

**Johannes Kahrs**  
***Then, maybe, the explosion of a star***  
**12.05–24.07.2016**

Opening Wednesday 11 May, 6–9 pm

Curated by Xavier Franceschi



Johannes KAHRS, *Figure turning (large)*, 2006. Collection privée, Pays-Bas. Courtesy galerie Zeno X, Anvers.  
Photo : Glossner Fotodesign, Berlin © Johannes Kahrs/ADAGP, Paris, 2016.

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## Press release

The frac île-de-france is proud to present the first major solo exhibition in Paris by Johannes Kahrs, shown at le plateau. Kahrs, who was born in 1965 in Bremen, Germany, lives and works in Berlin. Although his work spans a wide range of techniques, including drawing, video and sound installations, he is probably best known for his paintings. These distinctly realist works, which are generally based on photographs (sourced from mainstream media or his personal archive), carefully avoid narration; by isolating their subjects and eliminating all contextual details, Kahrs thwarts any attempt to identify their source. Freed from their original context, the images take on a universal quality whose evocative potential resonates deeply with spectators.

Rather than taking inspiration from photography to produce a mimetic representation of reality, Kahrs explores the gaps and imperfections of the photographic medium – blurring, hesitant framing, pixellation, etc. He often uses images from film or television, and the unstable outlines of the figures in his paintings are to some extent reminiscent of the vibrating or fluttering effect that occurs on a TV screen when a film is paused.

Painting plays the role of a mediator between the reality from which the photographs were borrowed and the ambivalent universe in which Kahrs immerses the spectators of his paintings. This strangeness derives not from the original context of the images but from the way the artist treats them. Kahrs explains that he is in search of images rather than real situations: 'What I'm looking for is the image, not the situation it depicts.' His attention focuses on moments of physical expressivity, captured as suspended gestures that appear to be floating in the abstract space of the painting. Human figures are never clearly visible, and only rarely in their entirety. The artist's reframing constricts the bodies, which become at once monumentalised and elusive, their immediate, unsettling nearness making them seem simultaneously strange and familiar. While Kahrs often depicts scenes that refer to traumatising or painful events, he restricts his attention to the moment before or after the occurrence as such. By doing so, he eliminates any explicit meaning and concentrates instead on what takes part, albeit indirectly, in creating an image that speaks of desire, fear and sex, but also of politics or more trivial matters, titillating the spectators' imagination and questioning their relationship to images.

Although the human figure holds a central place in his work, Kahrs also produces images of still lifes and landscapes, often with a tendency towards abstraction. Irrespective of their subject matter, however, all of his paintings negotiate an indistinct liminal space between reality and fiction that alludes to the duality between attraction and repulsion – a duality evocative of Francis Bacon or Francisco Goya.



## frac île-de-france

Kahrs is recognised as one of the most important painters of his generation for creating a truly unique pictorial universe. His work is represented internationally by Zeno X Gallery in Antwerp and Luhring Augustine in New York, and can be found in renowned public collections worldwide, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, MOCA in Los Angeles, MoMA in New York and SMAK in Ghent. The frac île-de-france has recently acquired one of his works, which had been shown in the exhibition *Un mural, des tableaux* at le plateau.

Kahrs' solo exhibition at le plateau is a landmark as it will present the work of a major artist who produces few works and exhibits rarely. His most recent solo shows were held at GAMEC in Bologna, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art in London, the Kunstverein München in Munich and SMAK in Ghent. Kahrs also presented a new series of paintings at last year's Biennale de Lyon.

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Free entrance

Opening times:  
Wednesday to Sunday, 2–7 pm  
Late-night opening, « plateau-apéro », first Wednesday of each month, until 9 pm

