

Matthias Franz *claim no easy victories*

June 5 – July 19, 2025
2 Bourdon Street, London (UK)



Matthias Franz | Detail | *Structuralismo*, 2025

GRIMM is pleased to present *claim no easy victories*, a solo exhibition of new works by Matthias Franz (b. 1984, Ilmenau, DE) opening at the London gallery on June 5, 2025. Coinciding with London Gallery Weekend (June 6 - 8, 2025), this will be Franz's third solo exhibition with the gallery and his first exhibition in the city.

For Franz, painting is a necessarily slow and thoughtful process. Inspired variously by literature and cinema, the artist uses paint and canvas as tool to visualise an interior notion, question and make sense of the world. Muted earth tones are contrasted with shadowy outlines and full primary hues that comprise invented architectural spaces or uncanny perspectives.

These new paintings by Franz revisit some of his previous motifs while incorporating new subjects, drawn from several literary sources. Joseph Conrad's 1900 novel *Lord Jim* and its tale of a ship's first officer and the poor decision he makes that leads to the near-demise of his crew and passengers, to be entrenched in guilt for the rest of his life, is one such subject. In a painting titled after the novel, Jim is shown with his head bowed and back turned, seemingly confronting the damage to the ship's tired hull, with his shipmates asleep in hammocks, ignorant of what is going on beneath them.

As in the novel, the ship is presented as a metaphor for class, with this theme of societal order unified across the work. The title of the exhibition, named after a quote from the influential poet, philosopher and anti-colonial revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973), refers to contemporary struggles for self-emancipation and determination. Elsewhere, interior scenes populated by uncanny motifs and figures lead the viewer to probe the relationship between them. Throughout these new works, Franz uses narrative to allude to the power imbalances that govern us, populating his spaces and landscapes with complex networks of motifs and the associations they bring with them.

One interior scene, *Revisionist*, depicts a tall, chamber-like room with a primary central figure of a large bust. The space resembles a museum, illuminated by two windows that cast harsh shadows across the statue making its subject difficult to decipher; it could equally be a Roman emperor as it could be a dictator from the modern era. Two stark figures circulate – an elderly man dressed in a long coat concealing a small child, and the other a man handing out sheets of paper, kept at bay by a wave of the old man's extended crutch.

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please contact our London press office:
press@grimmgallery.com +44 (0) 2033028180

2 Bourdon Street
London W1K 3PA
United Kingdom

Keizersgracht 241
1016 EA Amsterdam
The Netherlands

54 White Street
New York 10013
United States

Tel +44 (0) 2033028180
info@grimmgallery.com
www.grimmgallery.com

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The sense of unease created by this encounter, taking place around an imposing central figure, is at odds with the scene depicted in *Open House*. Here, an eponymous open-sided house is presented in the foreground, through which can be seen the wide landscape of the ocean. The tension of push and pull within his brushstrokes creates a dynamic contrast, capturing the sensation of heavy, enlarged forms giving way to more delicate arrangements. Two armchairs look out, inviting the viewer in, the house beckons as a place of sanctuary rather than a secretive bunker. Parked alongside is a rusty old car, now missing its wheels, further alluding to a sense of calm.

It is typical of Franz's practice to present these opposites, and in their differences, they begin to share similarities. One can trace patterns within his work, a relational search for things that connect, unravelling the familiarity of things that could be found anywhere and infusing them with the imbalanced weight and proportions one would find in a dream.



Matthias Franz, 2023 | Photo: Jonathan de Waart

About the artist

Matthias Franz (b. 1984, Ilmenau, DE) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 2019, where he was a student of Daniel Richter.

Selected exhibitions include: *Sensory Dialogue*, with Daniel Richter, Yi Space, Hangzhou (CN); *The Moon and I*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US); *Birds Sing the Echoes of Fragmentation*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL); *AIR 2020 / 2021*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna (AT); *Salon des Nutzlosen*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US); and *Condition Humaine*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US).

Selected collections include: The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX (US); Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Palm Beach, FL (US); De Heus-Zomer Collection, Barneveld (NL); THE EKARD COLLECTION; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX (US); Kunstmuseum, The Hague (NL); He Art Museum, Foshan (CN); The David and Indre Roberts Collection, London (UK) and many private collections.

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