

ERIK SCHMIDT

Blue Zone

Opening: September 8, 2026, 7pm

Duration: September 9 - October 15, 2026

Introduction by: Philipp Lange, curator and art historian

Water lilies grow as long-lived, extensively branching rhizomes beneath the water, revealing only their blossoms and floating leaves at the surface. The exhibition *Blue Zone*, presenting Erik Schmidt's latest body of work at Galerie Krinzinger, follows this logic of visibility and concealment within an extensive network. Its starting point is his 2025 video work *Rough Trade*. In it, the artist himself takes on the role of protagonist, returning to selected places that once served as settings for his earlier films or resemble them. Shot on a smartphone, this journey into the past takes us onto the streets of Berlin, into Schmidt's maisonette apartment, and into the conference room of a high-rise office. Finally, the artist literally enters the central image or self-portrait of the exhibition: a dinghy on a water-lily pond.

Schmidt transforms these and other snapshots from the approximately ten-minute short film into a series of new, large-scale paintings. In the form of photographic prints on linen, the film stills serve as the ground for his characteristically impasto application of paint. In places, the motifs are so thickly covered with oil paint that the picture surface takes on a sculptural quality, causing the still images to appear to move in an abstract way. The resulting sense of vitality corresponds to the scenes depicted, which bear witness to the active negotiation of the self with its immediate and familiar surroundings. The urban environment, the park landscape, or the furnished room merge with depictions of the protagonist and those around him. The bodies are not confined to their physical presence; rather, they are understood as repositories of movements, experiences, and memories. Schmidt seems to allow himself to be caught and carried by this physical state, while at the same time attempting to escape from it, even to the point of self-dissolution. Moving between conscious decision and free fall, between strength and vulnerability, the Berlin-based artist engages in an ambivalent interplay conveyed in the video not least through meditative choreographies, electronic melodies, and experimental camerawork.

Blue Zone revolves around an introspective re-examination of an earlier body of artistic work, without lapsing into nostalgia, passing judgment on his own practice, or seeking definitive answers. Instead, the exhibition openly interrogates what was and what is, sensitively situating artistic life within the continually advancing passage of time. Schmidt's fifth solo exhibition at Galerie Krinzinger is thus not merely an inventory of his most recent works, but a virtuoso movement through space and time. The term "Blue Zone" refers to those regions of the world where people achieve particularly high life expectancies. Erik Schmidt immortalizes himself in a manner that reaches toward immortality, perhaps finding the meaning of life in the ongoing process of movement, contemplation, and continual re-examination of one's own life and work.

Philipp Lange

Erik Schmidt (*1968 in Herford, Germany, lives and works in Berlin) creates works that engage with symbolic processes within various social subsystems. Immersing himself in foreign contexts plays a significant role in his paintings, videos, photographs, and drawings. Throughout his work, Schmidt continues to consciously adopt the figure of the outsider, whether in the crowded urban landscape of Tokyo, the camps of the American Occupy movement, among wine and olive producers in the West Bank or the aristocratic hunting circles of his native North Rhine-Westphalia. This removed stance offers him a distinct insight into group dynamics and the various clichés, stereotypes, codes, rituals, norms, patterns and conventions they behold.

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Erik Schmidt participated in group and solo exhibitions at institutions including, the EACC Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló, the Kindl - center for contemporary art, Berlin, the collection Wemhöner, Herford/Berlin, the Kunstraum Potsdam, Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, the Collection Glampe, Berlin, the Kunsthalle Hamburg, the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, the Artists Space, New York, the MARTa Herford, Herford, the Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, the Matsumoto City Museum of Art, Matsumoto, the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg and the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid.

Blue Zone is Erik Schmidt's fifth solo exhibition at Galerie Krinzinger