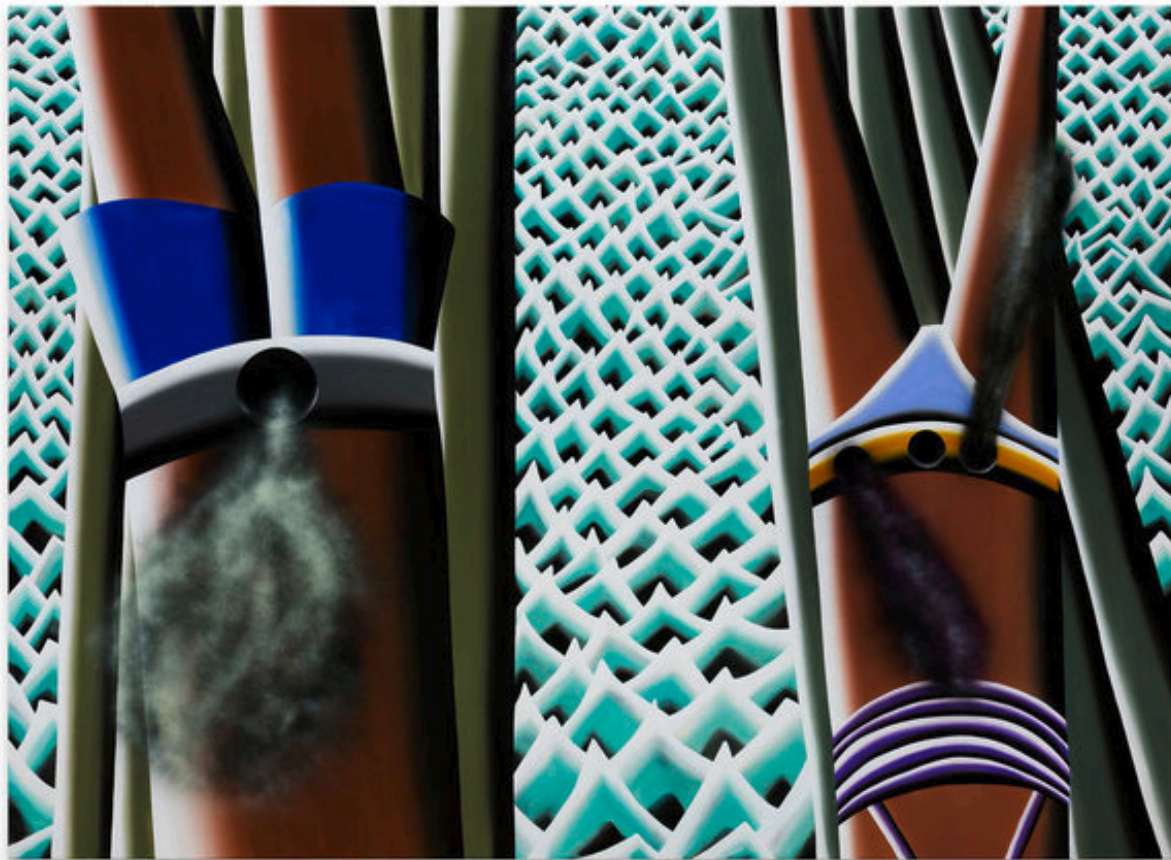


ART

Smoke on the Water: The Idyllic Nostalgia of Andreas Schulze

by PAC POBRIC

SEPTEMBER 27, 2017



Untitled (Vacanze) 22, 2017

COURTESY TEAM (GALLERY, INC.)

The German painter Andreas Schulze's latest pictures at the [Team Gallery](#) have a whiff of the past to them; maybe that's why a friend of mine scoffed and called them "outdated." With their depictions of bathers on vacation—sitting, standing, or lying by the water, lounging on pool floats—these new paintings seem steeped in nostalgia. But it's the technique that my friend was referring to: the linear, mechanical style evokes late Cubism, and Léger in particular. The figures, all torsos, are tightly cropped. They have neither arms nor heads, and some are painted in such close-up

detail that their bodies and clothing have dissolved into abstract design patterns. A few of them are really just backdrops for bright Hawaiian shirts; one has a towel across his neck that's so stylized, it looks like a strip of cartoon bacon.



Schulze was born in Hanover in 1955 and has been concerned, for much of his career, with the wastefulness of idyll. He seems to have little sympathy for luxury, and his paintings read as a dour critique of how freakish bourgeois life can become through affluence. There is always some peculiar, mild violence hovering nearby. In 2012, for his first show with the Team Gallery (the current is his fourth), Schulze created an installation to look like a contemporary sitting room with a group of chairs, a few lamps, a long table, one painting—and some vases shaped like detached human heads. Violence crops up in the new paintings in the form of pollution: Every single bather emits thick black clouds of smoke into the atmosphere, as only machines can do as they warm the climate.



Untitled (Vacanze) 15, 2016

COURTESY TEAM (GALLERY, INC.)

Stylistically, Schulze is part of an overall wave of Late Cubism in contemporary art that includes great painters like Jonas Wood and Dana Schutz. He is closer to the latter; like Schutz, Schulze makes figures so complex and artificial that they look only barely human. But of the three, Schulze is the only designer. He treats his paintings as images, not objects, which comes through especially at the edges of his paintings, which he doesn't always tape off. Ignore that messiness; it's the picture on front that matters, the one that's painted in a crisp, clean, graphic manner. Across the board, the paintings vary little in quality. Each is as handsome as the next, no matter what grotesque implication.



Untitled (Vacanze) 1, 2016

COURTESY TEAM (GALLERY, INC.)

That's evidence of a remarkably reliable painter, but it comes at the cost of too much familiarity. Much of the time, the problem is that Schulze's vision is *too* clear, as if he has too rich a sense of tradition to break free. The real issue is a question of form and content: How long can Schulze sustain such a harsh critique of middle-class life in his refined, well-established language? Let's be clear: There is merit in making good work in a venerable mode, but Schulze's work is a little too close to what we already know quite well. These paintings are a little too easy to like.

Andreas Schulze: Vacanze 365

Team Gallery

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Through September 30