and the contemporary, hinting that the contemporary may already be in the past.

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