



No.88, 2016, tempera and oil paint on wooden panel, 15.75 x 13.4 inches

Philip Akkerman

July 14 – August 26, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 14, 6-8pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of paintings by Dutch artist Philip Akkerman, featuring selections from his decades-long project of self-portraiture. Although the works are comparable in their intimate scale, Akkerman's variety of styles, colors, and compositions reveal the infinite possibility within his chosen genre.

Akkerman has exclusively been painting self-portraits since 1981. Confounded by the enigma of existence, he turned to self-portraiture as a means of comprehending. His inclination was validated by German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who professed that existence demands examination, and that "the more unintelligent a man is, the less mysterious existence seems to him."

Utilizing a traditional Old Master technique of grisaille underpainting, Akkerman layers his panels with washes of color or thick brushstrokes, achieving an array of results which ranges from realism to expressionism and everything in between. An heir to the tradition of Dutch self-portrait painting which includes Rembrandt and Van Gogh, Akkerman evokes these masters along with so many others: Durer, Dali, Picasso, Dix, De Chirico, Bacon, Close. In the end, it is the sheer breadth of his variation which makes Akkerman's voice unique.

In *No. 88*, 2016, Akkerman renders himself in fleshy tones against a pale gray ground, his visage broken into geometric shapes reminiscent of Cubism: a circle for a chin, triangular cheekbones, rectangular nose bridge. The remainder of his head and neck collapses into organic shapes and polygons, transforming into something grotesque and almost spectral.

The exercise of repetition within Akkerman's practice also calls to mind a kind of performative endurance, which makes sense given that he studied with conceptual artists like Jan Dibbets, Ger van Elk and Stanley Brouwn. At the same time, the repetition is upended by the extremes to which he goes to deviate from the original and assert his subjectivity. The intention behind these assertions is ambiguous: Are these articulations of the artist's inner life? Are they meant to address the current moment? Or are they simply the work of a virtuoso displaying his talents?

Philip Akkerman (b. 1957, lives and works in The Hague) has had recent solo exhibitions at TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam and Emanuel von Baeyer Cabinet, London. His work is currently featured in *Universes 5* at The Hole, New York, and Depot, Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Akkerman's paintings are included in the permanent collections of numerous institutions including Centraal Museum Utrecht, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Hirshhorn Museum Washington DC, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. This will be his first exhibition at the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Summer hours are Monday - Friday, 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.