

# Christian Schoeler

I wanna be ignored ...

Exhibition in Beijing: 8.11.2014–11.1.2015

Opening: Saturday, November 8, 2014; 4 - 7pm

Christian Schoeler's second exhibition at Galerie Urs Meile in Beijing focuses on his works on paper. Besides his large canvases, executed in a mixed media technique and oils, he also creates smaller, more intimate works on hand-made paper. Here he mixes drawing and printing techniques with watercolors or pastels instead of oil paint. They are different from the oil paintings because this technique is faster, and Schoeler has to construct his images in reverse, starting with the highlights and moving on to the darker shades of the image, since the light comes from the paper when less opaque color is used. The order and layers of the several techniques differ from piece to piece, and in the end even experts cannot distinguish between them.

Although they are reminiscent of classic portraits, Schoeler's works are not. The artist once said, "It's about beautiful paintings, not about beautiful boys." So, if the work has a name in its title, it might differ from the model's real name. Christian Schoeler arranges photo shoots with models or friends, as he did, for example, for the Solomon Series (*Solomon*, 2011, mixed media and pastel on handmade paper, 90 × 60 cm; *untitled #071 (Solomon)*, 2011, mixed media and pastel on handmade paper, 85 × 61 cm; *untitled #072 (Solomon)*, 2011, mixed media and pastel on handmade paper, 93 × 61 cm). Debating the issue of whether it is legitimate to use printing techniques and photography in painting is obsolete, because all famous painters have employed the technical means available in their times. Born in 1978 in Hagen, Germany, Christian Schoeler stages photographs and uses the images as starting points for new works. However, he is not interested in staying true to the actual appearance of the person depicted. Other works on paper are based on a combination of photographs he has found or made himself. He takes the scenery from one photograph and a person from another and combines them together in "a miniature of an alternative reality."

Schoeler appropriately describes his studio as a laboratory, a place where things are being transformed and experiments are conducted. In his laboratory he converts his models into androgynous, apparitional figures. Schoeler doesn't paint their bodies; he paints his idealized impression of them. Their indefiniteness makes his drawings function as a mirror for the artist's emotions. Sometimes, when looking at older paintings he has done, Schoeler wonders why he exposed so much of himself in a work. The people in his works are like ethereal doubles, and Schoeler deals with his own vulnerability when creating them. As a result, we see transcendent beings emerging from a mist; ghostly youngsters, inseparable from back- or foreground, introverted figures that define the space around them and are at the same time absorbed by it.

The title of the exhibition, *I wanna be ignored ...*, could be read as a statement made by one of these too-beautiful human beings as he disappears into the haze, but it was actually made by the artist. It is strikingly unusual. If the artist wants to be ignored, then why exhibit? Isn't the purpose of an exhibition to be seen? But this title is not a classic one, meant to be a headline above a selection of works, or a message to visitors. It is an intimate and personal statement. Over the last year Christian Schoeler had the most humbling experience a human being can have: being seriously ill. He suffered from an ischemic cerebral infarction. The self-deprecating title expresses his wish that—now that he feels better and is more like himself again—his friends would worry less about him and not anxiously monitor all his body functions anymore. Furthermore, it reflects his modesty, a mindset one automatically adopts when one is confronted with nerve-wracking trials and has no chance to exercise influence. As the artist is currently on the road to recovery, all of the works in the exhibition date from before July 2013, but many of them are being exhibited for the first time. It was important for Galerie Urs Meile to show Christian Schoeler's work at this point, and we are looking forward to seeing more of him in the future.